

## Re: How to prime kids to learn 3+ languages?

---

*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2007-10/msg00103.html>

---

- *From:* "Peter T. Daniels" <[grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Wed, 03 Oct 2007 05:20:37 -0700
- 

On Oct 3, 1:07 am, ekk...@xxxxxxxxxx wrote:

On Oct 1, 5:37 pm, pkeb...@xxxxxxxxxx wrote:

We're looking for methodologies and materials to prime child from 3 month of age for multiple language acquisition.

...

If anyone knows of any good sources or other materials, or systems – please let us know.

I see many people have talked but none so far offered any concrete help.

A friend of mine is trilingual at home and has raised his kids trilingually. He did research a bit before embarking on "priming" his kids to be trilingual. He offered this tip: you must pick up fixed activities where the child and everyone else present only use one single language during that activity. For instance, they would have fixed hours everyweek to watch cartoons in English, and during that slot of time, the parents and the kids would only speak in English. The thing is, children need a hint: an association of an activity (or person) to a given language.

[my previous message simply disappeared after I'd typed a paragraph. Maybe a finger slipped and hit some key that's equivalent to clicking "Send" that I don't know about. But I will continue and not repeat.]

Linguistic anthropologists have described cultures in which no particular linguistic attention is paid to infants — no "baby talk," no "motherese," no special praise for one's first words or first sentence — and the kids master their language anyway. IIRC they were in Melanesia.

I think somehow this approach is better than bombarding the kid with multiple languages at the same time. I've already seen a few cases

## Re: How to prime kids to learn 3+ languages?

where kids from immigrant families become late talkers, specifically when the mother is a non-native speaker. I do think it is a problem when the mother (or father, or nanny, whoever assumed here to be the main person raising the child) speaks in a language different from the one used on TV programs and/or computer games. Later-talking children invariably "catch up" later, so some may argue it's not a problem. But still, when you see these children not communicating with their peers, you always feel a bit heartbroken.

It lasts a few weeks at most.

I guess what I am trying to say is,

be careful in scheduling language-associated activities. There is a slight danger in having late-talker children if there is no planning whatsoever. It's a no big deal, but if you ask any parent of a late-talker child, they'll all tell you about their agony. I know a lot of people would cherry-pick counter-examples, but if you talked to any parent of a late-talker child, you'd think twice. I also think it is a waste of resources having to take these kids to specialist doctors and do all kinds of tests, only to end up with no solution whatsoever.

That's simply paranoia. Does your culture place special emphasis on keeping kids busy with structured activities all the time, as is now found in upper middle class US suburbs?