

# BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



English has become the main language of communication among citizens of the European Union, becoming the most important language of intra-European communication.

This importance has been reflected in the educational area since the very earliest stages. In fact, the progressive introduction of a foreign language in the early childhood education stage has already been included in the 254 Decree August 1st, 2008, which establishes the curriculum of the Second Cycle of Early Childhood Education in the Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia, where among the objectives of the stage it is specified that: "... boys and girls should develop communication skills in different languages and ways of expression, including a foreign language ..."

## 10 Benefits of a Foreign Tongue

### Definitely Noticed

3. Hear language better
4. Become more language sensitive
9. New ways of seeing
10. Improve your first language



### I can only hope!

1. Brain growth
2. Stave off dementia

### Can't Confirm

5. Boost your memory
6. Better multi-tasking
7. Increased attention



So, today the Ministry of Education and Universities, aware of the importance of promoting the improvement of teaching and learning foreign languages, has strongly committed to the System of Teaching Foreign Languages, and unifies in a single Order (Order of June 3, 2016), the regulation of the system that will be applied in all educational schools of the

Region of Murcia. Therefore, the Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia, in its strategy "+ Languages", proposes the incorporation of the Foreign Language Teaching System in all educational schools, so that all students in the region can take bilingual or plurilingual education, in any of the proposed modalities, in the 2018-2019 academic year.

This interest in learning a foreign language, specifically English, not only has been reflected in the classrooms, but also in parents. In such a way that teaching a second language to children has become the goal of many parents, giving this way a bilingual education to their children.



Now, the one million dollar question, which is the most suitable age to teach a second language to children? As far as we know, and this has scientifically been proven, thinking and speaking in two languages is easier when learning both languages since childhood. Therefore, in order to get a child to reach a perfect level of bilingualism, it is very important to take advantage of the learning stage of the mother tongue, that is to say up to 5 years old.

**Kids should begin to learn a foreign language from a young age...**



**...the younger, the better.**

According to Elvira López, Director of Communication at the Brains School, we must bear in mind that a young child learns naturally, does not translate, and can easily internalize both words and phonemes, and is not as self-conscious as an adult, therefore the stage of early childhood education is the most suitable to introduce a new language.

Therefore, when introducing a second language in children's education, the most important thing is to avoid establishing a translation point and make them think directly in the language they are speaking. In addition, it is convenient that the child is exposed in a systematic way, and as long as it is possible, to the new language. The implementation of bilingual centers will help us to achieve their goal. Their proposals revolve around the following axes: organization of the bilingual section, teacher training; methodology; human resources and didactic materials and pedagogical guidelines for the improvement of the linguistic competence.

Regarding its continuity at home, how can parents collaborate to make their children learn a second language? First of all we should take into account whether parents master that second language or not.

On the one hand, if the parent does not know that language or the pronunciation is not appropriate, it is better to provide the child with audiovisual programmes that allow them to get in contact with that language.

On the other hand, if the parent is fluent in that language, the best choice is always to speak to the child in that language and develop playful activities which involve learning while playing.

To conclude, bearing in mind that today Spain is one of the EU countries with one of the lowest rates of foreign languages learned per student, any measure to improve this data seems positive to me, although and from my point of view, we are far from carrying out a high quality bilingual immersion.

If you are interested in knowing more about bilingualism, please find attach the website address of the Bilingualism Guide of the British Council School:

<https://www.britishcouncilschool.es/servicios/psicopedagogica/guia-del-bilinguismo>

Rafaela Muñoz del Valle

