

## Tips on raising kids bilingually and the benefits it can provide

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**Warm-up question:** If you have children or plan to have them in the future, would you want to raise them bilingually? Why or why not?

**Listen:** Link to audio [[HERE](#)]

**Read:**

SCOTT DETROW, HOST:

About 22% of people in the U.S. ages 5 and older speak a language other than English at home. And for parents who are short on time and already **keeping multiple plates spinning**, raising a child bilingually can feel like an additional hurdle. For NPR's Life Kit, Julia Furlan talked to experts who say that raising kids bilingually doesn't have to be expensive or exhausting.

JULIA FURLAN, BYLINE: Watching my toddler speak English and Portuguese somehow blows my mind every time. But aside from being cute, there's actually a **whole laundry list of** benefits to being bilingual, according to Farwa Husain, who's a bilingual speech pathologist who speaks Hindi, Urdu and English.

FARWA HUSAIN: First of all, it's so fun to be able to speak another language.

FURLAN: Husain says that there are also improvements in cognitive function.

HUSAIN: There are better problem-solving skills, and actually, research says it delays the onset of **dementia** as well if you are bilingual.

FURLAN: The study that Husain is citing says that being bilingual may delay the onset of dementia by up to five years. Though, I should say that the results are **inconclusive** when it comes to learning a language much later in life. So let's talk about what it takes to raise multilingual kids. Liliana Diaz is a bilingual speech pathologist who works in Spanish and English. Diaz says it's actually pretty simple.

LILIANA DIAZ: It's consistency and exposure and practice. So it's all about just practice, practice, practice and exposing your little one to it as well, too.

FURLAN: She also says that there's no one way to do it.

DIAZ: You know, it's going to be different in every family, and that's OK. That's totally fine. No bilingual is the same. Like, there literally will not be a bilingual person that is the same as the next. So it's totally fine is usually what I tell parents.

FURLAN: So let's go through some of the most common techniques. There's one parent-one language, which is what I do with my kid, Leo. I speak to her in Portuguese, and my spouse, Steph speaks to her in English. There's also **minority language** at home. Time and place is another way to do it. Here's Husain again.

HUSAIN: You block the day, where in the mornings, maybe you're speaking one language, then you're speaking another.

FURLAN: The last of these techniques is called multiple languages at home, which is pretty self-explanatory. It may sound confusing, but really, it's not a problem.

HUSAIN: Children are wonderfully **resilient**, and they will start picking up on how you are providing them that input. And they are so great at being able to **tease apart** the ways and the languages together.

FURLAN: And while we're on the topic of confusion, before we go, I have to **bust one common myth** here. I dug into the research, and I spoke to experts. And if there's one thing you need to know, it's this...

HUSAIN: That myth of bilingualism creating a language delay is totally false.

FURLAN: This idea is so **prevalent**, but the research just doesn't back it up. Husain sees it all the time, where parents are worried that being multilingual will somehow set a child back.

HUSAIN: What research says is when the child acquires those - both those languages, they're at age level with their monolingual peers.

FURLAN: Bilingualism isn't a burden that you're adding to your life. It's actually a key that unlocks entirely new worlds.

FURLAN: As a parent, you don't always know you're doing the right thing, but watching my kid connect with her cousins on FaceTime or sing a song my grandmother used to love, it feels really nice. For NPR News, I'm Julia Furlan.

**Vocabulary and Phrases:**

1. **keeping multiple plates spinning:** managing many responsibilities or tasks at the same time
2. **a whole laundry list of (something):** a very long list of things
3. **dementia:** a medical condition involving memory loss and reduced thinking ability
4. **inconclusive:** not leading to a clear or certain result
5. **minority language:** a language spoken by a smaller group within a society
6. **resilient:** able to adapt and recover easily from challenges or difficulties
7. **tease apart:** to separate or distinguish carefully
8. **bust a myth:** to prove that a common belief is false
9. **prevalent:** common or widespread

**Fill in the Blank** Use the correct word or phrase from the vocabulary list.

1. Researchers are studying whether bilingualism may delay \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Parents are often \_\_\_\_\_ while balancing work and family life.
3. The results of the study were \_\_\_\_\_, so more research is needed.
4. Smartphone use has become increasingly \_\_\_\_\_ among young children.
5. Some immigrant families try to preserve their \_\_\_\_\_ at home.
6. The report included \_\_\_\_\_ reasons for learning another language.
7. Scientists are trying to \_\_\_\_\_ the causes of the problem.
8. Young children are often very \_\_\_\_\_ when adapting to new environments.
9. The documentary helped \_\_\_\_\_ several common misconceptions about nutrition.

**Comprehension Questions:**

1. What are some benefits of bilingualism mentioned in the transcript?
2. According to the experts, what are the keys to raising bilingual children?
3. What are some common techniques families use to raise multilingual kids?
4. Why do experts say children are not usually confused by multiple languages?
5. What myth about bilingualism does the transcript challenge?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What are the advantages of speaking more than one language?
2. Why do some parents worry about raising bilingual children?
3. Do you think schools should place more emphasis on multilingual education?
4. How can language help people stay connected to family and culture?
5. What challenges might bilingual families face in daily life?