

Practical Bilingualism

Ana Paula G. Mummy, MS, CCC-SLP

A Concise and Simple Guide for
Parents Raising Bilingual Children

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About The Author

Ana Paula G. Mummy is a trilingual speech-language pathologist raising her children bilingually. She was born in Brazil, learning Portuguese as her native language. At age 10, her family immigrated to the United States, and she was immediately immersed in American schools. Due to her young age and language immersion, she was able to learn English with native proficiency, but she was able to maintain her Portuguese language use due to dedicated parents who continued speaking Portuguese at home even at the expense of their own assimilation to the new language and culture. Ana Paula then learned Spanish as a young adult, and the similarities between her native language and Spanish as well as a language immersion summer program in Mexico allowed her to achieve near-native proficiency in Spanish.

She writes on many bilingual issues on her website – www.thespeechstop.com – including simultaneous bilingual language development through her article entitled *Convergence: When Two Languages Meet (Parts I and II)*, where she details the process and results of the simultaneous bilingual language development of her firstborn over a three-year period.

Ana Paula has also written a series of leveled storybooks for children entitled *GROW! Language Development with Engaging Children's Stories*. The series offers an English version as well as a Spanish-English version of the storybooks (Portuguese translations are also available). The engaging stories build vocabulary and teach important language skills for social and academic success. They are written in four progressive levels that can be tailored for children based on their age and language level and provide a built-in scaffolding of instruction.

Lastly, Ana Paula offers a series of tip sheets for parents, called P.O.P. sheets, addressing *Purposeful Ongoing Play*. These tip sheets are full of practical suggestions for enhancing language skills through play using common toys and activities.



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Author Disclaimer: *The experiences, views, and opinions expressed in this guide are mine, but I shall not be held liable if you choose to take my advice or heed my suggestions yet do not achieve expected or desired results. The ideas presented are in no way guaranteed to work, but my sincere hope is that you will find them practical and useful for your family.*

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Introduction

There are many books and blogs available for parents on the types of bilingualism (e.g. simultaneous vs. sequential), the systems or methods to promote bilingualism in the home (e.g. One Person One Language (OPOL) vs. Minority Language at Home (ML@H)), the benefits of bilingualism, bilingual education, and so on. These books are very thorough and excellent resources providing not only the “how” to promote bilingualism but also the “why’s” of bilingualism, including research and theories. Many book authors have chosen not to insert their own experiences as bilinguals/multilinguals in order to promote a broader understanding and applications of bilingualism as opposed to situation-specific applications.

This guide is unique in that it provides my personal tips and practical suggestions for everyday situations when fostering bilingualism in the home. My desire is to share my own experiences 1) as someone who was raised as a sequential bilingual (learning second language after 3 years of age), 2) as a mother raising my children as simultaneous bilinguals (learning two languages concurrently prior to 3 years of age), and 3) based on my knowledge and skills as a trilingual speech-language specialist.

My approach in this guide is informal, as though we were sitting in my living room drinking a cup of coffee while discussing the benefits and challenges of raising children bilingually. The information is presented as bullet points to consider. Though my situation and specific circumstances may differ from yours, I believe broader application to other situations can be gleaned based on underlying principles and/or possible similarities. My hope for this guide is practice, not theory...in other words, giving you practical everyday suggestions, techniques, strategies, activities, and encouragement for the bilingual journey!

Though my focus is bilingualism, the principles and suggestions presented in this guide can be applicable to multilingual homes. For the sake of simplicity, however, the term bilingualism will be used throughout the guide.

The variety in families, learning styles, languages, cultures, family dynamics, and children’s aptitudes make it impossible for me to address every situation, so the information presented here is merely a guide – ideas and practical suggestions that may be useful. They are not guaranteed to work and may not be appropriate for your situation, so you must use your own judgment to determine what to embrace and what to discard.

In addition, this guide is not a substitute for seeking professional guidance if you have concerns about your child’s speech/language development. Though I am a speech-language pathologist, my recommendations may not be appropriate for your child’s specific needs since I have not personally evaluated his/her language skills and do not know your family history. The only

professional who may diagnose and prescribe potential treatment for your child is someone who has evaluated him/her in person.

Finally, the term “community language” or “majority language” will be used to refer to the language spoken by the majority of the people in your community. Sometimes you may hear the majority language referred to as the stronger language not in relation to its value but in relation to the predominant number of people speaking that language. The term “home language” or “minority language” will be used to refer to the native language of the parents. The minority language is sometimes called heritage language, weaker language, or mother tongue.