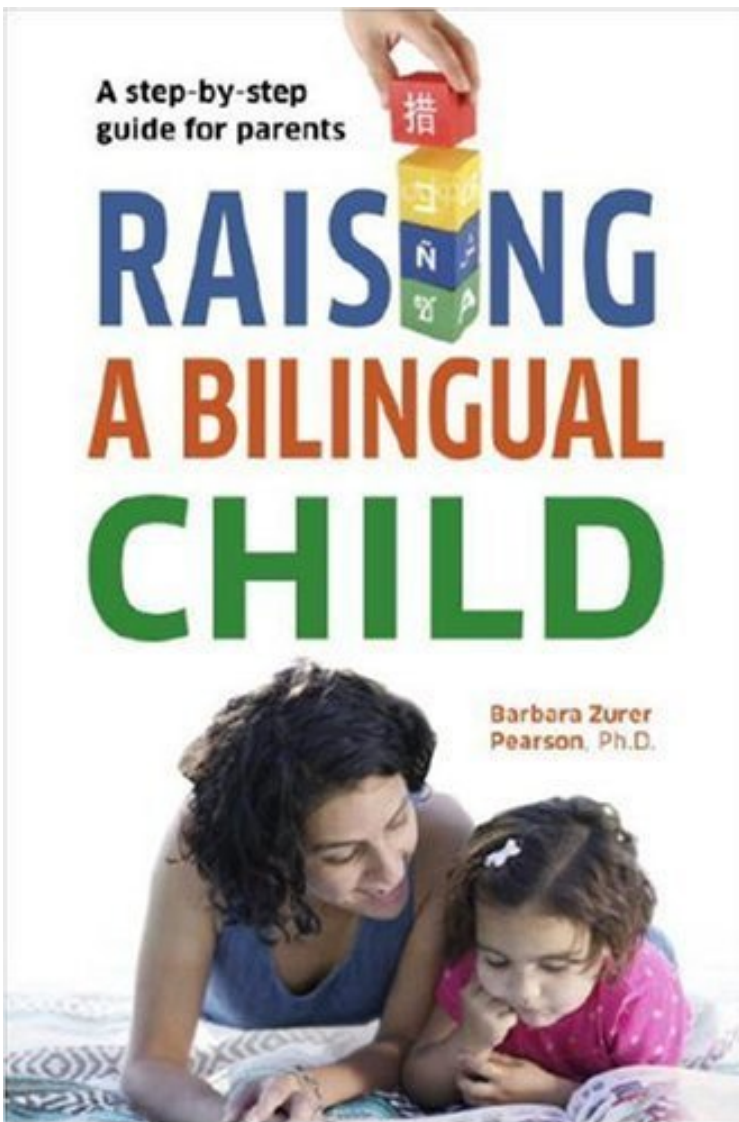


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# Raising a Bilingual Child



*Par Barbara Zurer Pearson  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIf you would like your children to experience the benefits of becoming bilingual, but you arent sure how to teach them a second language, then Raising a Bilingual Child is the perfect step-by-step guide for you.Raising a Bilingual Child provides parents with information, encouragement, and practical advice for creating a positive bilingual environment. It offers both an overview of why parents should raise their children to speak more than one language and detailed steps parents can take to integrate two languages into their childs daily routine. Raising a Bilingual Child also includes inspirational first-hand accounts from parents. It dispels the myth that bilingualism may hinder a childs academic performance and explains that learning languages at a young age can actually enhance a childs overall intellectual development.From the Trade Paperback edition.ExtraitCHAPTER 4 Establishing a Bilingual Environment

In chapter 2, I discussed the issues involved in language development in general. Everything you learned for learning one language holds just as true for learning two or more languages. You see that, as parents, you do not teach children language, but you create better or worse environments in which your children's language develops. In this chapter, we explore special strategies for creating enriching environments within your household so that your child can learn a second (or third) language. The key to raising bilingual children is for parents (or less often, the school) to establish the minority language. The language of the broader community—the language of school, commerce, government, and the mass media—is a given. In every culture, all healthy children learn the majority language, even when their parents do not. But families must make a special effort to grow both a majority language and another one. The minority language may be a heritage language that parents or grandparents have brought from another country, or it could be another language chosen by the parents for any of a variety of reasons. For example, it might be a second official language that children are expected to learn, as in Canada, Switzerland, or Hong Kong. Sometimes speakers of a country's majority language opt to educate their children in a language that they believe will have strategic importance later in the child's life, such as Spanish in the United States. Or it could be that the individual seeks to communicate in another modality, as with a spoken and a signed language. For any given person being raised in a bilingual situation, we cannot know whether she will become actively bilingual or not. But we can be aware of trends. We can compare groups who are bilingual to others who seem to have the potential for bilingualism, but did not pursue it or did not achieve it. With my colleagues in the University of Miami Bilingualism Study Group, I explored the practices and ideas bilingual groups have in common. From these studies, I pinpoint the key ingredients in their experiences for fostering the second language. At the end of this chapter, I explore ways to take advantage of this knowledge in your families. Then, in chapter 5, you will hear from parents who have used these principles, and together we will evaluate how their strategies worked for them and how they might work for you. I emphasize ways to strengthen the minority language because that is the more difficult case. However, the same principles are effective for a child who is learning a new community language, such as an expatriate or a recent immigrant. Parents wishing to encourage or reinforce the use of the community, or majority, language can also employ these strategies. As you read this chapter, I'd like you to consider where your child will hear and use her languages and what other resources are available to give the child's languages a broader context than just your nuclear family. The Foundation for a Bilingual Family If you do not buy a lottery ticket, you will not win. Similarly, if you do not maintain a bilingual environment, you will not have bilingual children. Luckily, the odds of children becoming bilingual are not like the odds of winning a lottery. If two languages loom large in your life, chances are they will be part of your child's life as well. But if you, the parents, are not actively using two languages daily, then bilingual upbringing must be a conscious construction on your part. Having access to meaningful interactions in two language environments gives you the ticket to play. The stage is set for your family to become bilingual. But then you must actively seize the opportunity. You must want to make it happen, and you must believe that your actions can have an impact on whether it will happen. Beliefs and Attitudes Annick de Houwer, a psycholinguist in Belgium, suggests that these two beliefs on the part of the parents are the best predictors of whether children will learn two languages: Parents must have a positive attitude toward bilingualism and an impact belief—a belief that their own language practices have an impact on the child's practices. It is crucial for you, as parents, to have an awareness of how your own language practices affect your child's learning, and you must use your knowledge of your role to insure the quality and quantity of your child's language exposure. These two beliefs usually go together, but either one can be absent. You probably know a parent with an impact belief but without a positive attitude toward bilingualism. For example, someone who has been speaking a minority language with his child and witnessing that she learns it has an impact belief. He sees that his language behavior shapes his child's language behavior. But suppose that the child's teacher convinces this parent that his child's intellectual growth will be hampered if he continues to raise her with two languages. Now he no longer has a positive attitude toward bilingualism. He has replaced it with a negative one, and the child, who had been on her way to becoming bilingual, loses the second language (amazingly quickly, it turns out). The opposite situation is also all too common. One example comes from an intensive study of the Taiap people of Papua, New Guinea. In interviews with researcher Don Kulik, almost all the parents expressed satisfaction with their own bilingualism and a desire that their children also become bilingual in the local Taiap language and Tok Pisin, one of the important languages of the wider society. However, they were not aware of how their own language use affected their children's language learning. They thought that it would happen outside the home

and that what they spoke to the child made no difference. We do not have to travel to New Guinea to find people with similar ideas. Many parents I heard from were like the Taiap speakers. As Mark and Cindy, an international couple living in Paris, said, We just thought if we were in the countries where the other languages were spoken, it would happen on its own. But despite the fact that they spent long periods of time in France and Italy, their children heard primarily English addressed to them, and so far, at ages four and one, they have learned primarily English. The parents did not see what role they needed to play in order to capitalize on the opportunity that their living abroad presented to them. So, neither belief is sufficient by itself. If parents lack one belief or the other, the environment they provide for their children will likely lead to weak or nonexistent learning of one of the languages. With both a positive attitude toward bilingualism and an impact belief that their own language use shapes their child's language use, parents will be motivated to take the practical steps that foster both first- and second-language learning. Practical Considerations In police lingo, parents must establish motive and opportunity for the minority language. They need to find ways to give children enough reasons for them to want to use the minority language and opportunities for enough exposure to it for them to be able to learn it. Where will the input, the interactions that provide the raw material for children to learn the minority language, come from? Who will speak it with them, and in what situations? Parents must specifically consider where speakers are found who can use the other language. If you, yourselves, are to be major sources of the second language, it may be useful for you to record your interactions for a week or keep a diary that will give you an idea of what your language practices are actually like. You also need to take the child's perspective, not your own, on the value of the second language. You cannot assume that your own desire to use the language will translate automatically into the same desire in your child. Although it is usual for children to adopt parents' attitudes and for them to want to please their parents, the use of the language must have value in the child's world, from the child's point of view. How will you make the language attractive and indispensable for your child, so that, with time, mastering it will evolve into the child's own goal? The Odds That a Child Will Become Bilingual Some small studies from these last decades have indicated that not every family that embarks on bilingual upbringing ends up with children who can use their two languages comfortably. Until very recently, we did not have any evidence from large-scale studies about bilingual success rates in large, unselected populations. Early accounts of child bilinguals were often case studies of linguists' children (for example, Leopold, Vihman, and Deuchar) children whose parents were knowledgeable about language and cared deeply enough about it to make it their life's work. I am not suggesting that all children of linguists will become bilingual and all others will not, but there may be more attention to language in the households of linguists than in the average home. Thus, they would not serve as a model for most families. More importantly, if a linguist's child did not become bilingual, the parent did not write about it, so we do not know how many books about incomplete bilingual learning never got written. A relatively large survey of bilingual outcomes is reported by Suzanne Barron-Hauwaert, a parent and member of the editorial board of the Bilingual Family Newsletter. She surveyed more than one hundred families, readers of the Newsletter. Revue de presse A timely and well-written book! [It] helps parents prepare their children for the future.--J. Kevin Nugent, Ph.D., Director, The Brazelton Institute, Children's Hospital Boston and Harvard University; Professor, Child and Family Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst This book is sure to become a classic! Parents should appreciate this important book. Pearson inspire[s] all of us to celebrate the richness of linguistic diversity in our lives.--Kenji Hakuta, Ph.D., Lee L. Jacks Professor of Education, Stanford University, Author of *Mirror of Language: The Debate on Bilingualism* This is a book that inspires confidence that the choice of bilingualism is a good one for parents, for children, and for our society.--Donna Christian, Ph.D., President, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington D.C. Pearson has used her keen insights about the issues that parents are concerned about to paint an in-depth and interesting-to-read handbook.--Fred Genesee, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, McGill University, Co-author of *Dual Language Instruction: A Handbook for Enriched Education* Barbara Pearson's [book] is a wonderfully written, sparkling composite of research results, personal narratives, practical advice, and wise enthusiasm for the project of bilingualism [ ].--Thomas Roeser, Ph.D., Professor of Linguistics, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Author of *The Prism of Grammar* I thoroughly agree with the authors' insights and recommendations which are both research-based and flexible and comprehensive enough to accommodate different family situations.--Lourdes C. Rovira, Ed.D., Associate Superintendent, Curriculum and Instructional Support, Miami-Dade County Public Schools I enjoyed reading *Raising a Bilingual Child* and found it informative and accessible.--Chris

Rosenberg, Principal, Starr King Elementary School, San Francisco