

CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS FOR CHILDREN IN THEIR EARLY YEARS

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The following is excerpted from the above article:

Total Physical Response is a strategy for learning second languages developed by James J. Asher. It is based on the way children learn their native language, that is, by acquiring listening comprehension before speaking, reading, and writing skills. It also includes the premise that learning a second language should be a natural experience with emphasis on communicative competence and realistic utterances. It perceives language globally, with attention to detail emphasized later in the learning process. Finally, it emphasizes use of the brain's right hemisphere, for implicit learning.

It is proposed that language acquisition improves if beginning students are allowed to experience three stages of acquisition: comprehension (preproduction), early speech production, and speech emergence. Each stage requires a different kind of activity building on the previous stage's development.

Studies have shown that teaching any second language to children at an early age greatly improves their chances of achieving fluency and a native-like accent very fast. The benefit of having a different lens from which to view and experience the world is a wonderful gift for a child. In fact, all of the scientific evidence points to children having nothing to lose and everything to gain by learning a foreign language. This is why it is important to fully support early immersion programs into a foreign idiom, which are the most effective ways for learning a foreign language. Field trips may also not seem like advanced educational strategy, but they work a lot like the educational tools and strategies of what is known as multi-sensory learning. Multi-sensory learning takes advantage of the way our senses - hearing, sight, and touch, primarily - reinforce one another while learning. Each sense builds toward a more complete experience of a concept or idea. Because it offers more than one way of experiencing something, it is ideal for children who naturally engage multiple senses in both learning and play. It is also ideal for the creation of the type of immersive environment that is so crucial for learning a second language.

Learning a language is an extraordinary accomplishment for anybody. Yet everyone completes this process and does so successfully at least once in their life with their native language at least. Linguists call the learning process "doubtless the greatest intellectual feat any one of us is ever required to perform." Yet this achievement is often taken completely for granted for non-linguists to whom the magnitude of this accomplishment only becomes apparent when they can step back and think of everything that goes into the first few teaching steps necessary toward language development and input; let alone the acquisition of a second, third or fourth language that can be typical of children from migrant backgrounds.

Knowing another language expands the mind and opens doors to future opportunity. Language is at the very center of human communication and interaction. It is the bridge that connects us or the gap that may divide us. Language acquisition shapes a child's perception of the world and lays the foundation for much of what follows in life: identity, friendship, work and travel. Whether there is still hope to better enable a child to form friendships worldwide or to open the door for a more fully appreciate world literature and arts, the most important benefit of learning a second language may simply be the different perspective and cross-cultural awareness that comes with it.

It is reassuring for parents to know that linguistic experts all agree that there is no reason to delay the introduction of a second language and that the benefits of a second language grow with practice and fluency. Nancy Rhodes, Director of Foreign Language Education at the leading US organization for language research, Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C., adds, "The more children learn about a foreign language the more they understand their own language."

When a child reveals and deciphers even just a few words, it is a moment to be very proud! A great reason to celebrate his or her small successes and it may be the only motivation required for some children to open up to the world of knowledge: Foreign Languages teach and introduce people, traditions, lifestyles, food, clothing, landscapes, scents and increases children's interest in traveling.

It awakes curiosity about others and develops empathy. Language teaching helps children connect with new things, open their minds and show respect for other cultures. It nurtures their appreciation for cultural diversity and therefore develops a better character. It shows them how to relate and understand the world around them. Verbal communication can make them learn about each other and become very early, citizens of the world. In conclusion it demonstrates that we all share the same world; we all have hopes and dreams and therefore can come together as one!

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