

Language acquisition: do toddlers do it better?

Are toddlers smarter than us? Why many struggle learning a second language but could acquire their first language with so little effort?

All of us can speak a language. Most of us can even speak two or three languages. However, while we have managed to learn our first language with seemingly no effort, learning a second language was not so easy, was it? And despite years and years of practice we probably still feel we would like to speak it better. Why is that? Are we just born with the first language pre-programmed? Or are babies some sort of geniuses that later on lose their fantastic language learning abilities? If so, can we do anything to get some inspiration from babies on how to learn languages more efficiently later on in life? Or are we doomed to learn languages worse and worse as we are getting older? I will draw on current research findings to try and address some of the myths about language learning. I will also ask you to reflect on your own language learning experience so that together we could start thinking about the complexities of language and about what an intricate skill to be able to speak a language is.