

## Simplified Speech #078 – Raising a bilingual child

### Episode description

How many languages are spoken in your household? In this Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Jeremy talk about raising a child to be bilingual and some useful tips to use when going about it. Whether you already have a child of your own who you hope to raise bilingual or you hope to raise a bilingual child in the future, this episode is a must for you!

Anyone interested in browsing the YouTube channel mentioned in this podcast can go to Hyunwoo Sun's page found at <https://www.youtube.com/user/ever4one>.

### Fun fact

Over half of the world is fluent in at least two languages. Learning a new language is known to have many benefits, such as enhanced creativity, musicality, and focus, along with the added bonus of preventing dementia later in life. So get out there and keep learning!

### Expressions included in the study guide

- To tackle
- To talk up a storm
- We shall see
- [Something] soup
- To rub off on [someone]
- Chore



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## Transcript

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Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

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Andrew: You're listening to the Culips English Podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, [Culips.com](http://Culips.com), [C-U-L-I-P-S.com](http://C-U-L-I-P-S.com).

Hello, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Jeremy: And I'm Jeremy.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hey there, everyone. Welcome back to Culips. Today we have a Simplified Speech episode for you, which is our series where we have completely natural English conversations, but we speak just a little bit slower than we do in our everyday lives. The topic for today's episode is how to raise a child as multilingual, and this was actually a really good suggestion from one of our listeners in South Korea named Eun Ju. And I am not a father, I don't have any children, but Jeremy does. Jeremy does have a little 2-year-old son, so I thought he would be the perfect person to come on and **tackle** this topic with me. So I'm here with Jeremy today.

Jeremy, how's it going?

Jeremy: Going pretty well.

Andrew: Jeremy, your son is now 2 years old? Is that correct?

Jeremy: Yeah, he just turned 2 about a month before the time of this recording.

Andrew: So I imagine he is **talking up a storm** these days. Is that true?

Jeremy: Yes, he is quite talkative for someone his age. And before I had kids, I didn't really understand the difference between a 2-year-old and a 3-year-old and a 4-year-old, but he speaks a lot more and quite a bit better than some older kids that we've seen at the playground or in public. So he's speaking quite well.

Andrew: That's good. You must be very proud.

Jeremy: I'm a little proud of him in that regard.

Andrew: As a language teacher, right?

Jeremy: Exactly, as a language teacher. I've been doing this for almost 10 years now. So actually teaching a 2-year-old how to say something is much easier than teaching a 42-year-old how to say something. He's much more receptive and he has a much better ear for pronunciation and for sounds than most adults do when they learn a new language.

Andrew: You are raising your son to be multilingual, and that is exactly what we're going to talk about here today, and I think you'll have a lot of interesting things to share with our listeners.

But just before we dive into the topic, I do wanna remind all of our listeners that there's a study guide for this episode available on our website, Culips.com. So if you'd like to study along with the study guide, and we suggest that you do, just visit our website, Culips.com, to check that out.

OK, Jeremy, I'm going to fire a lot of questions at you today, because I have no kids, I'm not an expert about this at all. So question number one is what languages are you teaching your son?

Jeremy: Well, currently we are teaching him English and Korean. So he is half Korean, my wife is Korean, and so he spends time with Korean family members and he also spends time with English-speaking family members. So we have chosen to raise him bilingually. But I also speak Spanish and I would like to introduce Spanish a little bit later in his life, after English and Korean have solidified.

Andrew: OK, so hopefully trilingual in the future.

Jeremy: **We shall see**, but yes.

Andrew: So, because I am a language teacher, I am of course interested in how children acquire language and I'm also interested in how parents raise multilingual children. And there's lots of different strategies and it seems like multilingual families, they all kind of have a different approach, right? Some people only choose to speak one language at home and then out in the real world, they speak, kind of, the language of that culture, that community, where they live in. Other families take an approach where one parent speaks one language and the other parent speaks a different language. What's your approach, what do you and your wife do, with your son?

Jeremy: Well, before he was born, actually, I started reading about these things and how different parents do it. But even before he was born, my wife and I, we use both Korean and English in our house. So we mix them very freely. And, for us, they're kind of like one big language. So when I started thinking about, you know, oh, how are we going to teach our son these languages, I felt like the most natural thing for us to do would be just to mix them with him, as well.

Jeremy: Now, a lot of the articles and things that I read about this topic said that that can confuse children or that it can delay their speaking, so sometimes they'll start speaking when they're older, 3 or 4 or even later sometimes. But I sort of had a different approach. So my initial approach was to teach him that Korean is *halmeoni*. *Halmeoni* is the word in Korean for grandma. So we call the Korean grandparents *halmeoni* and *halabeoji*.

Andrew: Grandma and grandpa.

Jeremy: So we use that word for those parents, because with them he uses Korean. And with my parents, they are grandma and grandpa in English. So my strategy is over time to teach him that you say this word to grandma and you said this word to *halmeoni*. So when we teach him a new word, usually a concrete noun, so an object, a ball, cup, things like this, we teach him both words for that object at the same time as one word.

Andrew: Do you think he's distinguishing between the two languages at this point? Does he realize that Korean is a unique language and English is a unique language, or does he just kind of think it's **one big language soup**?

Jeremy: That's a very good question. I think it is kind of **one big language soup** for him, but I have noticed him translate in certain situations from Korean to English. So the Korean word for flower is *kkot*, and he was with my mom, with grandma, and he pointed to a flower and said *kkot*, grandma, *kkot*, and she looked at him strangely and then he said flower after that.

Andrew: OK.

Jeremy: He's done this, like, two or three times with other words, so we're just now seeing that he's sort of able to distinguish between the two. But today I asked him something in Korean, a simple question, and he just stared at me. And then I asked him the same question in English and he answered right away. So his sentence structure is still sort of [more] developed in English than it is in Korean for him.

Andrew: OK, that's really interesting. I was curious about that whether he would try to speak Korean with non-Korean people or if he just had limited it to Koreans, so that's really interesting that he tried to speak it with your mother.

Jeremy: We went to Mexico recently—and you and I made an episode about that—and while we were there, he learned some of the commonly used phrases, *gracias*, *adios*, words like this, and *hola*, we taught him *hola* a long time ago, which is the word for hello. And a couple of times, I've noticed him say that to people who look Mexican.

Andrew: OK.

Jeremy: There was a handy man who came to our apartment to fix something and he was Mexican, I heard him speaking Spanish, and my son saw him and looked at him and said *hola*. And we started laughing because we thought how could this 2-year-old know. So I do think that he is able to distinguish the difference a little bit, but I plan to keep emphasizing to him this one is Korean, this one is English. And then these days we are asking him things like, "What is the other word for *bihaenggi*?" And he says, "Airplane, airplane!" And we say, "What's the other word for airplane?" And he says, "*Bihaenggi*." So that's what we're doing now to help him make pairs, connections between the equivalent words.

Andrew: What about the media that he is exposed to? So if he's watching TV, I don't know if you let him watch TV or movies.

Jeremy: We don't have TV.

Andrew: Or if you read him books?

Jeremy: We do read him books, yeah, we read him books in Korean and English, different, you know, English books and Korean books. And he learns a lot from these books. There's one book right now, the title is a full sentence in Korean, and when he wants to read that book he says *keoteun dwie nuga isseoyo* (there's someone behind the curtain) because that's the name of the book. So he is learning a lot from picture books right now.

Andrew: So I think many of our listeners want their children to grow up speaking English, but the issue that they have is that they are English learners themselves. So they're trying to teach their kids languages that they don't speak natively. And essentially you're doing this as well, right? You're teaching your son Korean, but you're not a Korean native speaker. You are a second-language Korean speaker. So is there any strategy or any tips that you could give our listeners who wanna raise their kids to speak English even though they're not native speakers themselves, and even though they're not in an English-speaking country?

Jeremy: I would say the easiest way is to sing songs together that are in that language, and especially if they're common songs that have a translation. So like Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, there is a Korean version and an English version, and he knows both of them and sings along to both of them. So songs are a very fun way to expose the children to new bits of language. Also, of course, storybooks. Storybooks are very, very valuable, because they have pictures that show you the context.

So a message to our listeners, if you have a child and you want to expose your child to English, I think there are three things that you could do to help them get used to English.

Andrew: OK.

Jeremy: The first is to sing songs in English with them that you also sing in your native language, because songs are fun regardless of the lyrics, right?

Andrew: Absolutely.

Jeremy: So they catch their attention, exactly.

The other would be to read books in English to your child. And this is also a good exercise for you. If you are learning English, reading the same storybook 12 times will really benefit your language learning, as well.

Andrew: I'm going to interject here and ask you another question. Would you suggest that parents read the books themselves, or should they listen to audiobooks together and hear native pronunciation? What's your thoughts on that?

Jeremy: Personally, my pronunciation in Korean is quite good from what I've heard, so I don't worry about that myself. But I do try extra hard to pronounce things properly when I read the Korean books. I also listen to my wife and copy what she says sometimes. But there are plenty of YouTube channels and YouTube videos where there are people reading storybooks to children for you, and this could also be a good exercise if your child likes that book and likes the story. But I think most children just want to do something with mommy or daddy. They want to spend time with mommy and daddy. And so reading it to them, I think, is a good option. It benefits everyone, and that leads to my third recommendation.

Andrew: OK.

Jeremy: Which is to let your child know that you are studying English, or let your child see that you are learning English. As children get older, I've heard that they learn more from what you do than from what you say. So they will copy your behaviour, but they might not listen to what you tell them to do.

Andrew: Right.

Jeremy: So if they see you learning English and curious about English and watching movies in English or speaking English with other English speakers, then they will likely copy you and develop an interest in English, as well.

Andrew: From a lot of stories that I've heard, being a positive role model plays a huge part, right? So how are you going to convince your children to do something if you're not into it?

Jeremy: Exactly.

Andrew: If you're not being a good role model and being open to learning English and being interested in learning English, I think your kids are going to pick up on that and they'll probably model your behaviours. So I think that's a really good point, Jeremy, that you should create a good environment where English is respected in the household, it's not seen as a **chore**, you know? It's something that you're passionate about. Your passion will probably **rub off on your kids** in some way or another. And it may not look like that at first, but ...

Jeremy: Yeah. Like, currently my son isn't using Korean to communicate very often. He communicates by putting words together, but sometimes he mixes both languages. But he mostly uses English sentence order. So now I've noticed that he has a weakness in Korean and I'm trying to focus on using Korean with him to help develop that language for him. But I think overall the most important thing is that your child has to want to use English or need to use English. So maybe you could play a game with them where they can only speak English. If they speak your native language during that game, then mommy pretends that she can't understand, right?

Andrew: Right, right.

Jeremy: Creating situations in which the children need the language will encourage them to learn it on their own. And children are natural learners. So if they want to learn, then they will learn.

Andrew: Jeremy, I'm sure you're familiar with this guy, his name is Hyunwoo Sun.

Jeremy: Oh, of course.

Andrew: He's a very famous Korean language teacher, but he's got a very fascinating YouTube channel where he is raising his kids to be English speakers in Korea. So I'm sorry for all of the listeners out there that, you know, don't have a connection to Korea. Maybe we're sort of heavily focused on Korean and English today, but I think this is applicable to any language. So he is not a native English speaker. He actually learned how to speak English while living in Korea.

He has two sons who he is raising to be bilingual, and I think his children are a bit older than your son, they're maybe 4 and 8, or something like that if I had to guess. And he has documented pretty extensively their language-learning journey so far. And it's really, really interesting to watch how he raises his children to be English speakers in the foreign-language environment of South Korea.



Andrew: So any parents out there that want to learn more about this topic, I would recommend checking out his channel. We'll be sure to put the link to his YouTube channel in the podcast notes for this episode so that, if you're interested in learning more about this topic and checking out his videos, you can do that easily.

Jeremy: I think that everyone has to find a method that works for them. My personal situation is different from most peoples'. My wife is a native Korean speaker and I am a native English speaker, so we can raise our children bilingually because we are both bilingual. But sometimes that isn't possible, so we all have to do the best we can with what we have. So I just think the most important thing to remember is to make sure your children like English or want to speak English. They have to see it as valuable, and if they do then they will learn it. But everything I've ever seen tells me that forcing them to learn English does not work.

Andrew: Forcing them does not work. And, Jeremy, I know we're going on a little long here, but I have one final question for you.

Jeremy: OK.

Andrew: And that's because I've heard something that is really negative that you can do is be embarrassed to speak your target language in public in front of your children. So, for example, if you are out at the grocery store in front of a lot of other Americans and you were speaking Korean to your child, but you are kind of embarrassed to do this or ashamed, this could have a negative impact on the language development because you are communicating to your child that this is something to be ashamed about. How do you feel when you are in public, in front of other Americans speaking Korean?

Jeremy: Yeah, I know what you mean. Personally, it doesn't bother me because I know people will look at us strangely or think, "What, where are they from?"

Andrew: Right.

Jeremy: But, at least where I live in California, this is a very diverse area. And so I see it as a positive thing, that I am raising my son to be more worldly, to be a more multicultural person. And so I personally don't feel very embarrassed about that. However, I have read articles about Americans telling parents not to speak another language to their child. Some old lady walks over to the mom and says, "Don't speak Spanish to your child, it'll just confuse her."

Andrew: Right.

Jeremy: And that would make me very angry if someone told me that.



Andrew: Well, Jeremy, thanks for sharing some of your insights here. As we mentioned, your son's only 2, so maybe we can come back to this topic next year. Each year that he ages, there'll be a different stage and different challenges in his language development, and it would be cool to hear some updates from you. So maybe a year from now we can revisit this topic and see how it's going.

Jeremy: Sure, let's do it.

Andrew: Thank you for listening, everyone. Once again, our website is Culips.com. You can get the study guide for this episode there and also listen to our other English lessons that we have created. There are over 500 of them available to listen to on Culips.com.

And thank you again to Eun Ju for the suggestion for this episode. It was a really great topic suggestion. And, guys, if you have any other topics that you would like to hear us talk about in the future, just send us an email. Our email address is [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com).

That's it for us, we will be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

Jeremy: Bye, everyone.

## Detailed Explanations

### To tackle Verb

**To tackle** is to focus one's attention on a task or problem and to try to deal with it as best as possible. The word **tackle** is used in sports; it's the act of grabbing someone and bringing them forcefully to the ground, either to stop the offensive player from advancing, like in American football, or to gain an upper hand in the ring, like in wrestling. Therefore, the term **to tackle** gives the impression of working very hard and passionately to complete a task or solve a problem.

Here are a couple more examples with **to tackle**:

Mom: Frankie, did you finish your homework?

Frankie: No, it's too hard. I can't do it.

Mom: Well, how about I sit down and we **tackle** this together? When we finish we can go to the park and play for a bit.

Frankie: Yay! I'll go find my pencil.

Rhonda: What's up, Tonya? You look a little blue. Is something bothering you?

Tonya: Yeah. I'm having marriage troubles. We've been having marriage troubles for a while, actually.

Rhonda: Really? Why didn't you talk to me about it sooner?

Tonya: Well, you just got back from your honeymoon. I didn't want to burst the newlywed bubble you've got goin' on. We've started seeing a counsellor, but so far it's not really helping.

Rhonda: Well, marriage problems aren't something you can **tackle** in a day. It takes time and commitment from the both of you. I hope it works out. Let me know if you need anything. I'm always available to talk.

Tonya: Thanks, girl. I appreciate it.

## To talk up a storm

### Idiom

**To talk up a storm** is to talk a lot and with enthusiasm. Similar expressions can be used to express doing something with enthusiasm, such as **dancing up a storm** or **writing up a storm**. Imagine doing something so much and so fervently that your actions literally cause a storm to brew in the sky; that is what this idiom represents.

Here are a couple more examples with **to talk up a storm**:

Christy: How'd your first date go?

Gina: Oh my goodness, it was so good! We just have so much in common. We went to a restaurant and **talked up such a storm** we didn't realize the restaurant was closing. They had to kick us out!

Christy: Gina, that's amazing! So did you guys already set up a second date?

Gina: Yup. He asked if I wanna go ice skating this Friday after work. You know I suck at ice skating, but it'll be fun.

Christy: Of course it will! It's an excuse to get close to him and get him to hold your hand so you don't fall on the ice.

Derek: What's your favourite movie?

Lucy: I love *Footloose*.

Derek: That's a bit old school. How come?

Lucy: I just love the story: teenage rebellion, romance, everyone **dancing up a storm** and making change in conservative town. It's got so many great elements.

Derek: I've never actually seen it.

Lucy: What? Well, we have to remedy that. You. Me. My house. Friday night.

Derek: Ha! OK, OK. I'll be there with the popcorn.

## We shall see

### Phrase

**We shall see**, also spoken as **we'll see**, is a phrase that people use when they don't know what the future will hold: they must simply wait and find out. For example, if a child asks what Santa will bring him for Christmas, parents will often say **we'll see** or **wait and see**.

Similarly, **we shall see** is used when people want to postpone making a decision or giving an answer for a question. For example, if a child asks her mom if they can go to the park after school, the mom might reply with the phrase **we shall see**. She does this because she is not quite certain what their schedule will be like after school and whether there will be enough time to go to the park.

Here are a couple more examples with **we shall see**:

Johnny: Mom, can we go to Funland this weekend?

Mom: **We shall see.**

Johnny: So yes?

Mom: I said **we shall see**.

Johnny: That means no, right?

Mom: **We shall see** means **we shall see**. It depends on whether your father has to work or not.

Johnny: Oh, then we definitely won't go. He always works.

Tyler: How do you think you did on the test?

Roger: I think I did pretty well, but I'm not sure about that last math section. That was pretty brutal.

Tyler: Right? I was so confident until I reached that part. Do you think we got good enough scores?

Roger: **We shall see**, man. **We shall see**.

## [Something] soup

Noun

Soup, as we know, is a liquid dish made up of a variety of ingredients such as meats, vegetables, or starches. However, several things mixed together could be called a **[something] soup**. For example, in this episode, Andrew referred to toddlers who speak multiple languages interchangeably in the same sentence as making a **big language soup**. The toddlers say what they know in any order or language all mixed together like a giant soup; therefore, their speech could be called a **language soup**.

Here's one more example with **[something] soup**:

Vicky: What on earth are you listening too? It sounds like a dying cat lying outside a jazz hall while a Jamaican man sings a Justin Bieber song at the top of his lungs.

Frances: Whoa, you really embraced my vision. Maybe I should put that scene in my music video.

Vicky: You mean you made this monstrosity?

Frances: It's not a monstrosity. It's a work of genius. I call it **musical soup**. I took a bunch of different music styles—metal, reggae, pop, jazz, and rock—and rolled it into one cohesive song.

Vicky: I wouldn't exactly call it cohesive ...

Frances: You just don't fully understand my genius.

## To rub off on [someone]

Phrasal verb

If a quality or characteristic of a person starts affecting and changing the characteristics or behaviours of those around them, then that person is said to be **rubbing off on other people**. For example, if a boy finds a movie really funny and his laughter makes those around him laugh, then one could say the boy's happiness is **rubbing off on them**.

Likewise, in this episode, Andrew says that if parents enjoy learning English and they show that passion to their children, then a love of English might **rub off on their kids**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to rub off on [someone]**:

Cara: Where have you been recently? It's like my best friend has just disappeared.

Ashleigh: Sorry. I've just been hanging out with Michael a lot.

Cara: Ugh. You two are beyond disgusting. Your love makes me want to puke.

Ashleigh: He has a cute friend. You want me to introduce you guys?

Cara: No way. I don't want your stupid lovey-dovey attitude **to rub off on me**.

Jeremiah: What are you going to major in at college?

Niko: I'm gonna study architecture.

Jeremiah: Like your dad?

Niko: Yup. I guess his love of architecture just kind of **rubbed off on me**.

Jeremiah: That's cool. He could probably introduce you to some pretty interesting contacts when you graduate, too.

Niko: Yeah. It makes life easier following in your father's footsteps.

Jeremiah: I wish I liked what my Dad did. I would rather die than be an accountant, though, even if the pay is good.

## **Chore** Noun

A **chore** is a routine task usually related to housework or household activities, such as doing the laundry or washing the dishes. However, anything that is unpleasant but necessary can be considered a **chore**, such as doing taxes or editing your resume.

In this episode, Andrew and Jeremy recommend making language learning fun for your child rather than making it feel like just another **chore** they have to complete.

Here are a couple more examples with **chore**:

Fernando: Your hair's getting long. I think it's time you get it cut.

Raquel: Ugh. Getting my hair cut is such a **chore**. I should just shave it all off this time.

Fernando: I don't mind. It would make you look edgy.

Raquel: Yeah, and I wouldn't have to style it every morning or worry about what products to buy.

Fernando: So you're gonna do it?

Raquel: No, definitely not.

JiMin: Mom, can I go play at Jake's house?

Mom: Did you finish your **chores**?

JiMin: Yup!

Mom: You cleaned your room?

JiMin: Yup!

Mom: You took out the trash?

JiMin: Yes, ma'am!

Mom: OK, go ahead. But be back by dinner!



## Quiz

**1. What is something that would be difficult to tackle in a day?**

- a) painting the spare bedroom
- b) editing a college essay
- c) solving global warming
- d) writing an article

**2. Which is not an example of a chore?**

- a) doing the dishes
- b) going to the park
- c) doing one's taxes
- d) going grocery shopping

**3. To talk up a \_\_\_\_\_ means to talk a lot and with enthusiasm.**

- a) frenzy
- b) whirlwind
- c) storm
- d) tree

**4. Which sentence is NOT grammatically correct?**

- a) his charm rubbed off on me
- b) their passion rubbed off on me
- c) her happiness rubbed off on them
- d) his dirt rubbed off on pants

**5. Which does NOT have a similar meaning to the expression we shall see?**

- a) watch out
- b) maybe
- c) we'll see
- d) time will tell

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Do you speak multiple languages in your household? Do you have any additional tips for teaching a language to one's children?
2. If your offspring could learn another language, which would you like them to learn?
3. Were you an early talker? Did you begin speaking very quickly in life, or were you a bit of a late bloomer?
4. What language do you wish you learned as a baby or toddler? Why?
5. What is something that you plan to tackle by the end of this week?

## Quiz Answers

1.c    2.b    3.c    4.d    5.a

### Episode credits

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