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This thesis is about bilingualism, in particular language learning in bilingual and multilingual children. And the research questions are: How can be possible that children raised in bilingual or multilingual families can speak and understand more languages since they are very little? How do parents have to behave in order to successfully raise their bilingual children?

Bilingualism is the ability to speak and understand two different languages. Authentic bilingual speakers have a native accent in both languages. Bilingualism is the simplest form of multilingualism (or plurilingualism), as opposed to the monolingualism (the ability of speaking only one language).

Bilingual people usually consider their bilingualism as a very interesting source of richness. But their parents have to deal with lots of uncertainties once they decide to begin with a bilingual education. For instance: can the simultaneous learning of two or three languages compromise the development of their child?

The attempt of this thesis was to explain this fascinating and mysterious world on the basis of scientific data and discoveries (scientific studies, academic papers, and many online witnesses), but also thanks to personal witnesses of bilingual and trilingual people, who were part of the experimental part of this work. The first one is a three year-old boy. He is trilingual, his father is from Morocco, his mother is from Italy and where both born and raised in Germany, where they have been living all their life. He can perfectly understand and speak the three languages of his family: Italian, German and Arabic. The other multilingual people who were part of the project are: half Italian and half Spanish, half American and half Italian, and half Italian and half Maltese born and raised in Germany.

In the first chapter, the issue of bilingualism was addressed, with a special focus on children. In the second chapter, the theme was further delved by concentrating, for instance, on the different methods for parents to talk with their child, as well as the ‘problem’ of

mixing the languages spoken within the family. Furthermore, an antithesis is introduced which is confuted at the end of the work: bilingualism is difficult to obtain if not impossible. The ‘main character’ of such antithesis is one of the people involved in the study: half Italian and half American. He was born in Italy but then moved back and forth to the USA with his family during his childhood. This discontinuity, especially at school, caused him some learning problems that have almost completely disappeared by the time.

The third and last chapter is based on the histories and personal experiences of the four people involved in this study. The detailed description of their learning acquisition processes they underwent in order to become multilingual bilingual or even trilingual demonstrates how feasible it is to successfully raise multilingual children. Of course, this success depends on the education and teaching method chosen and carried out by the parents. The path is very difficult and there are lots of discordant opinions. Someone could affirm that there is more probability of failure rather than success. Actually, when parents carefully and efficiently carry out a bilingual or multilingual education, success is not that far to reach.

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