45 Key Questions Every Parent Raising a Bilingual Child Should Ask

By Adam Beck, Founder of Bilingual Monkeys and The Bilingual Zoo

Note: These questions are from the Reader's Guide to the book ***Maximize Your Child's Bilingual Ability*** and are connected to the "Perspectives" and "Principles" found in this book.

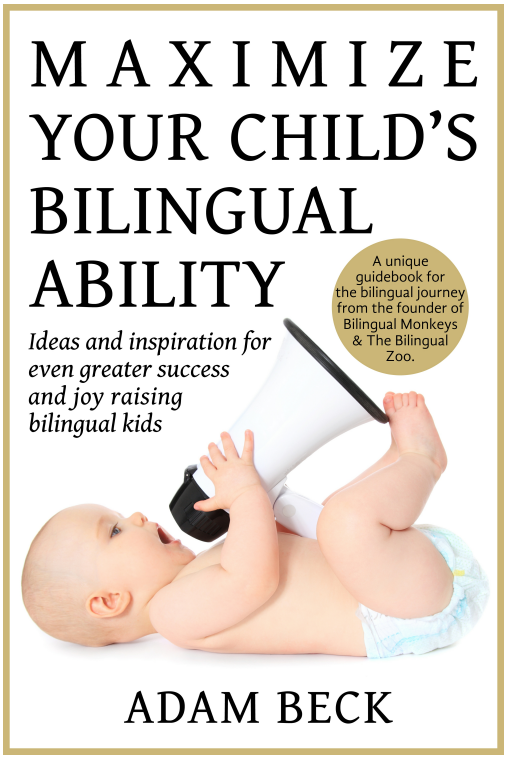
Reader's Guide

The Reader's Guide offers a range of key questions, tied to the content of this book, for consideration by individuals and groups. Not all questions will apply to every reader. A number of them could be important to you now; some might be more appropriate in the future, when your child is older; and others won't be as relevant to your situation. My hope, though, is that this guide will help you reflect more deeply on your bilingual journey in order to grow even more effective in your efforts and realize even greater success over the years ahead.

1. What are the benefits, to your mind, in raising a bilingual child? For the child? For you? For your family, near and far? For others? For the world? (Perspective 2 and Perspective 30)
2. How strongly do you believe that your actions each day—even your small actions—make an important difference to the larger success of your bilingual quest? (Perspective 3)
3. Which of your current circumstances are favorable for your success? Which circumstances are less favorable? How will you address these less favorable conditions to raise the odds of success? (Perspective 5)
4. How do you stay mindful of your bilingual aim? Does this include writing about your experience in some form? (Perspective 7)
5. In what ways are you proactive in your efforts? Could you be more proactive in some way? (Perspective 8)
6. What are the key habits and routines that form the foundation of your daily efforts? How disciplined are you about maintaining these habits and routines? What sort of short-term projects do you pursue, or could pursue? (Perspective 10)
7. Are you taking conscious advantage of the "cracks" in your day to increase your support for the minority language? (Perspective 11)
8. What challenges could potentially arise in the future? Can you avoid or reduce such challenges through "preventive medicine," by foreseeing the difficulty and taking preventive action beforehand? (Perspective 13)
9. How do you view the frustrations you face, and how do you handle them? (Perspective 13)
10. How serious are you about achieving your bilingual goal? And how playful are you in the way you pursue this aim each day? Describe the balance you hold between the two. (Perspective 15)
11. How fully do you engage in interactions with your children, including the times they "interrupt"? (Perspective 18)
12. Choose a current challenge and think very creatively and resourcefully about possible ways to address it. Brainstorm on paper. (Perspective 19)
13. On a scale of 1 to 10, how hard are you really trying each day? Are you satisfied with the level of your effort? If not, what more could you do? (Perspective 20)

14. What are your expectations for your children's attitude and effort? Are you firm about maintaining these expectations? (Perspective 21)
15. Are you consistent about your actions, while also staying flexible to meet the natural evolution of your circumstances? (Perspective 23)
16. What is your view of "failure" when it comes to raising a bilingual child? (Perspective 24)
17. Do you ever feel alone on your bilingual journey? How do you cope with this feeling? (Perspective 25)
18. Are you keeping a journal on your kids to capture their young lives for posterity? How often do you make entries? (Perspective 26)
19. Describe your archive for preserving your children's written work. (Perspective 27)
20. Do you regularly feel appreciation for the many positive aspects of your journey and your life? (Perspective 29)
21. How would you rate your bilingual aim as a priority in your life? Is it as high a priority as it should be to realize the height of this goal? (Principle 1)
22. In what ways do you try to inform yourself on the subject of raising bilingual children? Do you think these efforts are sufficient? What more could you do? (Principle 2)
23. The two "core conditions" for fostering active language ability are exposure and need. How many hours of meaningful exposure is your child receiving in the minority language each week? Does this amount of exposure seem adequate? If not, how can you increase the hours of regular language exposure? (Principle 4)
24. Does your child feel a real need to actively use the minority language with you and with others? If not, what can you do to strengthen this feeling of need? (Principle 5)
25. What is your family's strategy for the use of your languages? Is this the best approach for your family at this time? Why? (Principle 6)
26. Are your daily actions in proportion to the size of your challenges and the scale of your aim? (Principle 7)
27. In what ways are you trying to encourage your children's active use of the minority language? (Principle 8)
28. Describe the state of your resources in the minority language. What resources do you have? How active are you when it comes to bringing new resources into your home? Do you consciously seek out resources that can connect to your children's current passions and interests, like "home run books"? (Principle 9, Principle 10, and Principle 11)
29. Are you mindfully making productive choices that will empower, not undercut, the growth of the minority language? (Principle 12)
30. What does your circle of support look like, from your spouse and other family members to school and the wider community? Have you experienced any difficulties, like a lack of support for your bilingual aim? How did you deal with these contrary reactions? What more can you do to strengthen the support around you? (Principle 13)
31. Do you make a conscious effort to talk a lot to your children, day after day, to provide them with ample input in the minority language? (Principle 14)
32. Are you reading aloud in the minority language, for at least 15 minutes every day? If not, how can you establish and sustain this vital routine? (Principle 15)
33. What does your home library look like? About how many "real books" do you own (both children's books and books for adults)? How many of these are children's books in the minority language? How can you build a larger home library of minority language books? (Principle 16)

34. In what other ways are you making efforts to create a home environment that's rich in sources of print in the minority language? (Principle 17)
35. How are you making use of "captive reading" to promote literacy development and overall language ability? (Principle 18)
36. Describe the various ways you use stories and storytelling to nurture language development and interest in the minority language. (Principle 19)
37. How often do your children hear music in the minority language? Are you getting new music on a regular basis, to match their growing maturity and interests? (Principle 20)
38. What kinds of games do you play with your children? How could you take even greater advantage of games to fuel progress and make the minority language fun? (Principle 21)
39. Are you mindfully making use of the many images around you to engage your children in the minority language? How? (Principle 22)
40. Are you using "passive media"—like TV, DVDs, and online video—as supplemental input to more interactive exposure? And are you actively emphasizing such media in the minority language, while consciously limiting this exposure in the majority language? (Principle 23)
41. Do you have a daily homework routine? Is it effective and sustainable, with a steady stream of suitable resources? (Principle 24)
42. Do your children go to school in the majority language? Are you clearly aware of the impact this can have on their bilingual development? (Principle 25)
43. In what ways do you promote ties, in the minority language, with distant grandparents and other loved ones? Is there more that you can do? (Principle 26)
44. How are you nurturing your child's sense of value in the minority language, and a positive attitude toward bilingual ability? (Principle 27)
45. How are you able to sustain your daily persistence and long-term perseverance? In what ways do you rest and recharge your energy, mentally and physically? (Principle 30)



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