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This child care centre teaches Chinese to the children, with surprising benefits

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At this child care centre in Sydney's north, children as young as three are learning to speak Chinese from a native speaker.

We spoke with Lizzy, an Early Childhood Teacher from [Little Giants Killara](#), who is facilitating Chinese lessons for the children in her care.

Once a week, the children spend time with Lizzy learning about Chinese

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really look forward to. 'The children who already speak Chinese really enjoy having their friends and peers learn more about their language also,' she explains.

Why did you choose to teach a foreign language at your centre?

'I have always believed that learning a language is a great way to learn about culture,' explains Lizzy. 'It builds children's cultural competence and supports children's awareness of cultural diversity.'

It also creates a sense of belonging for both myself and children who speak Chinese to share and greet each other in their home language, really building and fostering a sense of connection.'

What made your centre choose to teach Chinese specifically?

'Our centre is located in an area where many families come from a Chinese background,' says Lizzy.

'Of course, being a native speaker allows me to be more confident in teaching the language, which is something I'm fairly new to - but am

excited to be a part of.'

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‘Currently, we are providing Chinese lessons to children aged 3-5, but we are planning to include toddlers aged 2-3 in the coming months,’ says Lizzy.

How are the lessons facilitated?

‘The lesson is facilitated through a group session where children engage in songs, stories and puppetry,’ explains Lizzy.

‘We also use the [language-learning program ELLA](#). The collaborative nature of this interactive digital resource allows children to connect and engage in the content instantly in a play-based and multisensory learning environment.

We also incorporate Chinese learning in our everyday curriculum such as including Chinese flashcards in the art and loose part areas, and play interactions.’

‘Children who can speak more than one language often demonstrate an increased executive brain function’

What benefits are there of learning a foreign language?

‘Learning a foreign language not only supports the cultural competencies of

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‘Children who can speak more than one language often demonstrate an increased executive brain function. They often have a faster reaction rate, improved problem-solving skills, concentration, memory and ability to multitask.

Further, the ability to communicate in more than one language promotes communication and social skills, which further supports the child’s confidence and social wellbeing.’

What do the parents think?

‘Our parents fully support and appreciate the learning opportunities offered to their children,’ says Lizzy.

‘I once had a parent come up to share the story of how her daughter was trying to teach her how to say “Ni Hao Ma?” (How are you?) and correcting her when she got it wrong.’

Why do you think young children are receptive to learning a new language?

‘A young child’s mind is designed to absorb information,’ shares Lizzy.

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to learn a second language as an adult.'

Do you think that the option to learn foreign languages is a good thing for parents to look out for when choosing a centre?

'There are many factors parents should consider when [selecting a centre](#) for their children,' says Lizzy.

'Offering a foreign language, especially from a teacher who is part of the staff team, demonstrates the openness and willingness to be inclusive of all cultures including sharing of their own.'

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