

# Learning with Lango: Program teaches second languages to young children

By Bruce Gallaudet | Enterprise staff writer | July 29, 2009 08:52



Children jump and play under a parachute during an early language development class at Mojo Flow Studio as teacher Yadira Zapata teaches them such Spanish words as 'up,' 'down,' 'inside' and 'outside.' Wayne Tilcock/Enterprise photo

Kids are pretty darn smart, especially when it comes to learning languages.

And to take advantage of a window of opportunity that some researchers say closes as early as the third grade, Helen Hadani is bringing Lango classes to Davis next month.

Designed to use music, art, games, movement and stories to immerse children ages 1 to 8 in new languages, Lango was established with the belief that 'every child should learn a second language,' according to Hadani, a developmental psychologist who lectures in human development at UC Davis.

Hadani experienced first-hand the benefits of being in a multilingual environment. Her late mother was Cantonese from Argentina

and her father is from Myanmar.

'It was actually a tri-lingual household,' Hadani laughs. 'My parents, although they both spoke Chinese, spoke different dialects and couldn't communicate in that language.'

Her mom spoke Spanish and English, too. Fortunately, her dad (Hla Shwe of Davis) also spoke English, and that became their common language.

Hadani's benefit was growing up in the language-rich family. She learned Mandarin, Spanish and her native English - in exactly the same way her Lango classes will help youngsters jump-start language.

'This is more a verbal skills experience,' Hadani believes. 'There's no focus on writing in Mandarin. For Spanish there will be writing and reading. The key is understanding the language.'

Flash cards, CDs, project books and a group of friendly Lango dolls all aid in the participants' experience.

Through Lango, Hadani says, kids will be well prepared to hone their written and reading skills when the languages are formally offered in the public schools.

'The goal is to expose our kids as early as possible - providing a good foundation for later learning,' Hadani continues.

When classes begin locally, Hadani's team of instructors will offer the Chinese Mandarin dialect and Spanish. On the horizon is French. Other languages will follow, based on demand, Hadani adds.

'Classes begin Aug. 24 to coincide with the start of the (public) school year,' Hadani explains. 'We'll have several demonstration classes before that - to give parents a chance to see if the program is for them and their kids.'

To be conducted in the Mojo Flow Studio at Second and C streets, demonstration classes are as follows:

n Monday, Aug. 10: Tot Mandarin (11-11:30 a.m.); preschool Mandarin (2:30-3 p.m.); elementary Mandarin (3:30-4 p.m.); and

n Wednesday, Aug. 12: Tot Spanish (11:-11:30 p.m.); preschool Spanish (2:30-3 p.m.); elementary Mandarin (3:30-4 p.m.).

The Lango program is in its third year and has been conducted coast to coast in 15 states. Five Bay Area cities feature Lango classes and Hadani's offering is the first in the Sacramento Valley.

'The studies show that after age 11, there is difficulty in achieving fluency in learning languages,' Hadani continues. 'You seem to be working against nature at a later age.'

Lango has the feel of a day care. The atmosphere to the kids is one of playtime. Lango almost tricks the children into learning.

Classes will be plugged into Russell Park and LaRue preschools and Lango will be worked into local elementary schools at Willett, Birch Lane and Korematsu, Hadani says. The Davis Kids Klub, which provides after-school and summer education and recreation, is also in the cards for Lango participation.

Sessions run eight weeks, once or twice weekly. Classes last 45 minutes.

Normal tuition is \$119, but Hadani says there is an introductory 10 percent discount for the August classes. Parents also get a break of 10 percent for a second child enrolled (25 percent off the third member of the same family).

Notes: Helen Hadani can be reached at [Helen@langodavis.com](mailto:Helen@langodavis.com) or by calling (530) 220-0453. -Visit <http://www.Langokids.com> for additional program information.

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Lango classes in Davis

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