

Early Childhood Educator

Name: **Orielen Lopez-Ayon**
Profession: **Early Childhood Educator**
Number of years in this line of work: **5**
Native Language: **Spanish**
Other Language(s): **Italian**

1) What languages do you know? How did you learn them? (At home, At school, etc.)

I learned English at school in my native country. I was able to read and write, but conversations were mostly up to the intermediate level with a slight concentration on communication. I had a director who was a native speaker of English and wanted to practice her Spanish with me and I would speak in English with her. From that point on, all the practice that was "dormant" started to flourish. I learned Italian at home because my mom was like somebody to practice with. She taught me songs and gave me books to read. Now I don't speak that much anymore. In my family, my sister and cousins speak more than 3 languages from the fact that we were exposed to different languages during our childhood years.

2) What is your profession?

I am an Early Childhood Education Teacher

3) Describe a "typical" day as an Early Childhood Educator. How do you manage to

I work in a bilingual environment. My director speaks only English and some of the staff members. I serve as a translator between my director and the staff members. A typical day finds me speaking the first language of some of the families we work with, too. If my director needs me to do something, I encourage the staff members to practice their English.

4) What do you enjoy about it?

It is very difficult to translate when the English and Spanish speakers are from different countries. It is too, the confusions are very funny and interesting. My director is from Nigeria she does not know some of the words and idiomatic expressions of "American English". The same goes for the Cubans. When I have to translate from HER English to THEIR Spanish it is difficult to do so.

5) What language do you think in?

English mostly, except when I am mad, worried or nervous. I dream in Spanish.

6) What do you think helped you the most in mastering the foreign/second language?

The full immersion process I went through.

7) What opportunities have knowing another language provided in your life? (Work, travel, etc.) otherwise?

The opportunity to finish a Master's degree from a US university and also to work in a bilingual environment.

8) If you had the time to learn another language now, what language would you choose?

I'd learn French. I would like to visit Paris.

9) How do you think your life would have turned out if you had never learned a second language?

Very, very boring. I would not have had the opportunity to meet so many people from different cultures.

10) In your opinion, are there more career opportunities for people who speak multiple languages?

Of course, if I were an employer I would rather have 5 bilingual (or more) employees than 5 monolingual employees.

11) What do you think you would be doing if you weren't an Early Childhood Educator?

A pianist or a librarian. I love music and books

12) What advice would you give to somebody who wants to be an Early Childhood Educator? Which specific languages they should learn?

You need to LOVE working with children. You should learn as many as you can because it helps with child development.