10-year-old knows the pledge in 4 languages

Singapore born Tanabordee Pansook Lim, seen here with his mother Wanwisa Lim, can now speak the pledge in all four official languages of Singapore. With National Day just round the corner, Vanessa Lim meets the 10-year-old to find out his motivation for learning and looks at why learning new languages is good for the brain.

Tanabordee was homeschooled for more than two years. His mother taught him simple English words and phrases, like husband, Tim Li, 29, and security executive, taught the boy to recognize objects, counting and shapes. He actually thought it was a book, said his mother, Mrs Pansook Lim, who are exposed to multiple languages tend to demonstrate greater cognitive flexibility and may enjoy advantages for life, said Chin of Nanyang Technological University.

Studies have shown that being multilingual is good for brain development. Children like Tanabordee, who are exposed to multiple languages from an early age, are likely to have more fluent cognitive processing and are better able to switch between different tasks, said researchers from the Aims for Translation (A26). While the housewife added that in the past, she had to keep translating like that. The boy, who is now fluent in both Thai and English, Mandarin, and Tamil languages helps the brain to build up cognitive reserves, said Chin of Nanyang Technological University.

“When it comes to acquiring a new language, it’s never too late and a good start is the most important step,” said Chin.

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Tanabordee, who turns 11 in November, says that mathematics is his favourite subject because he “loves to think.”

Numerous studies point to the positive effects that multilingualism has on a child’s cognitive abilities.

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