

The big idea

Cate Hamilton on making a career out of promoting languages: from Babel Babies to the Language Revolution

Q *How did Babel Babies begin?*

A I'm a French and English teacher and when I had my first baby 10 years ago, I started a multilingual singing group for families with young children. The Babel Babies approach is musical and multisensory. It was my little language revolution.

Q *What is your languages background?*

A I studied English and modern languages at Oxford, worked in events management and marketing, and then realised I wanted to teach.

Q *You've just taken Babel Babies online...*

A Yes, it's a platform with three levels of subscription providing an introduction to linguists for the under-10s. The 40-week course looks at 10 languages, including Italian, Arabic and French. The focus is on teaching how to learn languages and supporting parents through the process.

Q *What inspired the Language Revolution podcast and accompanying blog?*

A In schools students are reluctant to study languages but with Babel Babies I could see that young children are really good at learning languages, and their parents regret not taking languages more seriously at school. There was a case for educating the adults as well as the children. So the Language Revolution is my attempt to get people talking about languages, and raising awareness about how we learn them, in a free accessible forum.

Q *How did you learn how to do a podcast?*

A I knew a bit about making films and there's a YouTube video for everything nowadays. I



booked recording studios and edited with Garage Band. The biggest learning curve has been how to be a presenter – David Crystal was very helpful with that. In lockdown I had to work out how to do it online; I asked other podcasters for advice and most use Zoom.

Q *How did you learn business skills?*

A I've done several short courses. There's a brilliant network of women business owners in Cheltenham, so I went to every learning event.

Q *Who do you work with?*

A I have an accountant and a payroll team. I'm doing a Master's so a freelancer is taking over the social media and marketing. I've got a web designer and copywriter for the Babel Babies website. We also have Multilingualism Ambassadors, who are supporters and ensure our information is fact-checked and verified. I did the Language Revolution website myself, and worked with a brand development expert on the branding across the two platforms to

BRAND NEW: *A child engages with Babel Babies materials; and (inset) Cate Hamilton*

bring them together. For the *Multilingualism is Normal* anthology I worked with 60 contributors. Thomas Bak and I have been using the multilingualisnormal hashtag for a while as an awareness-raising campaign.

Q *Why did you opt to be a limited company?*

A There are benefits in terms of protecting your personal assets. Babel Babies used to have 10 employees; when you have a payroll it's much simpler to have a limited company.

Q *What are your plans for the future?*

A I want to offer training to teachers in multilingualism and language acquisition. I hope to fund the pilot project through a PhD, but I need to complete my MSc first. I'm also researching songs as an intervention for learning languages.

babelbabies.com | thelanguagerevolution.co.uk