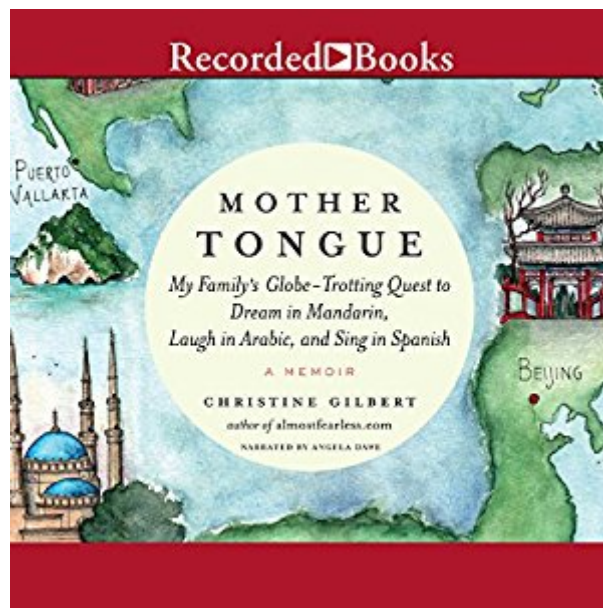


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# Mother Tongue: My Family's Globe-Trotting Quest To Dream In Mandarin, Laugh In Arabic, And Sing In Spanish



## Synopsis

One woman's quest to learn Mandarin in Beijing, Arabic in Beirut, and Spanish in Mexico, with her young family along for the ride. Imagine negotiating for a replacement carburetor in rural Mexico with words you're secretly pulling from a pocket dictionary. Imagine your two-year-old asking for more niunai at dinner - a Mandarin word for milk that even you don't know yet. Imagine finding out that you're unexpectedly pregnant while living in war-torn Beirut. With vivid and evocative language, Christine Gilbert takes us along with her into foreign lands, showing us what it's like to make a life in an unfamiliar world - and in an unfamiliar tongue. Gilbert was a young mother when she boldly uprooted her family to move around the world, studying Mandarin in China, Arabic in Lebanon, and Spanish in Mexico, with her toddler son and all-American husband along for the ride. Their story takes us from Beijing to Beirut, from Cyprus to Chiang Mai - and also explores recent breakthroughs in bilingual brain mapping and the controversial debates happening in linguistics right now. Gilbert's adventures abroad prove just how much language influences culture (and vice versa), and lead her to results she never expected. *Mother Tongue* is a fascinating and uplifting story about taking big risks for bigger rewards and trying to find meaning and happiness through tireless pursuit - no matter what hurdles may arise. It's a treat for language enthusiasts and armchair travelers alike.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The most interesting nonfiction book I've read in quite some time, this book deftly melds personal narrative and the fascinating subject of bilingualism. I stayed up way too late reading this

extraordinary book because I couldn't put it down and hope the sequel is in the works. It's a story of education, hope, and extraordinary courage. I'm so blessed to have been touched by the words and even though I've missed the critical window with my own child, I'm intrigued by how early bilingualism in school might be helpful for her in later life. The research was excellent and I can't wait to tell everyone I know about this new subject and incredible author!

As I read Christine Gilbert's fascinating story, I kept thinking of Ben Franklin's advice to either write something worth reading or do something worth writing. Gilbert has done both and I feel richer for her sharing her family's experience. Embarking on a project of this magnitude was simply impressive in and of itself. However, Gilbert's storytelling skills and powers of observation and insight are what make this worth reading. Although I'm monolingual, I was fascinated by the research on the rewards of learning a second or third language. There's no doubt in my mind that *Mother Tongue* will inspire others to expand their own vocabularies with new languages and cultural connections.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Travel books can be dry in my experience but I was happy to find out that this was not one of them. The family travels to China, Beirut, and Mexico to try and learn the languages. The honesty of emotions and dedication the author gave to trying to learn the languages is amazing. I am glad I gave this book a chance and would recommend it.

Christine Gilbert and her husband decided to take their toddler to China, Lebanon, Mexico, and Spain to expose him to different languages and cultures while he was young enough to become fluent. It's a bit of a pipe dream, but it makes for a pretty good story. Both parents were freelancers (writing, film making) so they could work from anywhere there's an internet connection. Beijing was challenging, but pollution was what finally drove them to their next destination. Beirut was more to their liking, but daily car bombs and anti-American sentiment encouraged them to try elsewhere. Mexico was perfect and after Arabic and Mandarin, Spanish seemed like a breeze. They even had another child while they were there! Christine Gilbert is a genial tour guide and she uses her documentary film background to research language learning and multilingualism. She read many books on the topic and interviewed some of the experts in the field and it's quite illuminating.

I finally finished this morsel of a book. I've been savoring it bit by bit like a chocolate Easter bunny for the last month since it was released. Christine Gilbert hits it out of the park with this masterpiece.

Her words can be artful on one page and read like a reference book on another. There's tragedy, heartbreak and joy, but isn't that what life is all about? This book is a love story for everyone. If you love to travel, have children, are fascinated with cultures and subcultures of the world or are just trying to figure out the best way to learn your target language, then this book is for you. It's about a millennial couple wanting the absolute best for their children because at the end of the day, don't they come first? With the World Wide Web bringing the planet closer together in the new century, its powerful prose captures the soul of young and old alike. The Gilbert's are providing their small children with a priceless gift, giving them a broader perspective of the world first-hand by traveling to a few places not for the timid or fearful of heart. Gilbert had me laughing out loud and openly sobbing during a cross country flight. Their story is sobering and inspiring. You will get caught up in Gilbert's humble struggles to decrease the effects and onset of dementia later in life by exercising and opening their minds with the proven methods of multilingualism. All I can say is, don't dive into this book with any expectations or assumptions. Just let it unfold and wash over you as Gilbert takes you on her journey with her family. Even though the story wraps up with a book-end finish, it leaves you wanting more. Whether there is a sequel or not, you can catch up with this family's adventure through Gilbert's blog at [almostfearless.com](http://almostfearless.com) or find them on Facebook at Almost Fearless.

As a rule, I avoid reading travelogs, preferring instead to experience my travels unfiltered by another's view. But this story hooks you in immediately and doesn't let you go! A thoroughly enjoyable read--both entertaining and educational. The author has more drive and determination in her travels than I could ever muster! I would recommend this book to travelers, mothers and expats alike!

This is not only a great book for an armchair traveler, it's also full of information about language acquisition and brain development, and encouragement that real-world people can do out-of-the-norm things to craft the life and family culture they want--no matter where they wind up. I appreciated the author's honesty and commitment to her family even when it meant shifting plans. Although our jobs wouldn't allow us the same degree of location freedom Gilbert and her husband enjoy, reading *Mother Tongue* gave me ideas for ways to reconsider how I approach language learning and cultural perspectives for myself and my children.

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