



At *Expolit 2004*, the annual Spanish Christian publishing event held in Miami, LeFever autographed copies of the translation of *Creative Teaching Methods* while Paola Barona translated her dedications into Spanish.

I salute those who do translation work. You are amazing—and more of you are needed to multiply the reach of Christian authors. by Marlene LeFever

Growing The Next Generation's Translators

I have the greatest respect for translators. They take difficult concepts in one language, run them through their cultural grid, and find just the right words to make what was provincial, world-accessible.

When my book *Creative Teaching Methods* was translated into Spanish, I had a bilingual teacher tell me, "I always assumed that teaching the Bible to adults had to be boring, but now my students are having fun finding out what God wants them to learn. We leave class smiling." The Spanish translator doubled the potential of my ministry.

Learning Styles has been translated into Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, Korean, Portuguese, and Spanish. This book investigates the ways people learn and process information. I cannot imagine being fluent enough to make the technical concepts in this book understandable across languages. I do not have language skills beyond English, a few words in Japanese, a sad smattering of high school French, and a few Latin verbs.

I suspect our young generations, however, will fare much better if parents and educators use what scientists now know about language development. Babies are truly born citizens of the world. From birth to six months of age, babies can discriminate between every one of the speech sounds used in the world's 7,000+ languages. Then, as their abilities in their own language deepen, they lose the ability to hear sounds that are not indigenous to them.

From birth to three years of age, a child's brain begins developing language skills. This continues until the child is around 10. Most children speak their first words when they are nine to 12 months old, but they understand much earlier. God knew children would need to understand first. The more words a child hears by age two, the larger her vocabulary will be. A child who develops good communication skills at a young age will usually be more socially adept, often for life.

By the time a child is 20 months old, he or she can learn words at the astonishing rate of 50 per week and hold this pace until age 10. From ages three to 10, children are capable of learning a vocabulary of 50,000 to 100,000 words.

Before age 10, a child can easily learn to speak a second language without an accent. Others can learn a second lan-

guage too, of course, but for them it is harder. Adults will speak with an accent. When I was teaching at a missionary school in Japan, I observed how easy it was for small children to learn Japanese while their parents struggled in language school. When the adults needed to be understood, they took their children along to do the talking. The children seemed to automatically know who spoke English and who spoke Japanese, even if they had never met the people before.

I'm jealous! I wish I had started to learn another language at five instead of waiting until I was 14.

I predict we will need many more translators in the future. Young people worldwide are having similar cultural experiences through movies, television, music, and technology. Communication across language and cultural boundaries is a necessity. English-speaking young people want to know what Brazilian Christians are thinking. Youth in India will be producing manuals that will benefit Christians in Bulgaria.

If we make use of brain research and start early language training for children, we just may grow a generation that can take an Indonesian Christian theologian's thoughts and disseminate them around the world. To grow translators:

- Befriend people from different language groups.
- Practice speaking along with foreign-language tapes.
- Play word games with children. Celebrate "big" words. Read books that expand their vocabularies.
- Use foreign words when your own language doesn't have a word for what you want to express. For example, the Japanese word *karoshi* reminds me to keep even ministry work in its proper place. It means "Death by work!"
- Spend time ministering in another culture, perhaps a summer or even a school term. Take your children along.

Yes, a new generation of translators is coming. Celebrate! God has given us the task of communicating His message. Let's multiply the next generation's potential to reach across boundaries. v