



Speak Your Language 2: When English Comes Second

Caregivers will learn:

- Why it is important to support a child's home language
- Common patterns in children learning multiple languages
- Bilingual children learn differently than mono-lingual children, but this difference does not mean a delay

Key Messages

1. Children's brains are wired to learn languages more easily compared to adults. If English is not used at home, a child can still learn it well later, if their first language is strong.
 - The stronger a child's social and language skills are by the time they enter school, the better they can learn English.
 - Brains can easily "transfer" information from the first language to a second or more, especially in vocabulary and reading. Learning letters, numbers, words songs, and stories in one language can make it easier to learn the same information in a second language later on.
2. It is normal for a multiple-language learner to show a slight lag in each language they are learning, and it is important to consider all languages in total.
 - It is important to understand a child's skill in all languages. Often the family's help is needed to determine this.
 - For instance, a toddler may know around 250 words in their home language, but only 50 words in English. If only English is counted, the child may appear delayed. But when all languages are counted, we see they are typical.
 - Is it typical when a child who is still learning English to have a "silent period" where they may not speak as much as we are used to. The duration is different for every child and depends on their personality, the situation, and other factors. If you think this period is lasting too long, talk to your child's teachers or health providers.
3. If home and school languages are different, the more "bridging" of experiences in both languages, the stronger both languages will be.
 - There is no one right way to educate dual language learners. However, when a child shows strong communication skills with their most important people (their family!), the child is most likely to thrive.

For more information

Speak Your Language! OneAmerica's Home Language Campaign

<https://www.weareoneamerica.org/speak-your-language>

Foundation for Child Development: Challenging Common Myths about Dual Language Learners

<http://fcd-us.org/resources/prek-3rd-challenging-common-myths-about-dual-language-learners-update-seminal-2008-report>

Frank Porter Graham Center for Early Care & Education Research: Dual Language Learners

<http://cecerdll.fpg.unc.edu/>

Dual Language Learners: Zero to Three Years Old

http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/Dual_Language_Learners.pdf

Resources & Handouts on Kaleidoscope Play & Learn Lesson Guide CD

Speak Your Language!
(25 Languages)

Note: You'll find these handouts in the folder for the Lesson Guide "Speak Your Language 1: Supporting Home

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When children have school experiences that connect back to their home language, they can learn new concepts easier. The more school-home connections, the stronger the child’s learning will be. Teachers need families’ input. <p>4. “Switching” languages is a sign of mastery, not confusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research cannot pinpoint exactly when bilingual children understand that words can be from different languages. • But they use the “right” language to the “right” people typically around age 2 years. This shows the importance of social cues and social interactions. But do not ‘test’ them –kids do not learn when they feel like talking is a test. • Switching between two languages in one sentence is a sign of mastery, not confusion. For instance, “<i>Yo quiero milkshakes.</i>” Or “<i>I like fresas.</i>” <p>5. Uneven patterns can be normal for bilingual children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary is not usually the same in both languages. Consider the situations for each language. • For instance, a child may know the word for “elevator” only in their home language because they live in an apartment building. They may know the word “blocks” in English from the Kaleidoscope Play & Learn group, but may never have seen blocks at home. • They may understand your home language, but only respond in English. This is not unusual, and they are still learning the home language. It is part of their identity development. You can talk to your child about this if they are interested, and ask them what it feels like for them. <p>6. If there are any concerns about the child’s communication in any language, consult a speech-language pathologist or your doctor. Any delays should be addressed as early as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is still ok to use the home (or multiple) languages with children who have delays. This will not worsen the delay. • If a child seems to struggle with communicating in their ‘strongest’ language, or in both languages, this may be an indication that there is a delay. Ask your child’s doctor or a language specialist. • A child’s play and their language are mirrors of each other. When we see play skills expanding, be on the lookout for language skills to expand too. When progress stops, or if interactions seem difficult in any language, ask about it. <p>7. Knowing multiple languages is good for your child.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilingualism boosts children’s flexible thinking and problem solving skills. • Bilingual people are in high demand in many careers. 	<p>Language”</p> <p>Cultural Considerations</p> <p>There is a wide variety in how families view being multi-lingual or multi-cultural. Some may want their children to ‘assimilate’ to the surrounding culture, but may not want them to completely disregard the family heritage culture.</p> <p>Some may want English to ‘take over’ the home language, while others may prefer the family use the home language when they are together.</p> <p>Be aware of these differences and acknowledge families’ values, while supporting their understanding of the key messages.</p> <p>Other Tips</p> <p>The language learning activities suggested in this Lesson Guide can be used with children of any age. The activities not only help children learn their family’s language, it also supports their relationships with family members.</p> <p>Even as babies, we pay close attention our parents’ moods and feelings – these are the basics of communication.</p> <p>From birth, the infant brain is most sensitive to the emotional cues from adults (such as facial expressions, tone of voice, body rhythms</p>
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- Skills can easily transfer from the first language to a second, especially in vocabulary and reading. Learning letters, numbers, words songs, and stories in one language can make it easier to learn the same information in a second language later on.

Coordinated Group Activity

Story Time

1. Share the Key Messages with caregivers and explain to all that you'll be reading a book together that will help us remember that your child's heritage and home language are important parts of their best learning, and by sharing your culture, you are sharing love.
2. Choose from one of the books below, or bring another book of your choice to delight with your children about their heritage cultures and family places of origin:
 - *Whoever You Are*, by Mem Fox
 - *Somewhere in the World Right Now*, by Stacey Schuett
 - *To Be A Kid*, by Maya Ajmera
3. Discuss:
 - Share with caregivers a time when you thought that your unique experiences, background, skills, or knowledge gave you an advantage, even though you may have been seen as different by some.
 - Invite others in the group to share if anything similar has ever happened to them based on their language, culture, or background.

Family Story Telling

Share the Key Messages and explain you'll be telling a story from your own childhood or family. Explain that children love to hear about when their own family members were their age. Even if they are still babies, they can detect the emotion in your voice and can follow along your words.

Tell your story. Or make arrangements a couple of weeks in advance to have a caregiver tell a story. Use rich language, body language, funny or interesting voices, and movements that will keep the children interested.

After the story, invite caregivers to tell their story to their child sometime this next week. Use these questions to help caregivers recall a story they can tell their children:

- What is the earliest happy memory of your childhood?
- What was your favorite thing to do when you were a child?
Do you think your own children would like that too?

and touch), long before they learn sounds or words. These cues are deep within our culture.

This earliest emotional understanding and connection is the base for learning to communicate in any language. When adults put words to those experiences, children more easily grow their language skills.

School-Readiness Connection

Children who come to school knowing many words and concepts in their home language are more likely to be faster and stronger at learning additional languages. This is because they can build on an existing foundation.

Without that base, they must work 'double' hard to build both the concepts AND a new language – which is much harder.

- What is one thing that you did as a child that you look forward to doing with your own child?

Child-Directed Play Activity

Play & Talk Together

Set out multiple play areas as you usually do, selecting activities that the children love and that encourage open-ended play.

Invite the caregivers to interact with the children as they play in ways that supports children's language learning. Encourage the caregivers to talk with their child in the language the caregiver feels most comfortable using. Suggest that caregivers ask questions and narrate some of the play using lots of action words and descriptions. Going back and forth between two languages is okay if that feels natural to the caregiver.

When you (facilitator) observe rich language happening, point it out and encourage more of it, and perhaps to pause to see what the child might do to imitate or join in. If they mix languages, that's ok.

After 10-15 minutes, the group might like to check-in. Ask caregivers to share:

- For children that are talking, do caregivers notice them switching between languages if they use or hear more than one language? If so, what type of words do the children switch?
- If you have 2 or more languages spoken by families attending your group, ask caregivers to talk about if they've noticed that their child seems to understand or is using some words from one of these languages that isn't their own.

Caregiver Relationship-Building

Pose a topic or question for the day related to having the family's home language as important in the child's life. Invite caregivers to talk about it during the child-directed play time. Some prompts you could use:

- What do you like and not like about having multiple languages in your family?
- What do you imagine it could be like for your child to know multiple languages as they grow up? Are there advantages?
- Are there any words, expressions or concepts that exist in your home language that you think don't exist in English? Have these come up yet with your children?

Caregiver Leadership

Prior to the group, ask caregivers to bring in a symbol or small item that represents a positive part of their own childhood that they want to pass forward. This could be a word, an object, a photo, or just a memory. Ask caregivers to use the language that they knew when they were a child, to tell their child about the symbol.

Home Activity

Invite caregivers to tell a story to their children using their home language sometime during the next week

Check in for the Following Week

Ask caregivers to talk about their experiences telling stories with their children. What might the children have learned from hearing their caregivers' stories? If they could talk, what might they ask or wonder about after hearing these stories?