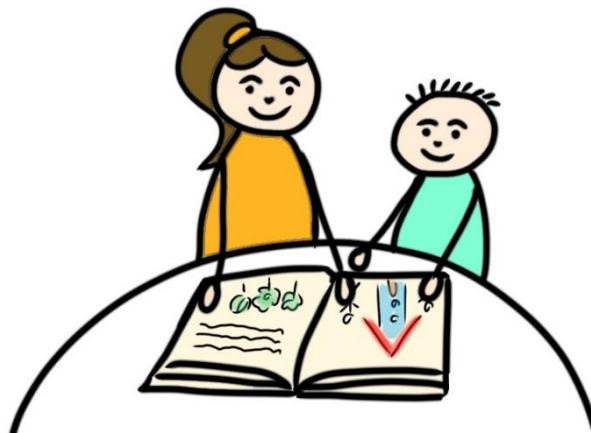


Letter to the parents

Bi- and multilingualism

“How does my child learn two or more languages?”

Information and advice on language support



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A6 - Bildung und Gesellschaft
Referat Kinderbildung und -betreuung
Pädagogische Qualitätsentwicklung
Frühe Sprachförderung

Dear parents, dear legal guardians,

spoken language is a precious gift in our society. As he or she develops, your child makes contact with many different languages and cultures. In this process, it is important to use diversity in a positive way in order to set an optimum foundation for future development. As the first language of your child (*language of the heart*), the language spoken in your family is of particular importance. It is used to authentically transmit feelings and individual needs.

This is why we would like to share some pieces of information and advice on language support with you.

What does my child need for good language development?

Growing up with two different languages, e.g. the family language at home and German in the elementary child education and care facility (crèche, kindergarten, nursery, ...), provides great opportunities for the future of your child. Various investigations and studies have shown that children are well able to cope with the acquisition of several languages.

View child education and care facilities as a positive resource:

The earlier, more natural and more playful children come into contact with a new language, the easier it gets for them to learn it. In the facilities, the pedagogical staff specifically promotes the German language by means of games, conversations, songs and verses, picture books and stories. The child gets the chance to learn the language without pressure and coercion and to additionally establish social contacts. Regular attendance of the child education and care facility has a positive effect on the language development of your child.

Social contacts (contacts with other children, meetings to play, play groups, etc.) additionally stimulate linguistic interactions.

View the first language (family language) as a positive resource:

One person should only use one language to speak to the child. Accordingly, this rule is called the “*1 and 1 rule*” (1 person, 1 language). In this way, children can distinguish between the languages spoken in the family and in their social surroundings and learn them best. It is important not to switch between languages!

This rule may be broken from time to time, of course, to bridge communication problems, but the more you stick to it, the easier it is for children to separate the different languages.

Practical ideas and suggestions for implementation in the family

Language is not only essential and important in child education and care, but also in the everyday life of the family.

Language is everywhere

The linguistic abilities of your child grow day by day, and they are strengthened through active listening and speaking. Involve your child in everyday activities (e.g. cooking together, shopping, etc.) and speak about what you are doing.

The everyday conversations with your child are extremely important:

Tell your child about

...your work

...an interesting experience

...the plans for the day

...your feelings.

There are countless situations and moments where you can accompany your child linguistically. Give your child also some time to talk about his or her daily experiences:

“How was kindergarten today?”

“What did you have for snacks today?”

“What did you play in the garden today?”

“Did you sing a song today in kindergarten? Would you like to sing it for me?”

“How was Simon’s birthday party?”

Through telling you about these experiences your child gradually learns to express him- or herself better and to explain his or her ideas and wishes in adequate words.

Practical advice

Use “corrective feedback”. This means that you don’t correct the child when he or she makes a mistake but that you repeat the sentence correctly. In this way, the child hears the correct sentence, which will be engraved in his or her memory over time.

Looking at books together

Children's books contain information, provide food for thought and discussion, address feelings and encourage imagination and creativity. In addition, the child acquires important skills that are relevant for starting school.

When looking at books and reading aloud it is important:

- that it brings joy to both children and adults, and
- that your child can contribute his or her own observations on the pictures and the content of the story.

This is referred to as “dialogical use of picture books”.

Practical advice

German picture books, which have little or no text, are well suited for looking at the pictures with your child and describing them in your first language (for example the so-called "Wimmelbücher"). You can borrow picture books from libraries and kindergartens. Additionally, the federal state of Styria offers a platform with many book tips.

Songs, finger games and rhymes are also very important for the development of language skills. They are fun for children and subconsciously promote the abilities of your child.

Digital media do not replace spoken language!

Excessive media consumption (television, videos via tablet, smartphone, ...) is not conducive to your child's language development. Children learn far more by talking directly to you and to other people.

"Language is the key to the world."

Wilhelm von Humboldt

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