Factsheet: [Category/age group here]

English as an additional language



Do bilingual children start to speak later than children speaking one language? Not usually. The evidence shows that all children start to speak around the same time and that young children learn 2 languages as naturally as learning one.

My child is bilingual will this cause language difficulties?

No – being bilingual alone doesn't cause language difficulties. What will you will notice is that if your child is struggling to learn and use their home language(s) they will also have difficulties learning and using English.

My child is bilingual and mixing up languages. Are they confused?

When children learn two or more languages they often use a word that might not exist in the other language or they don't know in the other language. This is called code-switching. This is the usual way that children use their languages; they literally switch between different languages.

How can I tell if my child has language difficulties?

Your child will be finding it difficult to understand and speak their home language. They may find it harder to understand instructions and may not say as much as other children the same age. You can go to www.talkingpoint.org.uk to find out more about the stages of children's talking.

What should I do if I am worried that my child has difficulties talking?

You can to the Progress Checker at www.talkingpoint.org.uk and see how your child is doing in your home language. You can also call the I CAN Enquiry Service to speak to a speech and language therapist about your concerns. You can also refer yourself to your local speech and language therapy service for an assessment. You can find out how on the Talking Point website.

You will also finds tips and advice on things you can do at home to help your child's talking on this website.

Should we stop speaking our home language and switch to English to help our child?

No. It's important that you carry on using your home language to speak with your child for many reasons:

I CAN Help enquiry service www.ican.org.uk/help

Call 020 7843 2544 to arrange a free phone call from one of our speech and language therapists or email enquiries@ican.org.uk



- Your child needs to keep developing their home language skills to give them a strong foundation for learning other languages. This then helps them develop their skills in understanding and using English.
- You will be more confident and relaxed using your home language.
- If you start using English your child may lose their home language and not develop competent English skills.
- Your child may lose their home language and be isolated from their family and community.

My child has been referred to a speech and language therapist as they aren't saying many words. Will the therapy be in English?

You are entitled to have an interpreter at your appointment if you want. You can ask for this and your speech and language therapist can arrange this. This will help you tell the speech and language therapist your concerns. It will also help the speech and language therapist to see how your child is doing in their home language and to discuss if they need any more help.

You can carry out any tips or advice at home in your home language.

You don't need to speak English to see a speech and language therapist.

My child has difficulties talking and is seeing a speech and language therapist. Should we stop speaking our home language and speak English?

Keep your speaking your home language with your child. Your child needs to supported by people who are using their language confidently so that they have lots of good models around them. They are more likely to make progress in their home language than if you suddenly switch to English, which you and your child are less comfortable and confident with.

For more information go to:

www.talkingpoint.org.uk

www.wordsforlife.co.uk/bilingual

www.londonsigbilingualism.org.uk

www.talkingpoint.org.uk

www.afasicengland.org.uk/publications/glossary-sheets/

www.bilingualism.co.uk

