



Over the years, raising a child in Singapore has changed dramatically, more often parents are relying on maids as the primary caregivers. With working parents and single parenthood becoming more common, children are required to be more self-reliant at an earlier age.

With the added expectations in school – academically and socially – what important skill does a child need to cope with the pressure?

The answer is, the ability to communicate in spoken words and sentences to command and maintain other people's attention.

BABBLING BABIES

According to P'ka Sen, a speech and language therapist and co-author of "No More Baby Talk: A Parent's Guide To Speech And Language Development": "The communication process begins the moment a

Loving The Language

Language is a beautiful gift.

*Through it, we share our wants,
needs, thoughts, feelings,
and everything that makes
us human. NICHOLAS*

*CHAN discusses how to share and
nurture this gift with our children.*

child is born. The non-verbal interactions between a young child and their family lay the foundation for later language development. Personal experiences affect each child's understanding and use of language, and the rate of language learning varies from child to child."

Many factors affect the rate at which a child develops language. Sometimes language development slows down while a child is learning other skills, such as standing or walking. The amount and kind of language the child hears may also affect the rate of language development. States Ms Sen: "If a child is only exposed to a second language at school and has no opportunity to practise it at home, then their skills will not be as advanced."

MOTHER TONGUE + ANOTHER LANGUAGE

For example, if the child is hearing two languages at home, his brain is trying to learn two sets of vocabulary, process two sets of speech sounds, and understand two sets of grammatical rules.

That is a lot of work! It may take longer to begin talking, and the child may at first feel comfortable speaking in only one of the languages.

Since most children these days are likely to be exposed to a second language, it is vital for the parents to create opportunities for them to explore their new language while at the same time encouraging communication in their first language.

YOUR RESPONSE COUNTS

Another factor that may affect the rate of language development is how

people respond to the child. For example, the child whose communication attempts are greeted with eye contact, acknowledgement and expansion of his ideas is likely to develop language faster than the child whose communication attempts receive little or no response.

The best way to encourage a child's language development is to nurture in them a love of the language. To do that, an environment must be created in which language is celebrated in all its forms.

"Language is embedded in everything we do with children throughout the day," says Ms Sen.

"The parent's role is to provide a language-rich environment with opportunities to explore and play with the rhythmic and lyrical qualities of language, and to



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Language Games To Play

Developing language skills doesn't necessarily have to end with getting your child to read and observing his progress. There are, in fact, a number of ways to develop your child's language ability while making it fun for him.

Language games help your child's skills develop when you chant, sing and act out songs and nursery rhymes. Perhaps bounce him on your lap while you sing the songs and play the games. Make animal or other familiar sounds and point to pictures of the same things. It will help him make connections.

Also, you can get some magnetic tape and make letters that will stick to your refrigerator. Thus, you can teach your child to read in the kitchen and have some fun by letting him move the letters around to spell out words he knows.

Another great game involves the use of street-signs. Go for a drive one afternoon and have your child read every sign that he sees. Don't take the same route every time. You will invariably see signs that you did not anticipate. That's when you can both do some learning.

celebrate the sound, feel, texture and meaning of words."

This means that children should experience written and oral language as an integrated, vital part of their day, whether it is through reading, writing, speaking or simply listening.

FALLING IN LOVE

The number of methods that can be used to increase a child's love of language is endless. Among them is the use of books, these stimulate curiosity and reflective

enjoys and be ready to add essential procs.

Another powerful medium for language acquisition is music. You can teach your child throughout the day, through the use of songs, singing games, adapting familiar songs to relate to topics being discussed and retelling stories through song.

LOOK, LISTEN, LEARN

One important factor in encouraging your child's language development is observing him to understand the message that he is sending. Also, give him time to collect his

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thought, and should be seen as a source of excitement and enjoyment. You should not feel restricted in what kind of books you can use, any type will do.

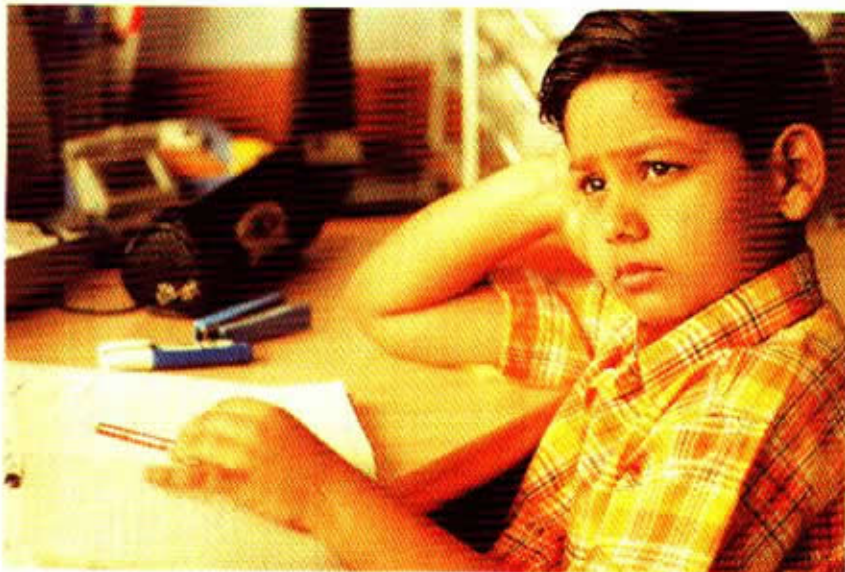
Language is at the core of dramatic role-play and parents can capitalise on many language opportunities here. Encourage your child to act out stories that he or she

thoughts and communicate them.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, listen carefully to what he or she is saying. Part of the process of total communication is to truly value what your child has to say and to respond to that.

Encourage your child to be curious about language and to ask

questions. Pique their curiosity by planning experiences that will require them to share observations, listen to and give instructions, express feelings and make decisions. 🧠



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