

Which language to speak in with your child?

Multilingual Upbringing

Have you ever thought whether it's right to speak to your child your own language, the language in which you can best express yourself and in which you feel most comfortable? Have you then sometimes had a guilty conscience because you sometimes think to yourself that you must nevertheless speak German with your child, whilst he or she has to learn German at school? Or do you even speak German with your child just because of this?

We, the speech therapists, work with children who have difficulty in acquiring language. There is a language problem when a child has difficulty in developing his or her language in his or her mother tongue in accordance with his or her age.

A healthy child is able to learn two or more languages, at the same time or one after the other, when it has acquired a basic language, his or her first language. It is therefore absolutely central that the parents speak their own language, in which they have fun and moan, get annoyed in or are happy in, with their child.

The following rules are important for the successful acquisition of a language:

- Speak with your child, regardless of what you are doing – whether cooking or tidying up. Language can only be learnt through experience – regardless of which language. Trying out language, the pleasure in telling stories, listening and the pleasure in communicating are the most important preconditions for acquiring a language.
- Speak with your child only in your mother tongue, under the motto: “One person- one language”. When you have decided on a language with the child, keep consistently to the separation of languages! It may be that your child will suddenly change to the language of his or her surroundings – don't give in and keep talking to it calmly in your mother tongue!
- Avoid mixing the languages! At the beginning the children often mix up the various languages that they learn in their surroundings. Take care then to keep consistently to your language. This way you will help your child to differentiate between the various languages.
- Should your child learn two languages, then it needs positive stimulation in both languages! Look at picture books with your child, read stories to it, speak to it about experiences, invite his/her friends around – that's the best way to foster a language – regardless of in which language! Give your child a positive attitude to bilingualism!

Today we know that a good grounding in one language – and that doesn't have to be German! - helps your child's whole development. Those who feel comfortable and secure in one language will also search actively in another language for words and comprehension.

Success in a second language depends on the quality of the first language!

Generally, speaking multilingualism is profit for everyone. However, if you are uncertain, have queries or have detected that that your child has basic difficulties in language acquisition, don't hesitate to give us a call!