



What Can I Do To Help Support My Child in Learning English?

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Mother Tongue First!

Please be very aware that it is most important (research based) to support your child's mother tongue. The tips and suggestions we will discuss today, should only be occasional events. Please do not revert to only communicating in English with your son or daughter. The stronger your child's mother tongue is, the stronger the foundations to acquire new languages.



Acquisition vs Learning

Language Learners need to 'acquire' language. Initially, this is more important than 'learning' (i.e. learning and following rules and grammar) the language. Please realize that much of this will happen naturally, through integration and the language of instruction at ISU being English.

Learning English yourself/ showing by example



To build a positive attitude towards learning, and towards English as language, the best place to start is with yourself. Learning English together is a great way to spend time with your kids and create a positive attitude towards learning and speaking another language.

By learning English yourself, you can show your kids that 'having a go' and making a mistake is better than only speaking when you have the perfect sentence prepared.

There are many useful, cool, interactive websites to help with this. Do you know DuLingo, BrainPop or Khan Academy?

Play & Cook & Do in English (but only sometimes)



To help your child get ahead with English learning, get them to play in the language.

At home, try playing games (board games, computer games, sports) in English.

When playing board games use English to follow the rules, instructions and commands.

Play 2 (or multi) player computer games and set language to English

Have a game of badminton or table tennis using playful rules about only being able to use the English language (and losing a point every time a player reverts to the mother tongue)

Cook a meal or bake a cake using an English recipe to follow.

Sing songs (or get YouTube to help)

In other words, get them to learn English in the same way they are learning their first language.

Read, Watch & Listen in English



- Read a book together. You can take turns in reading a few pages, stop and discuss.
- Watch a TV program, Netflix series or film in English. Maybe you can find a film which is available in both your mother tongue as well as in English.
- Listen to music or stories in English. YouTube is a great resource for this.
- Set the computer/Wii/PlayStation to English

I recommend BBC documentaries like Planet Earth or Human Planet but there are also plenty of other good documentaries available on YouTube or Netflix



Tune in to an English radio station and leave it on in the background

When starting to learn another language, exposure to the sounds and rhythm of that language are equally important to explicit instruction. This will eventually also help with pronunciation.

“As children learn their first language, they go through an incredible process in the brain of listening to everything around them, piecing together the information, and then using it. A child doesn’t imitate the word ‘teddy’ the first time she hears it, but instead will have heard this word said numerous times, by many different people, before attempting the word themselves.”

The radio offers the chance to listen to another language spoken by lots of different speakers with various accents.

Plan a time- slot at home where you will only speak in English

Encourage your child to do things in English and use English for a particular daily event (i.e. after school/ work or dinner time conversation).

The event or activity doesn't have to be about English, but should instead use English to complete the task or activity:

'Could you pass me the salt and pepper, please?'

'Here you are', 'Thank you'

'Why don't you draw a picture?'

'Can you help me tidy up?'

These sorts of phrases are the most helpful language you can introduce to your child. If you don't speak a lot of English yourself, you could simply follow audio or written recipe instructions as you bake cupcakes together. In the process, you are using everyday English that teachers use in the classroom. You are therefore preparing them for the sort of thing they will hear at school.

Hello.

What is your name?

Hello my name is... what is your name?

My name is...

Goodbye.

Goodbye.



Sources

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