

Myths and Facts

about children with language issues learning two languages

MYTH Parents should only speak English to their child because it is the language most people use in Manitoba. Parents should speak English, even if they aren't comfortable using English.

FACT Parents should be encouraged to speak with their children in their home language. Speaking your own language is more natural and likely to create connection to you, your culture, and family members who may only speak that language. *

MYTH Children with speech-language issues will be confused if parents speak a second language.

FACT Research suggests that a strong foundation in the child's home language helps the child learn a second language. The challenges faced by bilingual children with speech-language issues are similar to those faced by children who speak only one language. **

MYTH Talking is the only kind of communication that matters.

FACT Communication is much more than speaking out loud: gestures, eye contact, and body language are also critically important. *

MYTH English-speaking schools are the best place for your child if they have speech-language issues.

FACT Children with language difficulties may do just as well in bilingual schools. Every school has supports in place for students with speech-language needs. Check with the schools you are considering to see what supports they offer.

FINAL FACT Parents should be encouraged to communicate with their children in their home language. All children need a constant, rich exposure to both languages to become bilingual.

You know your child best, and what will work best for your family. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your speech-language pathologist.



*Lowry, L. (2012). Can children with language impairments learn two languages? The Hanen Centre.

**Kay-Raining Bird, E., Genesee, F., & Verhoeven, L. (2016). Bilingualism in children with developmental disorders: A narrative review. *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 63, 1-14. doi: 10.1016/j.jcomdis.2016.07.00

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