

1. Facts about multilingualism

1. Multilingualism is normal and very common

Most of the world's children learn to speak more than one language.

2. Home language maintenance takes hard work

Many parents are working hard to maintain their home language (Vietnamese) with their children when they live in English-speaking countries. You are not alone! There are many things you can do and resources to support you to teach your child Vietnamese. This program will show you many strategies to support your teaching of Vietnamese every day. Families need to persist in maintaining their home language(s) in a society filled with English-speaking influences!

3. Children have the ability to speak many languages well

Learning more than one language does not confuse children. Children's brains are amazing and have the ability to learn many languages with high levels of proficiency.

4. The earlier the better

Start speaking Vietnamese to your baby, then as they grow, speak Vietnamese as often as possible because it will create a strong foundation for maintaining Vietnamese later in life.

5. Speaking Vietnamese can help your child to be a strong speaker of English

Some people think they should stop speaking Vietnamese at home and focus on English. Actually, the research shows that children who have a strong foundation in their home language are very good at learning additional languages. Stopping speaking your home language can actually make it more difficult to learn English.

6. Children with disabilities and language difficulties can still learn to speak more than one language

Your child can still learn more than one language if they have speech, language or communication difficulties or disabilities. Learning more than one language will be important for them so they can communicate with all of the important people in their lives. It is important not to cut off the language resources they have by switching to English only, as this can cause more harm than good.

7. Parents should speak to children in their strongest language

Parents are the most important teachers of language to their children. Parents should speak their best language to their children to make sure they are providing a good model for the language. If a parent switches to speaking English with their children when they are not a strong English speaker this can provide a poor model of English to the children and impact their children's language skills. If a parent is strongest in their home language (e.g., Vietnamese) then this is the best language to teach their child. If a parent is strong at more than one language then they can model more than one language to the child (e.g., Vietnamese and English). In an English-speaking context like Australia, children will have many opportunities to hear and learn English from native speakers. What children won't have, is the opportunity to hear Vietnamese in every aspect of their life. Therefore, if you want to maintain Vietnamese you should focus on using Vietnamese in the home environment because children will learn English from lots of other places (e.g., school and social settings).

8. It's OK for children to mix languages

It is very common for people who speak more than one language to mix their languages together in the same sentence. This is called "code mixing". It is also common to switch between different languages in the same conversation. This is called "code switching".

9. It's OK for languages to influence each other

When people learn more than one language their languages can influence each other. This is why some people speak with an accent. It means the sounds in their first language are influencing their second language. This is perfectly normal. Sometimes learning new sounds that aren't in both languages can be difficult for multilingual speakers. Learning the pronunciation of sounds that aren't in both languages will help your children to be understood more easily when they are talking.

