



# Komunika

## OUR MISSION

Speech– language pathologists (SLPs) are professionals who work to prevent, assess and diagnose a vast range of difficulties related to speech, language, social communication and swallowing difficulties both in children and adults. In addition intervention programmes are designed and provided according to one’s needs. Raising awareness is also a key, whilst also educating and supporting guardians and school staff to ensure collaboration.

The service of speech-language therapy in Malta has been extending to state schools for quite a while now and there are a good number of state schools who have this service offered within the school. This outreach system allows for better collaboration between the children’s healthcare and educational system. This way SMT staff can be easily communicated with to ensure the best intervention for each and every established need of the child.

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## LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN 3 & 4 YEAR OLDS

Although normal development in itself varies from one child to another it is ideal to have an idea of what 3 and 4 year olds are expected to be at in terms of their communication skills as this is the age that they also start their kindergarten years.

By this time, children would have learnt a lot of new vocab-

ulary from their surroundings being it listening to you speaking, the context itself or story telling. However they continue to learn new words and start to make use of more complex sentences and not just express themselves in one or two word phrases (ASHA, n.d.)

*“The child begins to perceive the world not only through his eyes but also through is speech” - Lev Vygotsky*

### TIPS OF HOW TO HELP

- Read simple stories
- Act stories through role play
- Engage children in daily activities
- Look at pictures and encourage picture description
- Expose the child to a vast range of vocabulary
- Allow opportunities of symbolic play
- Reduce screen time

(The SLP solution, n.d.)

At this age children start to tell short stories mostly having a beginning and an end. However they would still need prompting to narrate in a detailed manner in a good sequence of events. Small conversations will also start and children start to be more abstract in their questioning. Also their clarity of speech would have improved by now as speech sounds should be developed by the age of 4, having only the /r/ sound which might be still being developing.

In terms of children’s receptive identification of the language, they will be able to understand instructions that have more than two-steps commands especially when the vocabulary used is familiar and start to understand slightly more complex commands. One must consider that the context helps a lot in supporting the child’s ability to understand what is being said at the moment (ASHA, n.d. & Raising Children Network, 2017).





*Good morning and hello said in different languages*

## BILINGUALISM IN EARLY YEARS

### WHAT IS BILINGUALISM?

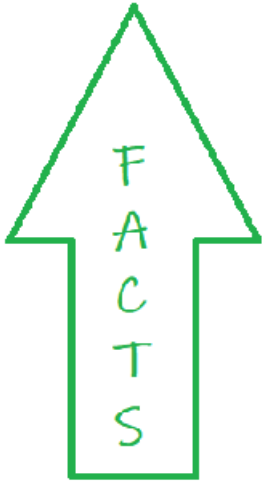
Children are able to learn to speak more than one language at once. The dominant one would be the one that the child knows better although this might change over time. Research shows that bilingualism leaves a positive impact on the child's linguistic and educational development as it allows more flexibility. This happens as they would need to process information through two different languages. Malta is a bilingual country and bilingual education is also being provided within the school setting, although lately we are seeing an increase in the diversity of languages within kindergarten classrooms. This can serve not only as a powerful cultural tool but also as a linguistic resource (New Jersey Speech-Language Hearing Association, n.d.).

### TALKING TO YOUR CHILD

Learning a second language does not cause or worsen a language problem. It is ideal to speak to your child in the language you know best as this way you can provide a good language model. A child can still learn a second language from another context such as the school. Like this as a parent you will be providing the child with the necessary abilities to support the learning of the first language in order to start developing the second one (New Jersey Speech-Language Hearing Association, n.d.).



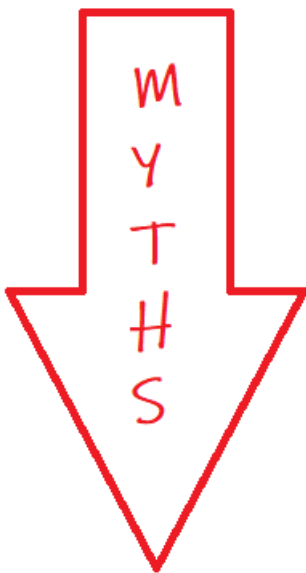
## BILINGUALISM



- If a child has an underlying speech and language problem it will show up in both language and not just one.
  - It is okay for children to mix grammar rules from time to time and they might use words from both languages in the same sentence. Always provide the right model to help children separate between the languages.
  - Although it is ideal for children to learn languages at a young age, older children and adults can become fluent in other languages.
  - There are different levels of fluency in a language but this does not make you a non-bilingual. You might always have a dominant language which can also change over time depending on how often you use the language (New Jersey Speech-Language Hearing Association, n.d.).
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*“To have another language is to possess a second soul” - Charlemagne*

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- Learning more than one language cause confusion and/ or delay.
- Parents of children experiencing a delay or a disorder shall speak to their children only in one language
- First children have to fully learn one language in order to start learning their second language.
- Children with a language delay/disorder will have a difficulty learning their second language.
- If children don't learn their second language when they are young, they will never be fluent.
- If children are not fully fluent in both languages, they are not truly bilingual (New Jersey Speech-Language Hearing Association, n.d.).

## ONLINE RESOURCES

With children one has to be creative to encourage participation, sustain attention and encourage learning. Here are a couple of links that you might find useful which are full of resources that one can utilise.

<https://www.sparklebox.co.uk/>

<https://www.twinkl.com/mt/>

[https://sheppardlibrary.org/childrens\\_library/uniteforliteracy](https://sheppardlibrary.org/childrens_library/uniteforliteracy)

<https://www.speechandlanguagekids.com/free-materials/>



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*“Technology will not replace great teachers but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational.” - George Coures*

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## ONLINE GAMES

The list below entails links of online games that can be utilized to keep stimulating child’s language learning. These are more interactive and definitely more fun !

<https://www.education.com/game/sorting-zoo/>

<https://www.abcya.com/games/pizza>

[https://www.abcya.com/games/make\\_a\\_cake](https://www.abcya.com/games/make_a_cake)



## WORKSHOPS OFFERED BY OUR SPEECH & LANGUAGE CENTRE

Hereunder please find a list of the workshops that are available on request:

- Facilitating Language through Play
- Visual Aids & Social Stories
- ASD One Step at a Time
- Social Communication Skills
- Key Word Signing
- Ready Steady Read
- Supporting children with ASD in the classroom
- ASD Apps for Tablets
- Taking Care of your Voice for School Educators

*Should there be interest in any of the above training workshops, the school / entity / group of individuals are kindly requested to forward their request on **marc.frendo@gov.mt**, specifying the location of their premises as well as the number of participants who shall be attending. Such a request would then be processed accordingly in liaison with the workshop speakers.*

## REFERENCES

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) (n.d) 3 to4 Years.

<https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/34/>

American Academy of Pediatrics and American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2017, 19<sup>th</sup> May) 7 Myths and facts about bilingual children learning language <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/7-Myths-Facts-Bilingual-Children-Learning-Language.aspx>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) (n.d) American speech-language pathologists: About speech-language therapy <https://www.asha.org/students/speech-language-pathologists/>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) (n.d.) Speech and language services in schools <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/speech-and-language-services-in-schools/>

New Jersey Speech-Language-Hearing Association (n.d) Facts and myths about bilingual speech and Language Development <https://www.njsha.org/wp-content/uploads/MIC-Brochure-19.pdf>

Raising Children Network (Australia) (2021, 17<sup>th</sup> February) Language development: 3-4 years <https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/development/language-development/language-3-4-years>

The SLP Solution (n.d) 3 year old speech and language skills

<https://www.speechandlanguagekids.com/what-speech-and-language-skills-should-my-3-year-old-have/>

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