



Research Unit for Multilingualism & Cross- Cultural Communication

Raising Children in more than one Language: (Re-)Introducing the home language to the older child

By Susanne Döpke

These articles were first published in 2004 and 2005 in Susanne Döpke's *Australian Newsletter for Bilingual Families* (see BilingualOptions.com.au). We thank the author for her permission to reprint and make them available on our website.

Contents	Page
(Re-)Introducing the home language to the older child – a short overview	2
Part 1: Setting the scene	3
Part 2: The first sessions	5
Part 3: Step-by-step progress	9
Part 4: Transfer to everyday life	11
Part 5: Maintenance	13

(Re-)Introducing the home language to the older child – a short overview

Introducing your language to your child after he or she has already developed a good command of English is a lot like second language teaching - at least initially. Nevertheless, the principles of **fun** while using the Language Other Than English (LOTE), **quality** of interaction with the adult who wants to transmit it and the **need** to understand and speak the LOTE are as important as for the child who develops the LOTE simultaneously with English. An additional element in this situation is your child's **agreement**. Starting with the last, I would suggest the following:

Depending on your child's age, **set aside 10 to 30 minutes each day** or at least several times a week. The more often you do it the faster the progress!

Plan an age-appropriate fun activity with your child which involves little language, and during which you only use your LOTE.

For the toddler you might bring home a new teddy or hand puppet who can only speak your LOTE. With the primary school aged child you might want to start with an easy board game. A car race or a hide and seek game might entice the 3-4 year old.

Design the activity so that you can **use the same few words or sentences over and over again**. It is better to aim for less in the beginning. Three to five words and one or two sentences are plenty. Sentences need to be very short. Ideally the target words slot into the target sentence, e.g. *where is the teddy/doll/man/dog duck or teddy/duck/cow/dog/pig wants a drink; I want a drink; do you want a drink?*

First use the target words and sentences yourself together with the relevant actions and object. This gives your child the chance to understand. Understanding comes before speaking!

Then turn it around and ask a question or make your child take the speaking role. **Model what your child should say** and let him/her repeat your model. As you are replaying the same sequence again and again, s/he will become familiar with the word or sentence and use it spontaneously. Importantly, the word or sentence to be learned needs to be embedded into a functional play activity which is a lot of fun!

Repeat anything your child says in English in your LOTE. It is a good guide to what your child wants to learn. However, the more tightly you have structured the activity, the less this will be necessary.

Ideally there will be no English spoken during the LOTE play time at all. In any case, **YOU need to stick with the LOTE**. You can point, show, act, make noises, do anything but DO NOT speak English yourself. If you accidentally slipped into English, translate what you just said into your LOTE.

Each week consider how you can re-use the words and sentences your child already knows and extend them by a few words or sentences. It will not be long before you have built up a good language base on which to draw for future activities.

Of course, **you can use more language yourself than your actual aim for the session**. Just make sure the target words and sentences come up frequently and the rest can be understood intuitively through the context, the actions, the props, and your face and noises. Repeat yourself several times, making it simpler as you go: *Dolly wants a bath. Look! Dolly - bath.*

In order to fill the 30 minutes, **vary the activity without varying the language aim**. Think of the same few words and sentences in a gross motor activity (the child doing actions), a fine motor activity (figurines or dolls doing the actions), an arts activity (drawing, play dough, pasting), and talking about books or pictures.

Motivation being so important for the child who can already speak English, here are some strategies which might help:

- (1) choose your LOTE activities around what your child likes to do and play;
- (2) do silly things, physically as well as verbally;
- (3) praise the child for any small achievement;
- (4) be ostensibly grateful for the child's willingness to participate in LOTE activities;
- (5) frequently contemplate with the child what you have already achieved (don't worry about the length of the way to your final aims).

As you and your child progress, **integrate the language you have introduced during play sessions into your daily activities**. Initially these can include rituals around the house like requests for food and drinks; getting dressed; setting the table; getting ready to leave the house etc

The complete shift from English to your LOTE might take between three to six months for the parent depending on the child's age. Inconsistencies, lack of motivation etc. will slow the progress down. I would not want to put any estimation on when the child will switch from English to the LOTE. That will depend on the child's temperament, motivation and memory capacity. Some triggering events might be able to invoke the switch suddenly.

Part 1: Setting the scene

Many families have children who are competent in English but either **not confident or not able** to speak their parents' language. With this series I am going to address the special needs of those families. Much of the practical suggestions are equally relevant for families with lesser challenges. The series will comprise five parts: (1) Setting the scene. (2) The first sessions, (3) Step-by-step progress, (4) Transfer to everyday life, (5) Maintenance.

If you want to shift to speaking your LOTE (= Language **O**ther **T**han **E**nglish) with your child after your child has become used to and able to speak English with you, you need to plan for it. You cannot simply walk in one day and speak Spanish, or expect her not to use English anymore. That would spook her. For once, because she might not understand or not be able to think of the words, but also because **the language we use largely defines the relationship we have with this person**. This is similar to other behavioural factors like having fun or working together, but much more intimate. Have you tried changing the language you speak with your spouse? If that is an option, why not give it a go and see what it feels like?

Start with setting yourself aims: ideal aims, good-enough aims, long-term aims, short-term aims. Then work backwards. Very importantly, the **short-term and long-term aims need to be aims for yourself,**

not for your child. How much time, thought and material resources are you prepared to put in? How determined are YOU?

When setting aims, **be realistic about what you can achieve.** The shift from English to your LOTE will not be instant, and it will not happen without you working on it - hard. Most parents' ideal aim is that the child speak the LOTE like a native speaker. Good vision! Keep it in mind. Visions create success!

Most families in Australia have to settle for something less. A **good-enough aim** might be that your child can understand and use the LOTE in all situations that present themselves to him here in Australia and step off that plane one day and get right into it. Lesser aims may be that your child may do well in the LOTE subject in school, understand most, follow some basic commands, or sing a few songs. The choice is yours. You will get as much out as you are prepared to put in.

This brings us to the **long-term aims for YOU!** Do you really want to commit yourself to passing on your LOTE to your child? If you don't want to make that commitment, it won't happen. Sorry. If you do, **you need to speak the LOTE** when you are with your child - every day, and after the structured beginnings - all the time.

The **short-term aims** are what you need to work with on a day-to-day basis. Depending on commitment and persistence, they will make the ideal or near-ideal aims come true. Short-term aims are what I will help you flesh out and put into practice.

Your first aim is to **enlist your child's agreement** to 'play' with your LOTE. The older your child, the more this needs to be a JOINT DECISION. With the **older child** you might want to sit down and talk about using the LOTE. Assure her that it will be fun, be excited about your long-term and ideal aims, map out the schedule and talk about some very tangible rewards (see below). It must appear easy and immediately worthwhile to your child. For the **younger child** it might be best to introduce a toy which can only talk your LOTE. Make this toy very special and get right into playing with it.

Then **decide on a workable schedule.** Promise your child that you will spend a regular time slot with fun activities during which you will use the LOTE and help him learn some words and phrases. For the older child that could be 30 minutes a day, for the younger child it might better be twice 10 minutes. Never go on for too long. Always stop while you are still enjoying it, so you can both look forward to the next time. Then agree on a fixed time that you are both likely to be able to keep regularly. For me the first half hour right after I came home from work was the best play time because it provided a chance to wind down and reconnect with my son before the nightly merry-go-round started. For others the most stable time might be after breakfast, the afternoon nap or the evening bath. In the long run, times scheduled earlier in the day might be better for transferring the session goal to everyday life. (More on transferring the LOTE to everyday life in Part 4). For some families it might be necessary to review the session times on a week by week basis. With older children you could have a weekly planning session to line up your time and theirs and also discuss what you want to do during the sessions. Anticipation breeds motivation!

For the actual sessions you need to establish the **language contract.** What I mean by that are some explicit rules about language choice. For example, explain: *At [the agreed time] I will only use [the LOTE]. I will help you understand without using English, and I will teach you some words that you can say.* [For more information on the *language contract* see Susanne's article in *Strategies in the family.*] Remember, it is YOU who needs to path the way and stick to the contract! If you have chosen to introduce the LOTE via a special toy rather than explicit agreement because your child is still very young, YOU need to make sure that the toy only understands the LOTE, is always spoken to in the LOTE and in fact only comes out during LOTE session times. Don't leave the toy around for your child

to play with at other times, no matter how much she pleads. You want to keep it special! You may also want to take the toy away if she doesn't cooperate, or better still play your child's favourite game with the toy, letting her watch how much fun you have, and allowing her back in when she starts to cooperate. [More on this and other strategies in the Part 2 below.]

Lastly, **make sure all LOTE experiences are rewarding**. Rewards take many different forms. The biggest reward will come from having fun. If your child perceives the LOTE sessions with you as fun, he will think it worthwhile to make an effort. Work your child's favourite play into the LOTE sessions. Laugh, cuddle, tickle, roughhouse! Depending on your child rearing philosophy you may want to use more tangible rewards like sweets or little presents. These work best when they are part of the activity. Don't rely on them as bribes. Many kids will simply forgo a bribe in order to get out of an activity they don't enjoy.

And don't forget the reward the LOTE sessions will give YOU: something special to share, motivation for spending more time together with your child and for putting more thought into what the time together should be spent on.

The complete shift from English to the LOTE will take at least three to six months for the parent, depending on your child's age. Any inconsistencies, lack of motivation etc. will jeopardise the progress. I hesitate to put an estimate on when a child will switch from English to the LOTE. That may depend on temperament and aptitude. Some triggering events may invoke the switch suddenly, e.g. a visit to or visitor from the homeland, or success in a particular situation in Australia. There are a lot of variables.

Part 2: The first sessions

You and your child have agreed to engage in some special activities reserved for the use of LOTE, you have set the schedule, you are all excited about this, and now it's time for the first session! Here are some ideas of how to go about it. Remember, **you are a parent, not a teacher, and this is not a school lesson**. It is supposed to be fun, interactive and an extension of what parents and children do, not teachers and students.

The parents' role

Choose a play activity that is highly structured and allows much repetition. Then decide what language you will use and what you will model and what you expect your child to say. These two need to be closely linked of course. Your child needs to hear the words and utterances s/he is supposed to say before you can expect her to say anything.

Only set a very easy aim. You want to ensure success! Structure the activity so that the same thing has to be said over and over again. Build in a lot of fun: romping around, competition, mystery, edible targets. Combine this with much laughter, cuddles, tickling - whatever your child likes.

During the activity, YOU only speak the LOTE. But only say as much as you can make your child understand. To make him understand you need to make it visual: show objects, show pictures, role

play. Keep your utterances short enough so you can do this. That may mean only one to three words per utterance. Allow plenty of pauses between utterances so your child has a chance to process the verbal and visual cues. Pauses should be at least five seconds long. Count them out in your head. Then repeat yourself. If your child understands more than s/he can say, you can of course talk more yourself. Then you only have to limit yourself with respect to the language models you want him to repeat.

If your child says something in English, you repeat it in your own language. Again, make it simple, even if what he said was complex. If possible build what your child would like to say into the activity.

For anything you want your child to say, you have to provide an exact model which she can repeat. Provide the model and make your child repeat it before progressing with activity.

Very importantly: it is YOU who needs to stick to language contract if you ever want your child to do it.

Examples of aims for first session(s)

Now to some ideas for activities. I won't grade them by age. You choose what your child would enjoy doing. Anything that works for little children also works for older ones. It is only the cognitively more demanding activities that are limited to older age groups, not the other way round. The following are only examples, which you can use as described or, better yet, use as a guide to develop your own activities.

Blow bubbles

Buy or make some really good bubble mixture. Blow some bubbles to delight your child, then wait. Ask *more?* in your LOTE of course. If s/he nods do it again. After a few rounds of him responding non-verbally to your questions say: *say* [in English] *more* [in your LOTE]. Then wait. Repeat the instruction when he or she does not respond. Praise her with an exaggerated *good* [in your LOTE] and the thumb up gesture. Then continue for her to have some more chances to request *more* [in your LOTE]. Point to a flying bubble and say *bubble* [always in your LOTE - you are getting the idea now I suppose]. Then ask: *more bubbles?*

To keep the game interesting, move on to popping the bubble accompanied with *pop*, then *pop bubble*. Without expecting your child to say it, you can also talk about *BIG* and *small* in relation to actual bubbles or by indicating with your hands big and small. If you are really good at blowing bubbles, you can ask your child if s/he wants a BIG bubble or small bubble. Then repeat *BIG? or small?* Give him time to respond. Possibly repeat your question with the appropriate hand gesture. If your child does not react with a choice, maybe you can get your partner to play along on her side. Your partner could model the response or prompt your child to respond. Keep on doing it until s/he gets it. Three tips: (a) this works really well in the bathtub; (b) remove all other toys or objects with which s/he may want to play before you start; (c) buy sticky bubbles which don't burst easily: They have a form of glue in them which makes them hold. They are great in the bath, but absolutely dreadful outside the bath where you end up with sticky hands.

Picture book

Choose a picture book where at least one object is the same on each page appearing. The *First Words* books with the little duck hiding on each page are a lot of fun for this. Make sure you pick a new book, not one you have already read in English to your child and for which you have therefore already established a particular reading routine which your child might want you to continue. **New language - new book - new routine!** Then, during the first session go through the book, only point to the object

that reappears and label it. Change your intonation from indicating where it is, as in: *duck!* to asking where it is: *duck?*

Then repeat the word with excitement when your child points to it. Exaggerate your intonation and facial expression. Find a toy duck in the house. Tap your child on the chest, say her name and say *duck* with questioning intonation. Wait for her response. It might be quite instantaneous, if not, gesture and say *come* and go for a pretend search through the house. Call out *duck!*, lift cushions, etc. You can probably slip in *where* [in your LOTE] without much effort. Once you found the duck, go back to the book and look through it again. This time, with the toy duck next to it, you may be able to label what the duck is doing, which you can then have the toy duck perform in order to clarify what you have said. You can also add another object to be labelled and pointed to and then found in the house. If your picture book depicts some useful or playable activities, you can label them in the book, then re-use the same one or two words for doing something around the house. The more often your child hears the same words, and the more s/he associates them with different contexts, the more likely she is to remember the words.

I want

Arrange a number of stuffed animals, dolls or figurines for a tea party. Do that one by one and involve your child in it. Say *Hi* in your LOTE to each of them as you place them. Put a tiny plate (or something to that effect) in front of each of the toys. Ask *want a plate?* with your voice appropriately inflected to sound like a question in your language. Make the toy nod the head before you put the plate down. After a few examples let your child operate the toy. Do it slowly so your child can process and remember the question. Then you play the hostess, your child plays all the guests. You have a plate of tiny food items such as tiny teddy biscuits, tiny jelly blues (the German *Gummibärchen* are a really good size), little pretzels, tiny pieces of chocolate, sausage, cheese. Make sure each piece is tiny. Limit the choices to two for the first session. You ask [in your LOTE] *want biscuit* [hold it up in one hand] *or pretzel* [hold it up in the other hand]? Repeat: *biscuit?* [wriggle your hand with the object - pause] *pretzel?* [wriggle the hand with the other object]. If your child does not respond with the repetition of one of the choices, but points, you say to your child: *say* [in English] *biscuit* [in your LOTE]. Give her time to respond. When she does, say: *good* [in your LOTE] and put the chosen object on the plate in front of the toy.

You might either have your child eat for the toy immediately or distribute all the food before you move on to eating. The second option has the advantage that you might be able to eat some of the goodies as well, which gives you the chance to say mmmh yummy while patting your tummy. When your child eats for the toy ask: *yummy?* If she nods tell her: *say* [in English] *yummy* [in you LOTE]. You probably noticed that I left out the pronoun in the questions. That might not be necessary but is an option if you would like your child to say *I want X* without bringing the shift between *I* and *you* in. That could complicate matters considerably for your child. You can always introduce the pronoun once your child has mastered *want + object*. Perhaps tomorrow? Tomorrow you may also want to use two other food items or possibly two old and one new one to choose from.

A special friend

Bring out a new hand puppet. The hand puppet only speaks your LOTE. You talk in the LOTE for the hand puppet and to the hand puppet and in English to your child. When the puppet talks, you make it move, e.g. open and close its mouth or nod its head. When you talk, you keep the puppet still. The hand puppet says *Hi* in your LOTE. You say *Hi* in your LOTE back. Then suggest to your child to greet the puppet. Model it, then ask her to repeat. Let the puppet say something like *come we play*. You can translate this for your child. Then you ask the puppet back: *play* [in your LOTE]. Tell your child what

you are going to ask the puppet next, e.g. *let's ask her/him 'play what'*, then turn to the puppet and ask in your LOTE. Keeping it on the one-word level for the first session, the puppet could say: *jump* and perform the action to demonstrate, then tap your child on the chest and say to her *jump* or his name plus *jump*. Follow this with *roll, run, hide*, or whatever you and your child like. After a number of rounds you can ask your child to tell the puppet what to do. If s/he needs help, say *jump* or *dance* [in your LOTE]. You can do any of the other activities I have described here with the puppet in lieu of an explicit agreement from your young child to abide by the language contract.

A simple puzzle

If your young child likes puzzles choose one with objects worth naming. As he chooses a piece, you name it. If he needs verbal support with putting the pieces in, say those things in your LOTE and guide him non-verbally, e.g. *turn* then move his hand or *here* while tapping on the correct spot. Give him praise for getting it in. To make it a little more challenging tap on one slot, then hold two puzzle pieces up and ask your child *house?* [move the object to get him to look at it] or *tree* [move that one hold the first one still]? If he doesn't decide repeat. If he points to one of them repeat the name for that object a few more times while you give it to him and he puts it in.

Board games

Board games work really well for children of primary school age, but may be too complex an activity for younger ones.

Visualisation

Try and put yourself in your child's position. What would you need to be able to decode messages in a new language? How about gestures, pointing, pictures. Anything that is visible. You could also use another person - like your spouse - to model responses. Once the child knows the routine of watching what's happening and imitating what you say, you can easily carry on without a helper.

What to expect from your child

In every first round only expect your child to react non-verbally. For some children it might take a number of sessions before they are prepared to say something in the LOTE. The first time she makes the slightest attempt, let her experience that this was really worth it! She also might continue to respond in English - possibly with a soft voice, with hesitation or with a look that indicates she isn't too sure she understood correctly. Show her your appreciation that she understood non-verbally, e.g. through a raised thumb and repeat what she said in the LOTE.

Your child will naturally only answer with single words when he first attempts the LOTE. That is communicatively and developmentally totally appropriate. In fact, encourage and model one-word requests and initiations like labelling an object to draw attention to it. He may also go through a period of mixing LOTE words and English words. That is his way of showing you that he wants to do it but can't quite do as much with the language as he would like yet. Appreciate his attempts and repeat the utterance in its entirety in the LOTE.

Where to go from here?

On successive days increase the language progressively, but only as much as your child can cope with. If your child does not want to do it, it is more likely that s/he finds it too difficult than that s/he finds it too easy. By combining two words which your child already knows or adding a new word to a word your child already knows you can increase the sentence length. Put into one- or two-word utterances whatever it is your child is doing. Continue to make everything visual. I will talk more about increasing the language challenge in the Part 3 below. Whatever you do, never go on for too long. Always stop while your child is still enjoying it, so that you are both looking forward to the next session. And always praise her at the end of the session for her progress and mention it to other people like your spouse, friends, parents - while your child can overhear you.

Part 3: Step-by-step progress

How did you go with your initial sessions? I very much hope you had fun and both you and your children want to go on. It will help you to have plans about how to continue. So that you know where you are going, know what to do next.

Setting goals

In order to help your own orientation, set yourself goals - one short-term goal at the time. Then review your short-term goal each week. Did you accomplish it? What went wrong? How can you change your strategies to improve the outcome? These weekly reviews are very important, both for remediation and the all so necessary pats on the back for a job well done.

You can set goals around topics. For example, food, clothing, body parts, washing, finding things, building with wood, or baking. The list is only limited by your imagination and by your likes and dislikes.

Once you have chosen a topic, introduce it in the fashion of a first session (as described in Part 2 above). Keep a tally of the words you use. It is best to limit yourself to a few new words each session and reuse all the words from previous sessions.

Closely watch what your child can say and add to it. By 'closely watch' and 'limit yourself' I actually mean: WRITE IT DOWN. This way you have a record of your achievements. This will make you feel really good in the weeks to come when you suddenly think you are losing sight of your progress.

Concrete goals could be five new words per week. If your child understands or even uses them quicker than you anticipated, you can add another couple of words. Alternatively, your short-term goal could be one particular grammatical structure a week. Examples of grammatical structure may be making requests, giving orders, asking a question, using plural, or using past tense, etc.

In all that you do, never forget to praise your child and yourself for the effort you are putting in. And most of all: **have fun with the activities.**

How to make a topic into a whole-week activity

As I have previously said, repetition is all important for your child to remember the language information. Maintaining the same topic for a whole week provides that sort of repetition. Real life is about doing things time and again as well. The trick is to build in enough variation to keep your child interested. Let me run through some examples of variations on a topic for intense language input.

For example: Clothing

- First session: Use your child's doll and available clothing items. Dress and undress the doll naming the items, commenting with *nice* or *not nice* (use your face to get the difference across). If you have different size dolls you can deliberately choose trousers that are *too big* or *too small*. If you have more than one doll or some dressable teddies, you can dress them too. Maybe baby clothes stored away or in the baby brother's wardrobe could be used. Hold out two items and ask your child: *jumper or cardigan?* Use a lot of variation in your voice and face.
- Second session: Choose with your child what s/he should wear from his or her wardrobe. Again hold out items and give your child choices. Maybe you want to make this into a nightly ritual?
- Third session: Cut out clothing items from a catalogue or an advertisement drop. Sort them as suitable for famous people, characters in movies. Make the activity as silly as your child would like it to be. You could draw a figure and paste the clothing items onto it.
- Forth session: Buy a dress-up doll made of cardboard. You can make them into magnetic dress-up dolls by sticking magnetic tape on (available from arts shops). Then play with that doll with your child. Maybe you can use the forms provided to add to the doll's wardrobe by tracing around them and colouring them in.
- Fifth session: Draw a monster and have your child tell you what clothes you should draw onto the monster. Think of different situations to dress the monster for. Or make a dress up monster with paper clothes to clip on.
- Sixth session: Sort through wardrobes for a donation to the Salvation Army. Discuss with your child which items should be given away or kept.
- Seventh session: Let your child dress up in your clothes and dress in the clothes of your partner yourself. How would that be for a laugh?

I am sure by now you have heaps more ideas for extending the clothing theme. There is no need to tackle the activities in the order given or indeed all of them. You may be able to combine some into one session. Pick and choose what appeals and add some ideas of your own.

For example: Body parts

- First session: Assemble Mr Potato Head. This will teach your child eyes, mouth, hat, arms, feet. Give you child choices: *hat or mouth? blue hat or red hat?* etc.
- Second session: Sing the song *Heads and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes* with your child. A second verse could go: *Eyes and ears and nose and mouth, nose and mouth*. Can you think of more lines? Combine this with a game of *Simon says*. Simon could say: *touch your nose/mouth/shoulders etc., lift your arm, pat your tummy*. Use the words your child already understands easily and add two new ones. Then repeat the game the next day, maybe at the beginning of the session. You might want to make some cards with visual reminders of the various commands you have used. You could either draw them yourself or search online for suitable pictures. Then you could play a game of drawing cards and telling each other what to

do. If you build in a *freeze!* or *stop!* command, you might get some good laughs due to people being stuck in awkward positions.

- Third session: Draw a picture together. Tell each other what to draw. Ask questions: *big nose or little nose? green ears or yellow ears?* Or make figures out of play dough.
- Forth session: Sing the song and do the actions for the *Hokey Pokey*. It goes like that: *Put your right foot in, put your right foot out, put your right foot in, then shake it all about* [do actions as text says]; *we do the hokey pokey* [sway your hips from side to side] *and we turn around; that's what it's all about* [clapping your hands for the last line]. You will have to adjust the text to whatever fits with the melody in your own language. It might be a bit of a challenge, but when you think about it for a while you will most likely come up with something acceptable. It's just for home use after all.
- Fifth session: Play hospital with your child's stuffed toys and dolls. *teddy is hurting - ouch ouch - head hurts, arm hurts - give medicine - put bandage on - better now*. This game can make for a rather extensive play session depending on how many stuffed toys you have. If your child can cope with full sentences, then by all means use them. If not, just use the main words when you first start and expand it to full sentences as your child understands the main words.

For example: Washing

If you choose washing as the next theme you can easily integrate the clothes and body parts themes. You may want to include words like *dirty, clean, wet, dry, soap, water, towel, turn on, turn off, rub* and *wipe* in your list of target words. You can wash each other, your child's dolls and other toys, the clothes, the car, the kitchen table, or even your dog.

I hope this helps you understand the idea of extending topics for mass input which will allow your child to remember all the new words and structures. All these activities are also very suitable for young children who are just starting to talk. For older children you can make the activities more demanding, but not the language you use.

Part 4: Transfer to everyday life

Have you started to build a bridge from the daily language practices with your child to using the LOTE in normal interactions? Here are some ideas that might help:

- If at all possible, plan the language session for early in the day. During that session play what you want to use later. Thus, the session acts as a primer for your child and a reminder for you (the latter is half the battle!).
- Keep a tally of what you have introduced already and consider how you can build on that in order to make the language and the activity increasingly more complex and more age appropriate.
- Purposely pursue situations that allow the use of the language material introduced in the session later in the day.

- Plan to structure your next session around what your child could not say in the real-life situation, then do that activity again in real life.
- Extend the language contract you have agreed upon for the LOTE to include routine situations like mealtime, bath time, playground, buying an ice cream etc. (For more on the *language contract* see the article in *Strategies in the family*.)
- Plan what you are introducing to ensure success. That is, make the activities highly motivating. What does he like to do? Where did she want to go for a long time? Introduce language material so that you can then go on that outing. E.g. look at the relevant page in the *Where is Wally* book before going to Luna Park; play shop before taking your child to the ethnic deli for some yummy chocolate shopping; learn the clothes items during dress-up play with Barbie dolls in order to be able to talk about clothes choices with your child in your LOTE ever after.
- Increase the number of sessions in a week, the range of topics and the length of time gradually, but regularly until the switch from English to your LOTE is complete.
- Listen to your child and reward her for TRYING to use the LOTE. The important point is the behavioural intention, not correctness. The big hurdle is to get your child to WANT to change to the LOTE with you. Once you have overcome this hurdle, she will automatically progress through sheer increased exposure and opportunities to use her language knowledge.

I hope I made clear with the above points that **there needs to be interaction between special activities and normal activities** in order to accomplish the transfer to using the LOTE all the time, that you need to plan the language use during a special activity so that it feeds into normal activities, then use as much LOTE as you know your child is familiar with - and just a little bit more. **Something your child is unfamiliar with you may want to translate into English ONCE**. If you translate a lot, your child will wait for your translation and not pay much attention in between. **Then use the new word or structure many, many times** in your LOTE. If you do not say the new word or structure many times, your child may not remember it. Try and use it in an 'or'-question. This will force your child to say it as well as hear it and make later recall even more likely.

Think up other situations for using the same new item or construction at your next play session and make it feed into everyday interaction.

The following is the progression you can expect from your child:

1. Initially, your child may just use individual LOTE words.
2. Then, your child may mix LOTE words into English utterances.
3. This may be followed by utterances with English sentence structure full of LOTE words.
4. LOTE sentence structure may emerge but continue to contain some English words.
5. Eventually, your child will use your LOTE as negotiated by the language contract between the two of you.
6. You may find ongoing fluctuation between stages (4) and (5) even if the child is proficient in the LOTE.

These stages are not set in stone. They derive from what we know about second language acquisition in immersion classrooms. Please take them as a guide only. I have included these stages to encourage you to continue and persist even if what you are hearing from your child sounds somewhat aberrant.

As always, making LOTE time FUN time. is paramount to success!

Part 5: Maintenance

The move from transition strategies (described in Part 4 above) to maintenance strategies will be progressive. If you are disciplined and consistent with transition strategies you will find yourself speaking less and less English with your child until one day you may say, *Hey, today we didn't speak any English to each other at all!* By then you are at much the same stage as parents who have always spoken the LOTE with their child.

Now all that applies to them applies to you as well. And vice versa! This article is for everybody. Much of it is simply a review of the basic strategies for ensuring his development in your LOTE.

Foremost, endeavour to speak your LOTE with your child all the time. Do not opt out because it would be easier to speak English. This is when she learns more! Cherish it as an opportunity for language extension. If you use the LOTE with your child wherever you go, whatever you do, for all topics - you provide the maximum amount of input you can possibly give her. So much is in your control. And it doesn't even cost any additional time or money!

Supplement this by reading books to your child at age-appropriate levels. Reading to your child gets much more interesting when you are past the picture book stage. Choose books *you* would like to read, about topics you would like to explore with your child. Supplement this with videos, which you watch together with your child. When you share books and videos you open up new topics to talk about. Best of all, they come with the necessary vocabulary to do so.

Don't give up playing with your child regularly, if not daily. While your child will continue to learn more language during play sessions than at other times of the day – with the exception of book reading maybe – play sessions will also ensure that your child will continue to have fun with your language and therefore no reason to reject it.

Language learning is *not* magic! The onus is on the parent. Our children only know as much of our language as we have provided. If our child is not progressing as we wish, we need to examine our own behaviour, not blame it on the child. That is actually very empowering for us as parents. If necessary, go back a step; ask yourself:

- *How can I provide more input?* e.g. be consistent; repeat yourself; repeat your child; extend and expand the LOTE situations; use media resources and other people resources, etc.
- *How can I change the input to serve my child's language learning needs?* e.g. choose activities which your child enjoys and totally avail yourself to the activity and your child; use simple language which can be decoded in the here and now; build on what the child already knows.
- *Am I really speaking the LOTE as much as I think I am?* Calculate the minutes a day that your child hears the LOTE from you – it might just not be enough. Consider in what situations and for what reasons you speak English with your child – can that be modified? Every time you speak the LOTE, you help your child's development of the LOTE; every time you speak English, you help your child's development of English. If I read a book to my child in English instead of the LOTE, how high is the proportion of LOTE reduction as opposed to English enhancement? For example, if you spend four hours a day talking the LOTE to your child (as a working parent) and he is awake 14 hours per day, the 20 minutes of reading a book at night constitute an additional 8.3% of LOTE exposure or an additional 3.3% of exposure to English. Where do you make the greater impact?

Two common concerns expressed by parents are whether the input they can provide in the LOTE is actually enough, and whether they should use the LTOE when they leave the safety of their homes. These two are intricately related. If parents continue speaking their home language wherever they go, they automatically provide more input than when they restrict the LOTE use to the home. They also afford their children the possibility of meeting other people who may overhear them talk and come and introduce themselves as speakers of the same language. This too increases the quantity of input for your child momentarily or even in the long run by making new friends this way.

Equally important is that you talk about different things when you are outside the house. New topics bring more and varied language into your child's life and may significantly increase the fun your child has when spending time with you. My own research into interaction strategies that work towards children becoming actively bilingual (Döpke Susanne: One Parent - One Language: An Interactional Approach. Benjamins, 1992) suggested a connection between children enjoying the interaction with their parents and using the words and phrases they hear their parents say to them. In my research, the children appeared to learn most from the parents who played with them frequently – and that was not necessarily the mother who had made looking after her child her fulltime job. In fact, in several of the families I studied it was the fathers who spent their evenings and weekends having fun with their children and towards whom the children oriented when learning language. In other words, the quality of interaction has the potential to offset the lack of quantity of language input. This is very empowering indeed, in particular for working parents! Thus: **Have fun with your children, keep playing, read books, explore new interests outside the home!**

Be realistic about achievements possible: As bilingual children in Australia grow up, they will always have more knowledge of English than of the home language because of the many new things they learn through the medium of English at school. This does in no way diminish what parents are achieving when giving their children the basis for understanding when the parents themselves or other people speak their LOTE with them, when they watch videos together or read books to them. When the time comes that they are put in a playing, studying or working situation in the parents' home country, they will fill the vocabulary gaps very quickly.

There might also remain some grammatical flaws which no amount of trying by parents can iron out because they are too irregular or too infrequent to be figured out on the basis of the somewhat limited input parents can provide when they are one of very few or the only speakers of that language for their children. Or parents may not be all that sure about some aspects of grammar themselves; may that be because they have forgotten themselves or because the language has changed back home since they have come to Australia, or may the parents be second generation or non-native speakers of the language they are passing on to their children. When measured against the ability to communicate, does grammatical flawlessness really matter? Many of us have only properly learned English after we came to Australia and are now very comfortable with the language and have satisfying careers.

In the big picture of cognitive development, family cohesion and keeping options open, the shortcomings are not even worth mentioning!