

## DEMYSTIFYING THE EARLY LEARNING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

***“My son doesn’t even speak Portuguese...”***

***Why learn English now?***

*Biological factors:* the capacity to apprehend different phonologies reaches its maximum potential before the age of three, beginning to lose ground after lateralization (6-8 years);

*Cognitive factors:* the capacity that young children have to process different sounds with ease is less conditioned by the auditory training that an adult already has to perceive sounds according to their own language;

*Psycho-affective factors:* with aging, a child’s natural spontaneity towards experimentation is replaced with a fear of making mistakes before others.

***“But won’t the learning of our language be affected?”***

No. Various longitudinal studies developed in the last decade indicate that the learning of a foreign language in a pre-school age potentiates gains at a linguistic level of the mother tongue. By being exposed to a new language, its phonology, vocabulary and phrasing, the children’s part of the brain responsible for language will be stimulated. And this applies not only to learning the mother tongue, but to any other second language.

***“What is the frequency and duration of the English classes?”***

The amount of time devoted to structured moments of initiation of the English language will increase with the age of the children. From 30 minutes per week in the gait acquisition rooms to 1 hour daily in the Kindergarten room. It is intended that the adaption to a second language occurs in a gradual form and in a way that doesn’t harm the children’s routines. However, and knowing the importance of the exposition towards a second language in the most assiduous manner, we will also have some challenges shared with parents, so they can give continuity to the work developed in the classroom, to potentiate the spontaneity and naturalness of the children’s learning.

***“And how do you teach such young children?”***

The lessons consist of moments with structured, involving and interactive activities, in small groups, where the ludic context arises as the primary space for this learning experience and the child is exposed exclusively to the English language. This is intended to foster the development of active listening skills and the oral comprehension and expression of the children, focusing on, as instruments, the dramatic and musical expression, arousing their natural curiosity to communicate.

***“My son has already tried English lessons. Will he have any advantage?”***

It depends. If you have followed up with that work, yes. If, on the other hand, he has been exposed to the English language in a sporadic way and without great continuity, it should not be expected. Learning a second language is not like learning to ride a bike – if you do not continue training, the most likely outcome is that you will forget how to do it. Therefore, it is important to understand the enormous potential that

children have to learn a second language in infancy. However, we must not forget that equally important is the continuity and consistency that must accompany that learning process.

***“When can we expect to see results?”***

As with the mother tongue, each child has their own rhythm to gain the necessary confidence to express themselves orally. Furthermore, we must not forget that a child is exposed to their mother language from the moment they are born (and for some months before, while still in the womb). Daily, the child listens to those that are close to him using that language and its phonology. In most cases, it is necessary to wait approximately one year for them to gain the tools that allow them to express themselves orally with meaning for the first time.

Thus, it is with respect towards this individual rhythm that we view the learning process. We can expect that the first words they use in English will refer to specific concepts or to expressions they use in their quotidian. Expect, therefore, ending up hearing simple phrases. And don't be surprised when your baby starts saying “bye-bye”. It is all normal, so enjoy the trip!