

Outreach Newsletter

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The SomaliCAN Outreach Newsletter is a bilingual publication of the Somali Community. If you have questions or story ideas for making our schools, hospitals or other community resource centers more effective in meeting the needs of special populations including new Americans and people with developmental disabilities, please do not hesitate to contact the SomaliCAN Outreach Newsletter editorial team. We can be reached by phone at 614-439-3034 or e-mail us at info@SomaliCAN.org.

Somalis Ask: How can I improve my child's Somali skills? Su'aasha Hooyo: Sidee baan ilmahayga af Soomaali fiican u baraa?

Somali Moms Ask: How can I improve my child's Somali language skills?

By: Sirad Shirdon

One question that I often get from Somali parents is how to improve children's Somali language skills. Exposure to language rich environments is crucial in developing children's oral and written language skills. A strong foundation in a child's first language (L1) will help facilitate a child's acquisition of their second language (L2). According to the *Linguistic Interdependence* theory (Cummins, 1979), while all languages have surface differences, there are competencies that are common amongst all languages. Some features of language common across all languages systems are content learning, abstract thinking, literacy and problem solving. A child is able to transfer these common competencies in their learning of their L2, which would thus facilitate their acquisition. For the Somali child, the higher their Somali language skills are developed, the higher their second language development will be. As a result, many researchers have advocated for the use of using children's L1 in the instruction of L2 oral and written language (e.g., Garcia, Kleifgan & Falchi, 2008; Castro, Paez, Dickinson & Frede, 2011).

For Somali children, there are many benefits to learning Somali including better acquisition of the English language. What are things Somali parents can do to improve their child's L1?

Turn off the TV!

Too many of our children spend a lot of time in front of the television or other gadgets (e.g., phones, ipads). Aside from the implications of watching TV on a young child's developing brain [see [Your child's developing brain and television](#)], children will develop an attachment to their favorite shows and early on, begin to develop positive associations with the English language.

While there is nothing wrong with this, for some children this can lead to an early privileging of the English language over the Somali language. I've interacted with many parents who lament that their preschool aged children refuse to speak Somali, in favor of English.

Early on, children understand the currency of the English language and want to use it exclusively, which results in the loss of their Somali language skills. Turning the TV off will improve children's social relationships with their parents, siblings and other relatives in the home; if the language of the home is Somali, then these improved social relationships will extend to positive associations with the Somali language.

Questioning

Engage your child in conversation by asking them questions. Begin with basic questions (e.g., what are you doing? What does the cow say? Are you hungry?), and when you think your child's understanding of the Somali language is improving move on to more complex questions (e.g., why are you sad?).

Commenting/Describing

Another way to build your child's language is to comment on everything in your environment. When you're engaging in a routine activity like washing the dishes or cooking dinner, use it as an opportunity to tell your child about what you're doing.

Be mindful of the words you're using—use action words, talk about the colors, the sizes, and shapes of the objects you are working with. Every environment provides opportunities to build children's Somali language skills!

Eeg bogga 3.

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Play with your child

Engaging in play with your child is a great opportunity to strengthen your relationship with your child, an activity which improves your child's cognitive development and a great opportunity for exposing your child to Somali. One example, is that when you're playing with blocks you can narrate what you are doing: "Look *hooyo*, I am stacking the blocks one on top of another. I'm gonna put the big one here, and the small one here. Let me count how many blocks there are...1-2-3-4-5. There are 5 blocks!" In the context of this one activity, you have exposed your child to a variety of Somali words including adjectives (e.g., big, small), prepositions (e.g., on) and numbers.

Share Somali stories, lullabies, songs and riddles with your child

One of the best ways to teach your child the Somali language is to share Somali stories, lullabies and riddles with your child. When I was young, my bedtime routine with my mother was for her to sing me to sleep with the children's song, '*Hoo wayye hoo waa*'.

My siblings and I also grew up with our parents sharing Somali children's stories including *Suul Cowre*, *Cigaal Shidaad*, and *Dhegdeer*. As a child, this improved my understanding of the Somali language and culture, and until today there is a feeling of tranquility when I recall these experiences, as their associated with a cherished childhood.

Building up on your child's vocabulary

When your child is beginning to speak Somali, they will begin with single words. When a child says a single word, respond with a phrase. For instance, if your child says 'car', you can respond with, 'that is a big car'. This will help your child in building up to phrases (e.g., big car, small car, red car, fast car etc.), and eventually to sentences.

Acknowledge and praise your child's attempts to speak Somali

I cannot stress the importance of praising children's attempts to speak Somali. In the diaspora, it is not uncommon for adults to comment on children's Somali language skills (or lack thereof). Comments at times can be derogatory, and reduce children's confidence when speaking Somali.

By praising children's Somali (as basic as it is) you improve children's confidence, and they are encouraged to continue trying to speak Somali. If a child speaks Somali, respond with praise: "I love the way you said that – your Somali is improving by the day!"

If corrective feedback is required because the child did not say a word/phrase/sentence properly, rather than saying: "That's wrong, this is how you say it," model the correct way of saying it. When done enough times, the child will pick up on this and self-correct.

Requesting

Sometimes, our children will not verbalize their requests because they believe their parents already know what they want. While that maybe true, by giving children what they want when they gesture (e.g., pull you or point to the object of their interest), you maybe unknowingly reinforcing the idea what children do not have to verbalize to request actions/objects. The next time your child points to an object, say "I can see you are pointing to something.

What are you pointing to?" Once they verbalize their request, respond with praise ("I love it when you ask me for things using your words") and then give them the item.

For the child, this will reinforce that using Somali words for making requests is indeed a good thing, an act they will continue as it allows them to achieve their goals (by way of effectively communicating their needs) and receive repeated praise.

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Immerse your child in Somali speaking environments

If you're able to, regularly visit with your Somali speaking relatives. Being in these contexts allow children to be exposed to the Somali language and provide many opportunities to practice their Somali skills.

Encourage your relatives to engage your children in Somali. Given that many Somalis live away from family members, connecting with your family virtually (e.g., Skype) may be a great idea. When my siblings and I were younger, we would record audio cassettes to send to our grandparents in Kenya.

While the day of audio cassettes are well behind us, technology has provided us with the ability to make video calls to family back home. If this is done regularly enough, not only will your child build strong relationships with your family back home, but this will provide them with ample opportunities to practice their Somali skills.

We hope that these tips are helpful for you, in your quests to help foster a love for the Somali language within your children.

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Tifaftirayaasha, hoggaanka iyo hawl wadeennada SomaliCAN waxay u rajaynayaan akhristayaasha wargeyskan sanad cusub oo farxad leh. Waxaan idiinka mahad celinaynaa in aad la socotaan wargeyska waxaan rajaynaynaa in aad nala wadaagi doontaan aragtidiinna 2016!

The editorial team, the leadership and associates of SomaliCAN wish all readers of Outreach very happy holidays. We thank you for following the newsletter and we look forward to your feedback as we welcome 2016!

... Somalis Ask: How can I improve my child's Somali skills? Su'aasha Hooyo: Sidee baan ilmahayga af Soomaali fiican u

Su'aasha Hooyooyinka Soomaaliyeed: Sidee baan ilmahayga af Soomaali fiican u baraa?

Qore: Sirad Shirdon

Su'aal in badan ay i weydiiyaan waaliddiinta Soomaaliyeed waa sidii ay u kobcin lahaayeen af Soomaaliga carruurtooda. In ay dhex joogaan goobo afka aad looga adeegsado ayaa aasaas u ah kobcinta ku hadalka iyo qoraalka afka.

In si wanaagsan uu ilmuhu u barto afkiisa hooyo waxay jidka u furaysaa in ilmuhu si sahlan u barto afka labaad. Sida ay qabto aragtida iku tiirsanaanta afafka (Cummins, 1979), in kasta oo ay afafku dusha sare kala duwan yihiin, waxaa jira xirfado ka dhexeeya afafka oo dhan.

Waxyaabaha ay afafku wadaagaan oo ka wada dhexeeya waxaa ka mid ah barashada erayada, fikradaha dhalanteedka, akhriska iyo xallinta mashaakilka.

Ilmuhu wuxuu adeegsan karaa xirfadahan ay afafku wadaagaan marka uu baranayo af labaad, taas oo sahlaya barashadiisa. Ilmaha Soomaaliyeed, haddii uu si wanaagsan u barto af Soomaaliga, wuxuu sidaas oo kale si wanaagsan u baranayaa afka labaad.

Sidaas awgeed, waxay cilmi baarayaal badani u ololeeyeen in la adeegsado carruurta afkooda hooyo si loo baro af labaad ku hadalkiisa iyo qoraalkiisa (sida, Garcia, Kleifgan & Falchi, 2008; Castro, Paez, Dickinson & Frede, 2011).

Carruurta Soomaaliyeed faa'iidooyin badan ayaa ugu jira barashada af Soomaaliga waxaana ka mid ah in ay Ingiriiska si wanaagsan u bartaan.

Haddaba, maxay samayn karaan waalidka Soomaaliyeed si ay carruurtooda u baraan afka hooyo?

Demi TV-ga

Carruurta Soomaaliyeed waxay waqti badan hor fadhiyaan TV-ga ama qalabka kale sida telefoonada. Saamaynta ay daawashada teleefishinku u leedahay maskaxda soo koraysa ee ilmaha yar ka sokoow [eeg [Maskaxda soo koraysa ee ilmaha iyo teleefishinka](#)], carruurta waxay ku xirmayaan barnaamijyo ay xiiseeyaan iyaga oo yaraantaba door bida af Ingiriiska. In kasta oo aan waxba ku jabnayn arrintaas, waxay carruurta qaar ku keentaa in ay af Ingiriiska jeclaadaan, booska af Soomaaliga. Waxaan la kulmay waalid badan oo ku calaalaya in carruurtooda aan iskuulka gaarini ay ka diideen in ay af Soomaali ku hadlaan, iyaga oo raba Ingiriis. Xilli hore ayay carruurta fahmayaan in af Ingiriiska lagu wada hadlo waxayna ku talagalaan in ay keligiis ku hadlaan taas oo keenta in af Soomaaligu ka lumo. Deminta TV-gu waxay kor u qaadaysaa xiriirka bulsho ee ilmuhu la leeyahay waalidka, walaalaha iyo ehelka kale ee guriga jooga; haddii afka guriga looga hadlo uu yahay Soomaali, xiriirka bulsho ee ilmuhu sameeyo waxaa ka dhalanaya in ilmuhu jeclaaado af Soomaaliga.

Weydiimaha

La sheekayso ilmahaaga oo weydii su'aalo. Ku billow su'aalo fudud sida maxaad samaynaysaa? ii sheeg ci'ga saca? ma gaajaysan tahay? Oo marka aad is tiraahdo ilmahaagu wuu fahmi karaa af Soomaaliga, weydii su'aalo ka adag sida maxaad u murugaysan tahay?

Faallada/Faahfaahinta

Si kale oo aad ku dhisi karto afka ilmaha waa in aad faallo ka bixiso wax walba oo degaanka ah. Markii aad hayso hawl caadi ah sida weel dhaqidda ama cunto karinta, waa fursad aad uga sheekayn karto ilmahaaga waxa aad samaynayso. Ka feker erayada aad isticmaalayso. Adeegso ficillo, ka hadal midabka, weynanka, qaabka, iyo waxyaabaha aad hawsha ku qabanayso. Meel walba waxaa taalla fursad aad ku dhisi karto af Soomaaliga carruurta. *Eeg bogga 6aad.*

...Somalis Ask: How can I improve my child's Somali skills? Su'aasha Hooyo: Sidee baan ilmahayga af Soomaali fiican u

La ciyaar ilmahaaga

In aad ciyaarta kala qayb qaadato ilmaha waa sida ugu wanaagsan ee aad xiriir wanaagsan kula samaysan karto ilmaha, waana hawl sare u qaadaysa korriinka garaadka ilmaha iyada oo aad ilmaha af Soomaaliga baraysid. Tusaale ahaan, haddii aad caagag iskula xirxirayso, waxaad oran kartaa “Fiiri, hooyo. Waxaan caagagga ka saarayaa korka midba midka kale. Waxaan dhigayaa kan weyn halkan, kan yarna halkan. Aan tiriyo inta caag... 1-2-3-4-5. Waa shan caag!” Ciyaartaas yarta ah, waxaad ilmahaaga u sheegtay erayo af Soomaali ah oo kala duwan sida sifooyin (weyn, yar), meeleeeyayaal (kor), iyo tiro.

U sheeg ilmahaaga sheeko Soomaali, sheeko xariiro, heeso iyo hal xiraale

Siyaabaha ugu wanaagsan ee aad ilmaha af Soomaali u bari kartid waxaa ka mid ah in aad u sheegto sheeko Soomaali, sheeko xariiro, iyo xujooyin. Markii aan yaraa, hooyaday waxaa caadi u ahayd in ay igu seexiso heesta carruuredda “huuwaayeey huuwa”. Aniga iyo walaalahay waxaan kale oo ku barbaarnay in ay waalidkeen nooga sheekeeyaan sheeko carruuredda Soomaaliyeed sida Suul Cawro, Cigaal Shiidaad, iyo Dhegdheer. Markii aan yaraa, sidaas ayay iigu fududaatay in aan fahmo af Soomaaliga iyo dhaqankaba oo illaa iyo maanta farxad baan dareemaa markaan soo xasuusto sheekooyinkan maaddaama ay ku saabsan yihiin farxaddii carruurnimo.

Kordhi erayada ilmaha

Marka ilmahaagu billaabo in uu af Soomaali ku hadlo, wuxuu ka billaabayaa erayo keli keli ah. Marka ilmuhu ku dhaho hal eray, ugu jawaab dhowr eray. Tusaale ahaan, markii ilmuhu yiraahdo “baabuur”, ugu jawaab “waa baabuur weyn.” Waxay sidaasi u fududaynaysaa in ilmuhu barto erayo isku xiran (sida, baabuur weyn, baabuur yar, baabuur cas, baabuur xiimaya, iwm.) illaa iyo jumlado dhan.

Qir oo ku ammaan ilmaha marka uu isku dayo ku hadalka Soomaaliga

Waa arrin aad u ahmiyad weyn in ilmaha lagu ammaano marka uu isku dayo in uu af Soomaali ku hadlo. Qurbaha waxaa iska caadi ah in dadka waaweyn ay wax ka dhahaan aqoonta af Soomaaliga ee ilmaha (ama aqoon la'aanta). Mar mar hadallo af lagaaddo ah oo hoos u dhigaya kalsoonida ilmaha marka uu af Soomaali ku hadlayo ayaa la sameeyaa. In la ammaano af Soomaaliga ilmaha si kasta oo uu u hooseeyo waxay sare u qaaddaa kalsoonida ilmaha taas oo ku guubaabisa in ilmuhu isku dayo ku hadalka af Soomaaliga. Haddii ilmo af Soomaali ku hadlo, ugu jawaab ammaan “waan u bogay sida aad ugu dhawaaqday eraygaas. Af Soomaaligaagu maalin walba waa soo hagaagayaa.” Haddii sixitaan loo baahdo oo ilmuhu si aan saxnayn wax u dhaho, ha dhihin waa khalad ee erayga ku celceli illaa uu kala qabsanayo. Marka aad tiro ku filan ku celceliso, ilmuhu wuu la qabsanayaa isagaana isa saxaya.

Codsiga

Mararka qaar, ilmeheennu afka kama sheegaan waxa ay u baahan yihiin waayo waxay aaminsanyihiin waalidku in uu yaqaanno wax walba oo ay rabaan. Iyadoo sidaas ay run ahaan karto, haddii aad siiso ilmaha waxa ay rabaan markii ay kuu tilmaamaan sida in gacanta ay ku qabtaan oo kuu jiidaan waxay doonayaan, waxaad gacan ka geysanaysaa in ilmuhu aanay waxba oran oo aanay afka ka sheegin waxa ay doonayaan. Markii ilmuhu farta wax kuugu fiiqo, ku dheh wax baad farta ku fiiqaysaaye waa maxay? Marka ilmuhu afka ka sheego waxa uu rabo, ugu jawaab ammaan (waan jeclahay in aad waxa aad rabto erayadaada iigu sheegto” oo sii shayga. Ilmaha tani waxay ku guubaabinaysaa in af Soomaali uu ku sheego waxa uu rabo ay wanaagsan tahay, sidaas ayuuna ku wadayaa maaddaama uu dantiisa ku gaarayo (isaga oo baahidiisa sheeganaya) oo ammaan joogto ah helaya.

Eeg bogga 7aad.

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Ilmaha dhex gee meelaha af Soomaaliga looga hadlo

Haddii ay suurto gal tahay, si joogto ah u booqo qaraabada af Soomaaliga guryahooda looga hadlo. In ay meelahaas tagaan waxay carruurta u sahlaysaa in ay maqlaan af Soomaali waxayna u tahay fursad ay ilmuhu ku adeegsadaan af Soomaaliga. U sheeg qaraabadaada in ay ilmahaaga kula sheekaystaan af Soomaali. Maaddama qoysaska Soomaaliyeed ay ku kala firirsanyihiin daafaha caalamka, in aad ehelka kula xiriirto qalabka la iska arko sida Skype waa arrin wanaagsan. Markii aniga iyo walaalahay aan yaryarayn waxaan cajalado u duubi jirnay ayeeyooyinkeen iyo awoowayaasheen oo Kenya joogay. In kasta oo haatan aan la joogin waqtigii cajaladaha maqalka ah la iska duubi jiray, farsamada casriga ah waxay suurta gelisay in la isku wici karo fiidiyowga. Haddii si joogto ah xiriirkaas loo sameeyo, arrintani waxay ilmahaagu ku baranayaan ehelkaaga dalkii jooga iyaga oo af Soomaaligana si wanaagsan u baranaya.

Waxaan rajaynayaa in talooyinkan ay wax ka taraan dedaalkaaga aad ugu jirto in ilmahaaga aad ku beerto jacaylka af Soomaaliga.

Tixraac

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