

English Language Learners: Questions and Concerns

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Q4: How long does it take a child to learn English?

There are many factors that may influence the speed of learning English and the proficiency level achieved.

For instance:

- Mother tongue proficiency (Sousa, 2011; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008)
- Time the child has been or is exposed to English (Alberta, 2009)
- Socio-economic status (Alberta Education, 2009; Alberta Education, 2009)
- Degree to which the child's mother tongue and English are grammatically aligned (Sousa, 2011)
- Distance between the child's native and the English culture (Sousa, 2011)
- A child's natural aptitude to process language (Alberta Education, 2009)

All these have an impact on how fast and how well a child will learn English.

The research does suggest, however, that it can take anywhere between 2-4 years for a child to acquire the level of social language and 5-7 years to acquire the level of academic language (Alberta Education, 2009).