

# parenthood

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## Book Review

Review by Kwong Howe Leng

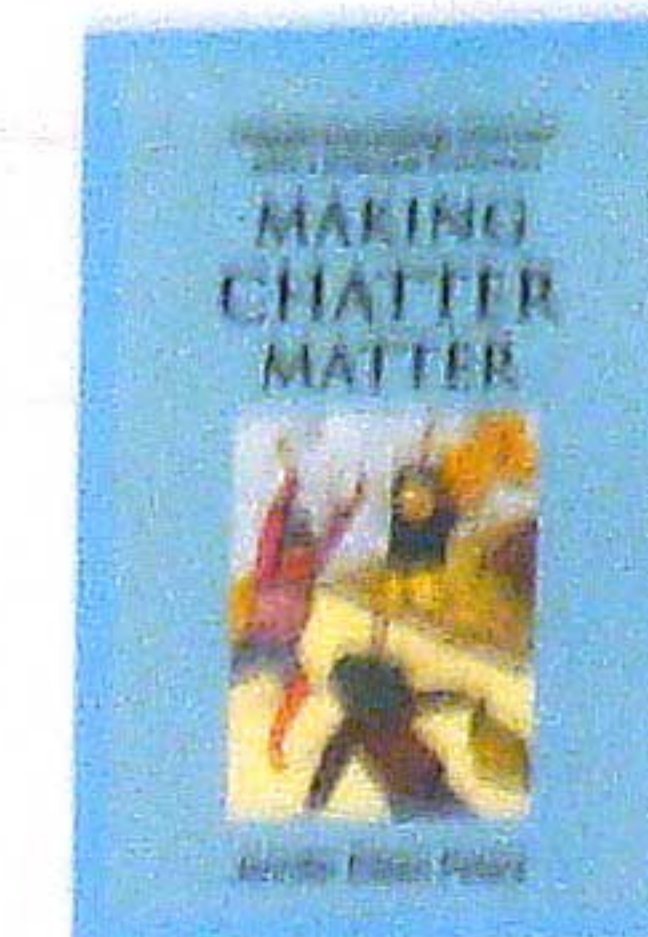
## Raising multilingual chatterboxes

### Making Chatter Matter - Understanding Language Impairment within a Multilingual Environment

By Jennifer Eileen Peters

Publisher: Nurture books, 2006

ISBN: 983-43239-0-5



Language is what connects us to others and is deemed the most important form of communication, said Jennifer Peters in *Making Chatter Matter*. She continued that as every country has individual characteristics, in Malaysia it is common that several languages are spoken in a household. However, in a multilingual environment a language-impaired child may find it harder to retrieve the proper word for an object because he was exposed to more than one language. This predicament may be mistakenly considered as a vocabulary problem. If children with language-impairment are not properly guided, they may grow up with poor self-image and have difficulty initiating conversations.

Peters, a Speech and Language Pathologist had difficulties when she started to work in Malaysia after graduation. Frustrated by the lack of books that address language problems among children living in a multilingual environment like Malaysia, she embarked on a mission to write this book specially for parents raising multilingual children. In addition, the book addresses language impairment in children with three chapters dedicated to this area.

While this book is meant for parents and supposedly for the consumption of the general public, I find it textbook-sy and a bit dry. It can be dull for light reading. This may be because Peters was also writing for students of speech and language pathology. However, Peters has reminded parents that this book is not meant to be a quick solution.

This 203-page soft cover book has 11 chapters comprising topics such as:

- (Introduction to) language and communication
- historical perspective (how children acquire and develop language for communication)
- learning
- language use in multilingual Malaysia
- language impairment
- descriptions of linguistic categories
- effects of language impairment
- strategies to enhance early communications skills
- teaching your child
- suggested activities that can promote language development
- frequently asked questions

If you are interested in jumpstarting your child's communication skills, go straightaway to chapter eight. Here, Peters suggested approaches that can be incorporated into your daily interaction with your child. Among some of the strategies are using routines, avoiding baby talk or imitating a child's speech and listening to your child enthusiastically.

Chapter nine should interest parents with a child with language impairment as Peters introduced two methods to teach these children. The methods are prompting/cuing techniques that guide and show the child what is taught or reinforcers, in which reward is given as a motivation.

I find Chapter 10 the most helpful of all. Here, Peters devised activities dedicated to improve language skills, comprehension, attention control and listening skills, expressive language skills and exploratory, imaginative and social play among children.

If you are pressed for time, check out Chapter 11 for frequently asked questions. It includes warning signs to language impairment and what to expect during a speech-language evaluation. You should also be able to get a general idea of what to do if your child has language impairment or whether intervention is required. If you would like to skim through each chapter, Peters has a summary for each chapter under 'at a glance'.

Peters has painstakingly compiled an extensive bibliography list and is useful if you are looking for extra reading materials on speech-language. The glossary will come in handy if you come across words that you do not understand. The book is also equipped with a list of organisations, bodies and societies, and support groups complete with mailing address, an email address or webpage.

#### Strengths:

Lots of examples; extensive bibliography, glossary and resources; summary at the end of each chapter, informative FAQs

#### Weaknesses:

Dry and technical in some chapters; textbook-sy