



NEWSLETTER # 2 – June 2020

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## 1. Introduction

After our transnational meeting in January 2020., we started developing and testing our first materials. During the lock-down period we had to review our planning. But there was a lot that could be done. We continued to work on the theoretical framework, looked for creative ideas for the next steps and where possible we started working with parents and practitioners via various social media.

## 2. The first version of the booklet, by Hilde De Smedt

This booklet will be an important output instrument in Planting Languages. This instrument will focus on parents' individual reflections and on the development of the language strategy they have chosen. Based upon the theoretical framework and our depth interviews we selected eight topics for a step by step reflection. For each topic there is a short informative introduction and a worksheet parents can first fill in separately and compare afterwards.

At this moment we are in the testing phase. Each partner will test this booklet with 15 families and will engage other practitioners to test as well. Based upon these experiences and feedback a second version will be developed. We briefly describe the different topics of the step by step reflection:

### **1. Looking in the mirror... thinking about yourself. Reflecting on your proficiency in different languages.**

*For most parents it will be easier to express themselves in and communicate with their child in their first language. But parents may feel they are more fluent in another language or have similar levels of proficiency in different languages. All this may influence their language choice at home.*



## **2. Looking in the mirror... thinking about yourself. Languages that have a special meaning for you.**

People who speak the same language can have very different feelings about it. So when making language choices, parents should reflect on what the different languages mean to them in particular. A language can be a way to pass on cultural values, customs and traditions.

## **3. Opening the doors to family and friends (about their social network).**

Family and friends can be very helpful in creating a strong environment for the different languages parents wish their child to acquire. But others among the family and friends may try to impose certain language choices, express a lot of doubts or criticize certain choices.

## **4. Reflecting about short and long term language goals for your child - positive beliefs and realistic goals.**

In this part parents reflect about how to differentiate between priorities during the first years and objectives to focus on later.

## **5. Choosing a language strategy at home. A choice to be made together.**

The One Parent One Language approach is well known, but does not fit into the daily reality of a lot of families. Parents can use more than one language if they try to focus on the good quality of the language(s) they speak and if they support each other.

## **6. Supporting your child in daily life - Learning activities.**

A variety of activities encourages language learning at home: reading aloud, singing, playing and using small talk during all daily activities. Watching television programs and the well-considered use of online activities can create some extra input. Activities should support comprehension, speaking and motivation.

## **7. Supporting your child in daily life - Social contacts.**

For each language a child learns, she/he needs "a community of practice". This means that parents should create opportunities for the child to talk and experience the need to express her/his feelings and thoughts. The extended family, the cultural community and especially peers can play a crucial role.

## **8. Looking to the future. What you may be confronted with on your path.**

Multilingual education is a dynamic process. Even when parents make clear decisions on language use from the start, they will experience that life itself can push them towards another direction. Starting day-care or school, or the arrival of siblings will ask for new reflections that take into account both language learning as well as the wellbeing of all family members.

### 3. Looking in the mirror... thinking about yourself, by Soumaya Mousselli

In the home country, speaking one's first language is self-evident because you use it every day. Only when you move to another country do you notice that the language is important and beautiful. (Syrian father in the Netherlands)

We will discuss the second topic of the booklet in more detail to give a better picture of the content.

Introduction to this topic: Languages are not just systems of communication. Languages define who you are and how you view the world. People who speak the same language can have very different feelings about it. So when you are making language choices, you should reflect on what the different languages mean to you in particular. A language can be a way to pass on cultural values, customs and traditions. It could also be the case that your cultural values are not strongly tied to a language and that other feelings and thoughts determine your language choices. Communication with your child in a given language can be experienced as more 'natural' than using another one. You should feel culturally and emotionally 'at home' in the language you put forward in your communication with your child.

Here is the worksheet used in the first experimental version.

My first language is a cocoon. A pleasure to be able to have fun with the language, to express whatever we want, with the nuances. It's my past, it's my childhood, my family and my roots. (Slovak mother in Germany.)

**Parent 1**

**Topic 2: Looking in the mirror... thinking about yourself**  
**Languages that have a special meaning for you**

Write your languages in the heart. Closer to the centre = stronger emotional connection.  
Draw lines to match each language to one of the below concepts.

Identity

Family

Culture

.....

I am most attached to .....

5

## 4. Extra background information, by Antri Kanikli

We provide additional background information for each topic. We will then elaborate more on certain aspects of the theme. Antri Kanikli (UCLAN, Cyprus) here provides extra information for this topic.

"One of the aspects we chose to focus on was home language transmission. Home languages serve as a link between generations. They carry the cultural values and beliefs of a community. If the parents want to remain members of their ethnolinguistic community, they feel the need to transmit their home language to their children, because they are proud of it. Studies on home language maintenance or loss (Wong Fillmore 2000, Spolsky 2004, 2007, among others) suggest that home languages form a strong bond between family members, which enhances family cohesion (Schwartz 2010). However, there are cases where parents choose not to transmit their home language to their children. The booklet examines the reasons why this may occur, so that professionals are aware of them."

## 5. Creative ideas to discuss multilingualism with parents, by Anna Martowicz

Do you run workshops for parents or parent and toddler groups? Or maybe you carry out individual consultations with young mums and/or dads? Below you will find some creative ideas on how to help parents communicate their language choices and reflect on these choices. You will also find information on children's language use and language development. These little visual aids can be a great starting point for discussing the benefits of multilingualism and the importance of family language policy.



### 1. Origami bookmark to make an announcement

This small gift can be given to relatives and friend when the baby is born. The parents write down their child's name and the names of the languages they are planning to raise their baby with. You can follow the instructions for making origami on YouTube NIET ALLE LINKS ZICHTBAAR:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3T2Uc3glMDY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZs8lXwqQDg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYKOy9EZdZ0>



## 2. How to grow a plant, how to grow a language?

Here is a creative idea you can use to discuss what is required to promote a successful multilingual upbringing.

a) Ask the parent(s): When you want to grow a plant at home from scratch, what do you need? (the answers we are looking for: soil, seeds, water, light, fertilizer)

b) Draw 6 pots on a piece of paper and ask the parent(s) to describe what the exact steps are for growing a plant. Use each step as a metaphor to talk about creating a nurturing environment for developing a language in a child and write down the components as listed below:

1. soil - respect for all our cultures and languages at home ONLY THERE??
2. adding seeds – what languages are we sowing? (write down their names)
3. watering – languages need regular love and flexibility
4. sunlight – the language input coming from other people all around
5. fertilizer – playing with the child, singing songs, reciting nursery rhymes, reading books
6. fully formed plant - confident, multilingual child



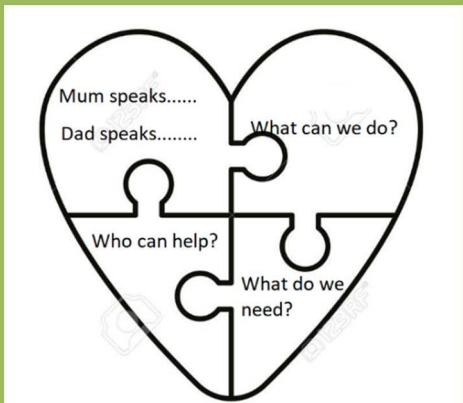
## 2. Let's plan together

This heart-shape jigsaw template will help to structure ideas about what can be done in a specific language and family situation to support multilingual language development.

Under "What can we do?" write down the kind of activities that will help your child develop the languages you want them to learn (talking to the child, singing, visiting family and friends, participating in parent and toddler groups).

Under "Who can help?" write down the names of people who can provide additional language input to your child on a regular basis.

Under "What do we need" write down what qualities (patience, flexibility etc.) and what resources (books, CDs) will be helpful.



## 6. Some advice formulated by Isabelle Barth

*Question: Why it is important to read aloud to your children when you raise them with two languages*



What does reading aloud have to do with our children's bilingualism? As parents, we all read aloud to our children when they are small, because they cannot read on their own. We read to tell a story and also to spend time together. We read to encourage our children to become readers.

Reading aloud also helps to develop the imagination and creativity, as the child can visualize scenarios. He/she can identify with the characters.

Reading aloud has many advantages. It allows for interaction between parent and child. It is a moment of quietness, a time that parent and child share together, during which they escape from the real world to enter the world of the story, thanks to the words, their musicality, the language and the illustrations.

Reading aloud helps the child to learn the pronunciation of words. It allows the children to enrich their vocabulary; in fact, by listening, the child learns and acquires the words necessary to speak a particular language.

*So what about the bilinguals?* Ideally, parents should read in their first language, the one they know best, whose music and pronunciation they know. By listening to a story once in one language, then in the other language, children will be able to learn the pronunciation of both languages, and discover words in both languages. Reading offers a great quiet and pleasant way to support children's development of skills in each language.

Reading is important because:

- it creates links between the child and the parent who reads,
- it helps to develop the understanding of the language,
- it enriches the vocabulary of the person reading or being read to.

It is also very important for the music of the language and because it helps to discover cultures behind stories and words.





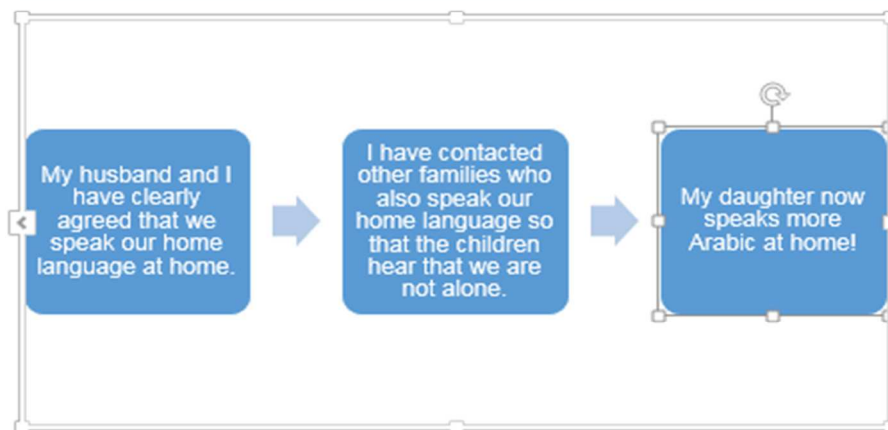
## 7. Language portrait, by Marga Van Mil and Carien Deutman

In this topic you can discover more about one family's specific experiences and the importance of peers.

### The importance of peers



Seela, 4 years old, notices that there are not many other children who speak Arabic at school and she suddenly speaks Dutch with her older sister at home. She says to her mother: Why are we different? I don't want to speak Arabic, I think that's stupid! Mother is very emotional about this. The bond she has with her children is one that exists in the Arabic language. If she cannot speak to her children, the bond will become less strong. That hurts.

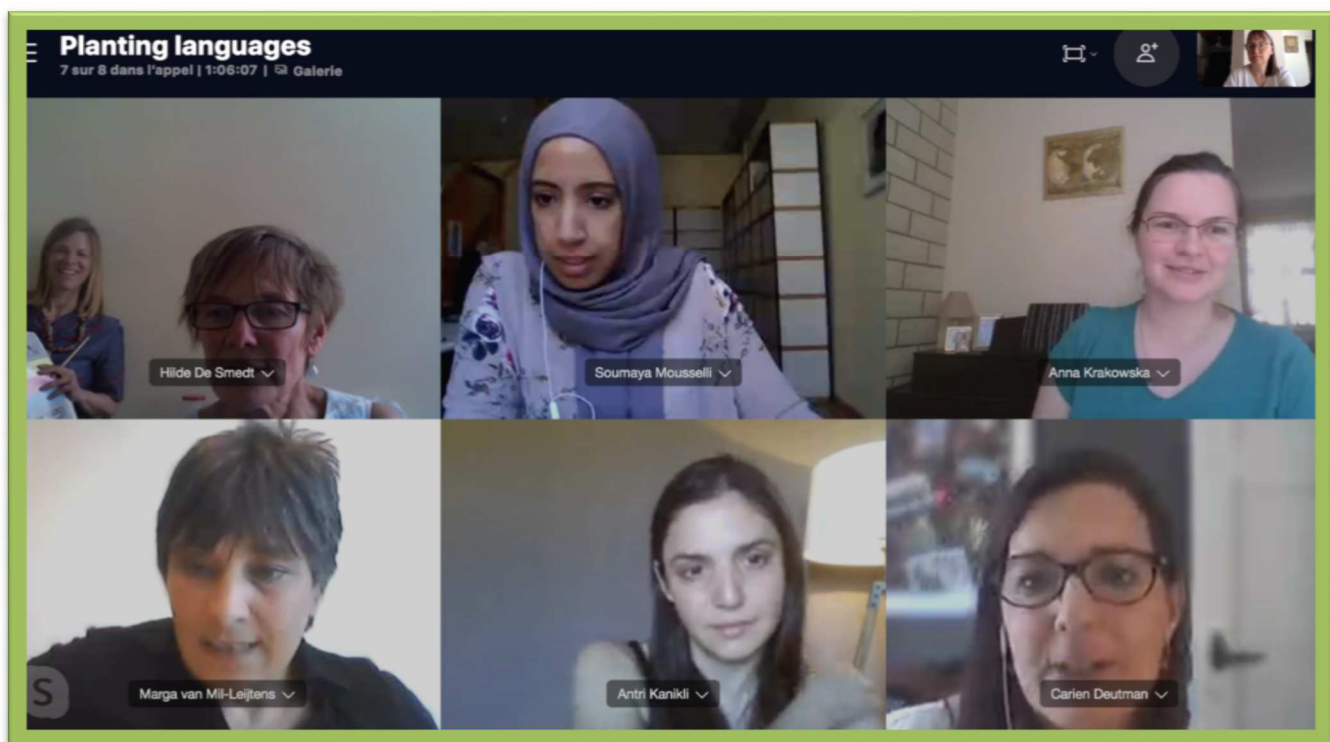


Extra tip: Arabic lessons after school and more attention for home languages at school.

Chatting with nephews or nieces in the home country can give an extra boost!

## 8. Activities to stimulate home languages during the past period of lockdown, by Patrizia Civetta

At Foyer, we often tell parents that a lot of talking to children is very important for their language development. During this difficult lockdown period, we realized that parents do not necessarily realize this. Learning language means so much! It's about learning words, having conversations, understanding assignments, asking specific questions. That is why we are starting a new project PIM @ home in which we make short films that offer tips to parents that are easy to put into practice. Parents can explore language with their children in a playful way using every day materials. For example: in one of the films parents discover how they can practice language with their children through taking about socks.



### Online meeting of the Planting languages' team in Corona times

On June 15, we held an online seminar called **A picture of Family Language Policies**, followed by an overview of our European project. You can find the audio and visuals on [our website](#)