



NEWSLETTER # 3 – October 2020

## In this issue

- 1 Intro
- 1 One year into the project
- 2 Choosing a language strategy at home – a choice to be made together
- 3 Parents facing language attrition and anxiety
- 4 Language advice
- 5 Language portrait in Greek
- 6 A partner in the picture: Multilingual Café
- 6 The impact of the project
- 7 Articles



*All these topics were discussed in our second meeting. Everything went online because of Covid-19. But Marga and Carien still gave us the feeling of being in Leiden.*

## Intro

Covid-19 posed new challenges for our project. We were looking for alternative ways to reach parents and practitioners and were forced to hold our transnational meeting online. Nevertheless, we were able to take new steps in the development of our tools. You can read more about our progress in this newsletter. We also draw attention to the topics 'language attrition' and 'language anxiety' as important factors in language maintenance. And we give advice on how to create the need for children to use the different languages.

## One year into the project. By Patrizia Civetta

*An overview of our activities.*

Exactly one year ago Planting Languages started conducting research to deepen our understanding of the way multilingual parents elaborate their Family Language Policy.

**A theoretical framework** has been written and is an important point of reference for the materials we make. It will be deepened over the course of the project. Soon you can expect some articles on the website taking up some important issues.

**The second version of the reflection booklet for parents** has been tested with a consistent number of families and now we are working at the definitive layout.

Some interviews with the parents have been filmed in order to **create videos**, which can be inspiring for other multilingual parents. The videos will be ready at the end of October and will be tested on other multilingual families.

We are now working on **the first version of the reminder** which will contain advices for parents and also reflections on how they could implement their insights in their own specific context.

A first concept of **the passport** will see the light within the following weeks. The passport will help parents to communicate their own choices and strategies on multilingual education to others.

Further developments can be followed on our website [www.plantinglanguages.eu](http://www.plantinglanguages.eu).



## Choosing a language strategy at home – a choice to be made together.

By Anna Martowicz

The line presented above is a title of topic 5 in the reflection booklet for parents that we have been preparing as part of the "Planting Languages" project.

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"A good parent is a prepared parent. After all there are two parents, it's not only one person. It's two mentalities, two brains thinking. It is important to know, share the knowledge and persist on the knowledge and agree on a plan rather than start to learn, agree and disagree when you have the child" (Greek father, living in the UK with his Polish wife and two young daughters)

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The first three topics encourage each parent individually to reflect on his/her **language competences**, **emotional attachment** to the languages he/she speaks as well as to think about the people around him/her who may support the family in the multilingual upbringing of their children. The fourth topic is an invitation to reflect on **the goals** that each parent has for the child in relation to the various languages and various skills (understanding speaking, reading and writing) that he/she wants the child to develop in each of these languages.

These pieces of information, when put together, enable the family to develop their family-specific language approach. It is at this point that the parents should sit together and look carefully into the conclusions they drew based on their own reflections and the reflections of their partner. Only where these two perspectives come together **a successful planning** for the future may start – i.e. planning in which not only strategies and goals are agreed on, but also relevant issues are raised to avoid tension or misunderstandings later. For this reason, topic 5 of our booklet (and all following topics) have worksheets to be filled in by both parents together. The first worksheet of topic 5 invites the parents to agree on which language(s) each of them is going to use with the child and what language they are going to use between themselves. The second one is a very important reflection on the amount of time the child is exposed to each language at present and forms a good basis for the reflections that will follow in later topics – how to support multilingual development in everyday life and how to plan for the future.

Both parents

**TOPIC 5**  
**CHOOSING A LANGUAGE STRATEGY AT HOME.**  
**A CHOICE TO BE MADE TOGETHER**

You have reflected on your language competences. You have reflected on your emotional attachment to the languages you speak. You already have an idea about who may help you with raising your child multilingually. You have set your goals. Now you are ready to develop your family-specific language approach. It is good to plan your strategy as early as possible. Bear in mind, though, that you may need to change your plans, so you need to be flexible. You should develop this plan together to avoid tension or discussions afterwards. If you are a single parent, discuss your plan with someone you feel close to.

Parent 1  
Language 1

Parent 2  
Language 1

Parent 1  
Language 2

Parent 2  
Language 2

Which language do you speak to each other?  
.....

Write down the languages you will use in your daily communication with your child.

Both parents

**TOPIC 5**  
**CHOOSING A LANGUAGE STRATEGY AT HOME.**  
**A CHOICE TO BE MADE TOGETHER**

Example

FRANCOIS POLSKI  
DUTCH

Mark the amount of time your child hears/learns each language over a regular week.

## Parents facing language attrition and anxiety.

By Hilde de Smedt

*This topic is part of the further deepening of our theoretical framework. The motivation is the following: Even when parents choose their mother tongue and experience this language as their best language, we often see uncertainty regarding the language support of the children. We briefly explain two aspects that we would like to draw attention to.*

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**LANGUAGE ATTRITION =**  
*a decline in a speaker's proficiency. Often linked with less use/none use (Köpke)*

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### Language attrition

Köpke describes language attrition as 'a decline in a speaker's proficiency. Often linked with less use/none use'. (In: De Houwer, 2019). It is therefore about intragenerational loss (within one person) and not the possible loss from one generation to another (intergenerational). The latter is called 'language loss'.

There is no direct linear relationship between length of residence and attrition. First years of immersion (recent migration of refugee context) are particularly vulnerable. Languages that remain completely separate are less conducive to attrition, frequent code-switching on the other hand can lead to interference and more attrition. In Brussels we observe for example less attrition in the Turkish community and stronger attrition in the Moroccan community using Arabic, Berber and French with more mixed language use. Keijzer and De Bot (2019) underline that the lexical domain is especially vulnerable to attrition. Köpke (2007) noted that literacy - through the multimodal coding it induces - can attenuate attrition.

### Language Anxiety

MacIntyre (1999) defined language anxiety as 'the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language'. This definition is also applicable on the use of the first language.

Handling these feelings is more challenging for transnational family members than for language learners in a foreign language classroom setting (Sevinc and Dewaele 2018). Anxiety leads easily to blaming for not receiving enough or good support in one of the target languages: children blaming parents, parents blaming children, parents blaming the school system. Neither should we underestimate these families' experiences during their visits to their home country and the impact they have on the families.

**In Planting Languages** we wish to take these feelings into account because they can cause insecurity and inhibition. We try to do this in several ways:

- by reflecting on language skills (topic 1) but always with the message that parents can improve them.
- accentuating that not only skills but also attachment to a language (topic 2) is a sustaining motivation to use a language
- by showing parents the different ways of supporting language (topic 6)
- by presenting the language education of the children as teamwork where they can use their social network. (topic 7)

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**LANGUAGE ANXIETY=**  
*the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language (MacIntyre)*

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## References:

First language attrition. From bilingual to monolingual proficiency?

Barbara Köpke p. 348-365 (In De Houwer, 2019)

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## Language advice

By Marga Van Mil and Carien Deutman

*About: Language exposure and need to talk*



We regularly hear that parents and professionals think that children are 'sponges' and will develop a language if you just talk to them. However, it is not that simple. Being exposed to language is not enough to start speaking a language. It is just as important to create situations in which interaction can take place: language use between two or more people. This creates the need for the child to talk. Consider, for example, video calling with family abroad, inviting friends who speak the same language, participate in a parent group in your language, etc. Extra effort to maintain the home language (s) is therefore important.

When parents raise their child(ren) multilingual they risk loss of the mother tongue over generations, mostly because of limited use of the language. So make sure that your child feels the need to use all the languages. Do you want to know more about this issue? Listen to the podcast:

<https://kletsheadspodcast.nl/2020/06/30/how-to-plan-for-a-bilingual-baby-english-edition/>

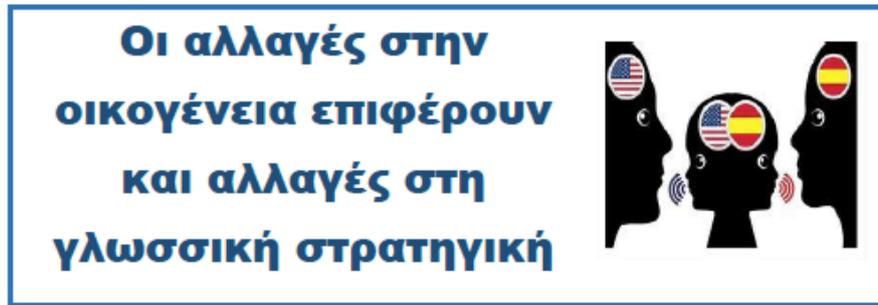


# Language portrait in Greek.

By Antri Kanikli

Our Language portraits are a way to share experiences.

This is a family portrait about a family where they started with the One Parent One Language strategy (OPOL). This turned out fine for the first child. Afterwards, when the twins arrived it was difficult to maintain this strategy and the parents had some worries. Now they sometimes use the majority language and realize that it doesn't have to affect the acquisition of the mother language.



«Ο γυναικολόγος μας, ο οποίος είναι επίσης μέλος πολύγλωσσας οικογένειας, μας πρότεινε τη στρατηγική του 'ενός γονιού-μιας γλώσσας'.»

Μητέρα: «Στο γιο μου μιλούσα μόνο Πολωνικά. Ακόμα και όταν ήταν στο στήπι ο σύζυγός μου, ο οποίος δε γνωρίζει Πολωνικά, προτιμούσα να πω το ίδιο πράγμα δύο φορές, μια στον άντρα μου και μια στο γιο μου.

Τώρα με τη γέννηση των διδύμων, δεν μπορώ να εφαρμόσω αυστηρά τη στρατηγική του ενός γονιού-μιας γλώσσας. Δεν έχω το χρόνο να λέω το ίδιο πράγμα δύο φορές. Οπότε συχνά καταφεύγω στη χρήση της Ελληνικής, όταν χρειάζεται να επικοινωνήσω κάτι σε όλη την οικογένεια.»



Μητέρα: «Ανησυχώ μήπως η αλλαγή στη στρατηγική που εφαρμόσαμε, επηρεάσει αρνητικά την κατάκτηση των Πολωνικών από τις διδύμες.»

Ποια συμβουλή θα έδινες σε νέους γονείς των οποίων η μητρική γλώσσα είναι διαφορετική;

Πατέρας: "Ένας γονιός-μια γλώσσα...αυτή είναι η καλύτερη συμβουλή. Ο καθένας χρησιμοποιεί τη μητρική του γλώσσα, αλλά δεν πειράζει αν μερικές φορές χρησιμοποιεί την κοινή για όλους γλώσσα, επειδή αν δεν το παρακάνει, δε θα επηρεάσει αρνητικά τη στάση των παιδιών απέναντι στις άλλες γλώσσες, και θα συνεχίσουν να μιλούν και τις άλλες γλώσσες.»



## A partner in the picture: Multilingual Café By Isabelle Barth

*Multilingual Café@work – DIALOGUE: a language festival organized by Multilingual Café in June 2019*



Multilingual Café is a small young non-profit organisation founded in 2010. We work in the field of plurilingual education with the aim of helping, supporting families raising their children with more than one language and creating bridges between them and the school teachers, educators, paediatricians, speech-therapists, who have plurilingual children and families in their schools, associations, centres or practices.

Thanks to those bridges, we can help the language development of the children. All our activities and trainings are aimed at creating the best environment possible for the harmonious and happy language development of the bi- or pluri-lingual child. To do so, we look at what the child needs, his/her abilities and competences, as well as the environment where (s)he is growing, and advise family and professionals on the way they can take all his/her languages into account so that the acquisition of the languages becomes natural.

We help families create their own Family Language Plan so that they can have a strategy / a method to put in place in their own "small place", i.e. their home. They can then share the Family Language Plan with school teachers, educators, and speech therapists in order for the latter to understand what is happening in the family and take it into account.

Multilingual Café offers consultations, workshops and trainings on a regular basis. These are open to families, teachers and schools, companies... Anybody concerned with plurilingual people, whether they are adult or children. You can find more information on our website or by contacting us directly.

Multilingual Café is mostly working with families and schools situated in towns and the countryside. Our aim is to reach bi- and pluri-lingual families who are living in towns and villages and bring to them the tools they need and are not readily available where they are. We are starting to open local branches, so we can be nearer to those who need support in raising their children with multiple languages and anybody who has an interest in multilingualism whether at home, at school, at work.

## The impact the project already had on our organizations.

*Extracts from our interim report*

The testing of the booklet gave us the possibility to reach out to more families and to approach families that we may not have reached before. (Multilingual Café).

The project helped with raising awareness of the importance of family language policy in the Cypriot society. (UCLAN)

It has widened our horizons and understating of the challenges that multilingual families and organisations working with them face in more complex scenarios, including also refugees, asylum seekers and countries with more than one official language.

There is an improvement of the quality of consultations for multilingual parents during the consultation hours for speech and language diagnostics by speech- and language therapists. (Onderwijsadvies)

Parents increasingly contact on us for language advice. We already feel growing recognition from other organizations, especially at the grassroots level. (Foyer vzw)



## CALL

Are you interested in trying out our materials as a parent or practitioner? Send your mail to [PIM@foyer.be](mailto:PIM@foyer.be) and one of the project partners will contact you!



Follow us on Facebook and on our website.

Check out which interesting events are taking place near to you!

### Website

[www.plantinglanguages.eu](http://www.plantinglanguages.eu)

### Facebook

Planting Languages

### *You can expect the following articles on our website soon:*

*Factors affecting parents' initial language choices in multilingual families – By Antri Kanikli UCLAN*

*When we talk about emotions and plurilingualism - by Dr. Isabelle BARTH Multilingual Café*

*Cultural identity and developing good attitudes in children from migrant backgrounds – some remarks and advice – by Dr Anna Martowicz APPLA*

*Family language policy – searching for a substantiated vision. – by Hilde De Smedt FOYER vzw*