

Ideas and Examples

Here are some strategies parents can use during conversations with their children to encourage the use of the minority or dominant language(s), whichever is desired.

To foster language acquisition, parents can provide input and support the child in expressing what they want to say.

Expressed Guess:

Parents reformulate their children's sentences as in a yes/no question or ask in the desired language.

Adult Repetition:

Parents repeat or translate their children's sentences in the desired language.

Integrating multilingual activities in everyday life motivates children to use their minority and dominant languages. A good way is establishing rituals and using the desired language e.g. when reading before bedtime or when going through the grocery list and cooking together.

Another fun way is by playing games where minority languages or several languages are used. Parents can create their own games or known games can be adjusted to focus on the use of different languages. Also, it is practical to make use of available multilingual resources e.g., bilingual/multilingual picture books, audios or films.

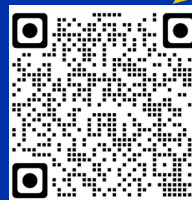
ABOUT THE PROJECT

Schools and families can be places where multilinguals can integrate their full linguistic repertoire into their daily lives.

MaMLiSE has developed materials that are aimed at different target groups (teachers, teacher educators and parents). In addition to creating awareness for multilingualism, the offers are also intended to promote and support multilingual education.



Learn more about the project here!



SCAN ME

MaMLiSE (Majority and Minority Languages in School Environment) is funded by the National Agency of the Erasmus+ Programme in Poland under Action 2 – Strategic Partnerships, School Education – KA201 (no. 2020-1-PL01 KA201-081612). Production of this flyer was funded by the European Commission. It reflects the views only of its authors.

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Majority and Minority Languages in School Environment: Helping Teachers, Pupils and Parents



Multilingualism

Most people in the world are multilingual, i.e. they use more than one language in their lives. This does not mean that they speak all languages “perfectly” as was assumed by many people in the past.

Most multilinguals have different competencies in their languages and in different domains of their lives, as they might, for example, use one language with their family and another language at work. Multilingualism and language competencies are dynamic and often change over time.

For multilinguals, languages do not exist separately but they are connected and always active. In order to support a child’s language development, all languages need to be considered and fostered.

Multilingual Parenting

Can children grow up with more than one language?

Yes, absolutely. This is very common in most parts of the world and does not lead to any disadvantages for the child as long as there is no pressure.

What does a child need to acquire a language?

For children to acquire languages, the quantity and quality of the input and interaction matter. This means that a child needs to hear the language frequently but also to engage in meaningful interaction and a close relationship with its speakers. This is usually easier with the majority language than with minority languages which need more attention.



Which language should I use with my child?

There is no right and wrong but the best language is usually the one that feels most natural to use with the child. This might be the first language but can actually be any language acquired in the course of a lifetime, as it depends on individual circumstances. The child will profit from the fact that the parents feel confident to use the respective language.

Why should I raise my child multilingually?

Sharing the same language enables creating a close bond. It might be important for the child, the parent and other family members to easily communicate with the child and build close relationships.

Moreover, additional language skills and cultural competence are always a benefit, e.g. at school or for future careers.

Can I mix languages?

Yes, absolutely. Code-switching and translanguaging (mixing languages and other forms of communication) are helpful and natural ways of communication. However, it is important to remember that in order to acquire a language, children need enough opportunities to hear and speak it.



Approaches and Ideas

Multilingual parenting is challenging and there is no bulletproof strategy guaranteeing success for everyone.

Realistic aims:

The situation in each family is different, and so are their linguistic needs. In some families, a minority language is used with all family members, in others, it is used much less. In some families, several languages are used regularly, in others just one. Keeping the linguistic situation in the family in mind, each family will have different aims.

Monolingual or multilingual:

Some families prefer parallel monolingual approaches like the “One Person-One Language” or the “one language at home” approach. Other families find multilingual approaches more natural where the minority language(s) are valued and fostered but all other languages are included, too.

Literacy activities:

Research shows that literacy activities such as looking at picture books together and reading or telling stories are valuable in language acquisition. Asking questions about the story or the child’s perspective on it fosters the child’s language development and literacy skills.