



More than one language?

A reflection booklet for parents



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Dear Parent of a multilingual child,

Raising your child multilingually is an unbelievably valuable gift. The majority of the world's population lives in a multilingual context. Because the situation in each family is different, it is important that you as a parent find the best strategy for your family.

Acquiring a language depends on the quantity and quality of the input a child receives in this language. That is why children may acquire languages at a different pace. There are a lot of damaging myths about multilingual acquisition going around, such as that 'it confuses children', 'it may cause identity problems', or even 'lead to language impairment'. These myths should not undermine your choices.

The booklet you are holding has been developed to help you choose a strategy to support your child's multilingual development. The booklet is divided into 8 steps which include a short introduction and one or two pages of reflection exercises.

Some of the exercises are to be filled in by each parent separately, while for others it would best if they were completed by both parents together. It will take some time to go through the booklet, but the choice of a language strategy for your child is particularly important and can determine its future. So we are sure it is going to be time well spent.

On our project website (www.plantinglanguages.com) you will also find videos where other parents talk about their experience in raising their children multilingually as well as some other interesting resources.

We hope you will enjoy using the booklet and other materials developed by us.

With best wishes,


The Planting Languages Team


STEP 1





REFLECTING ON YOUR LANGUAGE COMPETENCES

Language acquisition is a long-term process during which you should be able to speak with your child about anything, whether it concerns everyday life or more complex issues. For most parents, it is easier to express themselves and communicate with their child in the language(s) they feel most confident in, but they may decide to speak another language with their child.

 The languages I speak

 The languages I understand

 The languages I write in

 The languages I read in

Parent 1


**Write the languages you feel most confident in at the top of each ladder.
Write the other languages below them.**


STEP 1





REFLECTING ON YOUR LANGUAGE COMPETENCES

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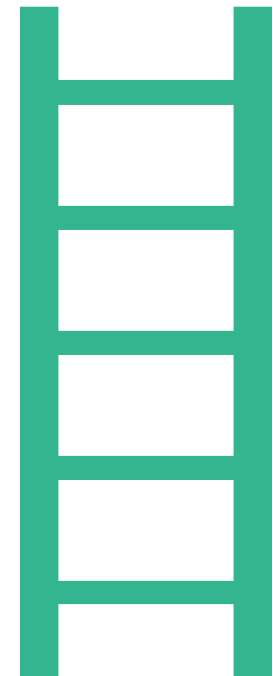
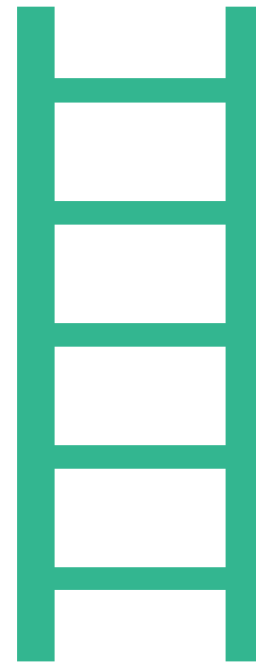
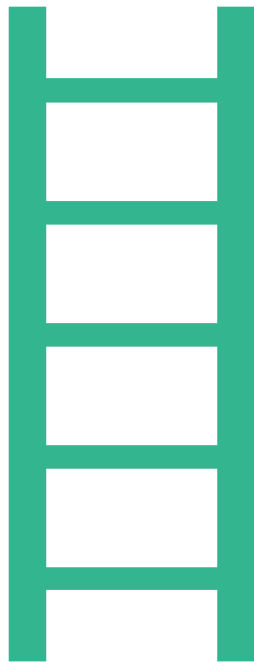
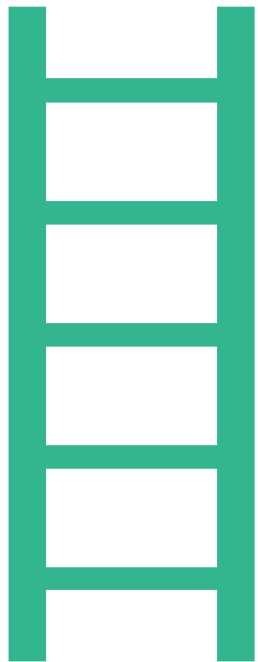
 The languages I speak

 The languages I understand

 The languages I write in

 The languages I read in

Parent 2



**Write the languages you feel most confident in at the top of each ladder.
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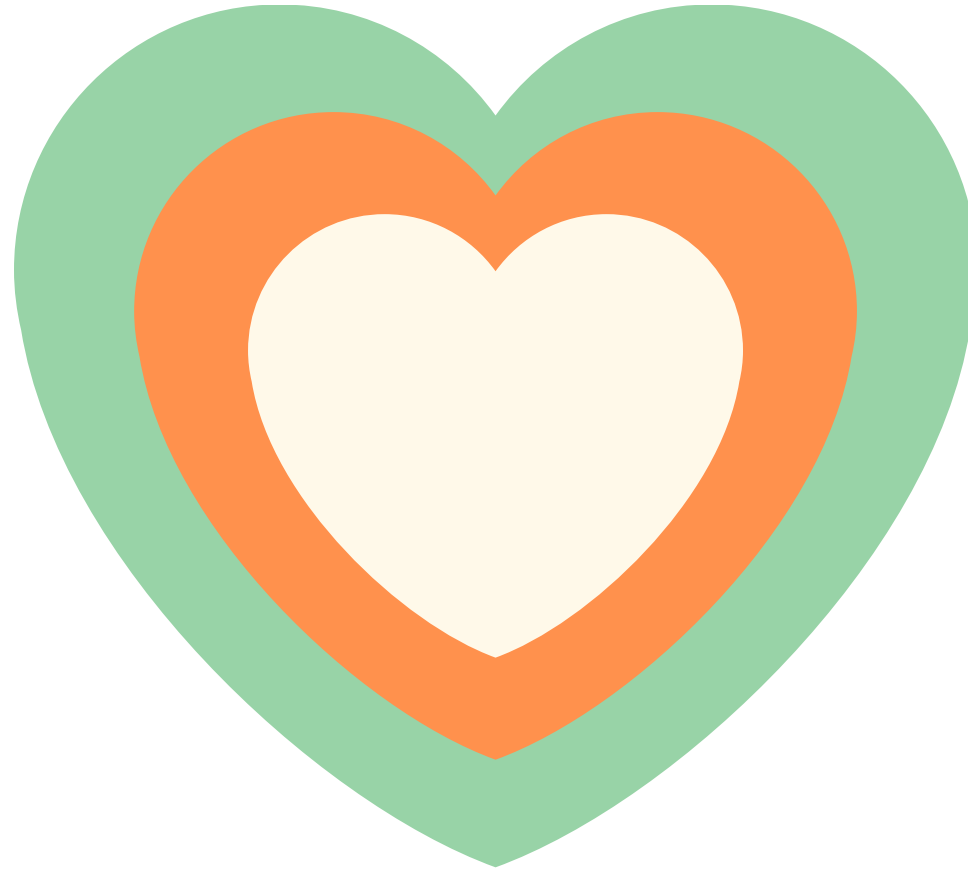
STEP 2

LANGUAGES THAT HAVE A SPECIAL MEANING TO YOU



A language is more than a system of communication. Languages define who you are and how you view the world. People who speak the same language may have quite different feelings about it. So, before you choose the languages you want your child to acquire, you should reflect on what the different languages mean to you. A language is a means to express not only thoughts but also emotions, and a tool to pass on cultural values, customs, and traditions.

Parent 1



Write your languages in the heart.

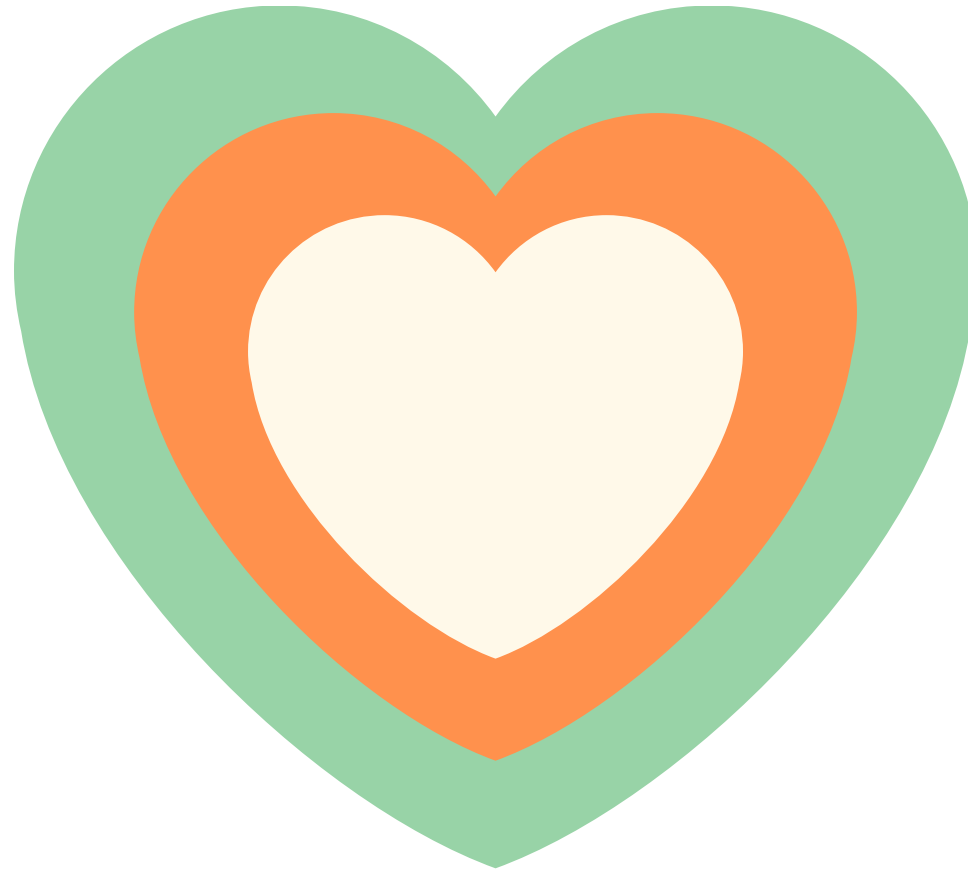
Closer to the centre = stronger connection. Think about feelings, family, culture, identity.

STEP 2

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Parent 2

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Closer to the centre = stronger connection. Think about feelings, family, culture, identity.

STEP 3

REFLECTING ON SHORT- AND LONG-TERM LANGUAGE GOALS FOR YOUR CHILD

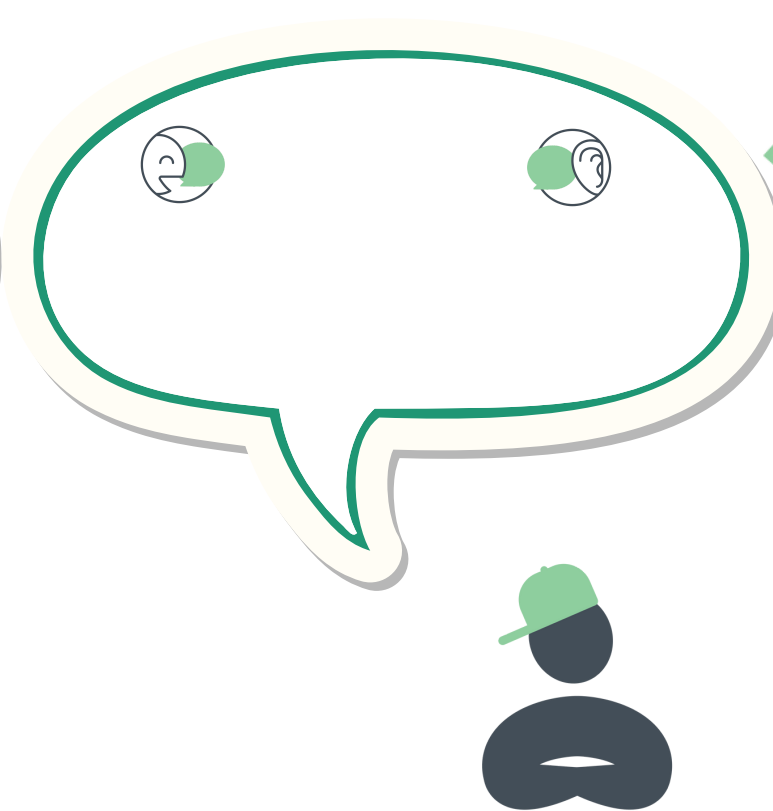


Do you believe that your child can become a proficient multilingual? What does "proficient multilingual" actually mean for you? Which languages do you want your child to acquire and to what extent? Speaking a language is great, but understanding a language is also a valuable skill. It is useful to differentiate between priorities for the first years and objectives on which you may focus later on.

From birth

Later on

Parent 1



***Write down the languages you want your child to acquire from birth.
Write down also the languages you want her/him to learn later on.***

STEP 3

REFLECTING ON SHORT- AND LONG-TERM LANGUAGE GOALS FOR YOUR CHILD

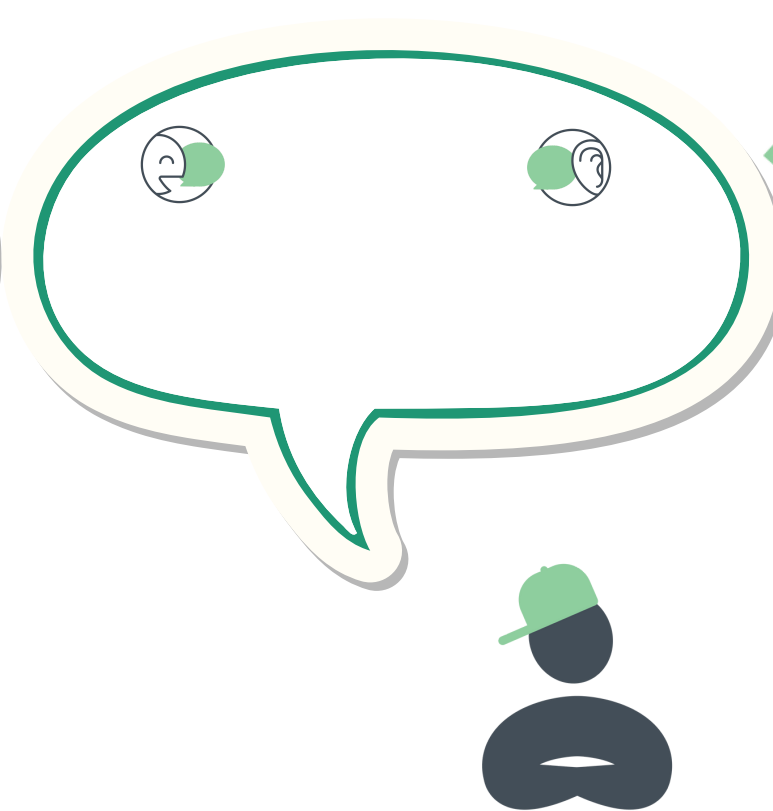


Do you believe that your child can become a proficient multilingual? What does "proficient multilingual" actually mean for you? Which languages do you want your child to acquire and to what extent? Speaking a language is great, but understanding a language is also a valuable skill. It is useful to differentiate between priorities for the first years and objectives on which you may focus later on.

From birth

Later on

Parent 2



***Write down the languages you want your child to acquire from birth.
Write down also the languages you want her/him to learn later on.***

STEP 4

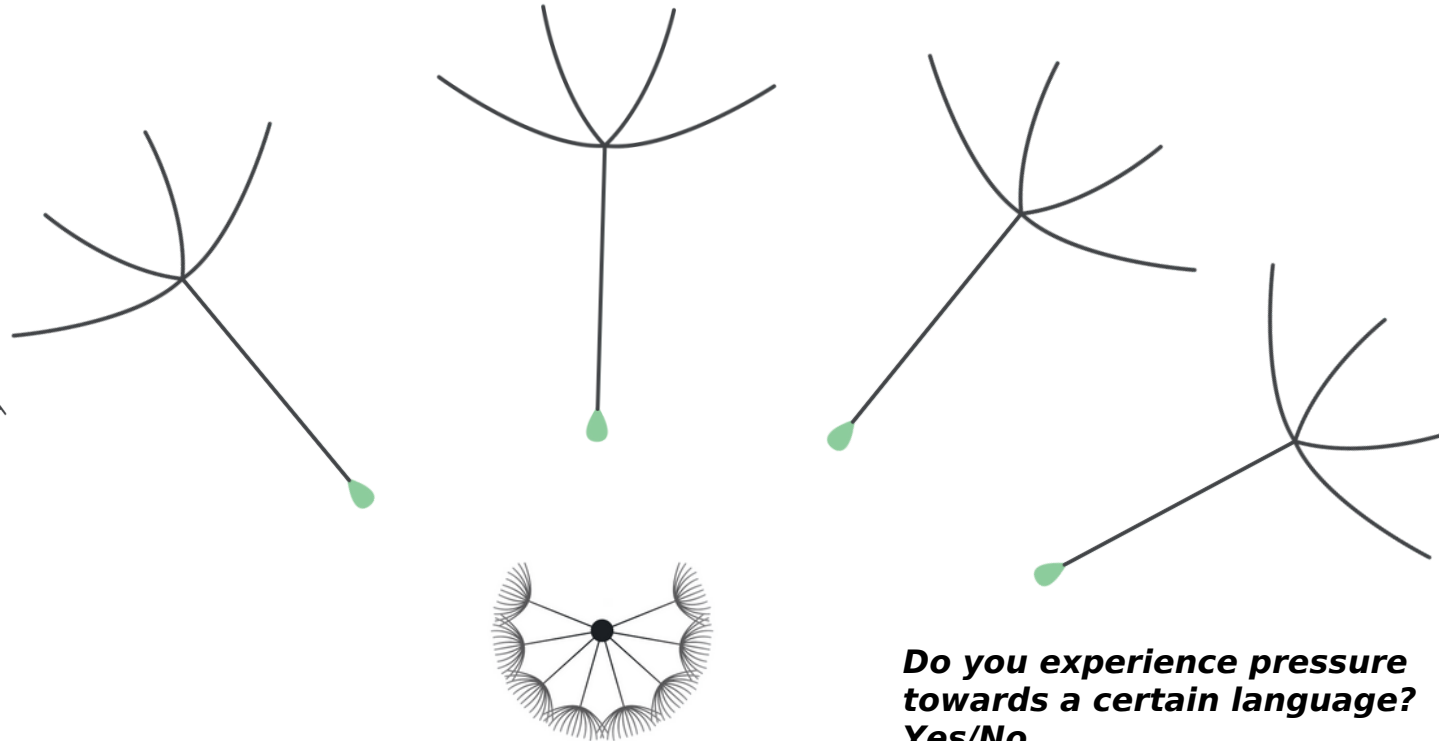
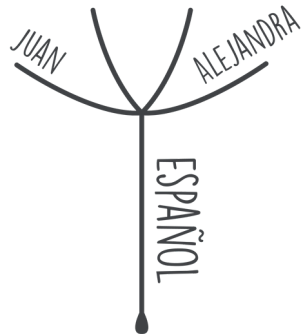


OPENING THE DOORS TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

It takes a village to raise a child. When planning the multilingual upbringing of your child, it would be nice to talk to key people, such as other family members, friends, caretakers, and schoolteachers. It is important that your social network understands the approach you are going to adopt. You may experience criticism or pressure from them, but talking things through and explaining your choices will help you create a strong team that will support your child in multilingual acquisition.

Parent 1

Example



***Do you experience pressure towards a certain language?
Yes/No.
From whom?***

Look at the example and write the languages you want your child to acquire and the names of the people who will help you with this.

STEP 4

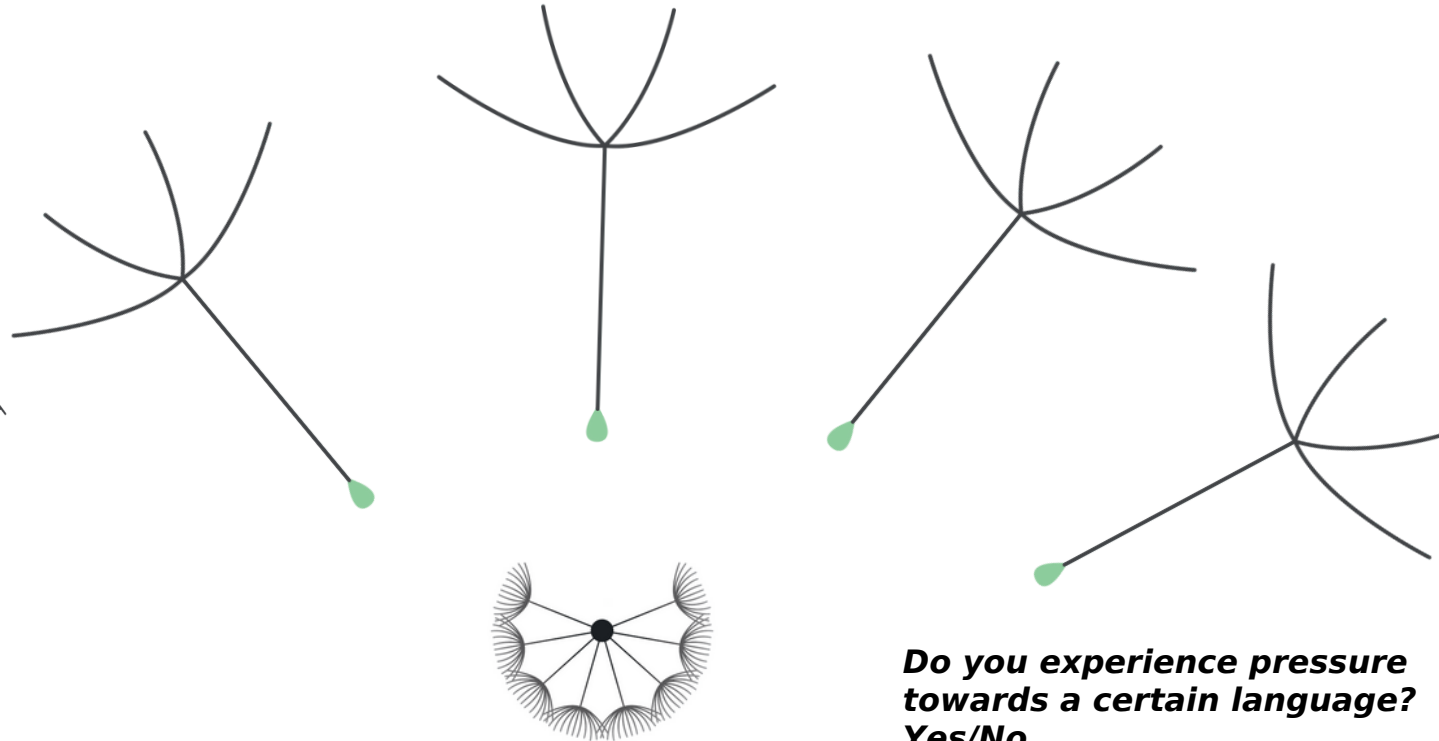
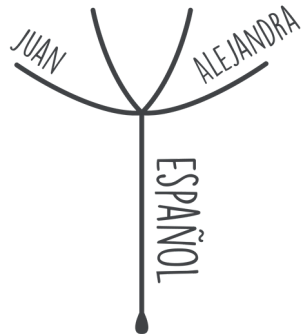


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Parent 2

Example



***Do you experience pressure towards a certain language?
Yes/No.
From whom?***

Look at the example and write the languages you want your child to acquire and the names of the people who will help you with this.

TIME TO START PLANNING

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. This requires making decisions and discussing your situation, so we encourage both parents to complete the remaining exercises together.



STEP 5

CHOOSING A LANGUAGE STRATEGY. A CHOICE TO BE MADE TOGETHER



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.

Both parents

Parent 1

Language 1

Language 2

Parent 2

Language 1

Language 2



What language do you speak to each other?

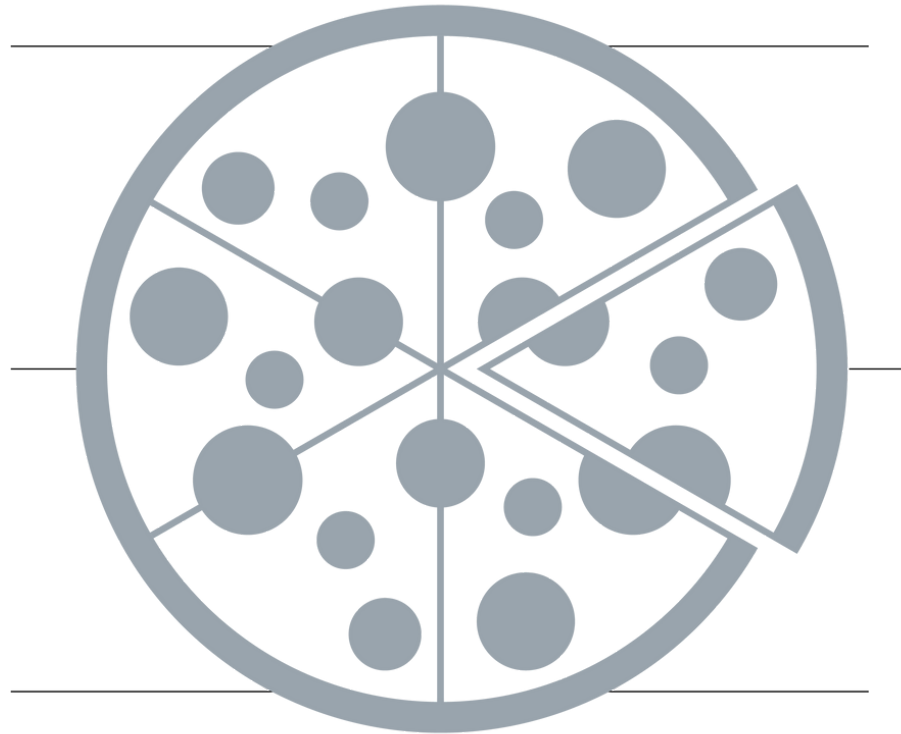
In the speech bubbles write down the languages you will use in daily communication with your child.

STEP 5

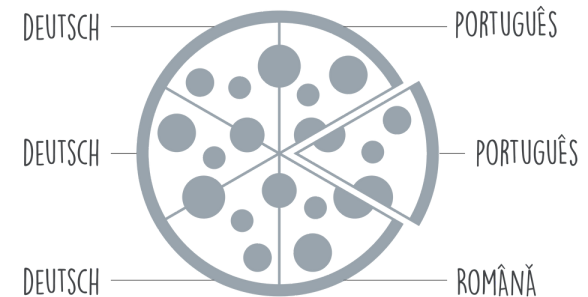
CHOOSING A LANGUAGE STRATEGY. A CHOICE TO BE MADE TOGETHER



Both parents



Example



Consider the amount of time your child hears (at home and outside) different languages over the week. Illustrate the proportions as pizza pieces.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

Multilingual upbringing is a fascinating process. In the next steps, we will focus on how you can support your child, once you decided on your strategy.

If you have not watched the videos on www.plantinglanguages.com yet, we encourage you to do so. You will find a lot of inspiring examples there, stories, and quotes from other parents. It is always a good idea to share your experiences with other families too.



STEP 6



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD IN DAILY LIFE: LEARNING ACTIVITIES

You can use a variety of activities to support language acquisition: reading aloud, telling stories, singing, playing, and small talk during all your daily activities. Watching television programs in the target languages and playing with a tablet/computer provide extra input, but in order to acquire a language, a child needs interaction - two or more people talking to each other. Make sure the activities you choose include that interaction.

Both parents



Reading books



Singing songs



Telling stories



Nursing



Playing



Cooking and eating



Shopping



Other activities

Write down the languages you use/are planning to use during these activities.

STEP 7



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD IN DAILY LIFE: SOCIAL CONTACTS

For each language your child learns, he/she will need a 'language community'. This means that you should create opportunities for your child to talk to others and experience the need to express his/her feelings and thoughts in these languages. The more people your child interacts with in a language, the better he/she will learn that language. Peers have an important role to play in motivating your child to use the target languages and identify himself/herself as a speaker of these languages.

Both parents



Online contact with the family



Holidays/family visits



Engaging peers



Religious activities



Attending parents/children groups



Social and community activities



Language classes



Other activities

Write down the languages you use/are planning to use during these activities.

STEP 8

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



Multilingual language development is a dynamic process. Even when you make clear decisions on language use from the start, you will see that life itself can push you in another direction.

Going to kindergarten or school, the arrival of siblings, or moving to another country may affect your earlier choices. Think about how you could overcome these challenges, stay positive, and try to keep a balance between applying your language strategy and maintaining the well-being of all the family members, so that you all enjoy the process.

Both parents



Do not forget that multilingualism is a valuable gift. Languages are the keys to open the world.

Write down in the road signs what events in the life of your child are likely to affect his/her language development. Think, for example, about the arrival of a sibling, going to school, or moving to another country.

Thank you for using this booklet.

We hope you enjoyed filling it in and we hope it helped you reflect on the strategy you are going to use with your multilingual child and the ways in which you can support its multilingual development. Bare in mind that it is a flexible and dynamic plan. Remember that talking about your choices to other people involved in the life of your child is important and you can learn a lot by listening to the experiences of other parents raising multilingual children.

If you have any questions about this booklet, you can contact one of the organizations involved in the Planting Languages project. You will find our contact details on www.plantinglanguages.com.

You can also use the other tools of the project:

- our reminders will help you monitor the multilingual development of your child,
- our languages card will help you communicate your family language choices to other people,
- our videos and language portraits of families will help you learn from the experience of others.

We wish you and your family all the best in your multilingual journey.

With best wishes,

The Planting Languages Team