

## Contents

- 1 Intro
- 1 Conference: Talking about Language and EmotionS at home. A project aimed at empowering multilingual families.
- 3 Expertmeeting: Talking about Language and EmotionS at home.
- 4 A little word of thanks

## Intro

September 2016, we started the TALES@home project: research, development, testing, supporting material. Now, May 2018, our output is ready and available for professionals working with multilingual families. Most importantly, the tool, which includes five interactive activities in order to create opportunities to talk about emotions linked to language use, learning and life experience. This tool, and the supporting material, are both freely available now.

We have presented our output at an international conference, held in sunny Brussels on the 8th of May, followed by a meeting of international experts on the 9th. In this last newsletter, you'll find a short overview of both activities. For your questions about the project, please contact one of the partners, their references are in [the leaflet](#).

## Conference: Talking about Language and EmotionS at home. A project aimed at empowering multilingual families.

During this conference, we focused on the research that was conducted throughout this project, and the digital instrument that was developed based upon our findings. To put our work in a broader perspective, we invited two experts external to the project.

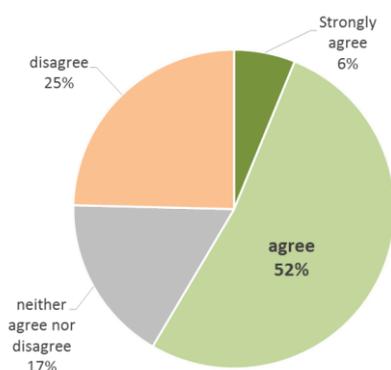
**Mina Kheirkhah** was our first keynote speaker. Her research focuses primarily on family language policies, language maintenance and shifts in multilingual families. Using detailed interactional analysis, her work focuses on family interactions and the role of children in the process of language socialization and family multilingualism. She presented, among others, a family in Sweden with a child refusing to use her mother tongues (Persian and Kurdish) at home thus creating stress and negative feelings for herself and other family members.

**Elisabetta Di Giovanni** (project partner and researcher at the University of Palermo) presented an overview of the research we conducted with multilingual children and their parents.

One of her important conclusions was that 'Family members hardly seem to agree on the management of language use / learning choices and this to the benefit of one of these poles: child-centred, parent-centred, environment-centred' and it is, as such, not really beneficent to a more family-centred approach.

**Maria Stopfner and Sabrina Colombo**, project partners and both researchers at the Institute of Applied Linguistics, Eurac Research, in Bolzano (Italy), presented our research conducted with professionals.

On the right you see an example of the responses to the question (written questionnaire) 'PARENTS find it difficult to manage the language practices within the family.'



**Negative emotions by parents:**

- frustration because of problems in communication and dependence on others
- insecurity, feeling of uselessness, exclusion, failure, disappointment
- lack of confidence, insecurity, confusion
- lack of pride, sense of loss of identity
  - sadness and grief
  - stress

**Positive emotions by children:**

- easy approach to new languages
  - interest and openness
- competence, pride and confidence
  - feeling of encouragement
    - integration
    - joy and happiness

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*Harmonious Bilingual Development : the development of bilingualism in the absence of negative feelings attributed to language use (Prof. A. De Houwer)*

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**Patrizia Civetta** working at Foyer (Brussels, project partner) in the field of multilingualism, maintenance of the mother language by migrants and refugees, introduced the public to the different activities of the tool. Using parts of the film.

**Brian De Lord and Bob Townley** (project partners) and working in London (Double Helix Resources) always reminded us of the importance to integrate the aspect of identity . They explained why and how it is linked with language and learning.

**Annick De Houwer** is Professor of Language Acquisition and Multilingualism at the University of Erfurt in Germany. She has been invited to speak across the globe. Recently, she gave form to the concept of 'Harmonious Bilingual Development ((HBD) referring to children and their families experiencing socio emotional well-being in a language contact situation. And because a harmonious multilingual family is what we intend to achieve using Tales at home, we asked her to articulate some reflections about the subject and our instrument.

The most important positive feedback was:

- That it puts the findings of relevant scientific research into practice
- Shows a great deal of RESPECT for ALL families, ALL children, and ALL languages
- The project has yielded a great tool that takes an exemplary position
- Finally, it definitely supports Harmonious Bilingual Development!

Some of her criticism was that this approach will, of course, take time and professionals should scrutinize ways to integrate it.

Finally, Hilde De Smedt, leader of the project and Multilingualism coordinator at Foyer (Brussel) formulated some conclusions, summarizing the vision about minority languages and language diversity undergirding TALES@home as a whole. (For an excerpt of these conclusions see here below:)

[Program and PowerPoints of the Conference](#)

International **texts on Human Rights** unambiguously stipulate the importance of valorizing language diversity. It is held that:

- **Respect for language diversity** should be an integral part of all language learning.
- Multilingual education should be approached as **a fundamental right**.

In our daily work with multilingual families, we can show this respect, by talking about minority and majority languages with interest and being supportive.

We strongly believe that the basic **attitude of professionals** should comprise **positive curiosity** toward an understanding of the complex mechanisms of language use in multilingual families.

I do hope, that we managed to arouse your enthusiasm, today, for addressing the issues concerning attitudes and feelings about languages and language learning.

In working together, parents and professionals will be able to **create a positive language environment** at home and further a **better understanding** of the complexity of all the issues that come into play.

We hope that TALES@home conveys you with a concrete and pleasant approach.

We would also like to urge **researchers**, to continue their invaluable work on all these processes in multilingual families.

## Expertmeeting: Talking about Language and EmotionS at home.

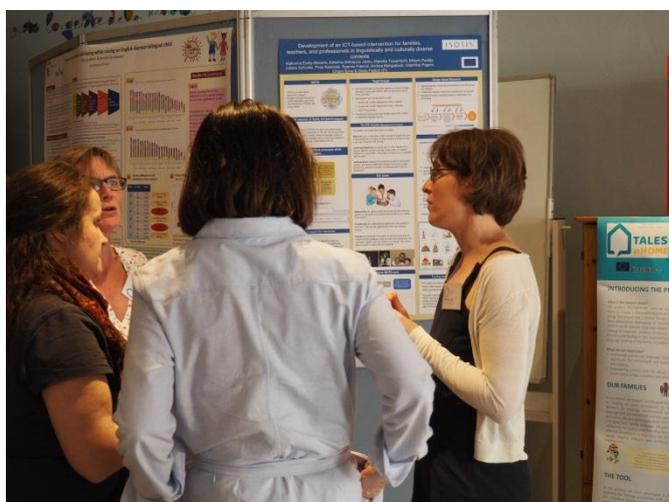
Participants at this expert meeting were: Isabelle Barth, Annick De Houwer, Anna de Graaf, Massimiliano Schirinzi, Marinella Orioni, Sabine Little, Francesca La Morgia and Arif Hossain. [Short biographies of the speakers and abstracts.](#)



The speakers offered an overview of multilingual families around Europe, trying to find creative answers to their demand for the good multilingual education of their children. Their approaches were very diverse and often involved unique techniques, but nearly always reflected the goal of bringing language learning and aspects of wellbeing together.

Parents are concerned about the wellbeing of their children, often neglecting their own feelings of stress and uncertainty.

Prof. A. De Houwer underlined that this part of children's education takes place, almost entirely, in the private sphere with little support of society. It often takes time, before researchers are able to gain the confidence (trust) of the families involved. Hopes, beliefs and goals of parents can have a strong, either positive or negative impact.



Isabelle Barth, Sabine Little, Annick de Houwer Bianca Mohr, Maria Obojska described these processes taking place within the families.

Francesca, Massimiliano, Anna DeGraaf made a connection with school and parental programs while Marinella Orioni looked at the mind-set of children.

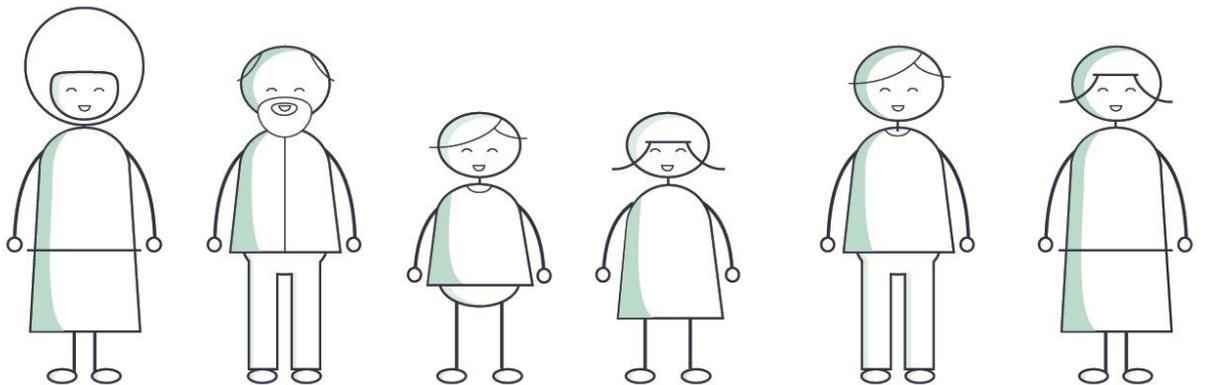
The concept of a 'minority language' was often experienced as negative and judgmental, throughout the talks, making children and parents more insecure about the value of their home languages. Other terms were suggested, such are: *Non-Soc Language, Basic Language or Heritage Language.*

## A little word of thanks

We would like to thank **all the children and parents** who were prepared to share their thoughts and feelings with us. We are aware that we touched upon delicate and intimate aspects of their family life. So we would like to thank them for being open with us.

Thanks **to all professionals** who gave us their impressions, ideas and experiences. They offered us a broader view on the interaction with multilingual families.

We would like to thank **the European Commission**, for allowing us the opportunity to bring this project to fruition and EPOS (Belgium) and 'Kenniscentrum Sociaal Europa'



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