



Closure

Hilde De Smedt, Foyer vzw

Before closing this Conference I would like to underline two aspects in our approach of multilingual families concerning minority languages and respect for language diversity.

Minority languages are often approached as an obstacle or even a handicap to integrate and learn the majority languages. This despite of all research (already done in the '70) that demonstrates that minority languages spoken at home can sustain the learning of other languages. One of the most known concepts on this matter is the 'Common Underlying Proficiency' formulated by Cummins:

Cummins shows that if a learner has already learned a language, namely their native tongue, then they are readily equipped to learn a second. This previous knowledge serves to support their understanding of basic skills and concepts related to language and, thus, a new language should theoretically come easier to them.

This common underlying proficiency gives every learner the ability to learn new languages!

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.

Finally some words of gratitude.

We wish to thank all the children and parents that were prepared to share their thoughts and feelings with us. We are aware that we touched delicate and intimate aspects of their family life. So we thank them for their openness.

Thanks to all professionals that told us their impressions, ideas and experiences. They gave us a broader view on their interaction with multilingual families.