

“ I feel much better since I started speaking to my child in my mother tongue. ”

- Watch television or films in this language, have your child speak on the telephone in your mother tongue, or organize holidays in your country of origin.

Should I keep the different languages separate?

It helps to keep the languages separate, but in practice, this is not always possible. However, this is not a problem. In multilingual households, it frequently occurs that:

- one person speaks a particular language with your child, and another speaks a different language,
- a parent asks a question in one language and the child answers in another,
- two different languages are used in the same sentence,
- conversations switch from one language to another.

A useful (Dutch-language) book for people who wish to learn more about multilingual child-rearing:

reference: Elke Burkhardt Montanari (2004). *Hoe kinderen meertalig opgroeien*. Publisher Planplan, Amsterdam.

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See also *Multilingual Development: Advice for bringing up children with auditory/communication difficulties in a multilingual environment (Meertalige ontwikkeling; Adviezen over meertalige opvoeding bij een auditieve/communicatieve beperking)*, Mirjam Blumenthal, 2009. Publisher: Acco Leuven

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This folder is available in Dutch, English, French, Turkish, Arabic and Chinese. All versions can be found at www.acco.be and www.kentalis.nl.

Multilingual development

for children with auditory/communication difficulties



Can my child become multilingual? even if he/she has difficulty learning to speak or has impaired hearing...

To make it absolutely clear: Raising a child in a multilingual environment does not harm the child's language development.

Some people are good at languages and some aren't.

This is also the case with children who have impaired hearing, have difficulty talking or have communication problems.

Why pay extra attention to multilingualism?

If your child has problems hearing and/or talking, you may be unsure about raising your child in a multilingual environment. Furthermore, people often give well-meaning advice on this subject without knowing the facts.

When parents worry about a multilingual environment being harmful to their child's development, the result is often that they talk to their child less. There are also people that try to

What can I do in order to prepare for this discussion?

Fill in this questionnaire about your family situation and bring it with you to the next discussion. If you can't answer all of the questions, at least give them all careful consideration.

Why is the mother tongue so important?

Our mother tongue is the first language that we learn.

We speak this language better than any others.

In our mother tongue, we can say anything we want (...).

If my child speaks the same language as me, I can understand him/her.

And my child can understand me.

I can ask my child "Why are you angry?", or "Why are you afraid?"

This helps me to raise my child.

This is why the mother tongue is an important factor.

Excerpt from *Talen in Balans (Balancing Languages)*, by De Taalstudio.

How do you teach your child to speak multiple languages?

Which language should I speak with my child?

With your child, you should use the language that you speak most proficiently.

Why?

- You speak this language more confidently than any other, and this will set the best example for your child.
- This gives your child a good, solid basis in one language, from which he/she will be

“ *It is good to pay attention to which language you speak with your child.* ”

better prepared to learn other languages. Your child will have more than enough opportunity to speak Dutch away from home.

What are the advantages of having my child learn to speak multiple languages?

- Your child will feel more secure in the local culture.
- Multilingual children have more opportunities in life.

What happens if my child prefers to speak Dutch?

- Keep speaking your own language.
- If your child asks you something in Dutch, answer in your own language.
- If your child says the Dutch name of a particular object, give them praise and then say the word in your own language.

What more can I do to help my child learn my mother tongue?

Ensure that your child is exposed to this language:

- Arrange for your children to play with other children who speak your language.
- Invite guests to your house who speak the language.
- Read books in this particular language to your child.
- Tell stories and sing songs or nursery rhymes in your mother tongue.



“ *It is nice to be certain of how to approach raising my child in a bilingual environment.* ”

speak a language with their children that they themselves do not speak very well. These two factors are certainly not helpful to the child's language development. Your child needs you to talk to him/her very frequently, in a language that you speak proficiently and confidently.

For these reasons, we focus particular attention on multilingual child rearing. Together with you, we can discuss your family's situation and decide what the best approach will be.