



# Reinforcing the Minority Language

Annika Bourgogne

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# Minority Language



The language that is not spoken by the community where the family lives.

Also called the non-community language and the heritage language.

# Minority Language

The logo features the word "Be" in a white cursive font on a maroon background, and the word "BILINGUAL" in a white sans-serif font on a teal background. The background of the entire slide is a light beige color with a pattern of white polka dots.

Be  
BILINGUAL

The language that is not spoken by the community where the family lives.

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*The common belief that children are like sponges who can simply absorb two languages from their environment sounds promising, but sponges only absorb when dipped in water, not thin air or good will. A language can be present in a child's environment if s/he hears it from grandma once a week. While this can be great for the child on many levels, it probably leaves the language sponge pretty dry, and won't realistically produce fluency in the language.*

*Be Bilingual – Practical Ideas for Multilingual Families*

# Ideas for the speaker of the minority language



- Make a conscious decision to interact (by speaking *and* listening) with your children as much as possible
- Look for one-on-one time with each child to speak your language without the interference of the majority language
- Pay attention when your child is interested in something and ask questions
- Read to your child, even before they understand the stories, and don't stop!

# Ideas for the speaker of the minority language



- Find other speakers of your language for support
- Expect your children to talk to you in your language and persist even if they don't
- Help your children (if the situation permits) to create close relationships with grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives in your country of origin
- Travel to the minority language country if at all possible

# How can the majority language-speaking spouse help?



- Encourage your spouse and show your children that you value the minority language
- Help your spouse find support to pass on the minority language: other bilingual (or expat) families, babysitters and materials
- Take an interest in your spouse's language and culture and help him / her stay connected with it
- Trying to learn your spouse's language (at least a little) is a great endorsement for your family's minority language

# Keep going



- Tap into your children's interests: connect the things that they like with the minority language
- Use books, magazines, DVDs, music, computer games and smart phone applications
- Encourage biliteracy
- Look for a school or day care in minority language / Saturday school
- Get their friends on board



# Last, but not least...



Make family bilingualism a priority, but not a source of stress!