

Part 3: Bringing up an intercultural and bilingual child

Tuesday 11.11.2014 16.00-16.45
(+ chat 16.45-17.15)



More Than the Sum of Her and His Parts

- An intercultural child is more than the sum of her/his parts
- Identity formation is the life-long process of the development of the distinct personality of an individual
- Identity consists of separate and distinct parts (family, gender, cultural, personal, professional, etc.)
- Identity is also multifaceted
- The identity of an intercultural child develops:
 - Through experiences
 - By experimenting
 - By making comparisons
 - Through phases
 - Within a time and a place



The Building Blocks of an Identity / Personal Culture

Age	Gender / gender roles	Language and communication skills	Personality	Education and occupation
Previous experiences	Religion / worldview	Ethnic background	Values	Environment and time
Social networks	Socioeconomic background and status	Family background	Sexual orientation	Cultural and national identity



Identity Formation of Intercultural Children

- Blood heritage, genes and skin colour (or parents' best intentions) do not determine the identity of a child
- Accept that your child will form their own fluid identity and that your child may not resemble you and may not adopt your values
- Intercultural children's four identity forms:

Majority-group identifiers	Minority-group identifiers
Universalists/disaffiliates	Synthesizers



Personal Story

When I talk about myself, I say I'm half Finnish, half Iranian, but of course I am not a 50-50 split. If Finnish is at one end, and Iranian at the other, then during my life I have been somewhere in between those two. How I feel also depends on the situation. I don't feel completely Finnish or Iranian, but my Finnish side is stronger, because I have lived here all my life. My Iranian side has strengthened as I have got older.



Helping Your Child to Develop a Solid and Positive Identity

- Love and respect each other
- Provide your child with positive experiences from both cultures (and other cultures as well!)
- Instill pride: be proud of your own and partner's culture
- Work out differences with your partner
- Be aware of your own biases and be fair
- Help your children deal with diversity and prejudice
- Normalise ambivalence: your child will go through different stages and may sometimes feel confused
- Be available and listen to your child's experiences
- Let your child grow up to choose their own path



Personal Story

In my opinion, you can't expect that a child will take on the cultures of her/his parents on a 50-50 principle, if you live in one country. I would have hoped that the non-present culture, in my case the Iranian culture, would have showed more in our day-to-day life in Finland.

I wish my parents would have been more aware of the fact, that growing up to be an intercultural child does not happen naturally and automatically, but needs support.



Bi- and Multilingual Child

- The majority of the world population is bi- or multilingual
- Bilingual person is one who can speak and have been spoken to in two or more languages
- Bilingual children use or are able to use two languages with equal or nearly equal fluency
- Children who have acquired two languages during early childhood and maintained them can also be called simultaneous bilinguals or second-language learners



Why Should You Raise Your Child Bilingual?

- Bilingualism is a gift and richness
- Bilingualism opens a window to both parent's cultures and supports a child's identity
- Language has an important role in bringing up a child
- A parent's mother tongue is the language of his/her emotions
- Bilingualism creates the best possible conditions for a child's warm and close relationship with both parents
- Bilingualism guarantees your child's right to develop a relationship with both grandparents, other family and friends
- Bilingualism offers also personal and academic advantages



Personal Story

"To a couple expecting a baby I would say that they should think about the language issues in advance. Children will thank their parents when they learn both languages. Language is extremely important because it has such a big part in the formation of our identities. I feel that because I am not fluent in the language of my father, that side of me is weaker. It has also made it more difficult for me to be in contact with my father's relatives.

However, the little that I do speak of my father's language, supports the other side of my identity. It is nice, for example, to hear my father's language in a bus and understand what's been said."



Myths about Bilingualism

- Myth 1. Growing up with many languages confuses children
- Myth 2. Bilingualism leads to speech delays
- Myth 3. Bilingual children end up mixing the languages
- Myth 4. It is too late to raise your child bilingual
- Myth 5. Children are like sponges, and they'll become bilingual without effort and in no time



Some Challenges and Solutions

- More than two languages at home
 - Plan for a language strategy
- The chosen strategy doesn't work
 - Be flexible and reinforce the minority language if necessary
- Children may refuse to speak the other language
 - Create a need and opportunities for using both languages
- Child doesn't speak both languages as fluently
 - Don't set your goals too high and accept the facts
- Bilingualism is affected by many non-foreseeable challenges
 - Consider and reconsider your language environment and your personal goals





Important Steps

- Discuss and choose a language strategy that works for you!
- Commit to bilingualism and be patient and persistent
- Reinforce the minority language how/when ever you can
- Talk to your child as much and from as early on as possible
- Motivate and give your child reasons to speak both languages
- Encourage and guide, but don't make it unpleasant
- Use diverse means and methods (reading, travelling)
- Bilingualism should be fun not a source of stress!
- Remember that bilingualism is not just the product of learning

- **Bilingualism is a way of life. Bilingualism is a lifestyle.** -



Next Steps

- **It's time to chat!** What did you think about the lecture? What questions did it raise?
- Take a look at the exercises and bonus material at Duo website
- Welcome to parenthood! May you cherish this special time and may the pleasure of parenting warm your heart, filling your life with wonderful memories. We hope to see you in the future!

Duo for intercultural families

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