



Dynamic language stories

Languages and emotions in families with recent migration background

Patrizia Civetta

Introduction

This book is a collection of a series of linguistic stories resulting from the use of Tales@home.

TALES@home is a tool for multilingual families, with a strong family-centered approach, and which can be used to empower the linguistic environment at home and in situations where the linguistic choices can influence individual family members' wellbeing and language learning abilities. Foyer (Brussels) has developed this tool together with partners from different European countries. In 2019, the tool was used with newly arrived and refugee children attending the Dutch-speaking primary school 'Sint-Pieterscollege' in Laken (Brussels). Every week, Foyer was present at this school to support these children and their parents in discovering the feelings connected to their mother tongue but also with the mainstream languages (Dutch and French) of the new country in which they are now living. The Foyer tool is aimed at encouraging and fostering communication within the newly arrived families about the use of languages and also to detect problems arising from the use of new and different languages within these families, in doing so trying to bring underlying topics to the surface, especially concerning issues that may have a negative influence on language learning and one's wellbeing. The exchanges with the newly arrived children and their families were very fruitful which is why Foyer would like to present to you several of the linguistic stories which resulted from the use of the tool. All of the children interviewed are between 9 and 12 years old and all of them have left their home country, where there is war, violence or no future for them. The names of the children and their parents have been changed and the book does not contain any pictures. We strongly want to respect the privacy of these families who still live in a difficult situation, and we would like to say thank you to all the children and the parents who wanted to tell us their linguistic story, which is also their life's story. Thank you to all the teachers of Sint Pieterscollege in Laken and the Brede School, who let us use the tool in their classes.

This collection of stories is dedicated to a boy born in Mali in 2001 who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea in April 2015 with his school report next to his heart. We are sure that this boy would have been ready to learn a new language/languages in the country he had dreamed of.

Patrizia Civetta

Brussels, November 2019

The linguistic story of Fatima and Soumaya

Fatima was born in Valencia in Spain. Her family is composed of father and mother and two siblings: Ossama, who is 15 years old and Souliman who is 10 years old. Fatima's parents were both born in Morocco and all the siblings were born in Spain.

Fatima is 12 years old and moved to Belgium with her family in October 2017. She attends a Dutch-speaking school in Brussels. The family moved to Belgium because the father lost his job in Spain. It was a very difficult decision to take but her father had to find a way to sustain their family.

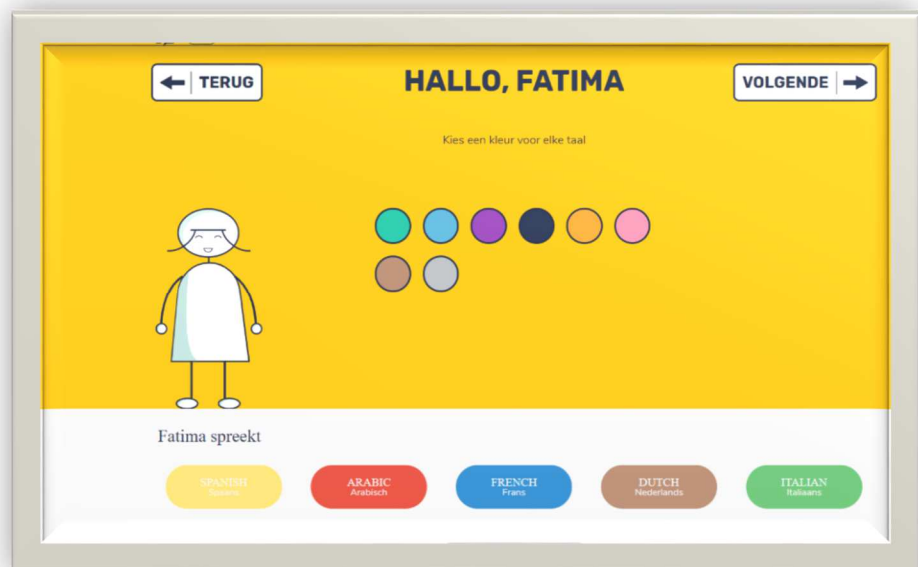
The father told his children that in Belgium a great number of languages are spoken and the children, who love learning languages, were quickly convinced and followed the parents. The grandparents still live in Spain, and therefore it was an option that the grandchildren could stay with the grandparents. The family misses Spain a lot and they are considering moving back.

Activity 1: Making a family

Fatima chose yellow for Spanish because in Spain's flag also has yellow in it. This color is a warm color and it reminds her of the sun in Valencia. She has a very positive opinion of Spanish.

Fatima chose red for Arabic because it is another warm color and she has a positive opinion of Arabic and Morocco. She has never lived in Morocco but she vacations there and has a lot of relatives in this country. She likes to speak Arabic with her cousins and she would like to learn how to write Arabic.

'Blue is a cold color and that is why I chose this color for French,' Fatima tells us. 'I speak a little



French, but not at school, but we I play with my neighbors – continues Fatima – I am so excited that I am going to secondary school next year. There I will learn how to speak French better and I will also learn how to write it’.

For Dutch Fatima chose the color brown; she likes her school and the teacher but this language gives her a negative feeling. Writing Dutch is still difficult for her and she needs to learn more in order to improve and be prepared for her future studies.

At school Fatima learned Italian with her best friend Melina; it was very easy to learn Italian because it is very similar to Spanish. Fatima chose green for Italian because this color gives her a warm feeling. She associates this language with her friendship with Melina.

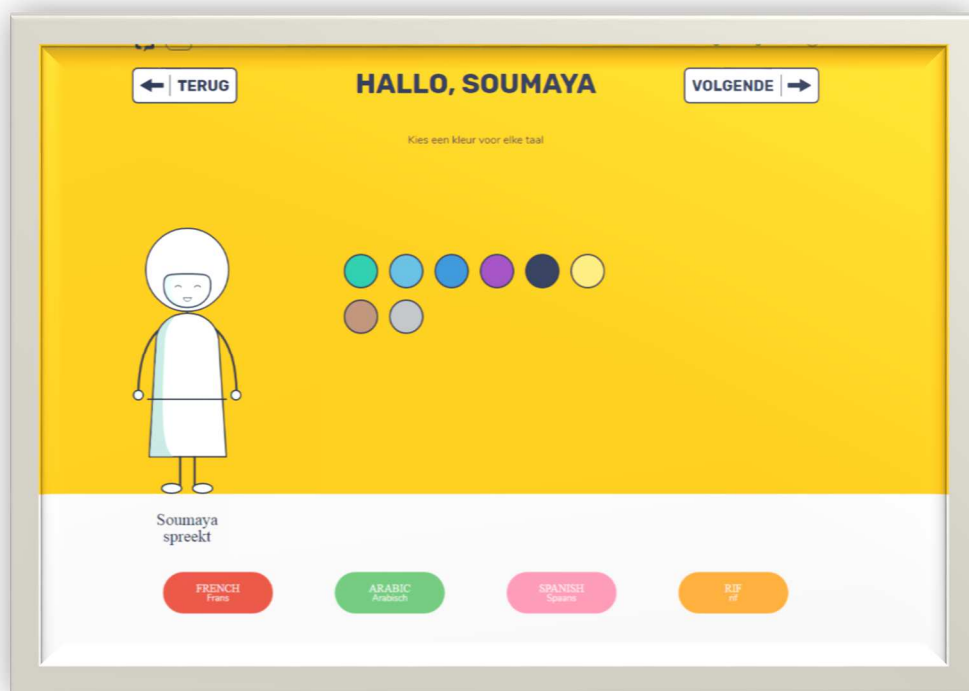
The mother chose pink for Spanish because this is her favorite color. She has had her best years in Spain, where she moved to from Morocco when she was 20 years old. She met her husband in Spain and the children are born there.

In Spain she was a teacher of Arabic and knew a lot of people. Now, in Belgium, it is difficult to make friends; life is spent inside your house more whereas in Spain people would meet on the streets and talk to each other very easily.

Soumaya chose green for Arabic because in this language she has the green light: she can say everything in Arabic, she speaks it very well and it means the world to her.

On the other hand French is red like a red light; Soumaya can speak French but she is still afraid of making mistakes. She would like to improve her knowledge but for the moment she does not have the time to follow a French course. She would also like to learn Dutch but for the moment she does not have the time to go to the lessons which are given at her children’s school.

For Rif she chose the color orange, because it is a warm color and it makes her think about the tangerines which she used to eat in Tangier. She is very proud of speaking Rif.



Activity 2: Competences on a ladder

Fatima is very proud that she can speak as much languages as her mother, even if they are not the same languages.

Fatima does not speak Rif because she has never lived in Morocco. She does not want to learn it because she says that she can talk Arabic to her relatives in Morocco and that is enough for her. She rather prefers to learn other languages like English or Portuguese.

Soumaya speaks just a few words of Dutch while Fatima is very proud of saying that her Dutch is very good.

Fatima would like to speak Arabic even good as Soumaya, who is a teacher of Arabic.

Soumaya speaks a little French, just enough to survive in Brussels but next school year she is trying to attend classes in French because she needs to integrate in the Belgian society.

Fatima has learned Italian because she met a good friend of her and that she likes this language.



The linguistic story of Elena and Giovanni

The mother (Elena) was born in Belgium from an Italian father and a Belgian mother. Elena's father was born in Sicily but grew up in Milan. He then immigrated to Belgium and in order to integrate he started to learn French. Elena's mother is a French-speaking Belgian. When Elena's mother met her Italian, husband she began to learn Italian. Elena's mother fell in love not only with Elena's father but also with the Italian language, as well as with Italian culture and with Italy. When she was a child Elena used to go on vacation to Liguria every summer. In the beginning Elena affirms that at home with her parents she used to always speak in Italian. After a while, Elena admits that she started to speak Italian when she was five years old and only with her friends in Italy and during the summer. After her secondary studies in a French-speaking school, Elena married an Italian man who was born in Belgium but with Sicilian origins. Together they have two children: Giovanni (13 years old) and Eva (8 years old).

Elena has chosen a Dutch speaking school for her children because she considers Dutch essential to finding a good job in Brussels.

Elena considers Italy her home country and she feels that she belongs to Italy. Her biggest frustration is that when she goes on vacation to Italy, the people there consider her a Belgian and when she is in Belgium, the people consider her to be an Italian. When she was a child on vacation in Italy her friend told her: 'Your mother is a stranger, because she speaks Italian with a strange accent'. Elena was very angry and answered 'My mother is not a stranger; she is my mother'.

Activity 1: Language portrait

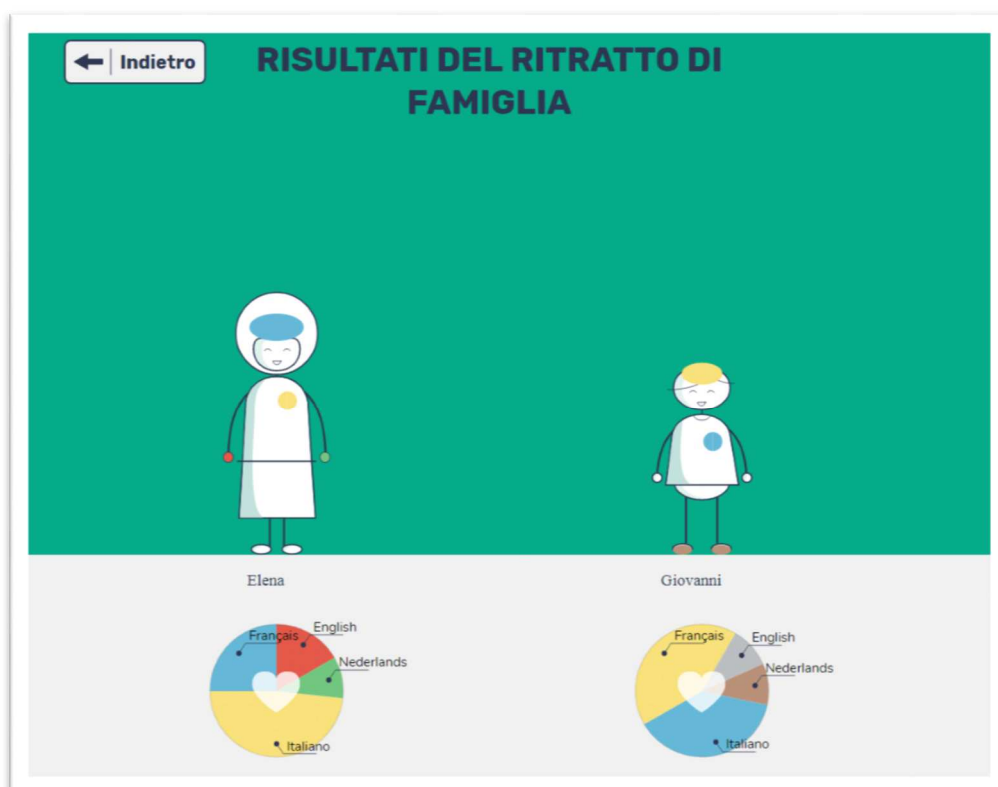
Elena chose the colour blue for French; there are not any particular emotions linked to blue but it is very interesting to observe that she puts French in her head. She thinks in French and that is why she colours her head blue. She affirms that she regrets that French has occupied so much room in her head and in her life. She would like to have more room for Italian. For Italian she chose the colour yellow, like the sun in Italy, contrasting with the Belgian clouds. She colours her heart in yellow, because Italian is her language, the language of her family, of her emotions. For Dutch she chose green and she coloured one hand of the silhouette in green. With Dutch you can work. She chose red for English and she coloured the other hand in red. English is also very important for the working world.

Giovanni

selected blue for Italian: in Italy there is the sea which is blue and he likes blue a lot. That is why he colours his heart in blue: his family is Italian and Italian is very close to his heart. When he will grow up Giovanni says that he would like to find an Italian girlfriend. French has the colour yellow, Since

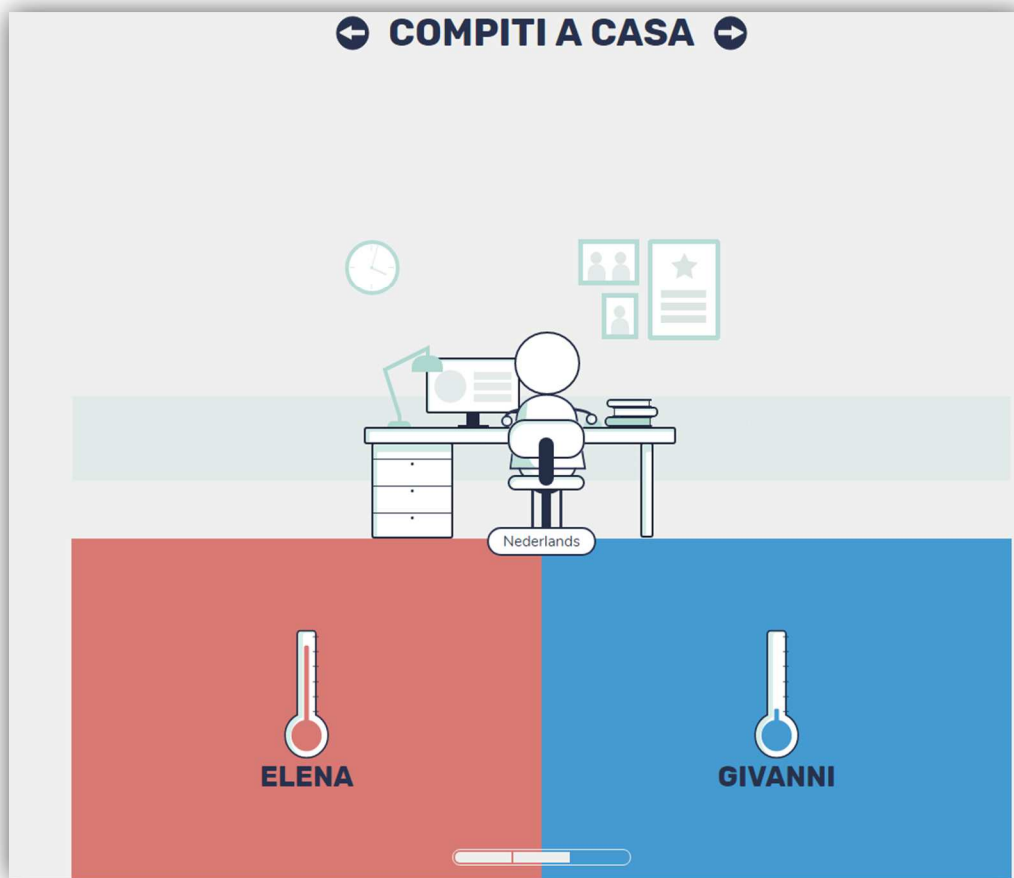
Giovanni says that in Belgium the houses are yellow and French is the language of his home country. He paints his head yellow because his head is full of French.

He chose brown for Dutch; Giovanni does not like brown and he does not like to speak Dutch. He is obliged to go to a Dutch-speaking school by his parents but he does not like it. It considers Dutch very boring; the books in Dutch are grey and there are no colours. Giovanni also realizes that Dutch is very important in order to find a job in Brussels.

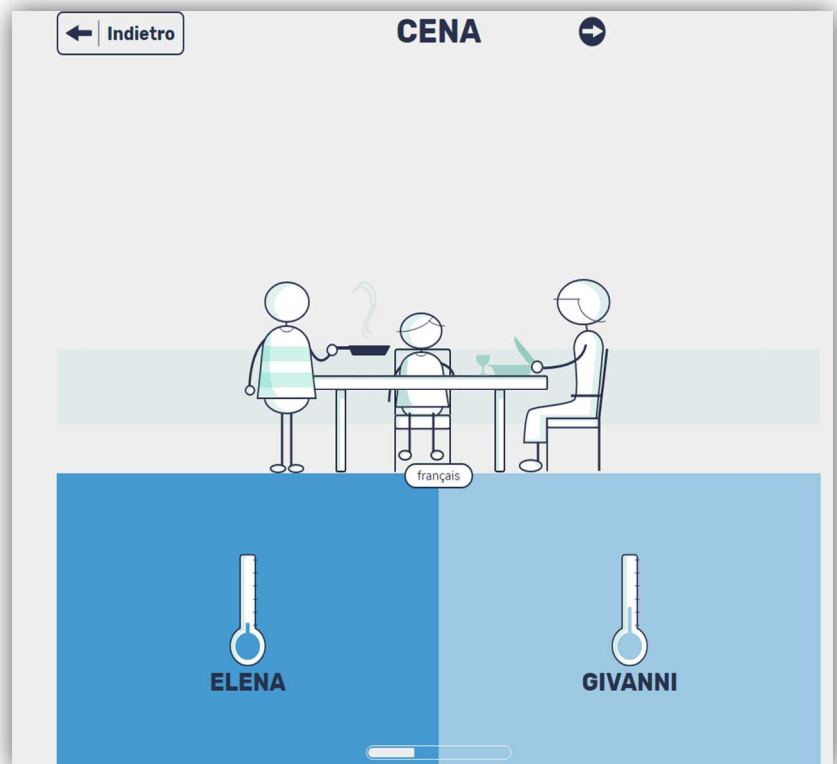


Activity 2: Language situations

Elena uses Dutch to help Giovanni in his homework. Giovanni does not like to go to a Dutch-speaking school and that is why he put the situation in blue which indicates that he does not agree on the use of Dutch during the homework. Elena keeps encouraging him saying that Dutch is very important for his future.



At the dinner table the family mostly speaks in French. At the dinner table Elena would like to speak Italian rather than French but she affirms that there are discussions where it is easier to speak in French. Giovanni agrees with his mother and says: 'I would like to speak Italian during the meals because we always eat Italian food and so it would be easier to speak Italian.'



The bedtime rituals are in French: when Elena reads a story to her children and in Italian for the prayers. Her parents were not Catholic and she chose to be baptised at the age of 18. Her grandparents from her Italian side were Catholic and she learned prayers in Italian. For her the religion is Italian.

Elena found a lot of her Italian friends from her childhood using Facebook. She uses a lot of Italian to communicate with them. She is very proud because they told her that her Italian has improved a lot over the last years. When her family comes to visit French is spoken, but when the family of the husband comes to visit, she speaks Italian. She has no Italian friends in Brussels, she would like to have more friends who speak Italian.

The linguistic story of Mohamed and Hussain

This is the story of Hussain's family. The family is composed of his mother, who lives in Sudan with a son and two daughters. The father actually lives in Belgium with the other children: Mohamed (10 years old), Hida (14 years old), Haya (17 years old) and Moudassir (19 years old).

All the members of this family were born in Sudan. At a certain point he moved with all of his family to Holland, where the father has been working for twenty years at an aluminum factory. It has been a very good period for the family: Hussain loved his job and he learned Dutch and he used to practice it every day with his colleagues.

After twenty years Hussain lost his job and he decided to move back to Sudan with his family. Meanwhile, the political situation in Sudan was getting worse every day and Hussain decided to move back to Holland to try to make his living there.

He tried very hard to find a job but he did not succeed and then decided to move to Brussels, where he had some relatives.

After a couple of months, the grandfather on the mother's side became sick and the mother decided to go to Sudan and visit her dying father. She brought her oldest children with her and left the youngest children with her husband in Brussels. The grandfather died and the mother decided to go back to Brussels to join the rest of her family. But her passport was not valid anymore and it was impossible to renew her passport in Sudan.

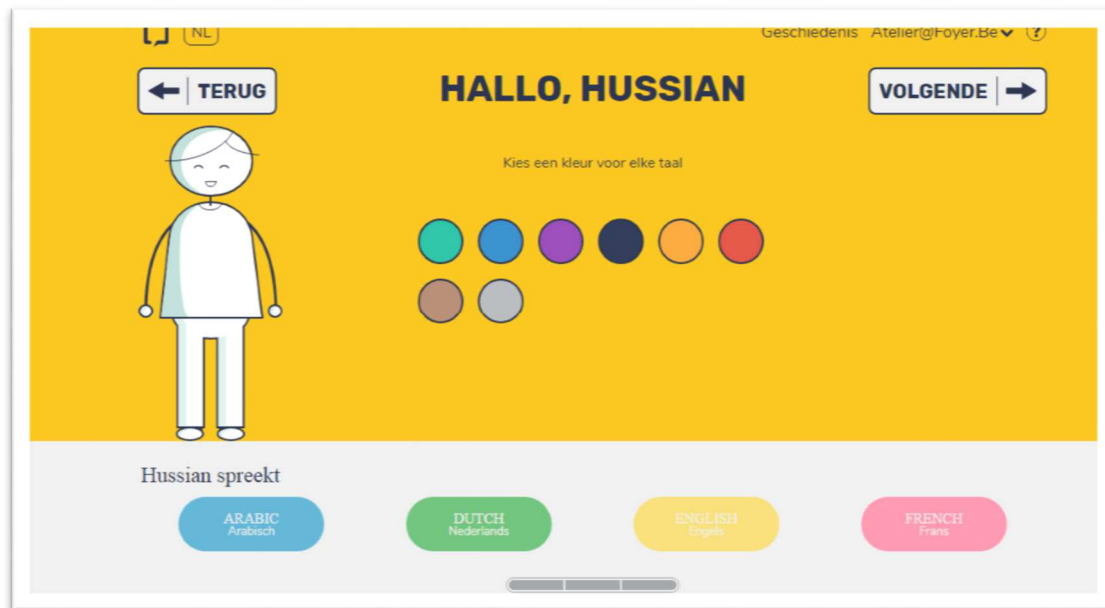
At the moment the mother lives in Sudan with her oldest children and the father lives in Brussels with the youngest children.

The family lives in Molenbeek in a so-called transit apartment while they are waiting for a bigger social apartment in order to host the rest of the family still living in Sudan.

Mohamed attends a Dutch-speaking school in Brussels.

Activity 1: Language Portrait

Hussain speaks Arabic, English, Dutch and French. Hussain chose blue for Arabic because Arabic makes him think about the blue sky of Sudan. He misses his country so much and he also misses his wife and his children back in Sudan. He tells us that Sudan is a wonderful country with incredible nature but now with the climate change the desert is expanding further and further. The country has natural resources like oil but the internal conflicts have turned Sudan into a refugee-generating country.



Hussain colors Arabic in one of his eye, in the half of his mouth and of course in his heart.

Hussain chose green for Dutch because of the plants and farms he has seen in Holland. He colors Dutch in one eye and in his ears. Dutch means a lot to him; it is the language that he used with his colleagues and permitted him to maintain his family

English is a very important language for Hussain. Sudan was a British colony until 1956 and Hussain learned English at school. Hussain chose yellow for English because it is the color of the sun in Sudan. He puts English in his heart because he considers English the language he can use to express his emotions.

Hussain speaks a little French, he considers French the language of love and that is the reason why he chose pink for French. He colors French in his hand, because he needs French in his daily life, for exemple when he goes to the market in Molenbeek. Hussain would like to improve his knowledge of French but he has no time to attend a course because he has to look after his children.

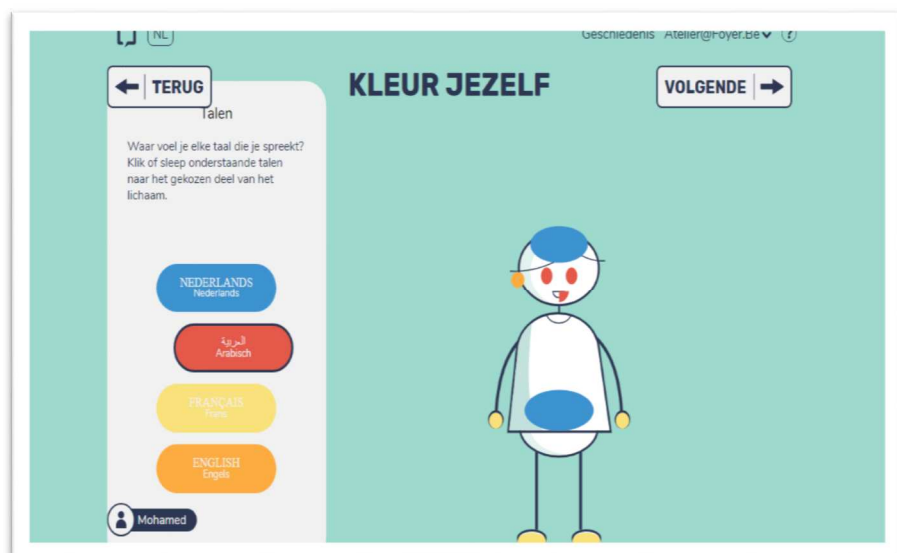


Mohamed chose blue for Dutch and he colors Dutch in his head and in his stomach. He tells us that he has to think a lot in Dutch because he goes to a Dutch-speaking school. 'I do not understand why I have to learn Dutch while in Brussels everybody speaks French' – affirms Mohamed. His father Hussain explains to him: 'You have a Dutch passport and that is why you have to learn Dutch'. Mohamed was born in Holland but then the family moved to Sudan and Mohamed attended school in Arabic until they moved to Brussels in 2018.

Mohamed colors Dutch in his stomach because he says that the food he eats here is very different from the food in Sudan.

He colors Arabic in his eyes and in his mouth because he would like to see his mother again and talk to her.

Mohamed colors French in his hands and in his feet because when he does something or when he walks in Brussels Mohamed needs to use French. But his French is not good and sometimes his friends laugh at him and he does not like it.



Activity 2: Competences on a ladder

Mohamed affirms that he speaks excellent Arabic like his father.

Mohamed puts himself on the highest position for Dutch even if Mohamed's teacher told us that Mohamed understands Dutch but he does not dare to speak it.

Mohamed used to learn English in Sudan but now that he lives in Belgium he does not learn it anymore and that is why his position on the ladder is below his father's position. Now Mohamed is playing cricket and there he hears a lot of English and it makes him very happy.

Mohamed is very proud to affirm that he speaks better French than his father and he is willing to improve it.



The linguistic story of Jumana and Ghanem

This is the story of the Safi family. There are five members of this family: Ferial the mother, Ghanem the father, and their three children: Jumana (12 years old), Human (10 years old) and Osam (8 years old).

The family members who have participated in the linguistic interview are the father Ghanem and Jumana

All the family's members are born in Iraq and are now living in Brussels.

The father arrived in Brussels in 2016; in Iraq he worked as a journalist for the national television broadcaster. He used to express his opinion about the political situation in Iraq but at one point he felt that he was not safe in the country anymore. That is the reason why he decided to move to Europe and more particularly to Brussels, where he had a friend who could help him in the beginning.

He moved to Brussels by himself in order to find a job and to find an apartment, things which would facilitate the settling down of his family.

The mother and the three children arrived in Belgium on April 2018. Ghanem has followed the integration courses in Arabic but he has not found a job yet.

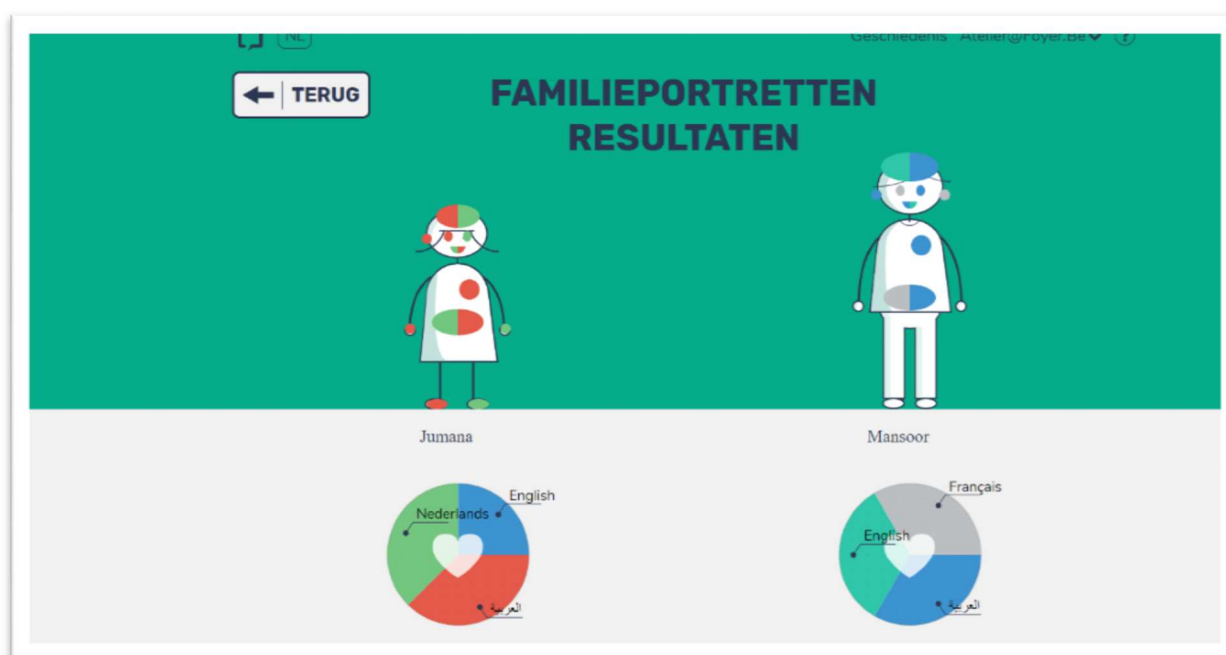
The children are attending a primary school in Dutch and the father regularly volunteers in the class of his children giving drawing lessons.

The activities of TalesatHome have been conducted with Jumana (12 years old) and her father Ghanem.

Activity 1: Family portraits

The languages spoken by Jumana are Arabic, Dutch and English.

She chose the color red for Arabic and she colors Arabic in her heart, because Iraq means everything to her. 'I want to use Arabic as much as possible – explains Jumana – 'I would like to learn a lot of languages but I do not want to forget my mother language which is Arabic.



I need this language to translate for my parents, who do not speak neither French nor Dutch'. Jumana colored her head in red because she can think very quickly in Arabic and also because she can read in Arabic. Jumana continues telling us: 'I have colored my hand in red, because I can write in Arabic and one part of my mouth is also red. I speak Arabic with my friend Haitam and also with other friends coming from Syria. I speak Arabic when I skype with my friends and my relatives who still live in Iraq – Jumana tells us. 'When I talk to them, I always cry, that is why I have colored one of my eyes in red'.

Jumana chose the color blue for English. She learned English at school in Iraq. She tells us: 'I have chosen blue for English because I have learned English in Iraq, which used to be a country full of water. Now because of the war, the water is not blue anymore but it is very dirty and the fish are dead.'

The color Jumana gives to Dutch is green; green like the color of the trees, which are seen everywhere in Belgium, explains Jumana. She likes trees a lot and she adores learning Dutch, which she colors in her head, in one eye, in one hand, in one foot and in one part of her stomach (because when she is at school, she eats Belgian food).

Ghanem speaks Arabic, English and French.

Ghanem chose the color blue for Arabic because blue is a powerful color.; it is the color of Facebook and Messenger and it is also the color of the diamond on the king's crown. Ghanem explains that Arabic is a language with 2 million and a half words and this explains the power of this language.

For English Ghanem chose green, because it is a color he likes a lot and that gives this sense of freshness.

Ghanem tells us: 'I have chosen grey for French because I do not trust my French. I still make a lot of mistakes in French. I consider French as the language of intellectual people. Now I have chosen these colors for the languages I speak but I am sure that in the future I will change the colors.

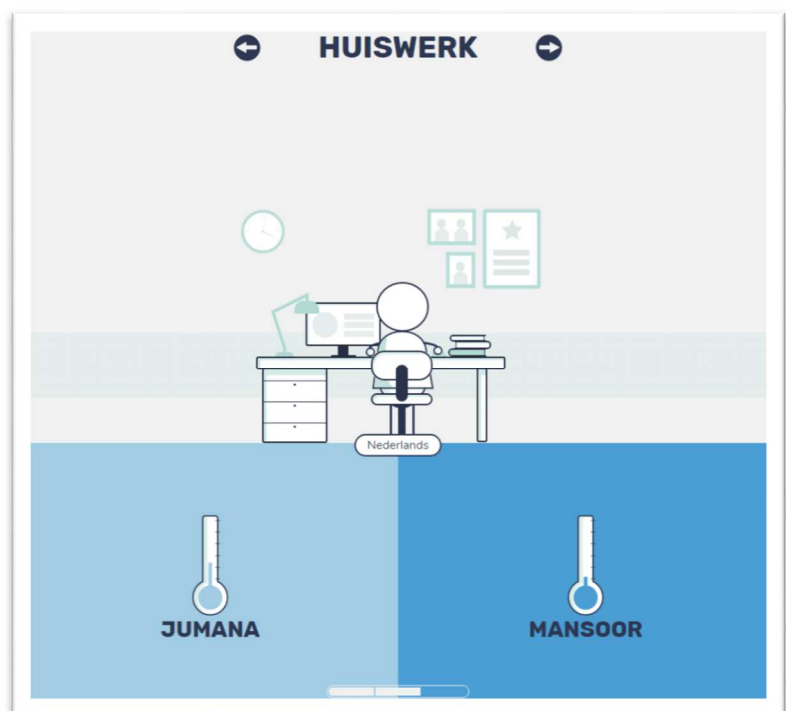
Activity 2: Discussing situations

The language that is most spoken at home by the Mansoor family is Arabic; they speak Arabic at table, when they pray, and when the siblings play together.

The father has chosen a Dutch-speaking school for his children because he considers that Dutch is an important language in Brussels and it is essential in order to find a good job. He tells us that he gives one euro to his children when they make a full sentence in Dutch.

Jumana has to do her homework in Dutch but her father cannot help her; she finds it sometimes difficult to do everything by herself. She would like her father to learn Dutch in order to help her and her siblings. That is why Jumana and Ghanem chose the color blue for this situation; blue in the

application TalesatHome means that they do not feel comfortable with this situation and would like to change something.



Activity 3: Competences on a ladder

Jumana affirms that her father speaks Arabic in an excellent way... much better than anyone else.

She would like to speak Arabic very well, like her father. Now she lives in Brussels and it is difficult for her to improve her Arabic. That is why she would like to go back to Iraq to continue her studies in Arabic. Later she would like to become a journalist like her father.

Ghanem tells us that he has always spoken to Jumana like he was talking to an adult. That is why she speaks Arabic very well. He is very proud of her and of her linguistic abilities.



Linguistic story of Miriam and Giuditta

The Berrada family is composed of the parents and two children, Omar, who is 22 years old, and Miriam, who is 12 years old. The father was born in Morocco and the mother was born in Italy, in the region of Lake Como. Both children were born in Italy.

The Berrada family moved to Belgium in 2017 because the father lost his job in Italy and he found work in Belgium in a transportation company. The oldest child is also working at the same company as the father. Omar's girlfriend also moved to Brussels but after a couple of months she went back to Italy. The mother has recently found a part-time job. The grandparents on the mother's side still live in Italy and the grandparents on the father's side live in Morocco. The children have visited their Moroccan grandparents only twice.

Miriam attends a Dutch-speaking school and next year she will attend secondary school.

Activity 1: Family portrait

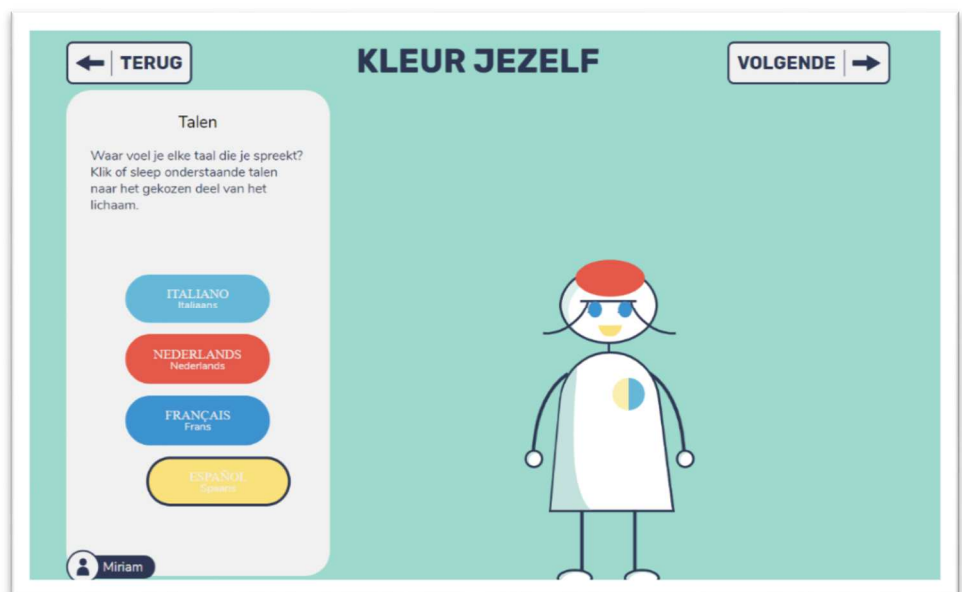
Miriam chose light blue for Italian because it is the favorite color of her friend in Italy. Miriam misses her friends in Italy a lot and she skypes with her best friend almost every day.

Miriam keeps repeating that Italian is a beautiful language and that everybody says that there is a lot of music in it. She likes music and that is why this year she started to learn how to play guitar.

Dutch is the language that Miriam had to learn when she moved to Belgium; she associates the language with red, the color of the Belgian Red Devils football team.

Miriam chose dark blue for French because she does not like this color; she does not like French because she cannot

she does not like when she cannot do something properly. French is in



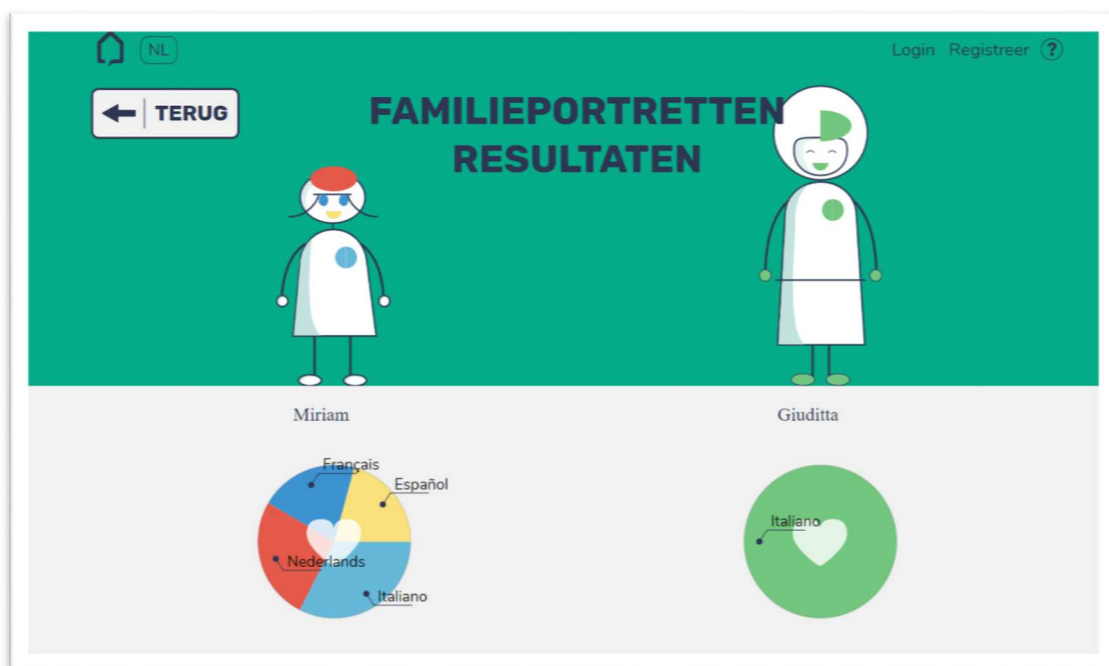
Miriam's eyes, because everywhere she sees people speaking French and she also watches television in French.

Yellow is the color she assigns to Spanish and she colors it in her heart together with Italian. Italian and Spanish are her two big loves, but her head is full of Dutch because she passes most of her time at school.

Giuditta only speaks Italian. She can also speak an Italian dialect from the South of Italy, because her parents were born there and then moved to the North of Italy. She colors Italian everywhere in her body. Giuditta never learned Moroccan because her husband always spoke Italian to her. Her husband left Morocco when he was 17, when he lived in Sweden for two years and there he learned to speak Swedish. Afterwards he moved to France where he studied for three years. Finally, he moved to Italy where he met Giuditta and they got married.

Her husband never spoke Moroccan to the children even if Giuditta was encouraging him to do so. When the children visited the grandparents in Morocco, he always had to translate for them. Miriam used to play with her cousins without using words because she could not speak Moroccan. Miriam only knows bad words in Moroccan and she uses them when she gets angry.

The father speaks a good level of Dutch since when he arrived in Belgium in 2015 he began attending Dutch classes (he also speaks Swedish so this helped him a lot).



Giuditta refuses to learn French or Dutch. She does not consider Belgium her home; she would like to go back to Italy because here her life is empty. Sometimes she only speaks to two persons in the entire day: her husband and her daughter. She realizes that it is impossible to go back to Italy and she also realizes that it is important to speak at least one of the national languages of Belgium in order to find a job. For the moment she only works two days a week and with a Spanish person, whom she can understand a little bit.

Activity 2: Competences on a ladder

Miriam is very proud to say that she speaks more languages than her mother and she keeps encouraging her mother to learn French or Dutch because she does not want to translate for her all the time.

She also wants her mother to be happy here in Belgium, to find friends and to have a good life. Miriam thinks a lot of Italy but she likes to live here; so she would not like to move back. Miriam also realizes that she has to make a lot of effort in order to speak Dutch and French better.



Linguistic story of Murat and Youssef

Murat is a Syrian boy aged 10. He arrived in Belgium three years ago with his uncle. His parents and his siblings arrived in Belgium one year ago.

When Murat left, he was living in a refugee camp in Istanbul. A relative of the family proposed to take Murat with him to Europe. They travelled by boat from Istanbul and arrived in Greece and they continued their trip until they arrived in Brussels. They had been living in Brussels for a couple of months in the Klein Kasteel when the uncle decided to continue his trip to a new life towards England and did so without Murat.

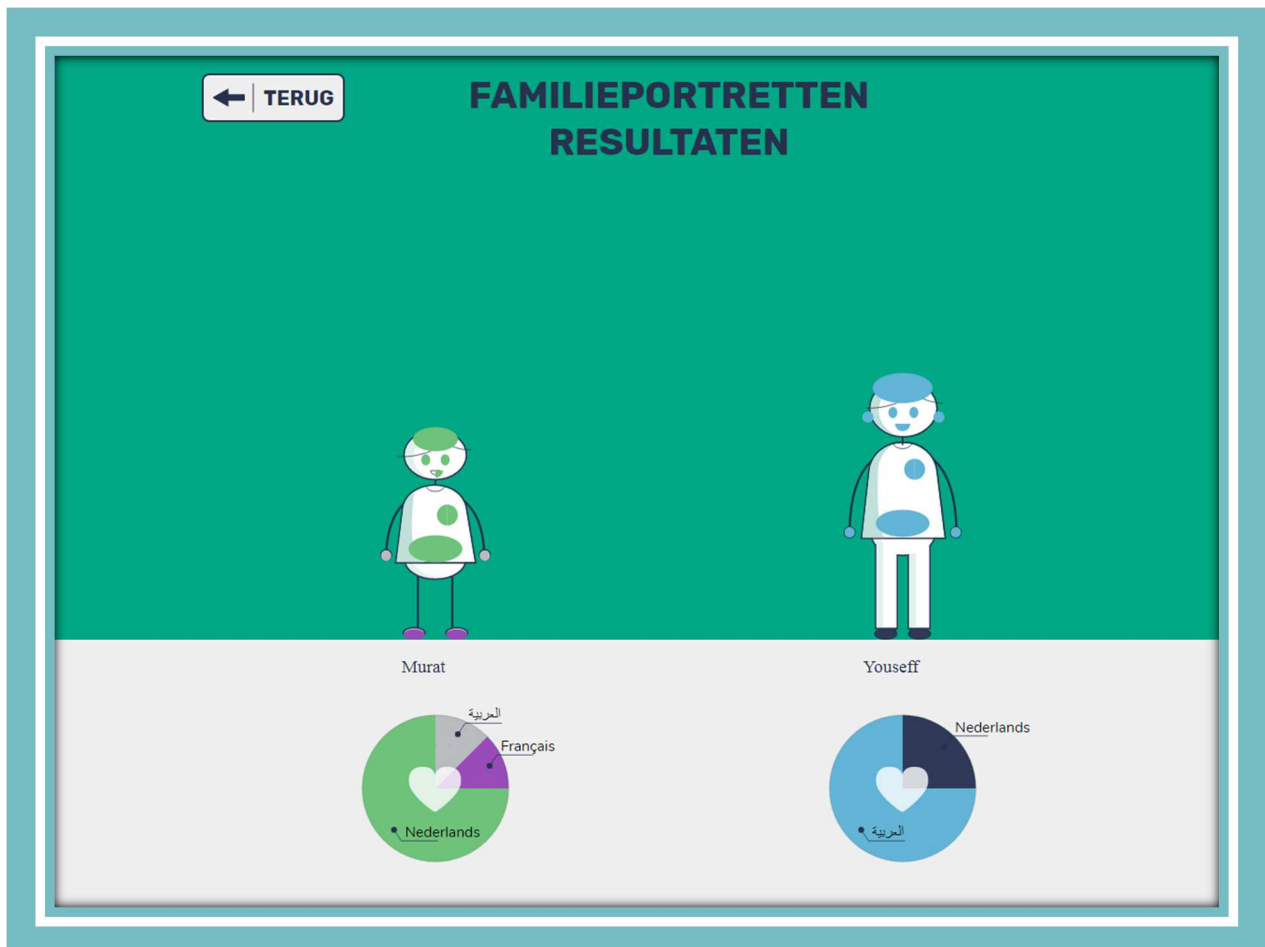
Murat moved to Minor Ndako in Dilbeek. In Minor Ndako Murat was the only Syrian boy and he learned Dutch very quickly. The other minors in Minor Ndako were all dependents and Murat was obliged to speak Dutch in order to communicate with them. After six months a foster family proposed to foster Murat. In the meanwhile, Murat's tutor was trying to get everything in order to obtain a family reunification visa for Murat's family. Murat's parents and his four siblings arrived in January 2018 and now Murat lives with them.

Murat attends a Dutch speaking school in Brussels. His mother tongue is Arabic but he cannot speak it anymore; after a couple of months in Minor Ndako he completely forgot Arabic and he started to speak in Dutch. The communication with his parents in Istanbul became very limited, just 'Hello' and 'How are you?'. Now that his parents are here in Belgium, Murat is learning to speak Arabic again, even if it very tiring for him.

Activity 1: Linguistic portraits

Murat has chosen green for Dutch because this is his favorite color and Dutch is his favorite language. He associates Dutch with the months spent with his foster family. He had a great time with them and learned a lot. They had been a very special family to him; with them he overcame his fear. He does everything for them. Murat considers Dutch as his mother language because coming to Belgium and learning this language has been a kind of rebirth for him. Murat colors Dutch everywhere in his silhouette. Murat chose grey for Arabic; grey is a sad color and Arabic means a lot of sadness to him. In Syria he has seen a lot of negative things: war, people who died, and friends who lost their parents. Murat left Syria when he was 5 years old and escaped to Turkey with his family. After two years he left Istanbul with an uncle and for Murat the trip was extremely tiring and perilous. The boat on which Murat was travelling suddenly had a problem, because it was overcrowded with refugees. Murat had to swim for a couple of meters but he had never learned how to swim. This was so scarring for him that for a while Murat could not say anything. That is why he does not like Arabic but now that his parents are here in Belgium, he is learning Arabic with them. Often, he has to translate for his parents,

so it is very important that he can speak Arabic. Murat hopes that his father is going to learn Dutch very quickly so that he would not need to translate all the time.



Murat chose purple for French: he does not like purple and he does not like French. At school Murat hears all the time that the children do not have to talk in French and that is why he has started to consider French as something bad, something that you do not need to deal with and come into contact with. Murat colors French in his feet because he lives in Brussels.

Youssef chose blue for Arabic because blue is a color he likes a lot. Arabic means everything to him; it represents his home country he had to leave because of the war. The situation in Syria was very difficult and he could not continue to live there. In Istanbul they have always been living with other Syrian refugees which is why he never learned Turkish. Youssef is very sad that Murat cannot speak Arabic anymore. Murat decided by himself to leave to Europe with his uncle, and Youssef asked him many times if he was sure about his decision. However, Murat kept saying that he wanted to go to Europe in order to help his family. Now that they all live in Belgium together, Youssef is teaching Arabic to Murat and Murat is teaching Dutch to his father.

Youssef chose black for Dutch and colors it in his feet. He realizes that Dutch is very important for him and his family in order to find a job. However, this language is very difficult for him and even if he is following a language course he is not progressing as he would like. In Brussels there are not that many people who speak Dutch and so therefore he cannot practice it.

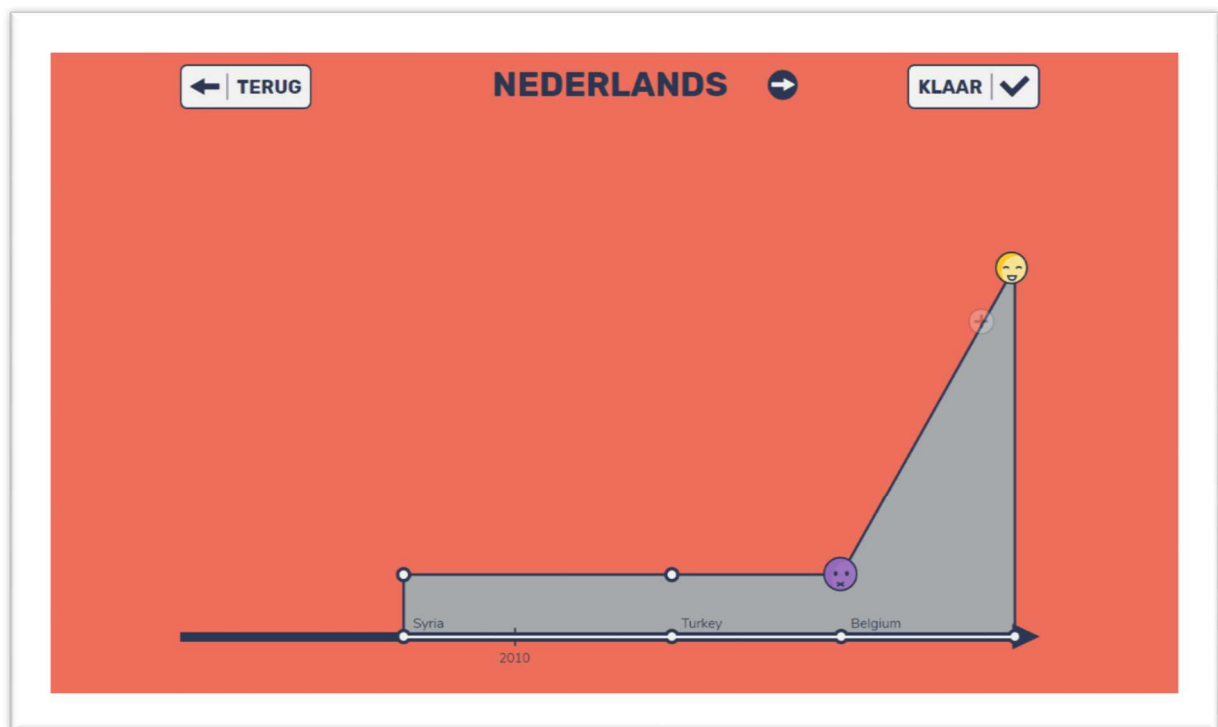
Activity 2: Timeline

Murat was born in Syria and lived there until the age of five. When he moved to Turkey he did not have the possibility to learn Turkish because he did not go to school in Istanbul.

When Murat arrived in Belgium he could finally go to school. For him, school has meant discovery, like learning about a great deal of other things, like practicing sports or learning how to play a musical instrument.

As well, all of his activities were in Dutch and that is why he started to like the language. In the beginning he did not dare to speak Dutch because he was afraid of making mistakes, but now his feelings are very positive.

Later, he would like to become a Dutch teacher and that is why he is already teaching Dutch to his father and to his siblings.



The linguistic story of Yasmin and Mayra

Yasmin is the fifth of Mayra's six children. Mayra is a young mother who always wanted a lot of children. The parents and the four oldest children were born in the North of Portugal, while the two youngest children were born in Holland. Indeed, the family moved to Holland ten years ago because the father found a job there.

The mother was very convinced of this choice; she learned Dutch very quickly in order to integrate into Dutch society. She also started to speak Dutch to her oldest children, who went to school in Dutch. While in Holland, Yasmin and Arianne were born. Then the family moved back to Portugal, because one of the grandparents was very sick.

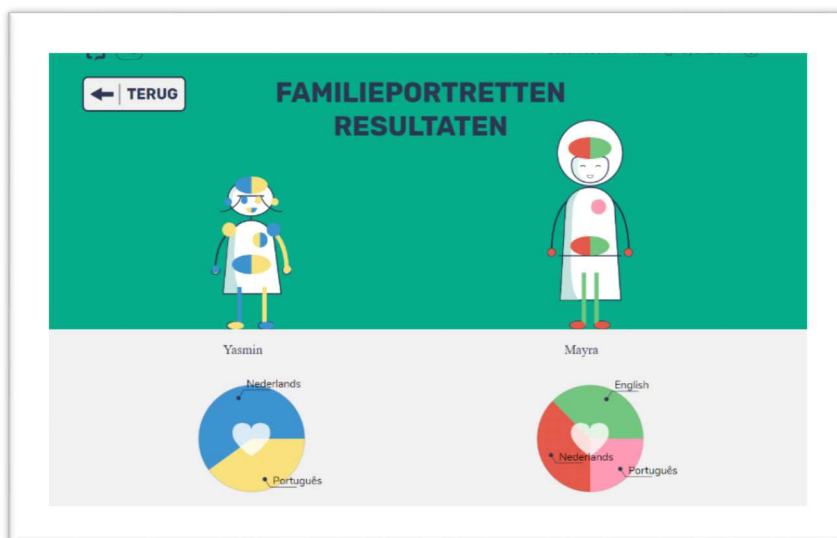
The oldest children, back in Portugal, could not speak Portuguese anymore; for them it was very difficult to learn their mother tongue again. Mayra felt so guilty that she did not continue to talk in Portuguese to her children.

Since 2018, the family moved to Belgium where the father has been working in the construction sector. In Portugal, the family's economic situation was precarious and that is why the family made the decision to move again.

The mother immediately found a job in a school as a hall monitor, because she speaks Dutch. All the children attend a Dutch-speaking school; the oldest children still know Dutch from their period in Holland but the two youngest never went to school there.

Activity 1: Language portrait

Yasmin chose the color yellow for Portuguese because she finds it a very joyful color. Speaking Portuguese gives her joy and this is the language she speaks with her family and her family means joy to her. She likes having a large family, a lot of siblings she can play with.



Dutch is blue; blue is also a nice color but this language is still very difficult for her. She tries to do her best to learn it but the teachers say that she had to try harder to improve her Dutch. She also wants to make her mother happy because her mother keeps repeating that Dutch is very important and it means the future of their family. Now she really feels

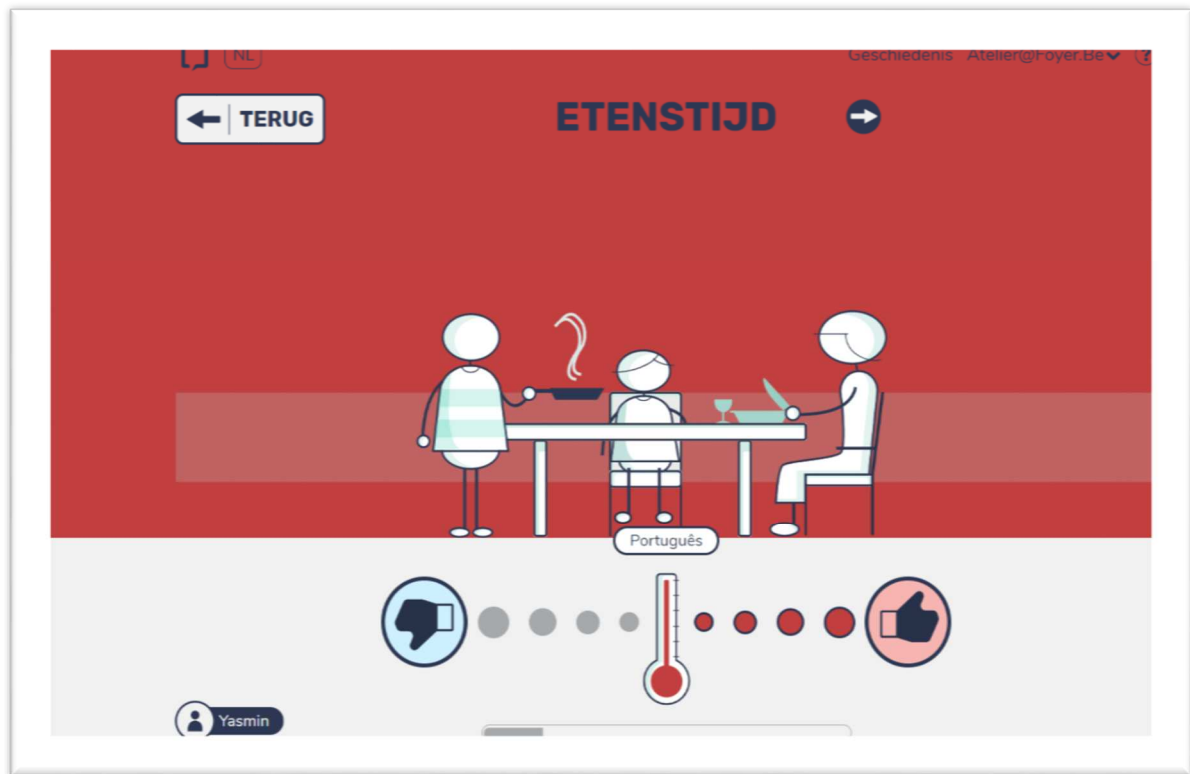
like she is divided into two parts and into two languages.

Mayra chose red for Dutch because it is a powerful color. Sonia speaks Dutch with a Dutch accent and here in Belgium people look at her in a strange way because of that. She speaks in Portuguese to her children because she does not want to make the mistake she made when they used to live in Holland. She says to her children: 'We are Portuguese and everybody considers us Portuguese; you have to speak your mother tongue well to show everybody that you are Portuguese'. Mayra colors Dutch in her head, in her feet, in her hands and in her stomach. 'I am trying to cook Portuguese food often but I don't find Portuguese products all the time. So sometimes we eat Belgian food, which is not bad at all' - affirms Mayra.

She colors Portuguese in pink; she has five girls and one boy and pink is the favorite color in her family. She colors Portuguese in her heart.



Activity 2: Discussion situations

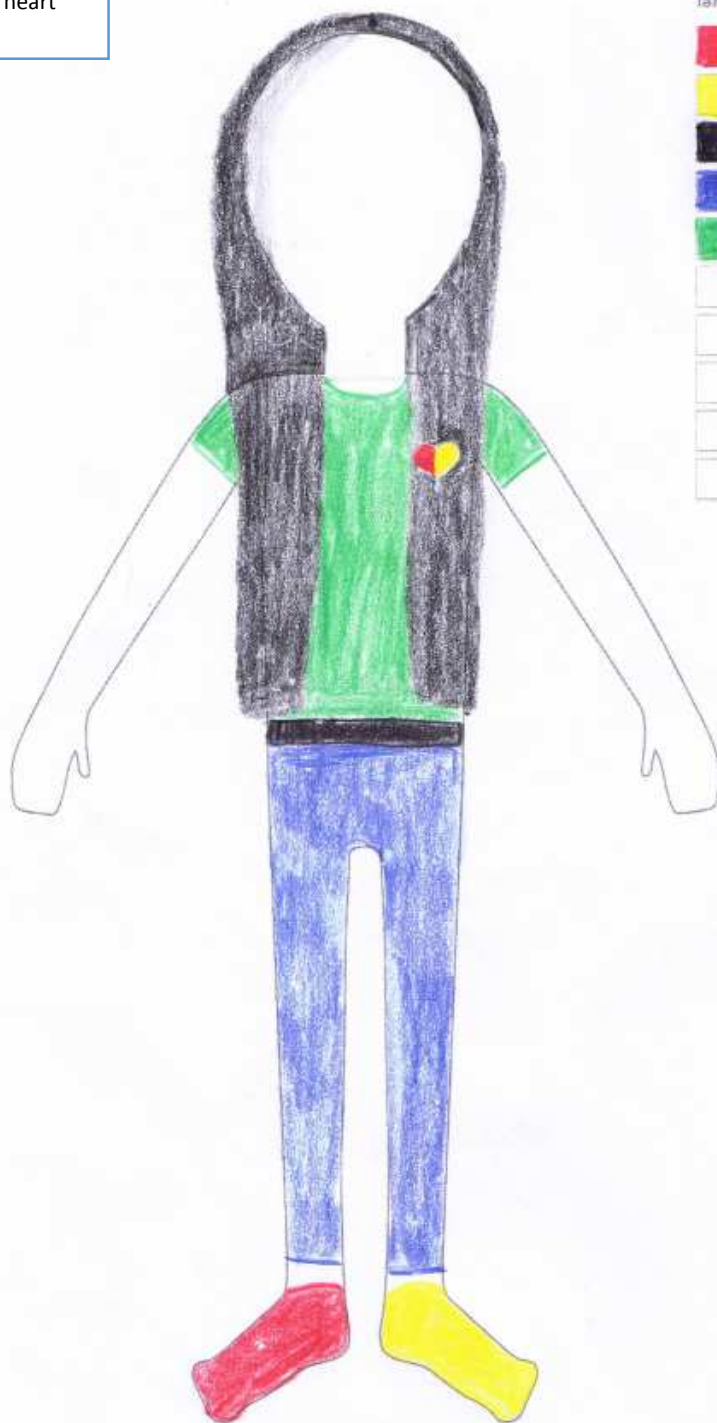


They all decided to speak Portuguese at table. Mayra wants so badly to keep her Portuguese identity and she wants that her children do the same. They all agree that at table the only spoken language is Portuguese. When visitors are coming to eat at their place, they all speak the visitor's language so that nobody will feel excluded

I feel excluded when my family comes to visit us and I cannot speak Punjabi. I would like to learn this language but my mother always told me that it was not important to speak Punjabi. Therefore, when we go to Pakistan I cannot play with my cousins



I speak a lot of languages
but I colour Italian and
Spanish in my heart



Pick a colour for every
language you speak

Italians
Spaans
Nederlands
Frans
engels

TALES
at HOME

My body is cut into two: Spanish and Arabic. I do not know where I would colour Dutch.



Pick a colour for every language you speak

	spanje
	عربية
	1 2 3 4
	
	
	
	
	
	
	
	



My mother comes from Thailand and I like a lot of things from Thailand.

I speak Thai and in my body there is a lot of Thai. I colored my hair Dutch, because it is something you need but you can also live without hair.

