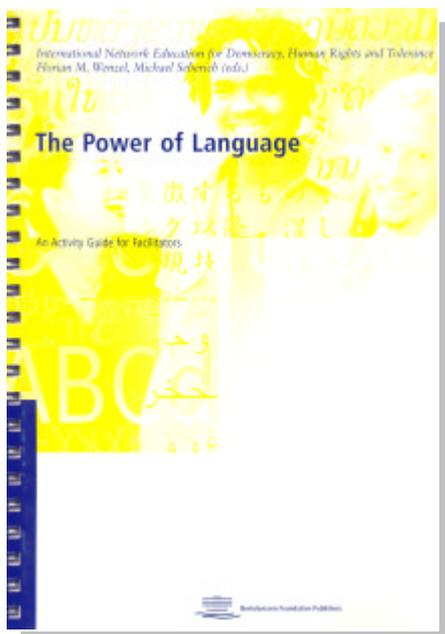


Die Deutsche Bibliothek - CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

A data set for this publication is available at die Deutsche Bibliothek.



© 2001 Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers, Gütersloh

Responsible: Michael Seberich, Florian M. Wenzel

Editing: David Grant, Lynn-Steven Engelke

Copy editor: Brigitte Neuparth

Production editor: Sabine Klemm

Cover design: werkzwei, Bielefeld

Cover photos: Photodisc

Typesetting and print: Hans Kock Buch- und Offsetdruck GmbH, Bielefeld

ISBN 3-89204-577-1

[www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/publisher](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/publisher)

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## Preface

Language is the basic means of communication of every human being. Therefore the use of a language can be understood as one part of humanity's cultural rights. Today over 6000 languages and major dialects are spoken in the world.

The strong link between interpersonal communication and identity underpins the fact that language is closely related to such issues as democracy, human rights and tolerance. Language allows us to develop and communicate our thoughts, experiences and rights. This observation turns into a source for conflicts when linguistic hierarchies develop within a political entity. From this perspective, language is inevitably connected with conflicts of identity and power structures.

One of the activities assembled in this guide particularly illustrates the connection between language and identity. The participants are asked to transfer a proverb from their mother tongue into the language used in the training. In many cases the direct translation of the proverb does not make sense in the other language. The participants feel misunderstood and surprised about the power of language. This misapprehension shows on a very basic level that language is one of the keys to express and access equal rights and political participation within a society. A sensitive approach towards this issue opens a great potential for the further exploration of related topics.

This observation has also been true für the organizations that have come together in the International Network on Education for Democracy, Human Rights and Tolerance. When its members first met in 1998, the dilemmas of working together as a multilingual group became immediately apparent. The challenge of overcoming intercultural barriers within the Network, as well as the reflections upon the work in their respective home countries placed the issue of language on the fürefront of the topics chosen to be addressed.

*The Power of Language* is the result of this effort within the Network. One of its working groups collected, adapted and developed a range of activities to help educators grapple with the many facets and issues surrounding the use of language. The activities proposed here were tested in different cultural contexts and with various target groups.

With this guide, the International Network on Education for Democracy, Human Rights and Tolerance presents its first publication. Initiated in 1998 by the Bertelsmann Foundation in cooperation with the Center for Applied Policy Research (C.A.P) at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich, the Network has developed an effective working process. Over the last three years, it has grown from seven to nine members and now consists of non-governmental organizations from Brazil, Chile, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, the Philippines, Poland and the USA. I am confident that the activities presented here will be useful for all those who are working in the field of education for democracy, human rights and tolerance.

I wish to thank Viola Georgi for her substantial contribution as Network coordinator. I want to extend this thanks to all the members of the Network that have participated in the development of this publication. A special thanks goes to David Grant who edited the final draft of *The Power of Language*.

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of the Bertelsmann Foundation, Gütersloh;*

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# Introduction

## Context and idea

The idea for this guide originates in the work of the *International Network Education for Democracy, Human Rights and Tolerance*.<sup>1</sup> This network consists of nine non-governmental educational organizations from Chile, Brazil, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, the Philippines, Poland, and the USA. The Network was initiated by the Bertelsmann Foundation and is directed in cooperation with the Center for Applied Policy Research in Munich.

## English as a working language in the Network

The working language of the Tolerance Network is English. Fluency in English was and is a precondition for participating in the Network, but of course proficiency levels vary. Whereas English is the mother tongue for participants from Northern Ireland and the USA, for most members it is their second language. These differing proficiency levels lead to problems of communication and sometimes to misunderstandings. Inevitably the native speakers of English find themselves in a privileged position. They can more easily raise their voices, can make themselves readily understood and are able to express their views in a more sophisticated way. This disparity has required heightened sensitivity to the question of language inequality within the context of the Network itself.

<sup>1</sup> Our homepage is [www.tolerance-net.org](http://www.tolerance-net.org). In the text below we will refer to the "Tolerance Network" or "International Network," each time capitalized, for the sake of abbreviation.

## **Experiences with language: Diversity within the Tolerance Network**

Within the membership of the Tolerance Network, there are at least 15 languages represented, not including the various regional and local dialects of those languages. Participants come from diverse national, historical, ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds in which they have faced widely differing linguistic situations. Some participants grew up in multilingual or bilingual societies. Some have lived through the suppression of their native language or minority dialect. Others belong to groups of the majority language. These personal experiences with language and the power relations caused by language provided reflective material for a systematic discussion of language policies and the meaning of language within the educational field.

## **The issue of language in the working contexts of the Network participants**

Participants of the Tolerance Network regularly face the problems of language diversity and language inequality in their pedagogical practice. They have to take into account that their audiences are multilingual - not only in the sense of speaking different languages, but also in terms of different linguistic styles and non-verbal modes. Complex cultural differences further complicate all communications.

All member organizations address language as a topic within their educational work. But their operational focus varies depending on the specific local or national context. Some of the Network partners work in more homogeneous and monolingual groups on the issue of "Language and Communication." Others are involved with "Dealing with Linguistic and Cultural Diversity" in intercultural education. Our Israeli partners as well as those working in Eastern Europe are addressing the link between national language policies and equal rights. Despite the very different historical and political backgrounds of these participating organizations, surprising parallels and inter-contextual perspectives relating to multilingualism have emerged.

## **Global educational and political issues**

Linguistic diversity, the promotion of multilingualism and democratization of language rights are issues that have become key educational policy topics in Europe as well as in many other regions of the world. Political and economic processes of internationalization and transformational processes in newly-emerged countries have joined with the global migratory flows to contribute to a state of permanent flux in the linguistic fabric. Most

modern societies are not homogeneous entities; rather, they are societies of immigration encompassing different linguistic and ethnic groups. This linguistic diversity challenges not only long-standing national education systems but also the more recently developed educational NGO sector.

Linguistic hierarchies are widespread. They are not simply based on designations such as "English in England; German in Germany." In some countries, the original languages have been marginalized or even displaced completely by the language of immigrants. From this perspective, multilingualism is inevitably connected with conflicts of interest, power structures and relationships of domination. These societal structures are often cemented by educational policies. In political systems where social inequities and linguistic asymmetries are reproduced, schools play a central role since the linguistic and cultural capital children bring with them is valued according to the reigning linguistic hierarchy.

Working with mixed-language groups, it is important first to observe the link between the linguistic disadvantage in the outside world and the symbolic representation of this inequality in the group process and then to work with that situation. Do not overlook a basic rule about any group-dynamic process, a small group reflects societal conditions and thus due attention must be paid to majority-minorities relations. The mechanisms of marginalization at work at the macro level are almost always repeated at the small group level. But even though cultural and linguistic change has forever been the human condition, appropriate educational concepts and guidelines for dealing with multilingualism are still under development.

## **Our approach to democracy and tolerance education**

Any educational activity that has the goal of promoting the values of tolerance, human rights and democracy has to show the presence of these values in the educational process. The impact the facilitator has in this context is often not openly and verbally declared, but comes from the way the process is guided. We want to focus on language as one of the areas that is often not specifically taken into account, but links with issues of power and inequality. There are various areas in which language is crucial in civic education.

If there are several languages in your workshop, some participants may be excluded from participation. If the minority has to speak the dominant language, it then gives up its cultural identity implicit in the mother tongue. This means that the personal identity of minority participants is split between their origins and the verbal setting of the workshop. Spontaneity of interaction is reduced and conflicts can occur. The facilitator has to ensure that participation and equal learning opportunities are possible for everyone. Special attention must be paid to creating a space for those with different languages. This is especially important if there exists one official dominant language in the group, while one or more other minority languages are also present.

Usually the positions of different languages in a society vary. Some languages are accorded higher social prestige than others. The facilitator should show respect to all languages present. This issue should also be brought up in the group. Finally, the group has to establish an agreement on how to deal with this problem.

The facilitators address participants from their own level of verbal expression. Their skill in expressing themselves may not match that of some participants, leading to ineffective communication. These participants may feel estranged from the facilitators and might not participate, at least not verbally, since they feel dominated by a complex language that they do not easily comprehend. They might furthermore be socially excluded from the learning situation, causing internal group conflicts. A divisive power structure and hierarchy could arise. It is therefore all-important that the facilitator be fully self-aware in the use of language complexity. She has to train herself to use language at different levels and to address participants in an appropriate way.

The use of different languages and different levels of language complexity in a group is both a challenge and an opportunity for the facilitator. Through adroit use of language, the different backgrounds of participants can be valued and shared. Such a workshop experience can generate an important realization of mutuality on the basis of differences. Language awareness can demonstrate that respectful heterogeneity can open more creative possibilities than restricted homogeneity. Mutual interdependence is the basis of a functioning community that makes full use of the resources of its members.

All the above applies not only to oral communication but also to non-verbal channels of communication such as body language, setting, gesture, dance, handouts, drawings, videos, role plays, etc. The facilitator has to be just as sensitive in using these forms of communication as in using verbal language. These non-verbal channels can convey cultural misunderstandings and foreclose communication. On the other hand, they can be regarded as powerful tools for extending expression and participation. This is especially true in situations when verbal exchange is difficult, for instance in situations of deep conflict or when working with an interpreter.

Another point in workshops when language is particularly problematic is in reflecting upon what happened during certain activities. Through verbal expression participants attempt to delineate different perspectives, values and norms underlying the preceding actions. Such analysis is crucial for long-lasting educational effect. Participants must be able to stand back from the accomplished workshop activities and evaluate on a reflective level processes concerning democracy, human rights and tolerance. Essential learning and the dawning awareness of the need for personal change in one's everyday life take

place here. This is where it becomes especially important to consider the many different ways people learn.

People in some cultures and sections of society are very much used to discussion, dispute and the dialectic as a fruitful way of learning and reflecting upon activities. For those people, this often seems to be the only way of effectively learning about democracy, human rights and tolerance. But there are other cultures and groups for whom this mode of reflection is inappropriate. They feel dominated by the perceived "elite" and might as a consequence not participate in the evaluation and reflection of the activities. For some participants, verbal exchanges can seem unnecessarily complicated, confusing and exhausting. In such situations the whole intention of certain activities can become counter-productive. Judicious use of appropriate evaluative and analytical methodologies is required.

### **The process of developing the material**

All of the material included in this guide has been extensively tested by the contributors themselves in their professional contexts. The two-year development process has involved collaboration, negotiation and intensive discussions among all Network members. In many cases contributions have greatly evolved during the production of this guide.

In some cases the materials that you will encounter have been tested by the Network members taking on the role of participants. We felt it important to submit materials that we have fully engaged with ourselves. Having experienced the exercises as participants, we have identified many challenges that exist within the contributions. These have provided opportunities for lively debate and discussion among us. Even our way of using language in preparing this guide led to intense debate over the writing and use of language. We hope the result is a uniformity of style with room left for differences of approach and method.

We have also attempted to develop the concept of debriefing so as to enhance participants' understanding of the processes that they have been involved in. Through our exploration of the debriefing concept, we have ourselves more fully engaged with the activities. Via thorough and creative debriefing, participants and facilitators alike can consolidate the learning enrichment that has taken place.

You will, no doubt, discover many new challenges and ways to adapt the materials to the needs of your own unique contexts. It is hoped that you will further extend the application of these materials and encourage participants to become involved in the language debate.

## Contents of the guide

This guide takes a close look at the power of language in education for democracy, human rights and tolerance. It is designed for experienced facilitators and meant to sensitize them to the issue of language in an educational context. These facilitators can then give more attention and respect to the various dimensions of language and can integrate the activities from this guide into their workshops.

*Part I (Gur stories: The relevance of language)* illustrates the importance of the issue by presenting stories from the contributors in various countries. In very different ways it shows why for all of us the issue of power and language is a burning one. These short pieces from various social cultures and political conditions provide a rationale for this guide. Information boxes on the general language situation of each country allow for comparison of the different contexts.

*Part II (Activities concerning language and democracy)* is the main part of this guide and presents practical activities with which facilitators address various aspects concerning the power of language and the relation of language to democracy. The intention is to create sensitivity to the problem and awareness of the need for tackling the issue. The activities themselves are divided into modular thematic sections from which a facilitator can select in designing her own workshop. Each thematic section starts with background and introduction, tying together the various threads of the activities. There is also one section of activities dealing with debriefing and evaluation, which we consider an integral and essential part of any workshop of this kind.

*Part III (How to do a workshop)* consists of *hints for facilitators* concerning our general understanding of what is important for running an interactive workshop as well as working in international and multilingual contexts. Following this there are various *workshop models* that have been employed in different countries. Thus the reader gets an idea of how to use the activities for different target groups and how to integrate them into a larger context that might be supplemented with specific focus on the language issue. The introductions to each model give an idea as to how such a workshop could be announced for publicity purposes.

*Appendix I* provides further reading on the issue of the power of language, and provides source material with which the member institutions work. *Appendix 2* lists the member organizations of this guide and gives information about the individual contributors.

Throughout the guide you will find quotes concerning language. They are not directly connected with the activities or the articles. Rather, they are building blocks to pause and reflect upon. Some reveal important cultural markers in their very structure. To highlight these, there are sometimes both a literal word-for-word translation as well as a normal interpretive translation. In a few cases, there is a further explanation of the meaning.

### **A note about the contributions**

The International Network Education for Democracy, Human Rights and Tolerance allows us to share experiences, to work together and to understand the philosophies of the member organizations. Learning about the situation of others gives us a unique opportunity to reach a better understanding of our own. This intense process has repeatedly demonstrated to us that the use of the activities in our specific cultural contexts is the essence of a workshop dealing with language and democracy. Here we would like to especially thank Viola Georgi as Network Coordinator for skillfully steering the process and leading us to what we hope is this widely-useful activity guide. David Grant worked hard in going through the entire manuscript and doing a final editing. With his help, we hope to have reached the right balance between uniformity and originality of the contributions. Furthermore, Ms. Lynn-Steven Engelke, Senior Consultant at the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies in Washington served as a critical external reader, pointing out many spots we had overlooked. We also express our gratitude to Coni Scheilhaas in doing background work in terms of layout and checking the manuscript. Finally, the realization of this activity guide was supported by a lot of help from colleagues and dear friends.

We look forward to seeing this guide used by the member organizations as well as by colleagues worldwide. Although the activities included are copyrighted to secure the protection of individual sources, we do invite educators to use the material for any non-commercial purposes. We also encourage revising and reworking the activities to make them appropriate to other cultural contexts.

The year 2001 is *The year of European languages*<sup>2</sup> as established by the Council of Europe. It is marked by a number of activities, conferences and workshops that are nationally coordinated by over 45 countries. We are happy to be able to contribute to this campaign and we hope that, together with similar activities in other countries, it will further awaken consciousness regarding the power of language.

<sup>2</sup> More information can be found on <http://culture.coe.int/AEL2001EYU/index.html> and [www.eurolang2001.org](http://www.eurolang2001.org).