

## TRANSCRIPTION

# MULTILINGUALISM: AN INTERVIEW WITH FARIDA, ISMAIL AND CHIARA



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**Children experience their multilingualism mainly as positive. Farida, Ismail and Chiara report on their experiences.**

*Speaker: The sister and brother Farida and Ismail are eight-years-old and live in Berlin. Their parents come from Egypt, and in the past year, that is, in 2015, they too attended the German School in Cairo for several months. On holidays and from other children at the school, Farida and Ismail have learned a little English, French, Spanish and Italian. The twins think it quite natural that they can speak more than one language. Farida explains:*

Farida: Arabic, because I'm from Egypt. And German, because I went to kindergarten for four years here in Berlin. And the other languages because I heard them around me and they were explained to me by the other children in German. I heard them while on holidays and then I asked the children at school who came from the countries about them.

*Speaker: With their parents and with each other, Farida und Ismail speak Arabic. There are also several children at school with whom they can talk in Arabic. With everyone else, they talk German. Farida is quite clear about which language she likes best:*

Farida: Arabic, because it's my native language.

*Speaker: When Ismail has to choose in which language he would like to see a movie, he chooses German.*

Ismail: Because I understand more of it.

Speaker: Sometimes Ismail translates for Farida or for other children. When this works, it makes him very proud.

Ismail: Then I give myself a pat on the back.

*Speaker: Farida and Ismail are in general glad that they have been raised bilingually. How would it be for Ismail if he were allowed to speak only one of his two languages?*

Ismail: Then I'd be sad, because I like them both.

*Speaker: And Farida?*

Farida: It would be stupid, because I also like both languages. And when I speak one language very often, I forget the other. That's happened to my friend. She used to be able to speak Spanish, but then she spoke too much German.

*Speaker: Farida also has a tip for how adults can help children learn a foreign language.*

Farida: They say something to me and then I say it ten times in a row. And then I can remember it.

*Speaker: The seventeen-year-old Chiara from Berlin also learned early to juggle more than one language. She was five-years-old when, in 2003, her family moved from Israel to Germany. Before that, she had spoken primarily Hebrew. Only her mother*



*talked German with her. After Chiara moved, the German language was suddenly at the centre of her life.*

Chiara: My mother told me that, when we moved here, I was reluctant to speak Hebrew because I wanted to fit in. That's why I pretty quickly learned fluent German. Before, I could only understand it, not speak it.

*Speaker: Lest Chiara forgot her second language in the German-language environment, her mother began speaking Hebrew with her after their move. For Chiara this was odd, because in Israel her mother was only person who spoke German with her. Now Chiara has become accustomed to her mother switching from time to time from one language to the other.*

Chiara: But even now I still notice when she speaks Hebrew and think, "Oh, she speaking it again". With my father I don't notice when she switches languages; it's quite funny.

*Speaker: Many of Chiara's family and friends come from Israel, are Jews and speak Hebrew so that they can keep in touch with the language even in Berlin. But sometimes Chiara has the feeling that she should conceal her knowledge of Hebrew and her necklace with the Star of David.*

Chiara: There are parts of Berlin where I simply don't talk. Where I also don't wear my necklace, especially when things are turbulent. I'm in a bus and see people and think: OK, it's better if they don't know. That certainly happens. It's why I very much like going to Israel. There I don't have to hide. Having to do so is really frustrating.

*Speaker: But on the whole Chiara feels comfortable in Berlin.*

Chiara: Because I grew up in a Jewish community and there were many Hebrew speakers among us, I never felt excluded; quite the opposite. But I have a friend at school who is Turkish, the only one; and he has, so to say, no one; he has an external circle of friends, but can't do much with them at school.

*Speaker: Some TV series Chiara prefers watching in German, others in Hebrew. She has her favourite musicians in both languages. And she finds learning other languages easier because, thanks to Hebrew, she already knows a language that is very different from German.*

Chiara: When I switch languages, I also change mentalities. The tone of voice changes, the whole way in which you are yourself. You can't explain it. You can't talk to people in German in the way you talk to them in Hebrew because it would be hurtful. Basically, in Hebrew you can say "Shut up!" without being offensive.

*Speaker: So Chiara's bilingualism has many advantages for her. Are there also disadvantages?*

Chiara: Not that I know of. I don't think so.