



Love language

Effectively communicating in a multi-lingual family

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The in-laws

Same country, different family, different language

When I married into Cheri's family, it was clear I didn't speak their language. In fact, it seems that whatever I said during my first few days with them came out in profanity, at least in their mother tongue.

During the courting process we (Cheri and I) seemed to bridge the gap of communication and over the years we've learned each other's preferred language of love. But those first few years (more like decades) with her family were very trying.

I felt they should learn my language because it was clearly a superior tongue. I was actually bilingual using the languages of touch and talk, whereas her family of origin spoke the language called 'acts of service.' Since I spoke two tongues fluently, I felt they could put in some effort to learn another. (Given my welcome, it couldn't hurt.)

I wanted them to learn at least one of my languages, but I didn't spend much time learning their language. Which is another way of saying I didn't pick up many words in my wife's native tongue. As the years have gone by and I've matured (a little), I've learned that she speaks a beautiful language. Mind you, I'm still fond of my native tongues, but adding hers to my quiver of communication skills, deepened my capacity to transmit intimate feelings of love and joy.

A different school of thought: 3 vs. 5 love languages

Dr. John Lund, who worked with Dr. John Gottman at the University of Washington, suggests 3 tongues of love:

1. Touch oriented: physical, sharing space
2. Verbally oriented: words of affection, intimate discussions
3. Visually oriented: acts of service, gifts, sharing productive time

Knowing which language or languages you speak is important. Knowing the language of your spouse or loved ones, gives you the highest probability of a deep level of affection, which leads to intimacy.

Verbal and touch are at different frequency levels than acts of service. Verbal and touch need consistency to be efficacious. Acts of service can require planning, tools, time

commitment, and can communicate deeper meaning and therefore is spoken less frequently.

The optimal space is a balance and familiarity with each love language is important. We are typically heavily weighted to a specific language at the time of marriage. Our environment or family of origin is the primary source for our native tongue.

There are no rules stating you must only communicate in your language of origin, in fact it's unhealthy space if you do. To optimize your love space, learning another language is refreshing and rewarding. Each tongue within the love languages carries specific strengths and weaknesses.

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This knowledge raises your awareness and foments a better space between you and your loved one, but it doesn't necessarily translate into intimacy and continued success. Developing the skill to articulate meaning in the specific language comes after acquiring knowledge of said language. In other words, you must practice speaking the tongue and learning when and where it is appropriate to speak.

But don't stop there, what about your accent? Have you ever received a hug from an 'acts of service' speaker? It's like hugging a cardboard mannequin. It takes time and practice before you develop the proper accent.

If you want a deeper level of intimacy with your spouse or loved ones, try learning their language.

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