

# The New Speaker Guide

## How do you talk about language?

How do you tell people about  
your experiences talking new languages, and  
the reasons you have for  
deciding to learn other languages ?



# New Speaker Stories

This mini-publication introduces the work of The New Speakers Network, a partnership of 28 countries working together to better understand the benefits and challenges involved in becoming a *New Speaker*.

This booklet is one element within the exhibition in the Milk Café entitled 'New Speakers Stories', part of the Refugee Festival Scotland 2017.

It accompanies the photographs and film made by Deirdre MacKenna, which have been drawn from new research funded by the EU COST programme The New Speakers Network.

The New Speakers Network is chaired by  
Bernadette O'Rourke of Heriot-Watt University  
and is made up of members from 28 EU countries.

The New Speakers Network focuses on  
the dynamics involved in becoming a *New Speaker*  
in European communities in which globalisation,  
mobility and transnational networking are transforming  
how people use languages.

The aim is to develop understanding and promote awareness  
of the experiences of multilingual people by  
investigating the challenges and opportunities  
they experience when acquiring, using and being  
understood as a *New Speaker* of a language.

The term *New Speaker* refers to people who learn languages in addition to what they would consider their 'native' or 'own' language, or their 'mother-tongue'.

In doing so, *New Speakers* transcend the dominant culture and society around them by broadening their horizons and adapting to new linguistic and social opportunities.

Members of The New Speakers Network are exploring the linguistic experiences of 3 groups of *New Speakers*, including

- those who speak a minority language as their mother tongue (such as Gaelic or Basque) so are used to adopting other, more dominant languages,

- immigrants, who adopt new languages as part of their integration over long periods of time, and

- transnational workers who might adopt and use language for shorter periods for employment reasons.

There are no universally accepted criteria for distinguishing a language from a dialect.

Scholars and other interested parties often disagree about the linguistic, historical and social status of minority languages and their relationships with the dominant national languages.

*(A minority language is a language spoken by a minority of the population of a territory.)*

# There are over one hundred languages spoken in Scotland

Today, the main language spoken in Scotland is English, while Scots and Scottish Gaelic are the indigenous minority languages and, amongst others, Arabic, Basque, Bengali, British Sign Language, Cantonese, French, Gujarati, Greek, Hindi, Irish, Italian, Mandarin, Polish, Punjabi, Somali, Swedish, Turkish and Urdu are also widely spoken.



The quotes and information on the following pages  
are extracts from conversations between  
Deirdre MacKenna and Agata Urbanska,  
Brian Thunder, Daniele Sambo,  
Hanneke Scott-Van Weil, Leena Nammari,  
Miren Manias, Nadifa Essa and  
Nina Bacos, who shared their  
stories and opinions about being a  
*New Speaker* in Scotland today.

# all language is an exchange

*it's just another code*

it's all about circles and relationships

*I need to understand my children*

*my neighbours*

*my work*

so many people have a different first language

we have a bond between us

*knowing only one culture makes you afraid of other cultures*

it means freedom, freedom to be me

# they don't ask about my journey

*I still make mistakes*

*I need time*

people don't see how rich these languages are  
or the riches these languages can give to them

*here, people have no idea what languages I speak*

language allows me to be part of daily life

*I loose my words*

*sometimes they fly away*

*sometimes arrive too late*

they underestimate me

# people are very impatient

*it's frustrating*

they have the potential to make trouble for me

*I don't want to insult anyone  
and I don't want to be insulted*

people in power positions can deny what I need

*if you cannot speak  
you are in a cage*

they speak about me  
when I'm sitting right beside them

# it's just another code

*it helps us to understand Other People  
and there are a lot of Other People in the world*

learning a new language is difficult for everyone

*speaking with an accent isn't always a good idea...*

we all make paths between languages  
some make an extra effort  
some recede

*it's always an exchange on both sides*

# New Speaker Stories

an exhibition of film and photographs  
commissioned by  
The COST New Speakers Network  
exploring the dynamics involved in  
becoming a *New Speaker*.

at The Milk Café, Victoria Road, Glasgow  
20 June – 02 July 2017  
part of the Refugee Festival Scotland 2017

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cultural  
documents



## More info...

The New Speakers Forum is an interactive space where you can explore the dynamics of engaging with languages, and share ideas about the opportunities and challenges facing multilingual speakers in today's society.

<http://www.nspk.org.uk/the-new-speakers-forum.html>

# New Speaker Stories

Language can define individual and collective identities.

It is a part of every exchange we have with other people,  
yet it is difficult to describe and imagine.

Without language, it's difficult to gain employment,  
access education and social services and join in  
with our neighbours, friends, families and community.

Yet the processes whereby people learn new languages  
and become legitimate speakers of these languages  
are complex and not always well understood.