

Our Multilingual *Lives*

In this series we interview multilingual individuals around the world, with a focus on how living with multiple languages influences their lives.



*Madalena Cruz-Ferreira hails from Portugal and received postgraduate degrees in linguistics from the University of Manchester, UK. Her main research interests are child multilingualism, multilingual phonology and intonation, and the language of science. Recent publications include her book **Three is a Crowd? Acquiring Portuguese in a Trilingual Environment** (2006, Multilingual Matters). She has published a book on the language of linguistics (2003, Prentice Hall), articles and book chapters on child prosody and multilingualism, foreign intonational accent and Portuguese phonology and intonation. She has lived in Singapore for over 10 years with her Swedish husband and their three trilingual children. You will find Madalena Cruz-Ferreira's articles and knowledge throughout Multilingual Living Magazine, where she shares her expertise in the field of raising children in more than one language. Here she shares with us her own personal experiences as a multilingual.*

What are your languages?

Portuguese, French, English, German, Spanish, Swedish, in order of appearance.

What language do you use in your family (with your kids, wife/partner)?

With my children: Portuguese by default, other family languages as and when the situation calls for them. With my husband: mostly Swedish, sometimes Portuguese.

In what language did you receive your schooling?

Portuguese and French.

In what languages do you commonly read for work?

Portuguese, French, English, German, Spanish, Swedish.

In what languages do you commonly read for

pleasure (can you name some titles of your favourite books, poems, etc.)?

Portuguese, French, English, Swedish. Favourites, respectively (among many, this is a difficult question!): Nítido Nulo by Vergílio Ferreira; António Gedeão's poetry. J.-P. Sartre's plays; 'Les Rocs' (among Eugène Guillevic's poetry). All of Jane Austen; Joseph Heller's Catch 22. Enligt Maria Magdalena by Marianne Fredriksson; Pär Lagerkvist's Aftonland.

In what languages do you commonly watch movies? (what are some of your favourite movies?)

Portuguese, French, English, Swedish, though I'm not a keen movie-watcher.
All-time favourite: the BBC series 'Allo 'Allo.

What language do you dream in?

In all of my languages, depending on what I'm dreaming about.

When you get angry, what language comes to you first?

It depends on what language I'm thinking or getting angry in.

What is the language you prefer to use to make a declaration of love?

As they say, love has a language of its own

In which language do you prefer to debate over a controversial issue?

It depends on the issue and on which language the issue is presented to me in. For example, I debate household issues with my family in Portuguese and Swedish, and work-related academic issues in English, because these are the languages in which these issues arise.

In what language do you prefer to write, and why?

My preference again depends on the purposes

of the writing. I use Portuguese to write to my children and Portuguese-speaking friends, Swedish to my husband and Swedish relatives and friends, and so on.

Do you like to mix languages or do you like to keep them strictly separate?

I don't give much thought to whether I'm mixing languages or not, except at work, where English is the lingua franca because we have no other language in common. Mixes into English from my other languages and those of my interlocutors might thus prove quite disruptive.

Did you ever rebel against a language/ decide not to speak a language, and if so, why?

No. On the contrary, I cherish every opportunity to use each one of them.

Do you think you are different when you speak a certain language/ does it affect your personality?

Yes. This is why I think it's great to be able to express myself in different languages. I'm still me, with all these different ways of being me. And besides, there's always the right word or the right tone of voice in some language somewhere, to say what I want to say. ❖



Madalena with her Swedish husband and young trilingual children