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Hello! My name is **Marie-Neige Umurerwa**. My family and I live in Lier (a city in the province of Antwerp). I am a Belgian-Rwandan French-speaking. I speak six languages: Kinyarwanda, French, Lingala, Kiswahili, English and Dutch. Thanks to my mother, I have had the opportunity to travel a lot and I lived in different countries. I came to Belgium at the age of 9. That is how I acquired my multilingualism.

I have always loved learning languages. For me, switching from one language to another is like switching from one music or rhythm to another, from one tone to another. Depending on what you feel, depending on how you experience things at the moment. For me, language is a translation of emotions. The more languages we speak, the more opportunities we have to access the hearts and emotions of people. Learning one or more languages should be done spontaneously and with pleasure, like a game. The sooner we start learning languages as a child, the more effective it will be.

Rwanda has four official languages, and everyone is able to speak more than one language. In a discussion, people easily switch from one language to another. We switch from English to French or from Kinyarwanda to Swahili. After a visit to my home country, I went to a restaurant with my family. The waiter came to take our order. When it was my turn, my eyes were fixed on the menu and without even realizing it I place my order in Kinyarwanda! Of course, my family laughed and when I looked up, I saw the waiter - in shock - asked me; "*Excuseer Mevrouw, ik heb niks begrepen, wat zei u?"* This situation happens to me often. It's automatic, I switch from French to Dutch or Kinyarwanda when I speak with my son or my husband or the other way around when I'm in Rwanda or at work.

For me, multilingualism is very important. It characterises an open mind, it opens the doors to the world. Multilingualism is the ticket to participate in the culture of people and to understand their code. So just keep going and don't be afraid to make mistakes! People always have massive respect if you try to speak their language, even if you make mistakes.