

Important tips for parents

- › For your child to stay multilingual, they should hear and use their languages in many situations – for example, at the dinner table, or while shopping, reading, or playing. This is important even in early childhood. This creates a good foundation for multilingualism.
- › Involve other family members. Everyone can help your child become and stay multilingual.
- › Talk with your child **about** all family languages and their importance.
- › Look for educational institutions that support multilingualism and include different languages.
- › **Actively** ask your child's school about classes in family languages. Talk with other parents about this and share your experiences. Community organizations or digital courses can provide lessons too.
- › Show your child that there are many ways to use all their family languages. Include your child's interests in this.
- › Use counseling and support services if you need them.

LITERATURE

Katja Cantone et al.: »Spracherhalt und Mehrsprachigkeit: Eine Einführung«, Narr Francke Attempto, 2024

Cemal Yıldız, Nathalie Topaj et al. (eds.): »Die Zukunft der Mehrsprachigkeit im deutschen Bildungssystem: Russisch und Türkisch im Fokus«, Peter Lang, 2017

Further book and material recommendations at:
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No. 7 – Achieving multilingualism Staying multilingual

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Achieving multilingualism Staying multilingual

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SCIENCE FOR LIFE
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Passing on languages

Many parents want their children to grow up multilingual. They think about how to do this from an early age. Some parents worry that their child won't learn enough German if they speak another language or several languages with their child. Many studies from around the world show that this worry is unfounded.



Multilingualism is a valuable gift you can give your child from the very beginning. For a child to become multilingual, they need regular contact with these languages. Parents don't have to choose between German and other languages.

How can children keep the languages they acquired early on? How can they not just grow up multilingual, but stay that way?

Research shows that children speak other family languages at home much less often than German once they start childcare or school. There are many ways to support the multilingualism your child has already gained during these life stages. This requires participation from parents, childcare, school, and all of us as a society.

Staying multilingual

You can use many resources to maintain your child's multilingualism and support other languages alongside German. There are different options depending on your child's age.

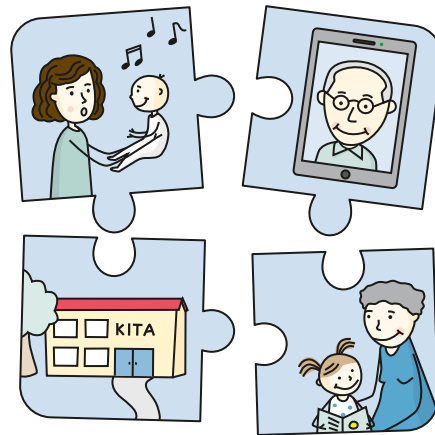
With very young children, you can:

- › Connect with multilingual families and find playgroups for family languages,
- › Stay in regular contact with family members (for example, through video calls),
- › Read or tell stories, sing songs together with siblings^[1].

If it's possible near where you live, you can:

- › Use a bilingual childcare center, or
- › Choose a childcare center that supports multilingualism. In such childcare centers, children's family languages are included and valued in everyday life.

This way, children experience using all their languages – in different situations, in leisure activities, and to connect with other people.



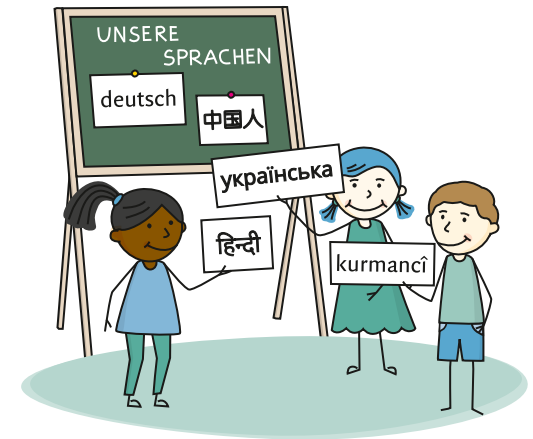
Strengthening multilingualism

With older children, multilingualism can be maintained and strengthened through education.

Teaching in family languages other than German is organized differently in schools. Starting in elementary school, some German states offer heritage language classes (also called first language classes).

Starting in secondary school, for some languages there is the possibility of:

- › Taking foreign language classes, or
- › Taking advantage of bilingual programs.



Experiences from classes can be deepened at home depending on your child's interests – for example, through music, media, books, or computer games in the respective languages.

Children can also strengthen their multilingualism outside of school. Especially in large cities, there are Saturday or Sunday schools, parent and community organizations that support multilingualism. There, your child can not only learn but also experience cultural, creative, or sports activities in the respective language.

^[1] S. Czapka, N. Topaj, N. Gagarina (2021). »[...] Study on the Lexicon Development of Russian and Turkish Heritage Speakers in Germany«. Languages 6(1), 27.