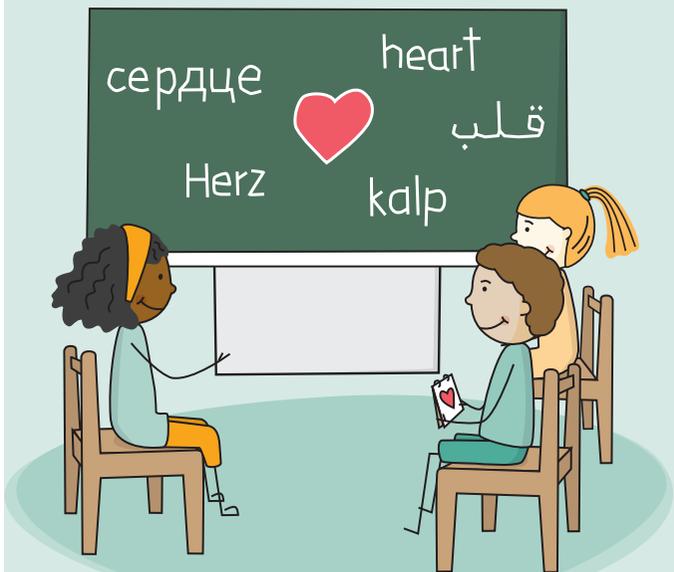


Important tips for parents

- › Discuss family strategies regarding languages from early on.
- › Be confident in speaking your home language with your child. Your language is as valuable as any other.
- › Talk positively about your language and culture. Value all languages.
- › Provide your child with multiple opportunities to learn and speak your language, e. g., through personal contacts, clubs, institutional activities, and with the help of books or other media.
- › Don't let other people's prejudices put you off! There are no good and bad languages, multilingualism is always an asset.
- › Take advantage of counselling and support services where needed!



No. 5 – Achieving bilingualism Valuing languages

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Achieving bilingualism Valuing languages

5

SCIENCE FOR LIFE
Facts – Research – Information
for Parents and Teachers

Linguistic diversity worldwide

Over 7000 languages are spoken in the nearly 200 countries around the world. Majority of people are multilingual, often speaking more than two languages.

Linguistic diversity is very high in Germany; although there are no comprehensive statistics, several hundred languages are spoken. About one third of all children grow up multilingual.

In many countries, languages that are not passed on from one generation to the next are dying out, and with them much cultural knowledge.

UNESCO, as well as many language researchers, are trying to draw attention to endangered languages and to preserve them. The preservation of those languages is important since all languages are of equal value, regardless of where they hail from, by how many people are they spoken or how they sound to the untrained ear.



Appreciation of languages is important

In early childhood, children can learn any language in the world. For them, there are no easy or difficult languages, and they can also learn several languages at the same time.

Where society is open and appreciative of all home languages, regardless of origin or religion, people feel valued and respected.

Children respond positively to the appreciation of their home language(s). The positive attitude of parents, educational professionals, and society towards home languages ...

- › inspires confidence when dealing with the languages,
- › shows appreciation of the languages and the child's abilities,
- › helps children perceive their home languages as valuable.

Language is part of identity

Language is part of people's identity, culture, and traditions. When moving to another country, people bring with them their languages and continue to use those heritage (home) languages even when permanently emigrating. They should have the opportunity to use their home languages and pass them on to following generations.

Multilingual people's intercultural and linguistic skills are a great resource for society. Furthermore, mastering one's home language provides a good basis for learning other languages and also supports learning the majority language of the country.

- › Scientific studies show that heritage (home) languages are important for people's identity and also confidence when speaking other languages.
- › Institutional support of heritage (home) languages, e. g., at school, helps to preserve the languages in the long term, shows recognition for, and a positive attitude towards multilingualism and linguistic diversity in society.

