



1

Introduction

What is KIKUS?

KIKUS (pronounced "keekooz") stands for "KINDER IN KULTUREN UND SPRACHEN", which can be freely translated as "Children of Many Cultures and Languages". It is a fully-integrated programme designed to encourage and promote early multilingualism. The programme comprises:

- an effective method of systematic language learning through play for small groups of children
- dedicated teaching materials
- the involvement of parents as partners in the multilingual development of their children
- further training for teachers and other qualified personnel

The KIKUS Method can be applied to all language learning which is primarily transmitted through the medium of the spoken word. Written elements can then be specifically used to augment the method, so that it is possible to carry over KIKUS principles to the teaching of young people and even adults.

In this handbook we will concentrate on KIKUS English, specifically the teaching of **English as a second language (ESL)** and the teaching of **English as a foreign language (EFL)** to children aged three to ten who are not native English-speakers.

A Brief Digression: What is the difference between ESL and EFL?

English as a Second Language (ESL) is used to denote a situation in which English is the language, or at least one of the languages, which is spoken within the wider society and which all who wish to be active within that society need to have mastered to some extent. If a child is being raised in a family where little or no English is being spoken, then language learning in the kindergarten or school setting becomes imperative.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) usually refers to English classes outside of the US, Great Britain, Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and other English-speaking countries, where English is not the language of the wider society but rather a foreign language. The motivation to learn English within these settings can vary enormously. It is rarely imperative.

There are many sections within this book which specifically relate to a programme of language support for non-native English-speaking children living in an English-speaking community, i.e. they relate to ESL teaching. However, all of the principles of the KIKUS Method can be applied to both ESL and EFL courses, and the suggested procedures and materials discussed in this handbook are suitable for both types of language learning.

In its structure, this programme is also suitable for children with extremely weak language skills who are being raised in an English-speaking family. Children with developmental speech and language disorders can also take part in the KIKUS programme, as long as they are additionally supported with appropriate therapy.

first language =
mother tongue =
language of origin =
family language



The goal of the KIKUS English programme is to support children in their acquisition of English as early as possible and for as long as possible, through stress-free play but in a purposeful and systematic way. At the same time, the first language is given equal status and is furthered through guided parent-child cooperation in the home setting.

Where can the KIKUS English programme be implemented?

The KIKUS Method can be used anywhere in the world where the following conditions can be met:

- the instruction is intended for a **small group** (maximum 8 students)
- there is a **qualified course leader** available
- there is an **appropriate room** available for conducting the classes
- the class can be held at a **specified time**, which will be adhered to by all involved
- the **continuity** of the class can be assured

Why is KIKUS a good idea?

Years of experience have shown that in English-speaking countries children from immigrant backgrounds do not just casually pick up a good command of English in kindergarten or on the street. The success of such "incidental bilingualism" depends on many individual, linguistic, domestic and socio-cultural factors. The percentage of non-native English-speaking children in the local kindergarten, day care centre or nursery school is also a determining factor. So beyond this situational linguistic development – the significance of which will not be examined here – there is a clear need for targeted language learning in a small group setting. (This goes for other languages and other countries with immigrant populations as well.)

KIKUS furthers social integration

Language is our most important communication tool and is therefore a basic requirement for integration of the individual within a society. The earlier children begin to meet this requirement, the better for all concerned.

But integration (inclusion) does not mean assimilation (conformity). Integration is a process in which all parties are equal participants: children, parents, teachers, local authorities, etc. This principle also applies to other countries and languages.

KIKUS generates equality of opportunity

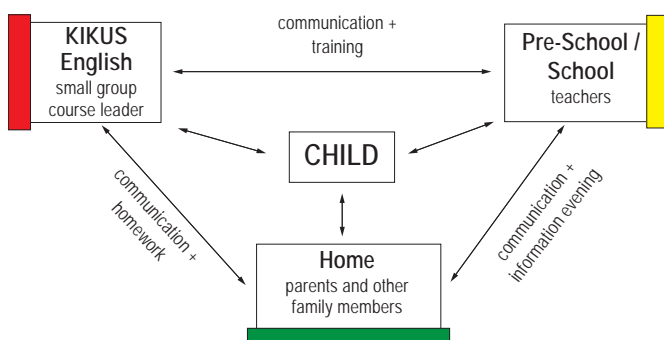
When children enter primary school they are already expected to have certain linguistic and social skills. This expectation is based on the normal development of a native English-speaking child. Unfortunately, in most school systems there is no particular tolerance shown or leeway given for the special circumstances of a multilingual child. So a language "boost" during the pre-school years is essential in order to give non-native English-speaking kids an equal chance to meet the aforementioned expectations and it is very important to begin this targeted boost at the age of three. One hundred hours of tuition spread over three years are far more effective than 100 hours provided in the last year before a child enters school, because language acquisition takes time. Additionally, it is important to continue language support as long as necessary for each child.

KIKUS facilitates early multilingualism

The vast majority of the world's peoples are multilingual. English, in particular, is becoming the first choice for a second language, the new "lingua franca". As multilingualism becomes part of a standard education throughout much of the globe, why should this process be delayed until a child is of school age? Learning another language through play in the pre-school years can be nothing but advantageous for every child, whichever second language is on offer.

The KIKUS language learning programme systematically incorporates the child's first language in a way that actively promotes equality and diversity from the very start.

How does the KIKUS programme work?



The KIKUS concept offers a simple, field-tested and effective model for furthering a child's acquisition of both English and his or her first language. The concept is based on three "building blocks":

1. systematic KIKUS language learning in the **small group setting**
2. consolidation in the **larger group setting** (pre-school, kindergarten, etc.) of what has been learned in the small group
3. support of the first language in the **home setting**

The child is situated at the midpoint of these three different centres of influence.

These building blocks form the foundation of the KIKUS Method for English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language and will be further explained in Chapter 2.

What is the academic basis of the KIKUS Method?

The KIKUS programme is based on the "*Action Theory of Speech*" (Rehbein 1977, Ehlich 1996; see Bibliography).

The Action Theory of Speech conceives of speech as one of the most important forms of human interactivity. Language acquisition does not proceed via individual utterances but rather via communication patterns which serve certain purposes. (The German term "sprachliches Handlungsmuster" has been variously translated as "speech action patterns", "linguistic actions", "speech acts" and "communication patterns". Throughout this handbook the latter term will be used.) Communication patterns such as making a request, asking and answering a question, reporting information, etc. are carried out in different ways within different societies. (Just consider the various ways of formally greeting an acquaintance or offering someone a gift.) In the process of acquiring a language, these communication patterns are "fulfilled" through the medium of speech and



the linguistic repertoire is enlarged. These principles need to be taken into consideration in the teaching of languages.

Communication patterns will be covered in detail in Chapter 7, "What Should a Child Learn Through Language Classes?"

Who is behind the KIKUS concept and how did the KIKUS programme achieve its current reputation?

The KIKUS programme was conceived by Dr. Edgardis Garlin through her own work in the field of early language learning and it was specifically designed for practical application in the field. Since then the programme has been continually tested and further developed by Dr. Garlin herself and a team of DaF (German as a Foreign Language), EFL, ESL, kindergarten and primary school teachers.

Edgardis Garlin studied the teaching of German as a foreign language as well as Spanish and Ethnology at Munich University. Her doctoral thesis, *Bilingualer Erstspracherwerb* ("Bilingual First Language Acquisition" – see Bibliography), formed the scholarly basis for the KIKUS Method.

The KIKUS programme itself dates back to 1998, when Dr. Garlin received a phone call from a desperate kindergarten teacher looking for help with her pre-school lessons, where progress was seriously hampered by the fact that half of the children simply could not speak adequate German. When the teacher concentrated on those who spoke fluent German, the others tuned out or became disruptive; when she concentrated on the children with poorer German language skills, the others became bored and inattentive. The first KIKUS course was devised as a response to this teacher's plea for help and was conducted by Dr. Garlin herself, who documented the course in the form of a pilot study. This study formed the framework which still underlies the KIKUS methodology.

More and more courses were added as the effectiveness of the method became widely known. It soon became clear that the language skills of the many children from families with immigrant backgrounds could only be improved in the long term by involving the kindergarten and primary school teachers themselves. Thus the KIKUS training programme was introduced in 2001.

At the same time, tailor-made KIKUS teaching materials were being developed with the help of Dr. Stefan Merkle and Augusto Aguilar. They are now available in both German and English versions and are presently being prepared for publication in other languages.

The KIKUS programme has been widely recognised for its distinguished contribution to the field of language learning for children and has been honoured with several awards, including first prize in the nationwide *McKinsey bildet* competition (Germany 2005).

