

# Bilingualism

Brain power improves by brain use, just as our bodily strength grows with exercise

Simple words were said by a man thinking so logically that anything by continuous use will improve. Learning new languages is a good brain exercise that doesn't only have tangible effects on one's personality, but it also does wonders to the brain structure and the wiring among the neurons.

Bilingualism refers to a situation when a child confronts two distinct languages at the same time. Bilingualism is closely related to the phenomenon of language acquisition - the particular way in which we all learn our native language as children. We acquire the skill, and even if we have to work on our writing, speaking seems as natural as breathing. Scientists claim that language acquisition is a process that starts at the beginning of our lives and ends around puberty. Bilingualism was considered a must be avoided method in raising children to prevent some myths and misconceptions that greatly prevailed in the beginning of 19th century.

One of these myths that learning more than one language in the childhood can lead to confusion and inability to differentiate between the words of the two languages. This common thought is not completely true, as the researchers



have proved that the infant mind has the ability to differentiate between languages that are totally different like French and Arabic but derivative languages like English and Dutch confusion may occur only in the first 6 months, after that the differentiation happens automatically in the infant's brain.

Another myth that Bilingual children end up mixing the two languages. Mixing languages is both inevitable and harmless. But to someone unfamiliar with bilingualism, its proof that the child can't really tell the languages apart. What really happens is that one of the languages often has a stronger influence on the child than the other, so kids who have a smaller vocabulary in the minor language may draw on words from the major language as needed. Experts agree that mixing is temporary. Eventually, it goes away as a child's

vocabulary develops in both languages and he gets more exposure to each one. In actuality, bilingual speakers of all ages mix their languages (also known as code-switching). A perfect example is the widespread use of Spanglish (mixing English and Spanish) by Latinos in the United States.

the more words we know, the more things we know about the world. From this point of view, many researchers didn't accept that bilingualism is a bad thing as it was alleged, and performed many studies in order to prove the opposite. Finally, the advantages of being bilingual are now known.

Researchers have shown that the bilingual brain can have better attention and task-switching capacities than the monolingual one, thanks to its developed ability to inhibit one language while using another. Researchers have used brain imaging techniques to investigate which brain regions are active while bilingual people perform tasks in which they are forced to alternate between their two languages like naming pictures in Spanish and in English. The images showed increased activation in some areas that are responsible for some cognitive abilities such as attention and inhibition.

Some scientists claim that once a child has learnt more than one language, it's fairly common for him or her to pick up another one with ease due to an improvement in cognitive and sensory processing driven by bilingual experience that can help the bilingual to better process information in the environment.

leading to a clearer signal for learning. Some studies showed that since the bilingual has more brain exercise so they have a better brain architecture and enriched blood flow and this may compensate for the loss of the diseased parts of the brain and this can lead to delay the symptoms of Alzheimer and Dementia (diseases characterized by memory disorder due to chronic brain damage) if you're susceptible to them.

Nothing is perfect, as some studies showed that bilinguals know fewer words about any language in comparison to those who speak only one. This study also found out that bilinguals suffer more from tip of the tongue (difficulty of retrieving some words from the brain), but even if there are some costs to be paid for being fluent in two languages, the many advantages of bilingualism are worth the trouble. If you are worried that your children might encounter communication problem if you choose to speak a different language at home or move to a different location, don't worry - their brains are under development and will quickly adjust to the new linguistic environment.

