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# **The Importance of Being Bilingual**

# Bilingualism in the World

**6, 500 languages**

**3.5 billion bilingual people ( >50% of world population)**

**35% Canadians**

**> 50% Europeans**

**722 languages in Indonesia, 445 in India, 207 in Australia**

# Bilingualism in the US

**1980s – 11%**

**1990s – 14%**

**2000s – 20%**

**55 milion people OR 1 in 5**

# Bilingualism in the US

**Spanish – 50%**

**Native American languages**

**Older colonial languages**

**Recent immigration languages**

**American Sign Language**

**Chinese**

**French**

**Tagalog**

**Vietnamese**

**German**

**Korean**

# Bilingualism in the US

**Lowest bilingual population: WV, KY, MT**

**Highest bilingual population: CA, NM, TX, AZ**

**The most bilingual cities: NY, LA, Chicago**

# Bilingualism in the US

**“The country's knowledge of the languages  
of the world is a natural resource  
that should not be wasted.”**

**François Grosjean in *Psychology Today***

## *Bilingualism – As American As Apple Pie*

**“The United States has probably been the  
home of more bilingual speakers  
than any other country in the world.”**

**American linguist Einar Haugen**

# What Causes Bilingualism?

- **Contact between communities and cultures**
- **Trade**
- **Business**
- **Movement of people (social, religious, economic, political)**



# Bilingual Benefits – The Brain

- **Better cognitive processing (task switch, Kovacs)**
- **Better cognitive flexibility (go with the flow better)**
- **Focus (Bialystok)**
- **Ability to multi-task**
- **Improved standardized test scores (LA)**
- **Improved memory and listening ability**
- **Efficiency (Costa)**
- **Delayed onset of dementia and Alzheimer's**

# Bilingual Benefits: Reading Skills

- Being able to learn new words easily
- Playing rhyming games with words like "cat" and "hat"
- Breaking down words by sounds, such as C-A-T for cat
- Being able to use information in new ways
- Putting words into categories
- Coming up with solutions to problems
- Good listening skills

# Bilingual Benefits: Financial

- **Translator/Interpreter - 1 of 15 fastest growing occupations**
- **25,000 jobs projected 2010-2020**
- **42% growth for the field (does not include the military)**
- **12,000 jobs posted on Indeed.com included the word "bilingual"**
- **\$43,000 median salary**
- **\$40/hour working as a translator for a school district in California**
- **\$200,000 for dangerous jobs**
- **\$7,000 more per year than their monolingual peers**

# Tip: Don't Learn Spanish!

## **Learn:**

- **Arabic**
- **Farsi**
- **Pashto (Afghani)**
- **Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Finnish**
- **Mandarin**
- **Other Asian languages**

# Bilingual Benefits: Social

- Noticing things lost in translation
- Connecting with others
- Better understanding of cultural references and nuances  
(*Northern Exposure* vs. *Doctor in Alaska*)
- Sense of connection with your family, history, heritage
- Self-expression takes on a multitude of forms
- Tolerance toward people who are different than yourself
- Less emotional decisions

# Where Should I Start?

- **Reps and sets (Arnold's Story)**
- **ASHA brochures: *Teaching Your Child Two Languages and Becoming Bilingual*; 1-888-498-6699**
- **HomeschoolWays.com (Category: multilingualism)**
- **Multilingual Parenting Facebook Group**
- **Raising Multilingual Children on Facebook**
- **Mama Lisa**
- **Listen to foreign radio stations**
- **Free language learning programs (PetraLingua.com)**
- **Schoenhofs.com**