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
“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