

BILINGUAL LEARNING

Who Can Learn a Second Language?

Bilingual education is for everybody. Everyone's brain has the wiring needed for it, the ability to form the connections: intricate maps made of patterns of sound and speech, an ability to attract repeated sounds like a magnet and prune away synaptic pathways the brain isn't using. However, if you have ever had "a senior moment," or just couldn't understand the waiter no matter how hard you tried, you won't be surprised to learn that it is infants and children that are the best at acquiring a new language. The brain is especially malleable up until age seven, and becoming bilingual, if given developmentally appropriate tasks and motivations, can happen quite naturally.

Why Become Bilingual?

Becoming bilingual gives you many advantages that can affect your future health, job prospects and general prosperity. Brain responses and their corresponding neuropathic highways are forever changed for the better! Learning a second language has been researched and proven to be beneficial throughout one's life. Bilingual children, as young as seven months, show more resilience when faced with a change in their environment and, when school-aged, will outperform monolingual children in tests measuring cognitive skills such as switching tasks, ignoring competing information, symbol manipulation and reorganization, and will have nurtured their auditory systems in ways that promote reading. Being bilingual even holds the ravages of Alzheimer's at bay. Additionally, our children are the future, and the future is multi-cultural and global. Our kids will need confidence and skill in understanding others' perspectives, and adaptability so as to navigate a world that, increasingly, depends on working closely with one another. The days of independently following one leader in a hierarchical system are vanishing, so knowledge of another's language gives valuable insight into their culture and puts one in a favorable position in a globally-minded work place.

Why Chinese?

Chinese language, being spoken by so many in many parts of the world, and China's rise in global markets, makes speaking Chinese stand at the forefront of opportunity and success in a variety of careers. The culture of

China is a thriving “we” culture where interdependence and astute cooperation are fostered rather than the dominant, yet in some ways stilted, “I” culture of the United States that promotes independence and singularities. Knowing Chinese language and culture provides a significant advantage in all areas of business, engineering, technology, education and the social sciences as well, and those who participate in Chinese language immersion experiences are sure to find them a meaningful asset throughout their careers.

There are a multitude of advantages afforded to bilingual people —they are profitable, and range from the practical to the profound. Indeed, the distinct benefits one gains from learning to fluently speak Chinese will not diminish nor ever be less of an asset in the future, and best of all, they can truly last a life time!

MORE IN-DEPTH READING

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3164118/>

http://dana.org/Cerebrum/2012/The_Cognitive_Benefits_of_Being_Bilingual/

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