

# Being Bilingual: A Gateway to New Opportunities

By: Halee

Ever wanted a gateway to new opportunities? Being bilingual may be the skill you need! Frank Smith once said, "One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages opened every door along the way." This is true. Although some may argue that learning a second language is very costly, it can be very beneficial in the future, especially with nearly forty-three percent of people globally who are bilingual, and the number is growing. Being bilingual can open up a gateway of benefits and opportunities, which is why everyone should be bilingual.

When someone is bilingual, it can open up many opportunities, especially in the work force. Although, some people argue that being bilingual is not a job requirement, being bilingual is a desired quality that employers want their employees to have. Actually, between the years 2010 and 2015, job recruiters' preference of bilingual applicants more than doubled. In fact, bilinguals have been known to have better brain function which sharpens skills that may be needed in the workforce, such as multitasking and memory. So, being bilingual may have the bonus of doing your job better! Also, employees of global corporations may communicate with other employees who speak another language, so being bilingual would be very beneficial. Another advantage of being a bilingual employee is earning more money. Another study in 2017 reported that bilingual employees earned between 5% and 20% more money per hour versus single language speakers. For some bilingual employees, that means possibly earning thousands more.

Did you know that being bilingual can help improve brain function? Well, it's true. Skills like memory, multitasking, and even academics can be improved by learning a second language. The brain is a muscle and as you exercise it, it becomes stronger. While learning a second language, you train your brain to remember new words, which advances your memory. In fact, monolingual adults usually have signs of dementia around age 71, however bilingual adults may start showing dementia signs at age 75. Bilinguals also know how to switch between tasks and think in different languages which help them to multitask. The University of Chicago conducted a study, which proved that being bilingual enhances decision making. Although some may argue that learning a second language while balancing school can be difficult, academically being bilingual is very beneficial. Studies show that bilingual children have higher test scores in reading, vocabulary, and math compared to monolingual children.

Another bonus of being bilingual is understanding others from different viewpoints. People from other cultures may have views that differ from yours, so being bilingual can help you understand and enhance your communication skills. Being bilingual also means having the opportunity to work with others from foreign countries. This could be very useful in real life, especially since jobs are becoming more global. Being bilingual doesn't just have benefits for adults, but kids too. In schools, there are more students who speak a second language, which means kids will be more exposed to other cultures. Nelson Mandela once said, "If you talk to a

man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart." I think Nelson Mandela is trying to say that a person can connect with other cultures better by speaking their language, therefore, knowing a second language could mean that kids can make friends and connect with others from unique cultures. Kids are future leaders and connecting with other cultures from a young age can be very beneficial. Kids would learn to respect others even if they are different. Aside from connecting with other cultures, kids could also become more empathetic. In fact, studies report that bilingual people are more empathetic than monolinguals.

In conclusion, everyone should be bilingual. While others argue about how effective bilingualism is, studies show that it's effective in many areas like the brain and academics. Overall being bilingual can impact your life heavily to jobs, academics, and even friendships! Imagine, doing your job better and possibly earning more money all because of the one extra skill of being bilingual. Also, being bilingual improves brain function and may even slow the development of dementia. By being bilingual, kids and adults can make new friends and learn more about other cultures. So as you can see, being bilingual can open a gateway of opportunities for your life.

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