

Bilingualism is more an asset than a deficit

English composition LS 102

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“One language sets you in a corridor for life, but two languages open every door along the way”. This quote by Frank Smith reminds me back home when I went with a friend of mine for a Visa interview to USA. My friend could only speak her native language and was asked how she was going to communicate with the people on the way, and in USA. She was denied the Visa and I being bilingual got the Visa. Bilingualism is an asset because it can open doors and, allows you to communicate with people from different cultures, boost your memory, and positively affects cognitive and neurological abilities, code-switching

Bilingualism is using or the ability to use two languages especially with equal fluency in everyday life. It is found in all countries and in all age groups. It is estimated that more than half of the population in the world today speaks two or more languages. People use a language to communicate their thoughts, feelings, to connect with others and to identify with other cultures and also to understand the world around them, and for many people, they involves two or more languages[CITATION Vio12 \l 1033]. Some people speaks one language at their homes and uses a different language at work, at school or when with friends.

Bilingualism facilitates cross-cultural communication. Having an ability to speak more than one language, not only helps a person when visit another country but also allows that person to enjoy another culture. Even if that person does not understand the language there, always there will somebody there who will be able to understand one of your languages you speak and help you have a better cultural experience. For the immigrant families, being able to speak the language of their family back home, preserves important relationships, traditions and identity. A bilingual person can be a bridge between two or more cultures.[CITATION The14 \l 1033]

Bilingual people are often forced to shift between languages, this is like an overall workout for the brain; making them quicker, better and smarter at multi-tasking. Since speaking

another language requires a lot of remembering, studies has shown that bilingual when given tasks regarding memory, they always score higher than those who can speak only one language. So bilingualism boosts a person's memory. Moreover the cognitive multitasking in lifelong bilingual acts as a protection against dementia for those who speaks two languages in a regular basis, suggesting that bilingual experience is relevant to brain health in aging.[CITATION Ols15 \l 1033]

Bilingualism has ability to shift personality. A bilingual feels a shift of personality depending on which language they are speaking. They feel like they are different when speaking a different language. Having a different language is like having a different vision or a different asset in life. Bilingual compete and shine better than a monolingual in the increasingly competitive global market because bilingualism open doors and opportunities for them. Learning a different language is like learning another different way of exploring things. This is why it is an asset.

To maintain the relative balance between two languages, the bilingual brain relies on executive functions; a regulatory system of general cognitive abilities that includes processes such as attention and inhibition (is the ability to ignore competing perceptual information and focus on the relevant aspects of the input). Since both language systems of a bilingual are always active and competing, that person uses these control mechanisms every time he speaks or listen. The bilingual people performs better than monolingual people at tasks that tap into inhibitory control ability, and also at switching between two tasks.[CITATION Vio12 \l 1033]

In addition, the cognitive and neurological benefits of bilingualism extend into older adulthood. Bilingualism seem to provide a means of cognitive function and maintain cognitive reserve. This refers to the efficient utilization of brain networks to enhance brain function during

aging. Bilingual experience may contribute to this reserve by keeping the cognitive mechanisms sharp and helping to recruit alternative brain networks to compensate for those that become damaged during aging. In addition to slowing off the decline that often comes with aging, bilingual can also protect against illnesses that hasten this decline, like Alzheimer's diseases.

[CITATION Vio12 \l 1033]

Another benefit for bilingualism is code-switching which refers to the ability to use different words in different situations. This means that bilingual may use a word and incorporate it in the wrong language. For example, speaking in English and suddenly ensure how to visualize a particular word the bilingual may say it in French. The bilingual knows he is using two languages and they are able to separate vocabulary. Bilingual shows more awareness of how language works and have better social interaction skills than the monolingual.[CITATION

Cha12 \l 1033]

Nevertheless, some people argue that bilingualism is more of a deficit than an asset because they suggest that in order to speak in one language, bilinguals have to suppress the influence of the other. They also suggest that bilingual know fewer words of any semantic category in comparison to people who speak fluently only one language- their vocabularies seemed to be somewhat smaller than those of monolingual speakers.[CITATION Tor18 \l 1033]

Even if they may know few words in one language, they will still end up knowing many words from both languages they speak. And so remain that bilingualism is more of an asset than a deficit.

As I conclude, bilingual has more benefits than monolingual, in solving problems, planning and in handling mentally demanding tasks. Bilingual will lead a richer lives and

develop understanding towards different cultures and above all been able to communicate to a person you could not communicate to if you are not a bilingual is the best feeling in the world.