Bilingualism: A need in the global economy

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A new language is a new life.  
*Persian Proverb*

A man who knows two languages is worth two men.  
*French Proverb*

You live a new life for every new language you speak. If you know only speak one language, you live only once.  
*Czech Proverb*

You can never understand one language until you understand at least two.  
*Geoffrey Willians*
Globalization is a term used to describe the increasing connectedness and interdependence of world cultures and economies.
Why learn a foreign and/or second language?
What is language?

• Language is **not only** a system of sounds, words and sentences.

• Language also has a **social function**, both as a **means of communication** and as a **way of identifying social groups**.
As proposed by Canale (1983) In: Douglas Brown, 2007
Why do languages come in contact?

Wei. L. (2007)
Changes in attitudes towards bilingualism

Beliefs about bilingualism in early nineteenth century:

“Bilingualism has a detrimental effect on a human being’s intellectual and spiritual growth”. (Wei. 2007)

Now,

“… experience with two language systems favors mental flexibility, superiority in concept formation, and more diversified set of mental abilities”

Bilingualism

- Furthers the ability to empathise and see a situation from another's perspective
- Enhances cognitive skills (high level thought, memory attention and multitasking)
- Delays onset of dementia and Alzheimer
# Bilingualism in the world

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>% of world population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monolingual</td>
<td>A person knowing only one language</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>A person using or being able to use two languages especially with equal fluency</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trilingual</td>
<td>A person speaking three languages fluently</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilingual</td>
<td>A person who speaks more than two languages (usually four or more)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyglot</td>
<td>Someone with a high degree of proficiency in several languages (usually 5 or more)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some other data: 60-75% of world population speak at least two languages*

Are monolinguals missing out?
Economic benefits of bilingualism

- Demand for multilingual workers more than doubled from 2010 to 2015
  - Specifically, demand for bilingual employees who speak Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic.
  - Increased demand particularly in the finance, healthcare, legal services, and customer service sectors.

A. Fluent bilinguals earned more than $5,400 annually than their monolingual peers.

B. Bilingual employees usually receive 5-20% more per hour compared to monolinguals.

- Those who are fluent bilinguals were more likely to complete their high school education than those who grew up speaking only English.

- Fluent bilinguals hold higher occupational prestige in their jobs and confirmed that bilingualism has direct and positive impact on earnings.

  (Rumbaut, 2014)

(Colón, 2019)
Why is it that bilingual employees get paid more?

1. **High demand:** The new interconnectedness makes language knowledge high in demand.

2. **More job opportunities.**

3. **Improved competitiveness in the job market:** Employees who can serve their globalizing clients. Bilingualism makes your resume stand out and boosts you to the top of the interview list for possible employers.

4. **More educational opportunities.**

5. **Improved problem-solving, multitasking, and decision-making skills.**

6. **Cultural gap:** Bilinguals can use their cultural knowledge and language skills to help their company instantly connect with diverse groups.

7. **Increased communication:** A bilingual person can help a company reach more people and tap into previously untouched markets.

8. **Better chances of getting hired:** CNN named bilingualism the hottest skill for job seekers in 2013!
Some facts

Bilingual remote job opportunities has increased **30%** in the United States since the start of COVID-19 job fairs.

Bilingual employees typically earn **$1.22 TO $2.33 more per hour than monolingual employees**

(Yagub, 2023)
Maybe the question should not be:

**Why** learn a second language?

The question should be:

**Why not** learn a second language?
Higher education

- Language requirement
- Internationalization
- Academic mobility
- Student exchange programs

https://centrodeeducacioncontinua.uabc.mx/
List of references


