

Topic 10

MULTILINGUALISM IS GOOD FOR US

Not only does speaking more than one language keep our brains healthy as we age, but it has multiple benefits for children too, such as giving them an academic advantage and improving their employment prospects once they leave school. Moreover, multilingualism gives us access to more than one culture and improves our understanding of our own cultures.

As noted above, speaking more than one language or walking in more than one language world is a bonus and an asset. It's good for the brain, good for children, useful for travel, employment and career purposes. In his popular and widely used book entitled *A Parents and Teachers Guide to Bilingualism*, Professor Colin Baker (2000) a Welsh scholar of bilingualism and author of over 140 publications, provides six advantages or 6Cs of bilingualism. With a word of caution, Baker characterizes these advantages as “potential” because it is speakers whose two languages are reasonable balanced or *fairly well developed* who enjoy the advantages.

The 6 Cs: Potential advantages of bilingualism and multilingualism

AREA OF POTENTIAL ADVANTAGE	EXPLANATION
COMMUNICATION	Greater awareness of and sensitivity to languages Stronger family ties Ability to communicate in different contexts: community, worship, school, work, and travel
CULTURAL	Deeper understanding of cultures Acceptance and understanding of others Access to traditions, music, stories, history and folklore Understanding different ways of talking, dressing, eating, speaking and worshipping.
COGNITIVE	Thinking advantages Enhanced executive functions Improved problem solving Sharpened memory and concentration
CHARACTER	Increased self esteem Strong sense (security) of identity
CURRICULUM	Better academic performance Ease in learning additional languages Transferring skills from one language into another
CASH AND CAREER	Expanded career opportunities (local, national and multinational) Economic and employment advantage: Languages are an asset in business, commerce, education and politics

References

Baker, C. *A Parents and Teachers Guide to Bilingualism*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4INv_Izr9wE&t=349s (page 12)

Baker, C. (2000) *The Care and Education of Young Bilinguals: An Introduction for Professionals*. Clevedon: UK: Multilingual Matters.

Baker, C. 6C's: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DwcaoI_7SE

Multilingualism is good for us:

<https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/blog/promoting-multilingual-approaches-in-teaching-and-learning>