

What is Bilingualism?

Bilingualism is the ability of an individual to use at least two languages. Bilingualism is a common phenomenon across the globe – in fact, around half the population of the world is bilingual.

Why Bilingualism?

Extensive research has been conducted across the world on the phenomenon of bilingualism and its advantages.

- Enhanced ability to use language in social situations
- Improved understanding of the form and structure of language
- Enhancement of various cognitive abilities including non-verbal intelligence, mental flexibility, visual pattern organization and concept formation
- Delayed onset of dementia
- Enhanced development of various regions in the brain.

How Can One Become Bilingual?

Simultaneous Bilingualism: Learn two languages simultaneously during childhood.

Sequential Bilingualism: Learn native or home language first (first language) followed by non-native language (second language). Most bilinguals happen to be sequential bilinguals.

What is important is that irrespective of the pattern of language acquisition, the benefits posed by bilingualism remain.

It's Never Too Late to Become Bilingual!

Research has found that the age at which the second language is learned does not impact the vocabulary or grammatical understanding of the language.

So, you can become bilingual regardless of how old or young you are!

HELLO

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BILINGUALISM TIPS & TECHNIQUES

**for
Parents,
Teachers &
Schools**



How Can You Support and Promote Bilingualism?

AS A PARENT

DID YOU KNOW?

- Humans are born with a capacity to be bilingual!

- Speaking two languages does not confuse children but enhances the child's proficiency in both languages and increases the speed of perceptual processing.

- There is absolutely no difference in the language milestones between bilingual and monolingual children.

- Research has repeatedly shown that sequential bilingualism is successful if and only if the child is first proficient in their home language before proceeding to learn a new language.

- Even children with language delays or impairments can benefit from learning two languages. It does not confuse them or slow their language learning.

- Children who have difficulties with social communication or have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders stand to benefit from being bilingual. Bilingualism enhances their social interaction abilities. However, they may require substantial support to become proficient in both languages in an academic setting.

- It is not necessary to have spoken or learnt a second language before attending school to be able to master the language.

- If your child is a sequential bilingual, ensure that your child is proficient in your home language before attempting to learn a second language. You can do this by speaking with and reading to your child almost exclusively in your native language
- Be accepting and understanding when your child uses words and phrases from one language in another. This is very common and is a part of the process of becoming bilingual.
- Don't 'code-mix' (use different languages within a phrase or sentence) when speaking to your child. If you start a phrase or sentence in one language, use only that language until you complete the phrase or sentence.
- Since most bilinguals have a 'dominant' language in which they are more fluent, it is completely normal to not be equally proficient at both languages.
- Follow specific patterns of language use while your child is in the process of learning two languages.

- One-Parent, One-Language: You can follow a pattern where each parent speaks to the child only in one language.

- One-Time, One-Language: Set a routine where you use a particular language in a given setting and switch to another language in another setting.

AS A TEACHER

- Motivate students to learn languages through innovative teaching strategies that make language-learning engaging and child-friendly.
- Try to ensure that there is no stark disparity in the resources available for the student to acquire and master both their native and additional languages. Classrooms must be equipped well enough to accommodate and encourage speakers of various languages.
- Be patient – learning a new language can be a low and long drawn out process.
- Success in learning a new language is heavily dependent on the attitude towards those who speak a particular language. Try to breed positive attitudes towards the language to be learnt and its native speakers.

AS A SCHOOL

- Be inclusive and respectful of the native languages of all students.
- Take effort to find out the home language of each student – don't assume.
- Provide training for teachers and equip them to support language learners of differing capacities.
- Encourage students to be proficient in their own native languages through various activities and strategies.
- Promoting an inclusive school environment and developing inclusive policies that value diversity and emphasize the importance of native language and culture are more likely to be effective in promoting bilingualism.
- Provide adequate resources and support for learners of all languages.
- Be proactive in providing support for additional language learners.