

Positive effect of language-learning on bilingual skills

Learning a new, third language, motivates bilinguals to maintain and improve their home language. It also increases their general interest in languages.

Learning a third language at school often strengthens the motivation for using the home language. Bilingual students learning a new language, have expressed several positive outcomes:

- they often notice an improvement in their home language, such as an increase in their vocabulary or better pronunciation, which in turn leads them to use their home language more at home;
- increased competence in the home language also seems to lead bilingual learners to enjoy speaking it more in general and make them proud of knowing another language;
- learning a new language can also boost bilinguals' confidence, making them less shy and embarrassed about using the home language in public places.

If your children or students already have two languages, learning a third in school is easier for them - with clear benefits in class and at home. It's good for them, and for Australian schools and families.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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MORE LANGUAGES, MORE BENEFITS

Research has shown that there are clear advantages when learning a new language.

People who speak two languages are called **bilinguals**, those who speak three are **trilinguals**. People on the other hand who only speak one language are called **monolinguals**. This flyer focusses on students who are bilingual in English and another language; this will usually be one that they speak at home or spoke in another country before migrating to Australia.

It is evident that **bilinguals are more effective language learners than monolinguals**. Bilinguals have a **better understanding of how language works**, which promotes their learning of a further language. They can take advantage of similarities between a new language and languages they already know. This makes it easier to recognize words, facilitates pronunciation, understanding, and makes grammar easier to grasp.

It is, for example, easier for bilinguals to recognize the different parts of a sentence in a new language. This increased understanding of a new language boosts students' overall confidence and interest in other languages.

On the other hand, learning a **third language also tends to boost students' confidence in their bilingualism**. It makes them appreciate their home language more, in some cases even leading to the wish to maintain their heritage and to pass it on to the next generation. Furthermore, bilinguals show an increased interest in learning a third language to discover different cultures, countries, and to interact with people.

Speaking two languages makes it easier to learn a third language. And in turn – learning a third language boosts bilingual skills.

Advantages of bilinguals learning a new language

The following points outline research findings of bilingual in contrast to monolingual language learning. They also include the results of local research conducted by observing and interviewing bilingual learners:

Better performance

Bilinguals tend to:

- achieve better spoken, written and grammatical learning outcomes when learning a new language;
- pronounce the new language in a more native-like way and have a more extensive vocabulary.

Advanced language awareness

Bilinguals tend to:

- remember grammatical rules more easily and are better able than monolinguals to explain them after learning about them in class;
- deduct rules with less help from teachers and provide the correct explanation for rules;
- have the further advantage of similarities in vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling or grammar (e.g. verb endings), if they speak a home language which is similar or related to the language they are learning in school;
- notice and draw on similarities between languages, such as sounds and word order, even if they study a third language unrelated to their home language, which makes it easier for them to learn a new language.

Greater participation in class

Bilinguals:

- participate more actively in the classroom by asking and answering more questions;
- find it easier to follow the lesson and understand words much faster than monolinguals;
- make more use of available resources, such as the dictionary, and are more organized in their notes (for example writing down lists of new words and grammatical rules);
- are more proactive and participate more readily than monolingual learners in extracurricular activities.

Seeking opportunities outside class

Bilingual learners:

- already have some contact with multilingual resources (such as TV programs, videos, music, and radio) in their home language. They are therefore more able and willing to make use of such resources when learning a new language;
- often show an interest in listening to and understanding the new language outside class and some even try to create opportunities to utilize the third language actively.
- are often keen to share with friends language experiences they have had with people from other ethnolinguistic communities.