



Speak World Languages

TARGET GRADES

Middle School and High School

OBJECTIVE

To promote linguistic skills for all students, so they can build pride in a home language or be excited to learn a completely new language. In addition, help students connect their school language requirements to possible careers and learn about how multilingualism is an employable skill.

MATERIALS

N/A

PREP TIME REQUIRED

5 minutes

PREP STEPS

- Display or handout the bilingualism statements on a piece of paper (included at the bottom of this activity) or use the PowerPoint slides 20-21 from the "Speak World Languages Educator Presentation"
- Handout or read "*Some Facts About Bilingualism That May Surprise You*" (included at the bottom of this activity)

ACTIVITY TIME REQUIRED

20 minutes

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

Part 1 (5 minutes)

- Have students take 2 minutes to individually answer the statements (below) about being bilingual or multilingual and decide if they are true or false
- Have students turn take 2 minutes to turn to a partner and share what they wrote

Bilingualism Statements:

1. Children whose parents speak to them in more than one language will speak both languages badly. (False)

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2. Bilingual children do better at school. (True)
3. Bilinguals are less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. (True)
4. It is impossible to become fluent in another language once you are an adult. (False)
5. With each language you learn, the process gets easier. (True)

Part 2 (15 minutes)

- Have students take 5 minutes to individually read "Some Facts About Bilingualism that May Surprise You" (included at the bottom of this activity) and have them check their answers.
- Have students take 10 minutes to turn to their partner to discuss the following questions:
 - Did anything in the text surprise you?
 - What are your reasons for learning a second (or third or fourth) language?
- Feel free to discuss as an entire class!

Part 3 (optional)

- Have students research potential careers that strongly desire or require being bilingual or multilingual and have them brainstorm how their school language requirements can help them achieve those careers!

Part 4 (optional)

- Share information about the World Language Credit Program and State Seal of Biliteracy with your students (PowerPoint slides 14-15 from the "Speak World Languages Educator Presentation."
- You can also show the video *World Language Credit Program Honors Bilingual Immigrant Students*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgCMhiM1N-o&t=1s>. The video can be found in 14 languages here: <https://speakyourlanguage.org/news/videos/>.



Bilingualism Statements

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. Children whose parents speak to them in more than one language will speak both languages badly.
2. Bilingual children do better at school.
3. Bilinguals are less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease.
4. It is impossible to become fluent in another language once you are an adult.
5. With each language you learn, the process gets easier.

Bilingualism Reading

Some Facts About Bilingualism That May Surprise You

Source: teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Benefits_of_being_bilingual_Student_worksheet.pdf

It is estimated that more than half the world's population is bilingual, and, in an increasingly globalized world, there are obvious benefits to speaking more than one language. However, for many years, parents were discouraged from teaching their children to speak more than one language from birth. Learning two or more languages simultaneously was believed to cause confusion and slow down academic development. While it is certainly true that children who are learning to speak more than one language as their mother tongue will often mix the languages up or speak a little later, these are temporary problems, and no reason to avoid teaching a child both their parents' languages.

In fact, there are plenty of reasons to encourage your child to become bilingual from birth. As well as the obvious benefits of being able to communicate with more people, and the possibility of earning more money, children who speak more than one language have been shown to score more highly in achievement tests at school. This is true for mathematics as well as tests of verbal skills.

And in later life it has been found that bilinguals, on average, will tend to develop Alzheimer's disease five years later than monolingual speakers. Speaking three or more languages offers even more protection. It seems that the increased number of connections within the brain allows bilinguals to cope better with brain damage.

But is it too late if you haven't already learned a second language in childhood? It used to be thought that the adult brain was very fixed, but recent research has shown that we continue to develop new connections in the brain throughout our lives, meaning that it's perfectly possible to learn another language to a high standard. Older learners are less likely to have native-like pronunciation, but they are better at learning vocabulary as they are able to use far more skills and strategies than children. And learning a language is like using a muscle – the more you use it the stronger it gets, meaning that you will find your third language easier than your second, and so on.