

21st Century Language Acquisition

By: WHAT??

The Problem

We decided the problem was that not many people in the U.S. know a second language. We believe that the younger generation should learn new languages so that they become fluent in two languages rather than one. We believe this learning should start at young ages. With this problem, preschool to third grade is ideal; during these ages, people are able to learn second languages much faster than they can later on in life. This is especially useful in the globalized world that we live in today. In addition, second language learning has been proven to help the brain's cognitive functions.

Although, some schools have tried to help with this problem. Some elementary schools have tried teaching in a way that one week they teach in English, and then the next week they teach in Spanish, and then they go back to English, and they continue to alternate.

Our Research

For our research, we first looked at Wikipedia, but because there can be errors, seeing as how anyone can edit it, and also because our questions were very specific, so we decided to go to other sources. We always made sure that we our sources were reliable, and we cited all of them. A good tool that we used to cite our sources was www.easybib.com. We also searched for solutions to the second language problem and found none.

Also, we interviewed the mother of one of our team members, Patrick. She is a teacher of English as a second language at Waverly Elementary in Albany, Oregon. We interviewed her about how she teaches, what the best ways are, and also some important questions pertaining directly to our project, like if she thinks that children should be taught new languages at a young age.

Our Solution

There are many people who believe that there are flaws in the way that second languages are normally taught. Teachers base all of the grades off of tests, not fluency, and second languages are taught to high school students, rather than elementary schoolers--despite the fact that many scientific studies have proven that it is far more unlikely for someone to become fluent in a language after the age of eight. So, we decided to have our proposed solution be to teach kids second languages starting in preschool. They would probably either let them choose between French and Spanish, or just teach them Spanish. It would be a normal part of the school day, just like math or writing. Then, in high school, they (if they chose to) would be taught a third language such as French or Spanish, (if they didn't take it in elementary school) or some different language such as German or Latin.

Why/How it Works

Our proposed solution is to begin teaching second languages in pre-school, where students will begin to become fluent. They will have a better insight to the other cultures, and the grammar and syntax of their original language as well as the second one. Learning at that age would also improve their overall mental ability and capacity. The switch would make complete sense, and our future generations will be even more intelligent. Making the change could very well engineer our future. The United States ranks as the 17th best country based upon science and math scores, but the cognitive effects that our solution entails may very well bring US up to #1.

Why is it Beneficial to Learn a Second Language?

There are many cognitive benefits to learning a new language--like the fact that it takes longer to get alzheimer's or dementia. Moreover, there are also worldly effects. For instance, you'll have more job opportunities overseas. And, if you travel to other parts of the world, you'll be able to have a better time because you'll be able to talk to and connect with the locals. In addition, you'll have a better insight to other cultures.

Learning another language may also give you better knowledge of the grammar of your first language. Children who grow up bilingual will have a better memory. They are better at paying attention and they'll be better at differentiating sounds or even languages. If you are to learn an extra language, you'll be better at multitasking and you'll also be proud of yourself.

Why is it Better to Learn a Second Language as a Child?

If someone was to learn a new language as a child, as opposed to in high school, not only will they develop a native accent and actually become fluent, but they will just have that natural sounding pronunciation. Herbert Simon and William Chase said that the only way to truly master something is to spend 10000 hours on it. An average adult or teen probably doesn't just have 10000 hours of free time. However, a child would have a lot of free time over the course of their life to master a second language.

Also, young children are more willing to give new things a try, such as learning a new language. There will likely be a multitude of people willing and able to help. Also, it teaches students to embrace multilingualism.

Even better, it can get children into college for multiple reasons. First, getting into college is becoming increasingly difficult, and they need any advantage that they can get. If a college knows the cognitive benefits of learning a second language, especially at a young age, they will be more likely to accept them. Also, multilingualism helps not only children's linguistic test scores improve, but do their math scores as well. On their Florida standardized tests, kids from bilingual classrooms scored 23-34 points higher. A report from a college board said that kids that had 4 or more years of second language learning scored an average of 140 points higher on the SAT.

How we shared

- Jana Sweringen, Memorial Middle School
- David Jazmin, Memorial Middle School
- Mallory Marquet, Memorial Middle School
- Liz O'Donnell, Memorial Middle School
- Connie Whipple-Mills, Memorial Middle School
- Jennifer Smith, Memorial Middle School
- Kilee Sowa, Memorial Middle School
- blog.avum.com

Bibliography

- "10 Reasons Every Child Should Learn a Second Language." *Kudo*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.kudolearning.com/10-reasons-every-child-should-learn-a-second-language/>>.
- "10 Superb Psychological Advantages of Learning Another Language." *PsyBlog RSS*. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.spring.org.uk/2013/09/10-superb-psychological-advantages-of-learning-another-language.php>>.
- "EasyBib: The Free Automatic Bibliography Composer." EasyBib. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Oct. 2014
- "The Benefits of Learning a Second Language." *The Benefits of Learning a Second Language*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.omniglot.com/language/articles/benefitsoflearningalanguage.htm>>.