

The brain allows young children to learn and retain the information they have learned much easier than a more developed brain. We need to take advantage of that window and introduce a foreign language. A second language, an easy one to pick up quickly such as Spanish, should be taught at the elementary school level.

At an early age, the brain is wired to learn the art of language. "The window for syntax or grammar is open during the preschool years and may close as early as five or six years of age, while the window for adding new words never closes completely." (A7-2). As soon as possible, the brain needs to be stimulated often and given new information constantly. It is important for parents to embrace this stage in a child's development. Communication is so important, a child hears everything starting in utero. A child starts by learning how to make sounds and then forming them into words. Young children learn so quickly, their brain is like a sponge and it just absorbs information. The "development of specific neural synapses" is important to take advantage of and improve, but to do this, it is necessary to be educated in when is the right time (A7-1). Taking advantage of this natural wiring of the brain is something that not many people do, but it is something that must happen if we want the next generation to grow up prepared for the economically driven world.

Our brains are wired to continue learning and keep updating our vocabulary as we grow, at times during brain development it is easier to carve new pathways than it is when that window of opportunity has closed. Once that window is closed it is harder to break through and get that valuable information in, it is still possible but just at a greater inconvenience (A7-1). There is this concept of growth mindset in which it is stated that if you practice solving a problem one way over and over again you will continue to get better and to grow. If you solve the problem multiple ways and practice looking at the problem from different angles then you have expanded what your brain is capable of. If you never try to solve the problem a different way than your brain will

be 'closed up'. The idea of being open minded while trying to figure out how to solve a problem will greatly increase the success rate of continuing on that path. "The human mind is fully capable of handling multiple languages effortlessly in the long run. Let's not underestimate it." (A2-2). In order for us to continue learning at a period of time where it becomes harder to catch on quickly, we must persevere and continue on this path, once those paths are carved into our brain, the easier it will be to access them. Learning a second language gives more "divergent thinking, greater cognitive flexibility, improved selective attention and a broader level of understanding of each other's perspectives." (A1-2). It gives children the flexibility to be able to have a higher level of executive functioning than children that are not learning another language, or that do not know one already (A1-1). Not being able to communicate on another level with someone is a sad reality of our simple minded society.

There are many obstacles that stand in the way of foreign language education. "One big obstacle is the lack of bilingual teachers and clinicians in every program. Another obstacle is the lack of sufficient immersion in two languages." (A1-2). This is becoming more and more of a problem that society faces daily, the lack of actually getting into something at a deeper level. With the few number of bilingual teachers there are in America today, second language programs are not well funded and do not really address the needs of those involved. Schools need to take the initiative and start teaching a foreign language at an elementary level. "Most public school students do not begin studying foreign language until high school...." (A6-1). This is the basis of the problem. When schools introduce certain subjects just in high school, the teenage brain is not as open to learning more challenging subjects because the curriculum has missed the window of opportunity to make an impact on the brain in such a significant way as it would if it was introduced earlier in the child's education. Lack of funds to the foreign language

programs provides a non-positive experience for the students who are looking for a class that will bring them deeper into the language and cultural part of learning a second language.

There is a general attitude that there is no need for American's to learn how to speak another language because the rest of the world is learning and becoming fluent in English (A6-1). This attitude toward becoming culturally intertwined is what is holding America back. America is isolated and there is something that can be done (A1-1). There is this misunderstanding that there is not a division between America and Italy or America and China, but there is. There is a huge gap culturally and geographically and even linguistically. Other countries such as China and Italy have taken on the responsibility of learning English to be able to communicate between one another.

According to... "Somewhere along the line, in the last decades of the 20th century, our country came to view a second language like Spanish as a handicap rather than an asset" (A9-2). This is a common misunderstanding of learning something that is different to what is the "norm". It is often misperceived that knowing or doing something different is reason to be judged and shut off from society, but instead society should be embracing these differences and learning themselves how to become diverse. It is because of this attitude towards furthering yourself and your country that there are people living in America that fear speaking their native language because they do not want to be judged (A2-1). Living in a society where people feel insecure about their culture is not a society that should feel superior to others. It is not this society that makes a difference in the world, it is the society that does not have division. Society should take the initiative to create a community with no division culturally, linguistically, and socially. In the past, linguistic lines that create division in the U.S. have been drawn by the Federal Government (A4-4).

Many theories have changed over time. Once the theory that witches existed ruled over people's minds without them taking a second look at the logical side to it. Today that theory is old and outdated, but there are some theories that are still in the back of some minds. There have been theories made about every topic but there are some that are still being worked out, such as education. In the late 1950's the educational theory was that being bilingual was an academic failure, it was confusing and that it was psychologically harmful to the well-being of students (A4-1). This theory had been believed by the majority of the U.S. for at least 30 years and before that, there had been other theories about how education was detrimental. Even educated, trained professionals believed this theory to be true. In 1926 a psychologist named Florence Goodenough believed that the leading cause of mental retardation was caused by speaking a foreign language (A4-1). Today there are still many people that do not believe that learning a second language can help improve the mental flexibility and social capability of a student in the economically driven world. Over time this theory has changed, more and more people are seeing the benefits of learning a foreign language. There are more and more theories emerging about how education in this area has proven to increase mental flexibility and improve social skills. If that instruction was taken away from the education system than it would affect all of the students who want to learn that subject, the parents who have the right to control the education of their children and it would take away the passion from the instructor wanting to share their knowledge with the upcoming generation (A4-1). There are so few foreign language instructors today that have the appropriate supplies for their classroom. Besides the lack of funding towards foreign language education, there is a lack of sufficient immersion in the topic as well.

Classroom interactions with the language are the most important key to having a healthy learning environment where the students not only want to learn the subject just to be able to

graduate, but to actually submerge into the content. A lot of high school students in America do study a foreign language such as Spanish in their classrooms, but few of those students actually learn another language (A6-1). Few of the high schools in America that do require a second language class to graduate never understand that students are not submerging into the topic and really learning the content, they are just studying and memorizing the words and phrases in order to pass the test and then forget the content. Ask your parents and if they had studied a second language in high school. Now ask them to hold a conversation in that language, most of the time it can not be done for the simple reason of lack of immersion in the topic when the window of opportunity was open. According to “Most of us are never really able to communicate at a deeper level or engage in a conversation...” (A6-2). This creates barriers within society, barriers that cause America to fall because of the single idea that foreign language should not be taught in public schools simply because it is not beneficial to the student or to society. It creates division between neighbors in a country where diversity is supposed to be embraced.

Diversity is achieved when there are multiple cultures, languages, ways of life, etc. living all in one community and every member of that community trying new things. A culturally acceptable society works together and learns about other societies and cares, embraces them and makes them feel comfortable. America's mixed cultures worked together to create a “melting pot” community where every person from all walks of life felt welcomed. Today's America has the attitude that they are still the best and every other country should be modeling after us. According to “And some researchers predict that China will soon have the world's largest English-speaking population. Our education system is one of the reasons Americans aren't learning other languages.” (A5-2). America has been so focused on itself that it has not realized that the world around them has been changing for the last 60+ years. One of the main reasons for the development of second language education in public schools and through other

forms of support for such studies is the Sputnik launch of 1957 (A5-3). The federal government looked at this technological challenge and noticed that one of the subjects that students from America were lacking and students from other countries, the ones not as technologically advanced as the U.S. at the time but educationally ahead, was foreign language. The U.S. wanted to continue to be on the top of the pyramid so the Department of Education started supporting a second language education that started in primary grades so that it was ensured that students were immersed through high school (A5-1). In order for America to keep up with the changing world around them it was reconsidered and decided that second languages actually do provide benefits that do more than providing the student with a better looking resumé than a student who did not sufficiently learn a second language. Second language is taught at school but the real experiences that help the most to prepare young children with the task of learning a new language before they know what long division is is a healthy home experience and good parent-child interactions.

Having a healthy parent-child relationship is what influences a child the most to better themselves in the development of languages skills. If a parent were to talk to their 2-year-old daughter in “baby talk” then the child would not continue to grow their conversation and language skills. If other parents were to talk to their 2-year-old daughter like she was 8-years-old then that child will have the conversational skills and the vocabulary of an 8-year-old. The development of language skills as well as conversational skills are in direct relationship to the foundation laid down by the parents. It is the job of the parents of the next generation to provide a good base of communication skills that can be translated into the second language (A7-3). There are other important early experiences that can provide advantages to the child such as hearing two languages (A7-3). While a child is learning the basic rules of conversation, the window of opportunity for them to learn any new bit of

information is wide open and is drawing things in left and right. It is the right time to introduce a second language, that way the child is learning these two things at the same time with a basic understanding of conversation and language. It is essential that children who grow up in a household that speaks two languages takes advantage of this incredible gift and not feel ashamed because in the end, they will have more of an advantage over the child who grew up in the family just speaking English and not Spanish and English, or any other combination of languages for that matter. There are many English Language Learners (ELL) in America's public school system. In the 2011-2012 school year, 9.1 percent of an estimation of about 4.4 million students enrolled in public high schoolers were ELL students (A8-1). That number grew from 8.7 percent or an estimated 4.1 million students in the 2002-2003 school year. Speaking a language other than English is not some concept that will fly out the window, and neither will the strong necessity for students to learn one. Not only does the government and the education system need to have a higher level of support for these necessities, but they also need to encourage already multilingual students.

It is known that students who can speak two languages by kindergarten will have a much harder time understanding the content that is common knowledge to the average kindergartener i.e. colors, how to count to ten, shapes. Students that have learned a second language before hand have an easier time in learning another language to become trilingual (A2-2). While some students in America will never learn a second language in their lifetime, there are some that leave kindergarten bilingual. It is important that when a child enters kindergarten that their anchor language is not lost (A1-1). As a child enters kindergarten not knowing any language but Spanish, it is a struggle, no doubt. Putting teachers in kindergarten classes that can communicate in Spanish will make the students feel welcomed and not feel like an outsider. Rewriting the curriculum to bring these two languages together first thing will increase a sense

of community. Kids who only speak English will help out the children who only speak Spanish and visa versa. This will increase the number of kindergarteners who are bilingual which will create a deeper interest in learning the language and breaking down those barriers that divide Americans linguistically. In order to support this educational necessity, according to “Our schools should help Hispanics maintain and enhance their bilingualism, just as schools in other countries do, and help American children to become bilingual.” (A2-2). To compete globally and in order to contribute to America’s economic/societal advances, it is necessary for bilingualism to be the goal for all high school students. Bilingualism creates a society that is fighting to keep good relations with other countries. It creates a society where a little healthy job competition against your neighbor will contribute to society and further America as a country.

According to “Just 18 percent of Americans report speaking a language other than English. That’s far short of Europe, where 53 percent of citizens speak more than one language.” (A5-2). The global market is changing and it is now more than ever needed for America to step up and learn a second language in order to compete economically with other countries. Europe is just one example of the many countries that have increased their language skills across the country. In article Rhodes says “bilingual children represent an improved future economic asset in our increasingly global market.” (A1-2). Workers in America need to be able to communicate to with other competitors and in order to do that, it is necessary for them to be bilingual. America as a whole needs to learn how to understand other languages in order to compete economically and improve relations with other countries (A5-1). Other societies are multi-lingual and America is not.

Other countries are prospering economically and the reason is the communication skills that they learned at a young age and have grown up speaking more than one language. In America the idea of globalization and the economic driven world does not set in until a higher



level of education (A6-2). It is at this time when students realize that in order for America to compete on an international level and maintain relations with other countries, their communication skills need to improve. In...says “they realize the potential benefits in today’s globalized market. To compete for some jobs, they must be fluent in languages other than English.” Not only to compete against other countries do students need to study a second language, but also to compete for job opportunities against each other.

Having a deep understanding of a second language will give you a huge advantage over someone competing for the same position who doesn’t. Being fluent and able to communicate on more than a basic level of a knowledge of a second language makes a resumé desirable (A3-1). Students studying in a higher level of education are not prepared for the competitive world that surrounds them. The education system does not do their job to prepare students for the next level if they are being left to fight for themselves without the proper tools. America is “a nation of students unprepared for a global communication.” (A9-4). The U.S. had all of the proper tools in the past and they did a great job ensuring that all citizens played a role in contributing to society as a whole. Society meaning the country and then the world. A prosperous country will benefit the rest of the world and increase positive relations. It is not only the cultural benefits and the social advantage that is gained after retaining a second language, it is also the benefits you receive towards a more economically prosperous self (A9-2). In fact, more and more jobs are looking for people who can bring something to the table. Employers are looking for workers who are well rounded and are able to communicate on a deeper basis. Learning a language and really being able to apply it to your everyday life will generate a more positive response. Just imagine, if every person you saw on the street you were able to have a basic conversation with about the weather or last night’s football game in their native language, the response would be enthusiastic. In order to ensure national security, CIA Director Leon

Panetta “has set a five-year goal to double the number of CIA analysts who have a proficiency in a language other than English.” (A5-1). A lot of higher positioned jobs become more available if the applicant is proficient in a language other than English. It gives them a personal edge. There are smaller scale jobs available that the employer wants to hire people with a proficiency in a second language as well. A second language is so incredibly beneficial to create a more interdependent world culture.

It is important to reach a broader audience in this economically driven and culturally dependent society and that can be accomplished simply by learning a second language. America will soon become bilingual, but it takes every person working together to make this goal become a reality. An estimated 1 in 4 Americans will be Latino by the year 2050 (A9-4). That is not a very long time for us who English is our native language to become fluent in another language such as Spanish. Becoming bilingual is a necessity and is certainly not a liability to those who are learning it and their country.