

Bilingual Context

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Spanish, English, Portuguese, Chinese, German, etc... Do you speak more than one language? Are you really fluent in more than one language? Being a bilingual person in the States is a very common thing. It is due to the fact that a huge number of the population came

from other countries. To be able to communicate your ideas, feelings and even to dream in more than one language, it does not make people smarter. But it certainly opens a lot of windows and it gives us more opportunities all around the world. However, not everybody who is bilingual is completely fluent in the language; and also, no matter how long you have been speaking that foreign language, most of the bilingual people still have their foreign accent.

There are several types of bilingual people. It depends on factors as the age, the context, and the frequency that the languages are used. According to the Institute for learning and brain science, there are three main types of bilingualism, those are compound bilingual, coordinate bilingual and subordinate bilingual. The first group, compound bilingual, belongs to the early childhood age, which also is divided into two more types; simultaneous and sequential bilinguals. It means that simultaneous is the kids that learn both languages since they are born and grow up learning them at the same time; while sequential bilinguals are children who learn their native language first and then the second one.

Now, it is well known that two factors let bilingual people be in a context where the brain would be prepared to learn more than one language at the same time. Those elements are exposure and dominance. On one hand, exposure is the number of hours per day that a person is in contact with both languages and, on the other hand, dominance refers to the language that is being used longer than the other. In that order of ideas, to create an environment where people's minds are ready to learn more than one language at the same time, reduce the accent, and switch between codes without problems. It is necessary to keep a balance between the exposure and the dominance. For instance, if there is a house where the family speaks Spanish at home and English outside, the goal should be to change scenarios, which eventually would increase the vocabulary and the ability of the brain to admit both languages as native.

Consequently, the idea of being completely fluent in both languages (the foreign and the native one) is totally possible. But it would be possible just by admitting that learning language is a product of experience, not a thing to use in specific situations.