

# Why children benefit from language learning argumentative essay examples

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The benefits of learning a second language are both tangible and intangible. Knowing how to communicate in a second language can open up job opportunities that otherwise would not have been available to the individual. Knowing the language also can help you better understand and synthesize other cultures and perspectives. And there is also evidence that being bilingual or multilingual has many cognitive benefits, including a decreased risk of dementia in old age. One thing pretty much all language scholars agree on, though, is that the younger you are when you start learning a second language, the more it will benefit you later in life.

Unlike adults, children still have the ability to become true native speakers if they are learning the language under the right conditions. Many multilingual families will, for example, have one parent speak one language to the child and the other parent another, ensuring that the child has native command of both. The mechanism in children younger than about 12 years for acquiring language allows them to gain native command of both, and they can learn the second language basically in the same way they learned the first (under the right conditions) simply by “absorbing” it and not having to go through the tedious rote memorization of grammatical rules and series of repetitive grammar exercises and vocabulary drills more than familiar to anyone who has learned a foreign language later in life.

That said, it is not always that easy in a non-native environment without a parent native in the language to pick it natively. Immersion schools are gaining popularity in the United States, although frequently the instructors are a mix of native and non-native speakers, and learners may fossilize non-native errors and structures that are bound to arise. This is not, however,

necessarily a negative feature; research has shown that, even if some errors are present in a child's exposure to a foreign language, they still get the cognitive benefits, and it makes them more adept at language in general and provides them the tools needed to learn other languages later in life. In our increasingly globalized world, knowledge of foreign languages and cultures can also give students advantages career-wise. Knowledge of Spanish is already an advantage in many workplaces in the United States, and Mandarin is dramatically increasing in economic importance as China becomes the center of global manufacturing. Arabic also already provides many opportunities for employment in government and security-related positions. These economic advantages can be expected to grow alongside demographic change.

The American Council on the Teaching of Languages (ACTFL) website lists a number of academic benefits of learning foreign languages. These include a correlation between language learning and higher academic performance, higher ACT and SAT scores, higher reading abilities (in both languages), the ability to transfer skills from one language to another, a correlation with increased ability to hypothesize in science, and higher scores on standardized tests. These benefits help students achieve not only in language, but in all areas of learning. They also list the cognitive benefits, including increased intelligence, memory skills, verbal and spatial skills, and problem-solving abilities. They also point out the correlation between language learning and offsetting age-related cognitive losses. Surely all these benefits speak volumes for the advantages of language learning, and the earlier, the better.

Given the extensive advantages that learning a second language provides to children, childhood language learning should certainly be promoted and supported.

**Source:**

“ What the Research Shows”. American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

**Web. Retrieved from**

<http://www.actfl.org/advocacy/discover-languages/what-the-research-shows>  
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