

Rapporteur Group on Bilingualism

5. Thinking benefits

Research has shown that having two well developed languages can give people particular advantages in thinking, far from bilingualism making people mentally confused, as is sometimes alleged. There are four main areas:

- bilingual children have two or more words for each object and idea. When different meanings are attached to words in the two languages, a bilingual person may develop the ability to think more flexibly.

- bilingual people have to know which language to speak with whom, and when. They therefore appear to be more sensitive to the needs of listeners than monolingual people.

- research from many different countries of the world shows that bilingual people tend to do better at IQ tests compared with monolingual people of the same socio-economic class.

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There is growing evidence from European research that bilinguals tend to find it