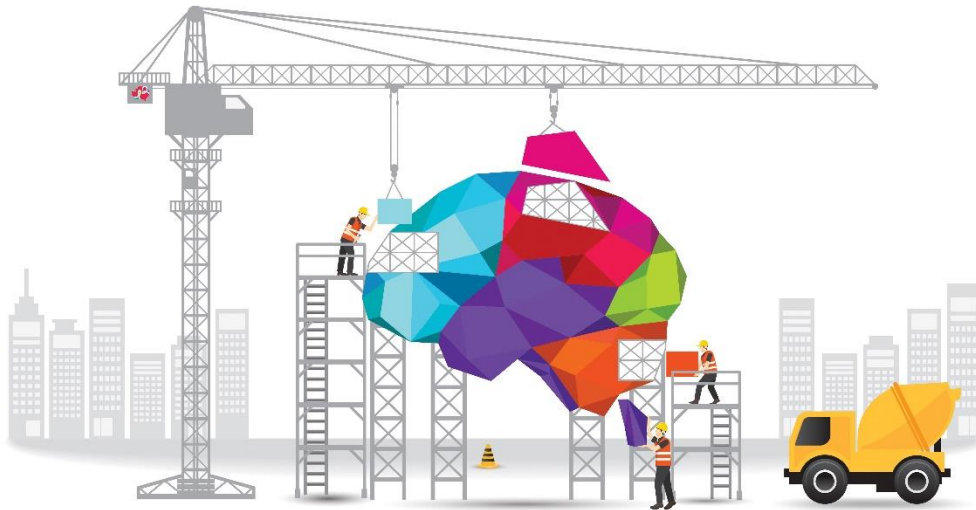




Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers
Association canadienne des professeurs de langues secondes

Why Learn Languages? Languages Build Brains

Second-language learning is beneficial on many levels, but to what extent? Let's have a look at our first article (of a series), based on the [Literature Review on the Impact of Second-Language Learning \(2017\)](#), for the cognitive impacts of L2 learning.



More precisely, second-language learning rewires and reorganizes brains.

This has been proven by many researchers, including Professor Ellen Bialystok from York University and Professor Ana Inés Ansaldo from the University of Montreal (Government of Canada, 2016). Bilingual brains are structured differently and work differently than unilingual brains. This enables bilinguals to stay more focused and to better pinpoint the relevant details buried in the vast amounts of conflicting and needless information that bombard us every day (University of Reading, 2015).

Languages Build Memory

The most significant cognitive benefit of second-language learning, however, is undeniably the preservation of cognitive capacities into old age.



First, bilinguals tend to have a higher cognitive reserve. This means that they can tolerate more damage from stroke, alcohol overuse, or head injury without having their intellectual capacities affected. They also show signs of Alzheimer’s disease later than monolinguals because they can continue to function normally during the early stages of the disease.

Second, the increased white matter in bilingual brains that helps information travel across the different parts of the brain prevents, or at least slows down, the degradation of age-related memory.

Let’s not risk it – learn a second language and give yourself the best odds! It’s not the age at which you acquire your second language that matters, but the consistent use of more than one language that builds your brain (Wodniecka, 2010).

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