



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

# Why Learn Languages? Languages Build Personality

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



According to science, our personality is built with a mix of genetic markers and environmental influences; we can therefore say that languages (environment) build personality (Marsolais, 2017).

## Languages Build Communicators

Since the studies examined in the *Literature Review on the Impact of Second-Language Learning (2017)* on communicative abilities looked at children between the ages of two and six, the conclusions are relevant to the impact of early bilingual exposure on communication skills.

Repeatedly proven by Yow and Markham, children growing up in a dual-language environment may better understand the speaker's communicative intent by paying attention to verbal (tone of voice) and non-verbal cues (pointing and eye gaze). In doing so, they are able to respond appropriately to the speaker.



## Languages Build Creativity

Kharkhurin investigated whether bilingualism had a measurable impact on verbal and non-verbal creative performance by having 150 college students, both bilingual and unilingual, complete a test of creativity. Results showed that bilinguals have an advantage in non-verbal creativity. How bilinguals find creative and unique ways of problem solving can be explained by their experience with different linguistic and cultural frameworks, which allows them to perceive the world from a wide range of perspectives. A wide range of perspectives leads to open minds.

## Languages Build Open Minds

Learning a new language means dealing with ambiguity. When learning a new language, we are often faced with unknown words, both read and heard, and are expected to answer appropriately. As a result, bilinguals have a significantly higher tolerance of ambiguity, which leads to a higher tolerance for others.

Another key element is that while learning additional languages, we also learn about other cultures, which contributes to building minds open to different values, beliefs, perspectives, and communicative practices.

Our next article will focus on how languages build society.

## Bibliography

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