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**"1,000 IDEAS & ACTIVITIES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS"**  
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## **Being bilingual boosts brainpower**

**5th May, 2012**

[http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1205/120504-brain\\_power.html](http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1205/120504-brain_power.html)

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# THE ARTICLE

From [http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain\\_power.html](http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain_power.html)

A study by the USA's Northwestern University provides biological evidence that people who are bilingual have a more powerful brain. Drs Viorica Marian and Nina Kraus investigated how bilingualism affects the brain. They found that studying another language "fine-tunes" people's attention span and enhances their memory. In particular they discovered that when language learners attempt to understand speech in another language, it activates and energises the brainstem – an ancient part of the brain. Professor Kraus stated: "Bilingualism serves as enrichment for the brain and has real consequences when it comes to...attention and working memory."

Professor Marian explained why studying and learning another language was so beneficial for the brain. She said: "People do crossword puzzles and other activities to keep their minds sharp, but the advantages we've discovered in dual language speakers come automatically simply from knowing and using two languages." She added: "It seems that the benefits of bilingualism are particularly powerful and broad, and include attention, inhibition and encoding of sound." She said bilinguals were better listeners because they are "natural jugglers" of sound. She said: "The bilingual juggles linguistic input and, it appears, automatically pays greater attention to relevant versus irrelevant sounds."

# WARM-UPS

**1. BEING BILINGUAL:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about being bilingual. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*evidence / powerful brain / bilingualism / fine-tune / attention span / memory / studying / another language / crossword puzzles / inhibition / better listeners / juggle*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. BRAINPOWER:** What boosts it? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you wrote. Change and share again.

	Effectiveness?	Why?
Studying languages		
Crossword puzzles		
Exercise		
Reading		
Maths		
Food		

**4. BILINGUAL:** Students A **strongly** believe we must all be bilingual; Students B **strongly** believe not. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

**5. BETTER:** Which would you rather have? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- A more powerful brain
- A more beautiful smile
- A flatter stomach
- Bigger muscles
- A better sense of humour
- More get up and go
- More tolerance
- Better athletic ability

**6. BRAIN:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'brain'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From [http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain\\_power.html](http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain_power.html)

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. A university said bilingual people have more powerful brains.           | T / F |
| b. Researchers say studying languages increases our ability to focus.      | T / F |
| c. Listening to other languages activates a newly-found part of the brain. | T / F |
| d. The researchers say bilingualism enhances attention and memory.         | T / F |
| e. The study says bilingual people are better at crossword puzzles.        | T / F |
| f. Researchers say good things come automatically with bilingualism.       | T / F |
| g. The researchers said bilinguals are good at juggling different objects. | T / F |
| h. A professor said bilinguals totally ignore irrelevant sounds.           | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article.

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. evidence     | a. especially    |
| 2. investigated | b. triggers      |
| 3. enhances     | c. advantageous  |
| 4. activates    | d. proof         |
| 5. ancient      | e. intelligent   |
| 6. beneficial   | f. boosts        |
| 7. sharp        | g. deals with    |
| 8. dual         | h. inquired into |
| 9. particularly | i. twin          |
| 10. juggles     | j. old           |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- |                                    |                      |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. biological                      | a. part of the brain |
| 2. how bilingualism                | b. irrelevant sounds |
| 3. attention                       | c. to attention      |
| 4. an ancient                      | d. for the brain     |
| 5. real consequences when it comes | e. sharp             |
| 6. so beneficial                   | f. linguistic input  |
| 7. keep their minds                | g. evidence          |
| 8. She said bilinguals were        | h. span              |
| 9. The bilingual juggles           | i. better listeners  |
| 10. relevant versus                | j. affects the brain |

# WHILE READING / LISTENING

From [http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain\\_power.html](http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain_power.html)

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A study by the USA's Northwestern University (1) \_\_\_\_\_ biological evidence that people who are bilingual have a more (2) \_\_\_\_\_ brain. Drs Viorica Marian and Nina Kraus investigated how bilingualism (3) \_\_\_\_\_ the brain. They found that studying another language "fine-(4) \_\_\_\_\_" people's attention span and enhances their memory. In particular they discovered that when language learners (5) \_\_\_\_\_ to understand speech in another language, it activates and energises the brainstem - an (6) \_\_\_\_\_ part of the brain. Professor Kraus stated: "Bilingualism serves as enrichment for the brain and has real consequences when it (7) \_\_\_\_\_ to...attention and working (8) \_\_\_\_\_."

*attempt*  
*memory*  
*affects*  
*powerful*  
*comes*  
*tunes*  
*provides*  
*ancient*

Professor Marian explained why studying and learning another language was so (9) \_\_\_\_\_ for the brain. She said: "People do crossword puzzles and other activities to keep their minds (10) \_\_\_\_\_, but the advantages we've discovered in (11) \_\_\_\_\_ language speakers come automatically (12) \_\_\_\_\_ from knowing and using two languages." She added: "It seems that the benefits of bilingualism are (13) \_\_\_\_\_ powerful and broad, and include attention, inhibition and (14) \_\_\_\_\_ of sound." She said bilinguals were better listeners because they are "natural (15) \_\_\_\_\_" of sound. She said: "The bilingual juggles linguistic input and, it appears, automatically (16) \_\_\_\_\_ greater attention to relevant versus irrelevant sounds."

*simply*  
*sharp*  
*encoding*  
*pays*  
*particularly*  
*beneficial*  
*jugglers*  
*dual*

# LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From [http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain\\_power.html](http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain_power.html)

A study by the USA's Northwestern University \_\_\_\_\_ evidence that people who are bilingual have a more powerful brain. Drs Viorica Marian and Nina Kraus \_\_\_\_\_ bilingualism affects the brain. They found that studying another language "fine-tunes" people's \_\_\_\_\_ and enhances their memory. In particular they discovered that when language learners attempt to understand speech in another language, it \_\_\_\_\_ the brainstem – \_\_\_\_\_ the brain. Professor Kraus stated: "Bilingualism serves as enrichment for the brain and has real consequences \_\_\_\_\_ ...attention and working memory."

Professor Marian explained why studying and learning another language was \_\_\_\_\_ the brain. She said: "People do crossword puzzles and other activities to keep their minds sharp, but the advantages we've discovered \_\_\_\_\_ speakers come automatically simply from knowing and using two languages." She added: "It seems that the \_\_\_\_\_ are particularly powerful and broad, and include attention, \_\_\_\_\_ of sound." She said bilinguals were better listeners because they are " \_\_\_\_\_ " of sound. She said: "The bilingual juggles linguistic input and, it appears, automatically pays greater attention to relevant versus \_\_\_\_\_."

# AFTER READING / LISTENING

From [http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain\\_power.html](http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain_power.html)

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'brain' and 'power'.

<b>brain</b>	<b>power</b>
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- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• study</li><li>• affects</li><li>• span</li><li>• particular</li><li>• ancient</li><li>• real</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• beneficial</li><li>• sharp</li><li>• dual</li><li>• simply</li><li>• natural</li><li>• versus</li></ul>
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# BEING BILINGUAL SURVEY

From [http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain\\_power.html](http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain_power.html)

Write five GOOD questions about being bilingual in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper. When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.



# BEING BILINGUAL DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'bilingual'?
- c) How bilingual are you?
- d) What are the advantages of being bilingual?
- e) Should bilingualism (or trilingualism / multilingualism) be part of a country's education system?
- f) What effect do you think language learning has on your brain?
- g) How are your attention span and memory?
- h) What would your life be like if you could not understand or speak English?
- i) Are monolinguals disadvantaged in life?
- j) What do you think of your brainpower?

*Being bilingual boosts brainpower – 5th May, 2012*  
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# BEING BILINGUAL DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What three adjectives best describe this article, and why?
- c) Why do you think learning another language is good for the brain?
- d) Do you think crossword puzzles are good for you?
- e) How sharp is your mind?
- f) Do you think you are better at recognizing and encoding sounds because of your language studying?
- g) What do you have to juggle in life?
- h) Are you a good listener?
- i) What new language would you like to learn and why?
- j) What questions would you like to ask the Northwestern University professors?

# LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From [http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain\\_power.html](http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120504-brain_power.html)

A study by the USA's Northwestern University provides (1) \_\_\_\_\_ evidence that people who are bilingual have a more powerful brain. Drs Viorica Marian and Nina Kraus investigated how bilingualism (2) \_\_\_\_\_ the brain. They found that studying another language "fine-(3) \_\_\_\_\_" people's attention span and enhances their memory. In particular they discovered that when language learners (4) \_\_\_\_\_ to understand speech in another language, it activates and energises the brainstem – an (5) \_\_\_\_\_ part of the brain. Professor Kraus stated: "Bilingualism serves as enrichment for the brain and has (6) \_\_\_\_\_ consequences when it comes to...attention and working memory."

Professor Marian explained why studying and learning another language was so beneficial (7) \_\_\_\_\_ the brain. She said: "People (8) \_\_\_\_\_ crossword puzzles and other activities to keep their minds sharp, but the advantages we've discovered in (9) \_\_\_\_\_ language speakers come automatically simply from knowing and using two languages." She added: "It seems that the benefits of bilingualism are (10) \_\_\_\_\_ powerful and broad, and include attention, inhibition and encoding of sound." She said bilinguals were better listeners because they are "natural jugglers" of sound. She said: "The bilingual juggles (11) \_\_\_\_\_ input and, it appears, automatically pays greater attention to relevant (12) \_\_\_\_\_ irrelevant sounds."

## Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- |     |                  |                 |                |                   |
|-----|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1.  | (a) biological   | (b) tactical    | (c) diabolical | (d) esoterical    |
| 2.  | (a) reflects     | (b) effects     | (c) affects    | (d) infects       |
| 3.  | (a) melodies     | (b) tunes       | (c) harmonies  | (d) songs         |
| 4.  | (a) tempts       | (b) temps       | (c) preempts   | (d) attempts      |
| 5.  | (a) outdated     | (b) antiquated  | (c) ancient    | (d) old-fashioned |
| 6.  | (a) real         | (b) reality     | (c) realism    | (d) really        |
| 7.  | (a) with         | (b) by          | (c) at         | (d) for           |
| 8.  | (a) prove        | (b) do          | (c) carry out  | (d) conduct       |
| 9.  | (a) dual         | (b) oral        | (c) oval       | (d) seal          |
| 10. | (a) particularly | (b) particulars | (c) particles  | (d) particular    |
| 11. | (a) lingo        | (b) linguistic  | (c) lingerie   | (d) lingering     |
| 12. | (a) verses       | (b) versions    | (c) verbs      | (d) versus        |

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# HOMework

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find out more about being bilingual. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. BEING BILINGUAL:** Make a poster about being bilingual. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. BRAINPOWER:** Write a magazine article about brainpower. Include imaginary interviews with people who know how to increase it.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

**5. LETTER:** Write a letter to an expert on bilingualism. Ask him/her three questions about being bilingual. Give him/her three of your opinions on it. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

# ANSWERS

## TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T      b. T      c. F      d. T      e. F      f. T      g. F      h. F

## SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. evidence     | a. proof         |
| 2. investigated | b. inquired into |
| 3. enhances     | c. boosts        |
| 4. activates    | d. triggers      |
| 5. ancient      | e. old           |
| 6. beneficial   | f. advantageous  |
| 7. sharp        | g. intelligent   |
| 8. dual         | h. twin          |
| 9. particularly | i. especially    |
| 10. juggles     | j. deals with    |

## PHRASE MATCH:

- |                                    |                      |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. biological                      | a. evidence          |
| 2. how bilingualism                | b. affects the brain |
| 3. attention                       | c. span              |
| 4. an ancient                      | d. part of the brain |
| 5. real consequences when it comes | e. to attention      |
| 6. so beneficial                   | f. for the brain     |
| 7. keep their minds                | g. sharp             |
| 8. She said bilinguals were        | h. better listeners  |
| 9. The bilingual juggles           | i. linguistic input  |
| 10. relevant versus                | j. irrelevant sounds |

## GAP FILL:

### Being bilingual boosts brainpower

A study by the USA's Northwestern University (1) **provides** biological evidence that people who are bilingual have a more (2) **powerful** brain. Drs Viorica Marian and Nina Kraus investigated how bilingualism (3) **affects** the brain. They found that studying another language "fine-(4) **tunes**" people's attention span and enhances their memory. In particular they discovered that when language learners (5) **attempt** to understand speech in another language, it activates and energises the brainstem – an (6) **ancient** part of the brain. Professor Kraus stated: "Bilingualism serves as enrichment for the brain and has real consequences when it (7) **comes** to...attention and working (8) **memory**."

Professor Marian explained why studying and learning another language was so (9) **beneficial** for the brain. She said: "People do crossword puzzles and other activities to keep their minds (10) **sharp**, but the advantages we've discovered in (11) **dual** language speakers come automatically (12) **simply** from knowing and using two languages." She added: "It seems that the benefits of bilingualism are (13) **particularly** powerful and broad, and include attention, inhibition and (14) **encoding** of sound." She said bilinguals were better listeners because they are "natural (15) **jugglers**" of sound. She said: "The bilingual juggles linguistic input and, it appears, automatically (16) **pays** greater attention to relevant versus irrelevant sounds."

## LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a    2 - c    3 - b    4 - d    5 - c    6 - a    7 - d    8 - b    9 - c    10 - a    11 - b    12 - d

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