

# The importance of becoming a bilingual professional in your chosen field of expertise

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My professional goal as a bilingual educator has always been to encourage and provide support to any student who wants to become a bilingual professional in their areas of interest. We need to aim higher than mastering the informal language skills [listening, speaking, reading, and writing] in two or more languages and enter the job market prepared to work with monolingual, bilingual, and non-English speaking professionals. This means you have to master the technical and career-specific formal language in your chosen career.

Under the current University system, students who are enrolled in Foreign Language classes or are working towards a bilingual teaching credential are recognized as possessing language skills in languages other than English on their degree. However, university students enrolled in math, science, social studies, fine arts, or any other field of study who are fluent in languages other than English do not receive formal recognition of their bilingualism on the university degree.

It is your individual decision and motivation that will lead to the development of bilingual skills related to your major and your minor. Here are some ideas and reasons to help you become a bilingual professional.

Advocate for a University Seal of Biliteracy to recognize your bilingual skills when you graduate from college.

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## 2 MY ADVICE TO YOU AS COLLEGE STUDENTS

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**TIME:** As you master your coursework for your major and minor, take the extra time and effort to become a bilingual professional instead of a monolingual professional. Start when you are a Freshman and don't stop.

**VOCABULARY:** As you learn new concepts and vocabulary in your major field of study at a university, teach yourself the new concepts and vocabulary in another language so that you can communicate your new knowledge in other languages.

**PERSONAL GLOSSARY:** Identify the top 500 academic terms and phrases that you must master in order to work with bilingual and non-English speaking professionals in your future career; then learn those terms and phrases in another language by using a large variety of sources [bilingual dictionaries, professional journals in other languages, videos/lectures in other languages, etc.].

**BUY:** Bilingual dictionaries, glossaries, etc. that contain the vocabulary and phrases most commonly used in your major and minor. Consider the Velazquez Press Math, Science, and/or Social Studies Glossaries.

**PRACTICE:** Practice talking with your colleagues in other languages to prepare yourself to communicate technical information with professional colleagues in their native language.

**TRANSLATE:** Translate/rewrite your assignments into another language as samples of your ability to write in more than one language.

**LECTURES:** Attend lectures and presentations presented in other languages in your chosen field of study. Watch videos in other languages related to your major and minor fields of study.

**JOURNALS:** Read professional journals in other languages and write yourself bilingual summaries of what you have read. Keep them as samples of your ability to read, write, and summarize information in more than one language.

**UNIVERSITY HELP:** Ask your instructors to help you prepare to become a bilingual professional. Ask them to proofread any assignments, reports, summaries, etc. that you have written in other languages. Rewrite them as needed until you have the best samples possible.

**WHY SHOULD YOU WORK HARD TO BECOME BILINGUAL?** Here are some quotes from a variety of websites regarding the need and opportunities for bilingual professionals.

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### **3 BILINGUALISM & CAREERS**

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"According to a 2009 poll published by the business executive recruitment firm Korn/Ferry International, about 31 percent of business executives are capable of speaking two or more languages. About 20 percent of those executives could speak three or more languages. Much like government positions, business executives must often converse with foreign business partners from different cultures. This makes an understanding of the partner's foreign culture extremely important."  
(Brachmann)

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### **4 WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING BILINGUAL IN U.S. JOBS TODAY?**

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"You can increase your marketability by adding new languages to your repertoire, especially if English is the only language you speak, to demonstrate your ability to collaborate with overseas teammates and display your appreciation for other cultures." (Dowdell)

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### **5 FROM SECRETARY TO VICE PRESIDENT OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETING: BILINGUAL PROFESSIONAL MAKES HER DREAMS COME TRUE**

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"I speak fluent Spanish and English. I have found the ability to converse in the language of my customers and vendors to be a huge advantage. While most business people in Latin America can speak some English or at least struggle through it, speaking Spanish gives me a major advantage over competitors. I am able to build relationships more successfully. It can be very difficult to build trust

between suppliers and customers living and working in different countries. Building trust is much easier when you are able to communicate in the language of your suppliers and customers. Significant misunderstandings can be avoided as well." (Latpro)

## **6 INTERVIEWING TIPS FOR BILINGUAL PROFESSIONALS**

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"If you're a bilingual job seeker, in some cases you may have a competitive advantage over other job seekers. Not only are job opportunities more plentiful for bilingual professionals, but workers can command a higher salary, often 5-20 percent more than the position's base rate." (Exchange)

## **7 BENEFITS OF BEING BILINGUAL**

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"Bilinguals are preferred over monolinguals for jobs that require them to travel extensively or communicate with a wider group of people. Individuals who are proficient in a foreign language can work as translators, diplomats, teachers, doctors, etc. Employing bilinguals also helps in exploring new avenues and pooling in new clients from around the world. Bilingual and multilingual employees can also help in training new members when the need arises." (Buzzle)

## **8 THE BENEFITS OF BILINGUAL PERSONNEL**

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"Most customers are more comfortable working with a representative who shares their cultural background. In addition to easier communication in their native language, an ethnic representative implies an inherently better understanding of mindset, culture, and personal needs." (Career)

## **9 WHY & HOW TO HIRE BILINGUAL EMPLOYEES**

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"Hiring a bilingual lawyer has the potential to grow your practice and even open up your business to international markets. As your clients begin to do business in foreign markets or with foreign companies looking to expand their products and services into the U.S., you will position your firm to compete for their legal business." (Perez)

## 10 BILINGUAL EMPLOYEES

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"In almost every state in the nation, financial and accounting executives are grappling with an increased need for bilingual employees. Demand for hiring bilingual employees is primarily increasing within financial services, pharmaceutical, technology, and life sciences sectors, according to Chris van Someren, president, Global Markets, at Los Angeles-based Korn/Ferry International. His company specializes in executive recruitment." (Teiseira)

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