

Learning a second language keeps your brain young

We've all thought how convenient it would be to know a second or even a third language, either to speak to more people when traveling or to better communicate with travelers in our home country. We can now add 'keeping your brain young' to the list of reasons why we should all learn an extra language.



A new study from the University of Edinburgh supports an old claim from an earlier study suggesting that learning a second language can help delay dementia.

Dementia is a broad category of brain diseases that cause long term loss of the ability to think and reason clearly. The most common form of dementia is Alzheimer's disease.

The University of Edinburgh's study confirms that learning a new language can in fact help your brain stay young and strong.

Cognitive function.

Cognitive function is a person's ability to process thoughts. This refers to things like memory, the ability to learn new information, speech, and reading comprehension.

This latest research from the University of Edinburgh was focused on discovering if learning a second language actually helps to improve cognitive function, or if people who have high cognitive function are the ones more apt to learn a second language and become bilingual.

The study measured the cognitive function improvement of the learners over a 60-year period. Researchers first tested learners cognitive function at age 11. This gave the researchers a 'baseline' or starting point to measure from.

The learners were tested again when they were in their 70s.

According to the results of the assessments, language learners of all ages showed improved cognitive function after having learned another language.

"Our study is the first to examine whether learning a second language impacts cognitive performance," Dr. Thomas Bak explained. "Our study shows that bilingualism, even when acquired in adulthood, benefits the aging brain."

So for anyone who is learning a second language or has learned a second language, you're on track to keeping your brain strong, active and healthy. For those who are still monolingual, don't worry, it's never too late to start learning a second language!