

Abstract: All our experiences contribute to the way our minds and brains develop, but intense experiences have a special role in shaping our cognitive systems. As humans, no experience is more intense or pervasive than our use of language, so a lifetime of learning and using (at least) two languages has the potential to leave a profound mark on human cognition. Research with infants shows that those exposed to two languages from birth demonstrate more control over attention than do infants in monolingual environments, and young children learning two languages show precocious development of



essential cognitive processes. These effects can also be found in school, particularly for children in bilingual education programs. Thus, development through childhood is shaped by the linguistic environment. The most dramatic findings, however, are found in older age where lifelong bilingualism protects cognitive function in healthy aging and postpones symptoms of dementia and other neurodegenerative diseases. This talk will review the evidence from these studies and propose an explanation for how exposure to and use of two languages leads to these cognitive and brain consequences.

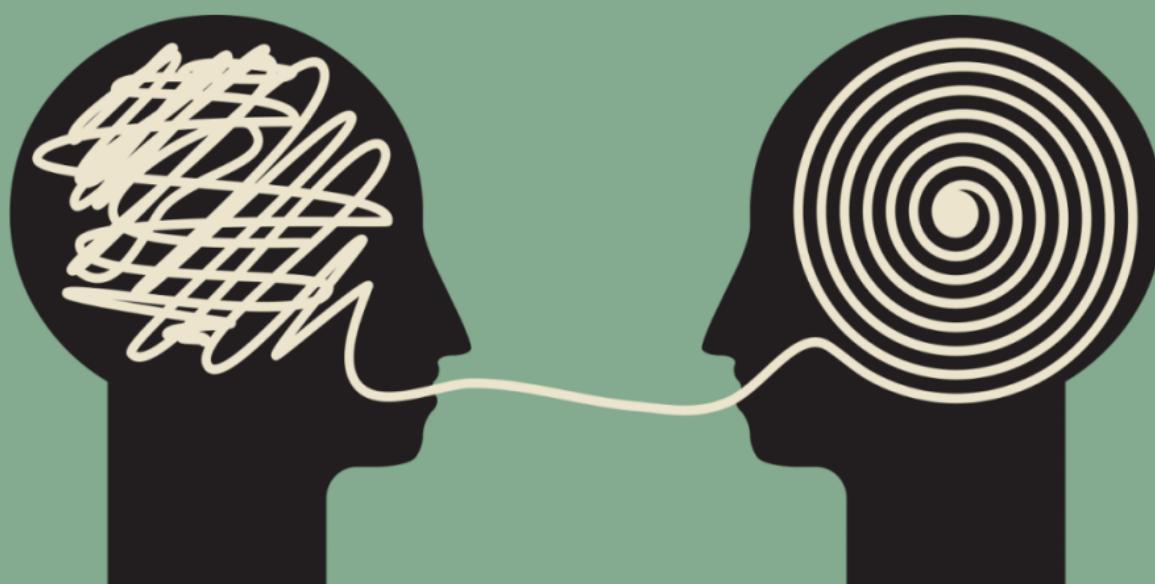
Prof. Dr. Ellen Bialystok

BILINGUALISM: CHANGING MINDS AND BRAINS

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Audimax

Ellen Bialystok is a Distinguished Research Professor of Psychology and Walter Gordon Research Chair of Lifespan Cognitive Development at York University, and Associate Scientist at the Rotman Research Institute of the Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care. She is an Officer of the Order of Canada and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.



Her research uses behavioral and neuroimaging methods to examine the effect of bilingualism on cognitive processes across the lifespan. Her discoveries include the identification of differences in the development of essential cognitive and language abilities for bilingual children, the use of different brain networks by monolingual and bilingual young adults performing simple conflict tasks, and the postponement of symptoms of dementia in bilingual older adults..