

THE PROBLEMS OF BEING MONOLINGUAL

I - PRE-READING ACTIVITY

1. Match the following words with their definitions.

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|------------------------|---|
| 1. monolingualism | a] A language used for communication between people who speak different languages |
| 2. multilingualism | b] When someone bases their own self-awareness on the language they commonly use, especially their native language. |
| 3. lingua franca | c] Only being able to use one language for communication |
| 4. linguistic identity | d] The language someone learns to speak first |
| 5. native tongue | e] A person living in a country that is not their own |
| 6. expatriate | f] The ability to use more than one language for communication |

2. Join the following sentences.

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|---|--|
| a) Being monolingual in a global world is limiting due to | 1. in multicultural societies, it might not be enough to communicate successfully. |
| b) Most people learn English as a second language ; however, | 2. they speak two or more languages. |
| c) Learning several languages is very important in order to | 3. it gives you access to new worlds. |
| d) Language learning is a very enriching experience because | 4. the need to depend on others to translate for you. |
| e) Approximately half of the world's population are bilingual or plurilingual since | 5. but it doesn't allow you to fully understand cultural differences. |
| f) English is a <i>lingua franca</i> | 6. understand different cultures and realities. |

3. Read the following text and fill in the blanks with the words below.

affect • bridge • encouraged • belonging • disadvantage • first • employment • advantages

Why bilingual is better

In the past it was thought to be a (a) to be torn between two languages. Now children are (b) to be bilingual. And why is that? Being bilingual, multilingual or monolingual is likely to (c) a child's identity, thinking, schooling and (d). It may even help to determine whom we marry. Bilingualism increases opportunities and choice and offers a host of possible (e): communication with the whole family and the community, to name just two. Where parents have a different (f) language, a child who is bilingual can develop a special relationship with each parent. It creates a (g) between generations – with grandparents, for example. This helps build a sense of (h) to the extended family and community.

II - READING COMPREHENSION



Read the following text carefully.

I am Indian, but I don't understand the words

- 1] The only language I speak fluently is English, with the next best being rather mediocre French. It wasn't until I moved to England a few years ago that I realized how much my identity was tied to the language I spoke.
- 2] Though I grew up in Saudi Arabia and India, I was raised speaking English. My parents, having been brought up in different states within India, spoke English around the house because it was their only shared language. Preschool and elementary school in Saudi Arabia were filled with the rich selection of English-speaking expatriates that the Middle East has to offer. English is definitely the lingua franca of the Gulf countries, it's used by everyone, whatever their nationality or occupation. It wasn't until later in life when I realized this monolingualism wasn't ordinary.
- 3] It all really hit home when I moved to India for high school. India is painfully multilingual — in urban areas most people speak at least two languages, while in rural areas you can drive for a day and pass through half a dozen different linguistic zones. For the first time, I was immersed in life as an Indian, and not as an expatriate. Nothing can make you stand out more than a complete inability to speak a single Indian language in a country where most people speak at least two. And my extended Indian family's reaction to my monolingualism was an almost distressing medley of amusement and incredulity.
- 4] India's enormous variety of languages and cultures give it a vibrancy that I have yet to experience in any other country. Yet for someone who speaks none of them fluently, I know I'm missing out on a fundamental part of being an Indian. To be fair, I never noticed any of this at the time. It was only when I arrived in London that I realized what I was missing. For once, I knew how to speak, fluently, the language of the majority. I was finally able to chat with the postman in the morning, or strike up a conversation with the lady behind the till at the supermarket.
- I definitely wouldn't say I was English, but after years of living in places where I didn't speak the native tongue, I finally realized what it was like to feel 'at home' in a country.

FEROZ SALAM In <http://www.denizenmag.com/2011/04/i-dont-understand-the-words/> (abridged and adapted)

A. TRUE, FALSE OR NOT GIVEN? Quote from the text to support your answer.

1. Feroz speaks two languages fluently.
2. His mother and father don't (didn't) have the same first language.
2. He found out that speaking only one language is not normal.
3. Not knowing how to communicate in Indian attracted people's attention to him.
4. People in the Gulf countries are monolingual.
5. People in rural areas in India are multilingual.
6. Feroz learnt how to speak his mother tongue while at high school in India.
7. Feroz learnt how to speak English fluently when he arrived in London.

B. Answer the following questions on the text in complete sentences and in your own words as far as possible.

1. Which countries has Feroz lived in?
2. What does he mean when he says "India is painfully multicultural"? (paragraph 3)

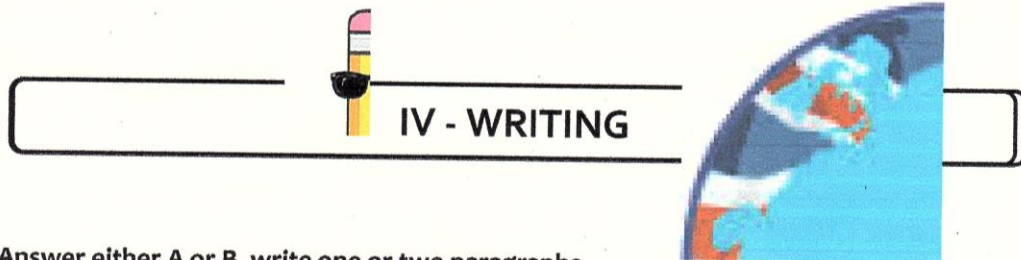
3. What does he mean by "I know I'm missing out on a fundamental part of being an Indian"? (paragraph 4).
4. Why does he feel "at home" in England?

C. Complete the following meaningfully.

1. Although Feroz is Indian, he ...
2. His parents didn't teach him to speak an Indian language because ...
3. His extended family felt both ... and ... by his monolingualism.

D. Find the synonyms for the following in paragraph 4 in the text above

1. diversity 2. liveliness 3. essential 4. speak 5. begin



Answer either A or B, write one or two paragraphs.

A. "Everyone should speak the same language. English, being a global language, could serve that purpose." To what extent do you agree with this statement? Give your reasons.

B. Do you think that English is having a negative effect on other languages? Can anything be done to prevent this? If so, what?