

Bilingualism Matters at UCR



Learning and using more than one language has many benefits, but there are also misconceptions about what it means to be bilingual. Some believe that exposing infants to more than one language will confuse them and harm their development or that it is impossible to fully learn a new language as an adult. The new research on language learning and bilingualism shows that these misconceptions are false. Bilingualism changes the minds and brains of babies in ways that produce greater cognitive flexibility and openness to new learning. Adults are also far more open to new language learning than we previously understood. New findings on older adults suggest that lifelong bilingualism may protect them against the cognitive declines that individuals experience normally as they age and also against the symptoms of dementia. How can we better communicate the excitement of these new findings?

[Bilingualism Matters](#) began as a public information service at the University of Edinburgh in 2008, in response to a lack of information about bilingualism in the community. In October, 2017, Bilingualism Matters at UCR launched a new branch to bring together researchers at UCR and elsewhere with the Southern California community. This region is a linguistically diverse environment and UCR, as one of a small number of research intensive HSI, is no exception. UCR is one of the most diverse of the UC campuses. A large percentage of our students are bilingual. Many are heritage speakers who grew up in homes with a language other than English and were only first exposed to English when they entered primary school. At the same time, within universities across the country and internationally, there has been an explosion of research on bilingualism, to understand what bilingualism means historically, politically, and linguistically in the context of immigration and border communities, to identify the patterns of learning that might promote the acquisition of more than one language, and to determine how a life in two languages might come to have positive consequences for social development and for the quality of the mind and brain. Bilingualism Matters brings together the lives that are lived in two languages and the research that uses bilingualism as a tool to illuminate issues of scholarship.

The program hosts speakers and events throughout the year. To learn more about Bilingualism Matters, visit their [Facebook page](#) or email bilingualismmattersucr@gmail.com.

Organizers

[Judith Kroll](#), Psychology

[Cova Lamar-Prieto](#), Hispanic Studies

[Christine Chiarello](#), Psychology

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