

Gaitas Sur applies trilingual ability for connections at home, school

ALEXANDRA RUBICONLINE

In the US, roughly 22% of kids are bilingual; however, relatively few of those kids can speak Greek. Junior Clea Gaitas Sur not only speaks Greek proficiently, but she is also learning French at St. Paul Academy and Summit School.

Because French is Latin based and Greek is not the two languages Gaitas Sur can speak are quite different. Accordingly, Gaitas Sur's knowledge of Greek is not the most helpful when it comes to learning French. Despite the two language's differences, Gaitas Sur said, "I think knowing a little Greek and having a bilingual mom gives me a good ear for language," which helps when it comes to learning any new language, specifically French.

Among many other benefits, being able to speak multiple languages can increase both cultural

awareness and strengthen connections between family and place. "Speaking Greek helps me connect with my mom's family and culture," said Gaitas Sur. Eliminating the barrier that language can create makes her interactions and bonds unique. "I would like to learn more [Greek]," said Gaitas Sur, "so that I can have more engaging conversations with my Greek family." Learning more Greek must be done outside of school, as it is not a class offered at SPA.

Greek

adjective

1. There are only about 365,000 people who can speak Greek in the US. "Junior Clea Gaitas Sur"

Although Gaitas Sur can't take Greek at SPA, her knowledge helps with many of her classes. "A lot of words originate from Greek, so it is easy for me

to know the meanings," said Gaitas Sur. Greek word parts appear in several classes, ranging from English classes to science classes like Biology. When doing homework, "my mom points out words that originated from Greek that I didn't even know about," said Gaitas Sur.

While her ability to speak Greek is quite helpful in the classroom, Gaitas Sur doesn't use Greek that often. Gaitas Sur sometimes speaks some Greek with her family: "I'll occasionally throw a little around with my mom's parents" said Gaitas Sur. It is not easy to find people to speak Greek with, as there are only about 365,000 people who can speak Greek in the US. Gaitas Sur's ability to speak Greek impacts her life daily: it aids in the learning of other languages and connects her to her family and culture.

The language of us

words we use have the ability to bridge divides

mul-ti-lin-gual

adjective

1. speaking or using several different languages. "multilingual translators/communities/societies"

BY THE NUMBERS OUR NATIVE TONGUE

50%

OF PEOPLE GLOBALLY WHO ARE BILINGUAL

76%/16%

OF PEOPLE IN THE U.S. WHO LEARN THEIR NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT HOME

OF PEOPLE IN THE U.S. WHO LEARN THEIR NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT SCHOOL

22%

OF PEOPLE IN THE U.S. WHO ARE BILINGUAL

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Bilingual narratives

CLAIRE KIM THE RUBICON

Language is a key component to navigating our daily lives, whether it's through communicating with family or friends, a class taken at school, or simply reading. While most people speak one language—the one they've grown up with—many choose to become fluent in a second language through immersion, or become fluent in a language outside home.

According to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the percentage of Americans aged 18 and older, who are proficient in another language, increased from 8.1% in 2000 to 21% by 2014. This increase in bilingualism is aided by several factors, including the increased arrival of immigrants passing on their languages and growing amounts of language learning opportunities (such as immersion curriculum) for children.

him communicate with friends and neighbors in the Chinese community surrounding him.

"I think it [being bilingual] opens more opportunities for me in my life, being able to communicate with more people and in a way, speaking the same language as someone else in a place where it isn't the most common language is a good way to connect," Bai said.

A second language can be acquired and taught in several ways including learning the language at school or through programs outside. Learning language because of family background and heritage, or because of the region are two common examples that create bilingualism. For example, Quebec is the francophone province in Canada, meaning the main language spoken is French. However, the majority of Canadians still speak English, coming to a total of 75.4%.

For freshman Alba

ish, uses language as a way to connect with family.

"It allows me to converse and keep up with

identities," Lajuzan said.

Lajuzan's bilingualism also shaped his career and life today. "I took a summer job at Concordia

"Spanish is very important to me because I grew up speaking it."



freshman Alba Markowitz-Mulet

my mom's family who live in Spain, and is a part of myself that I get to share with my friends and the community around me," she said.

Spanish is also a significant part of her culture and life experiences. "Being bilingual allows me to access entirely different cultures, media, and ways of life as well as the ability to talk to different groups of people," Markowitz-Mulet said, "Spanish is very important to me because I grew up speaking it and it's always been something I have been proud of."

Bilingual or multilingual people often have different experiences juggling two or more languages. Upper School French teacher, Aimeric Lajuzan, speaks both French and English and studied Spanish for years. His native language, French, is a way for him to connect with his culture and identity, "I don't do much 'French stuff' aside from some music and movies/shows, so the language is a way to stay connected to one of my

Language Villages when I was in college, mostly as a way to travel to the US. It ended up changing my life because I discovered how much I loved teaching a language, and because I ended up working there 10 summers and meeting my wife in the process!" He said.

His favorite part of speaking multiple languages is seeing how his children, who speak French, English, and Swedish, adapt by switching between languages and identities.

Being bilingual is a unique trait that impacts the lives of many, mainly by creating connections to other people and cultures. Although it may come with the difficulties of learning to code-switch or feeling alienated, speaking multiple languages is intertwined with countless positive day-to-day experiences. In an increasingly connected world, bilingualism defines and shapes the identities of many people as it opens opportunities to engage with surrounding communities.

"Speaking the same language as someone else, in a place where it isn't the most common language, is a good way to connect."

junior Andrew Bai



Junior Andrew Bai is fluent in both English and Chinese, which he mainly uses with his family and relatives. Bai's bilingualism also helps

Markowitz-Mulet, Spanish is an acquired language by both family background and location. Markowitz-Mulet, who speaks English and Span-

cul-ture

noun

1. the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively. "20th century popular culture"

2. the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group. "Caribbean culture"

Language is culture

HAZEL WALTEBAUGH THE RUBICON

Growing up, children learn the language that they are initially surrounded in, which acts as a tool to understanding both the people and the culture it is tied to. Culture and language go hand and hand as they both have impacts on what defines and shapes understandings and beliefs.

Language was invented as a tool to allow us to better understand each other. It allows us to communicate our feelings, beliefs, emotions, to find connections within one another, to see how we relate and how we differ.

Culture is also an expression, one that uses language to make con-

nections and build relationships between a group of people. To understand one's culture, it is essential to understand their language and the way in which that culture might think and perceive things.

"Language could be a

that language could create misunderstandings among people," Spanish teacher Rolando Castellanos said.

Different cultures often represent different values and express them through their language in various ways. Even

Again, the settings we grow up in (therefore the cultures and languages we are surrounded by) will inevitably influence how we view the world. It is very difficult to express a feeling without being aware of what it is or without having a word to define it.

Among the many benefits that come from being multilingual, speaking multiple languages allows individuals to connect and understand different cultures and communities. It can be difficult to directly translate concepts between languages. Understanding more languages can mean understanding a more diverse range of people, cultures, and places throughout the world.

"If you don't understand the culture, not knowing that language could create misunderstandings."

Rolando Castellanos



cultural barrier in more than one way because of the lack of understanding and how to communicate effectively. If you don't understand the culture, not knowing

though we express things differently based on the culture or the language we are familiar with, can language really determine how we perceive the world?

SPEAKING MY LANGUAGE

56%

OF PEOPLE IN THE U.S. WHO SPEAK SPANISH AT HOME

20%

OF PEOPLE IN THE U.S. WHO SPEAK INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES AT HOME

17%

OF PEOPLE IN THE U.S. WHO SPEAK ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLAND LANGUAGES AT HOME

7%

OF PEOPLE IN THE U.S. WHO SPEAK OTHER NATIVE LANGUAGES AT HOME

DATA FROM: American Academy of Arts & Sciences