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**TOP 6 BENEFITS OF HISPANIC BILINGUALS IN THE TEXAS AND THE US**

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**ABSTRACT**

In 2018, Hispanics were about 20 percent of the American population (about 60 million) and lived in 5 states mainly: California, Texas, Florida, New York and Illinois. Most of them were born in the US, came from Mexico or were from Mexican American descent. About 75 percent of them speak Spanish or are bilingual who speak English and Spanish (Chavez, 2018). Although Spanish is the second most spoken, studied, and researched language in the US after English, its status is of a subordinated language with many levels of Spanish (Chavez, 2016). Unfortunately, many bilingual Hispanics lose their heritage language or mother language once they enter school. However, being a bilingual person has numerous benefits. In this work, readers will learn about the benefits of being a Hispanic bilingual in Texas and the US. Those benefits include cognitive and academic skills, better economic status, cultural, social, and personal benefits. In this work we found out that the most common benefits of Hispanic bilinguals include the cognitive and the academic benefits.

**Keywords:** : bilingual students, Hispanics, Latinos, Spanish teaching

**1. INTRODUCTION**

In 2018, Hispanics were about 20 percent of the American population (about 60 million) and lived in 5 states mainly: California, Texas, Florida, New York and Illinois. Most of them were born in the US and came from Mexico or Mexican American descent (62 percent) (PewResearch.org, 2017). About 75 percent of them speak Spanish or are bilingual who speak English and Spanish (Chavez, 2018). The counties with the highest rate of Hispanic population are Los Angeles County in California, Harris County in Texas, and Miami-Dade County in Florida (PewResearch.org, 2020). Although Spanish is the second most spoken, studied, and researched language in the us after English, its status is of a subordinated language with many levels of Spanish (Chavez, 2016).

Furthermore, many Hispanics lose their heritage language or mother language once they enter school. However, being a bilingual person has many benefits. Those can be cognitive, economic, cultural, academic, social and personal. In this work, readers will learn about the benefits of being bilingual in Texas and the US.

**2. TERMINOLOGY**

Below you will find 4 terms to help the reader understand this work better:

Hispano, Hispanic or Latino: “a person: who is of Hispanic American origin and lives in the united states” (Chavez, 2018). In this work, Latino and Hispanic terms are used interchangeable and are synonyms.

Heritage speaker or bilingual person--a person who speaks a second language after the first language or mother language in this work specifically Spanish and English. It is also someone who learned Spanish at home or another mother language, but uses English through school, work, etc. They are usually called bilingual students when they are in grades K-12 but heritage language learners (HLLs) when they are in college. Usually, they are children of immigrants in the US. They may or not speak Spanish, but they understand it better than they may speak.

Speaker of Spanish as a Second Languages (L2)-a person who learns Spanish in school as a second language (Chavez, 2016)

Subordinated language-something inferior (Chavez, 2018; RAE, 2018)

**Hispanics in the USA and in Texas**

Here are some facts about Hispanics in the US adapted from Chavez (2020). Table 1: Facts on Hispanics in the US, Adapted from Chavez (2020)

**Table 1: Facts on Hispanics in the US, Adapted from Chavez (2020)**

<b>Facts on Hispanics in the US</b>
1. There are about 60 million of Hispanics in the USA or about 20 percent of the population (Chávez, 2018)
2. Most of them live in California, Texas, Florida, New York and Illinois (Chávez, 2018)
3. However, by third generation or grandchildren, Spanish is lost for most of them except for Cubans (Chavez, 2016)
4. Most of the Hispanic or Latinos in the USA are from Mexican American descent (62 percent), Puerto Rico (10 percent), Cuba, El Salvador and Dominican Republic (about 4 percent each)
5. 75 percent of Hispanics speak Spanish in the USA (Chávez, 2018)

Here are also some facts about Hispanics in Texas, US to better understand their population. In Texas, Hispanics make about 40 percent of the population with about 11.5 million (Ura and Novak, 2020). Many Hispanics or Latinos speak “Spanglish” or informal Spanish (Chavez, 2018). Also, 70 percent of Hispanics in Texas were born in Texas and they do not come from other countries. They are what we call bilinguals or heritage language learners. 87 percent of Hispanics in Texas are of Mexican or Mexican American origin. 52 percent of Hispanics attend public education schools in Texas. 86 percent of Hispanics finished high school in Texas in

2016. However, only 20 percent of Hispanics got a college degree in Texas in 2013 (Chavez, 2020).

### Spanish in the USA

According to Chavez (2020), Spanish is the 2nd most studied language in the US after English at all levels K- College. Spanish is also the 2nd language in the US by its number of speakers and in the world with more than 400 million speakers. Spanish is also the 3rd language worldwide regarding the internet use. The interest in teaching Spanish to Heritage language learners or bilingual students started in the 1930's in the US and bilingual education started in the 1960's. However, the teaching of Spanish as a heritage language got real interest about it until after 1970 (Baker, 2001; Fairclough and Mrack, 2003). In college, instructors still have more freedom in teaching Spanish to college students, the curriculum they want to use, assessment, materials etc than in grades K to 12. The main programs are with specialized instruction to heritage language learners (HLL), students of Spanish as a second language (L2) or for mixed classes (Chavez, 2016)..

In the 1980's and 1990's the bilingual education programs in the US went through major changes that included several varieties of bilingual education programs that are still in effect today in grades K to 12 grade (Baker, 2001). According to Baker (2001), the most successful programs in bilingual education include the following: immersion, maintenance, or heritage language, two way bilingual or dual language and mainstream bilingual.

Unfortunately, according to Chavez (2020), the Spanish in the USA has a subordinated status. Some of the research demonstrates that it could be due to the following reasons: multilinguals in the US, stereotypes, and legislation about English only policies in the country (Hernandez, 2019). The subordination of the Spanish language can also be due to lack of voting by Hispanics, the lack of economic sources of Hispanics, the lack of knowledge about the benefits of being bilingual and the lack of higher education among Hispanics (Chavez, 2020; Chavez, 2018).

However, many other reasons are also possible.

### 3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Chavez (2020) presented the following benefits of being bilingual. Those benefits include cognitive, academic, economic, social and cultural. She also provided in detail a table for each of the benefits that are included below in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4.

#### Table 2: Cognitive and Academic Benefits of Being Bilingual

Cognitive and Academic Benefits:
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- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Faster brain</li><li>2. Better reasoning and critical thinking skills</li><li>3. Better routes to reach our memories</li><li>4. Better understanding of language</li><li>5. Keep our brain young</li><li>6. Improve abilities to learn a third language</li><li>7. Better auto control in children</li><li>8. May delay Alzheimer's in seniors</li></ol> |
|---|

**Table 3: Economic Benefits of Being Bilingual**

- |  |
|--|
| Economic Benefits:   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Better employment opportunities</li><li>2. It may help with a better salary rate</li><li>3. Getting more information from more sources</li><li>4. May help with improvement on business earning</li></ol> |

**Table 4: Social and Cultural Benefits of Being Bilingual**

- |   |
|---|
| Social and Cultural Benefits:   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Learn about other communities and cultures including music, food, people, art, religions etc.</li><li>2. Speak to people from other cultures</li><li>3. Better self-esteem</li><li>4. Socialize with people from other cultures</li><li>5. Better cultural understanding in children</li><li>6. Better cultural connection for business with Hispanic communities</li><li>7. Connect better with people with Hispanic background</li></ol> |

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

As the benefits of being bilingual are numerous, we decided to rank them from 23 documents from conference presentations, research articles, newspaper articles and websites. First, we created 5 major categories based on Chavez (2020). Then, we added the subcategories to be able to count them from the greatest to the smallest number as demonstrated in Table 5. The work was done on an Excel spreadsheet. See the reference list for all the sources used in this work.

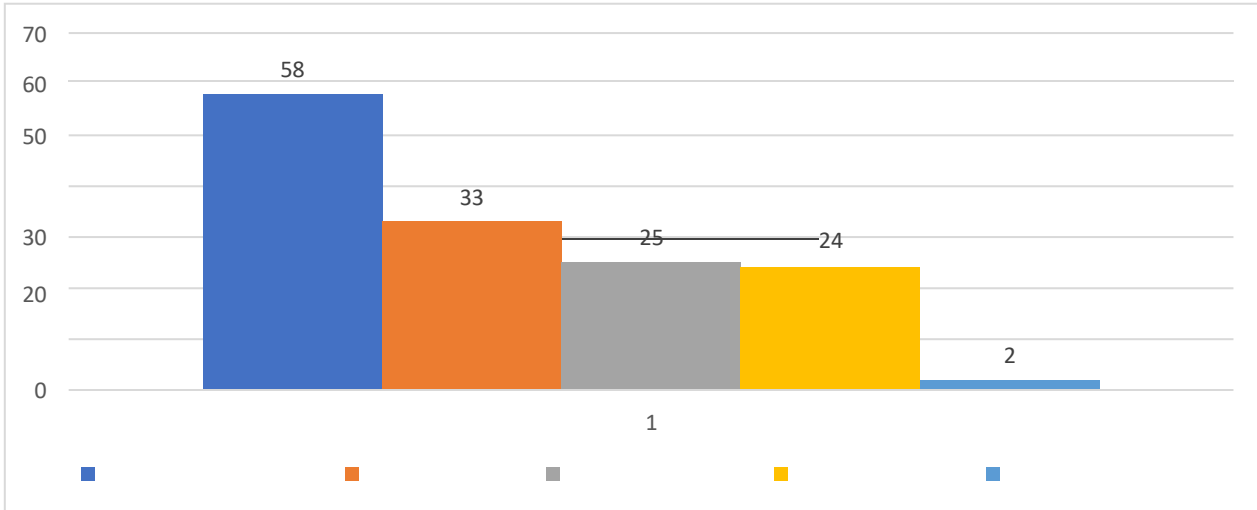
**Table 5: 6 Benefits of Being a Hispanic Bilingual in the US**

1. Cognitive and Academic Benefits :	2. Social and Cultural Benefits:	3. Economic Benefits:	4. Personal Benefits:	5. No Negative Effects:
Critical Thinking Skills	Meet Other Cultures and Communities	Better Employment Opportunities	Improve Adaptability	
Prevent Alzheimer's	Improve Communication	Better Salary	Self Esteem	
Improve Language Learning Skills	Improve Global Skills	Improve Travel	Empathy and Tolerance	
More Creative	Improve Travel and Travel Skills		Identity: Political and Self	
Improve Memory	Learn about Other Cultures and Communities Including Arts, Music, Food, Films, etc.		Health Benefits	
Cognitive and Academic Benefits			Bilinguals Are More Attractive	

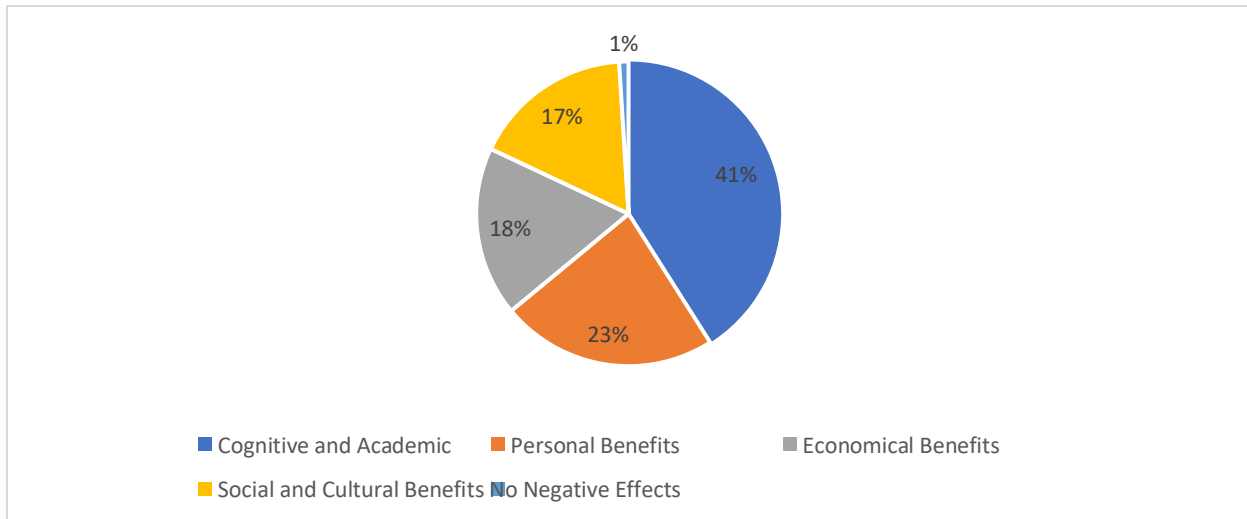
**5. RESULTS**

The most important categories found in our research are Cognitive and Academic Benefits followed by the Social and the Cultural Benefits as seen in the following Figure 1. The total points from all the categories was 142 points.

**Figure 1:** Results of Benefits of Being a Hispanic Bilingual



**Figure 2:** Results of Benefits of Being Hispanic Bilingual in Percentages



## 6. DISCUSSION

As we can see, there are 6 main benefits of being a Hispanic bilingual in the USA and in Texas as their population keeps on growing. The benefits more mentioned on the works analyzed include placed cognitive and academic level as the most popular ones However, it seems that the political figures, administrators and many times the Hispanic and general population are not aware of the benefits. We should make those benefits more visible to our population, that way

more Hispanics or Latinos will benefit from it. It can also help the bilingual students reassure their Hispanic identity and feel proud of who they are in the US. The question now is how we can improve those benefits and make more people aware of them. Chavez (2018) already mentioned 25 recommendations to improve the subordinated status of Hispanics in the US.

Here we offer other 7 possible solutions to promote the bilingualism in the US and the bilingual programs at local, state and national level. First, continue promoting the higher education attainment among Hispanic bilinguals as only 22 percent of them had a college degree in 2015 (Edexclencia.org, 2020). Second, continue promoting voting among Hispanics as now more than ever we have more people who qualify for voting in the coming elections with more than 32 million Hispanic voters available (UnivisionNews, 2020). Third, continue improving the economic benefits for Hispanics in the country as now they are among the population who works the most in the most dangerous jobs in the nation. That makes them more vulnerable to sickness and unemployment benefits as has happened with Covid-19 as of July 6, 2020 in Texas (UnivisionNews, 2020). In Texas 72 percent of the positive Covid-19 test results were from Hispanics (Morris et al., 2020). Fourth, continue promoting the richness of the Hispanic culture, food, music, art, traditions etc. in the world as our population could be a majority as soon as next year in Texas and in other states in the nation (Ramos and Calderon, 2020; Ura and Novak, 2020). Fifth, Hispanics or Latinos need to be more united as they did with the recent tragedy of the Guillen's family in Texas. For that matter, they did protests in Texas and throughout the nation captivating the attention of local leaders like judges, mayors, state and national representatives, the speaker of the house, the presidential candidate and the president itself. That social promotion happened in all social media platforms in English and in Spanish which is believed to have help in its dissemination. Sixth, continue improving the educational system and its teacher' selection services at all levels. Seventh, eliminate the "social and symbolic oppression" for Hispanics, their culture, their language and their traditions (Chávez, 2018).

The time for making Hispanics' and Chicanos' voices to be heard, rise, and excel is now. We should "demand and not ask" for justice, equal rights, and equal access to education. We should be able to bring our Hispanic identity, Latino and Chicano culture and language "to the table" today (Hinojosa 2020; Cantu-Wilson and Villanueva, 2020). The time is now that important people like Shakira, Salma Hayek, Thalia, Jennifer López and Bad Bunny are getting

all the social media attention to act. We now know that it works as it happened with the Guillen's case that started getting attention from the public when Salma Hayek started talking about it. Therefore, we should continue it.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, there is still a lot of work to do as the Hispanic population in the US continues to grow. Hopefully, we get more teachers, administrators, politicians, famous people and leaders interested about the Hispanic language and their culture in the USA. For now, we are happy to say that the benefits of being a Hispanic bilingual in the US are many including improving the

academic and cognitive skills, the social and personal skills and the economic and personal benefits. Finally, we also want to take this opportunity to thank all the Spanish and bilingual teachers for their hard work through the years in the US since the existence of bilingual education in Florida, Texas, California all of the US, Latina America and the world. As for now, we consider them to be among the most important promoters of the Spanish language and the Hispanic culture in the US and in the world. We hope that they continue making the difference in the life of their students especially for the Hispanic children who are the future of our country.

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