Unit 1

Working in a Second Language

Do you think speaking a second language can sometimes be an advantage at work? Why or why not?

For many people, working in a second language can feel exhausting. Meetings require extra concentration, e-mails take longer to write, and finding exactly the right word is not always easy. Many professionals worry that speaking a foreign language makes them sound less capable than they really are. However, working in another language can also bring unexpected benefits.

One reason is that using a second language often changes the way people make decisions. Psychologist Albert Costa, a research professor at Pomeu Fabra University in Barcelona, Spain, and his colleagues found that people are sometimes less influenced by emotional reactions when solving problems in a foreign language. Instead, they tend to slow down, examine the information more carefully, and make better decisions. Researchers describe this as the "foreign language effect." Some researchers believe this happens because people feel slightly less emotionally connected when using a language learned later in life. "The farther removed the second language is from your mother tongue, the bigger the effect," says Ceri Ellis, a psychology researcher at the University of Manchester, UK.

The benefits of speaking a second language go beyond making decisions. Receiving criticism in a second language may feel slightly less personal, making it easier to focus on the message instead of the emotion behind it. During negotiations, non-native speakers often pause before answering, as they process both the language and the situation. Although these pauses may seem like a disadvantage, they can make a speaker appear calm and thoughtful. In some cases, other people may even underestimate a non-native speaker, which can become an unexpected advantage.

Of course, there are real disadvantages as well. Communicating takes more mental effort, conversations may move more slowly, and understanding cultural references or workplace etiquette can be stressful. Jobs that require people to persuade others quickly, join discussions without preparation, or use very precise language may therefore be more difficult.

Even so, working in a second language should not be seen only as a challenge. While it may reduce speed and fluency, it can also help people think more carefully, stay more objective, and communicate more thoughtfully. Rather than making someone a better or worse employee, using another language may simply help them approach important workplace decisions from a different perspective.

Part 1: True or False (5 Points)

Instructions: Read the statements below and decide whether each statement is **True (T)** or **False (F)** based on the passage.

1. _____ Many professionals are concerned that speaking a foreign language at work makes them appear less competent than they actually are.
2. _____ According to Albert Costa's research, people tend to react more emotionally when solving problems in a second language.
3. _____ Ceri Ellis suggests that the "foreign language effect" is stronger when the second language is very similar to a person's native language.

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4. _____ Pausing to process information during negotiations can unintentionally make non-native speakers look composed and thoughtful.
5. _____ The author concludes that employees who work in a second language are generally superior to native-speaking employees.

Part 2: Multiple Choice (5 Points)

Instructions: Choose the best answer (A, B, C, or D) for each question based on the passage. *(Note: These are new questions designed to supplement the original worksheet.)*

1. What is the "foreign language effect" as described in the passage?

A. The tendency to speak slower when learning a language later in life

B. The ability to make more rational and less emotional decisions in a non-native language

C. The difficulty of understanding cultural references in a foreign workplace

D. The stress caused by writing e-mails and attending meetings in another language

2. Why might receiving criticism in a second language be easier to handle?

A. Non-native speakers often misunderstand the negative words being used.

B. Colleagues tend to be more polite when criticizing non-native speakers.

C. The feedback feels less personal, allowing the listener to focus objectively on the message.

D. Non-native speakers usually pause and ignore emotional comments during meetings.

3. How can being underestimated by others turn into an advantage for a non-native speaker?

A. It allows them to avoid taking on difficult projects at work.

B. It gives them extra time to prepare for spontaneous discussions.

C. Other people may lower their guard or misjudge the speaker's actual capabilities during interactions.

D. It encourages colleagues to translate difficult cultural references for them.

4. Which of the following professions would likely be MOST challenging for someone working in a second language, according to the text?

A. A data analyst who reviews reports independently

B. A trial lawyer who must quickly persuade a jury without prior scripting

C. A software developer who communicates mainly through scheduled e-mails

D. A researcher who reads academic papers in a foreign language

5. What does the word "objective" in the final paragraph most likely mean?

A. Having a specific career goal

B. Influenced by personal feelings and opinions

C. Unbiased and based on facts rather than emotions

D. Able to speak fluently without hesitation

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Part 3: Open-Ended / Critical Thinking Questions (10 Points)

Instructions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences. Support your ideas with details from the text and your own perspective.

1. Comprehension & Synthesis (5 Points): Based on the passage, explain **two** psychological or interpersonal advantages and **two** disadvantages of working in a second language.

Your answer: _____

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2. Opinion & Application (5 Points): Do you agree with the author that using a second language can help people make better, less emotional decisions at work? Give an example from your own experience (studying, working, or communicating in English/another language) to support your opinion.

Your answer: _____

_____

_____

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