

Bilingualism as the Norm "Bilingualism--more generally, multilingualism--is a major fact of life in the world today. To begin with, the world's estimated 5,000 languages are spoken in the world's 200 sovereign states (or 25 languages per state), so that communication among the citizens of many of the world's countries clearly requires extensive bi- (if not multi-)lingualism. In fact, David Crystal (1997) estimates that two-thirds of the world's children grow up in a bilingual environment. Considering only bilingualism involving English, the statistics that Crystal has gathered indicate that, of the approximately 570 million people world-wide who speak English, over 41 percent or 235 million are bilingual in English and some other language. . . . One must conclude that, far from being exceptional, as many lay people believe, bilingualism/multilingualism--which, of course, goes hand in hand with multiculturalism in many cases--is currently the rule throughout the world and will become increasingly so in the future."