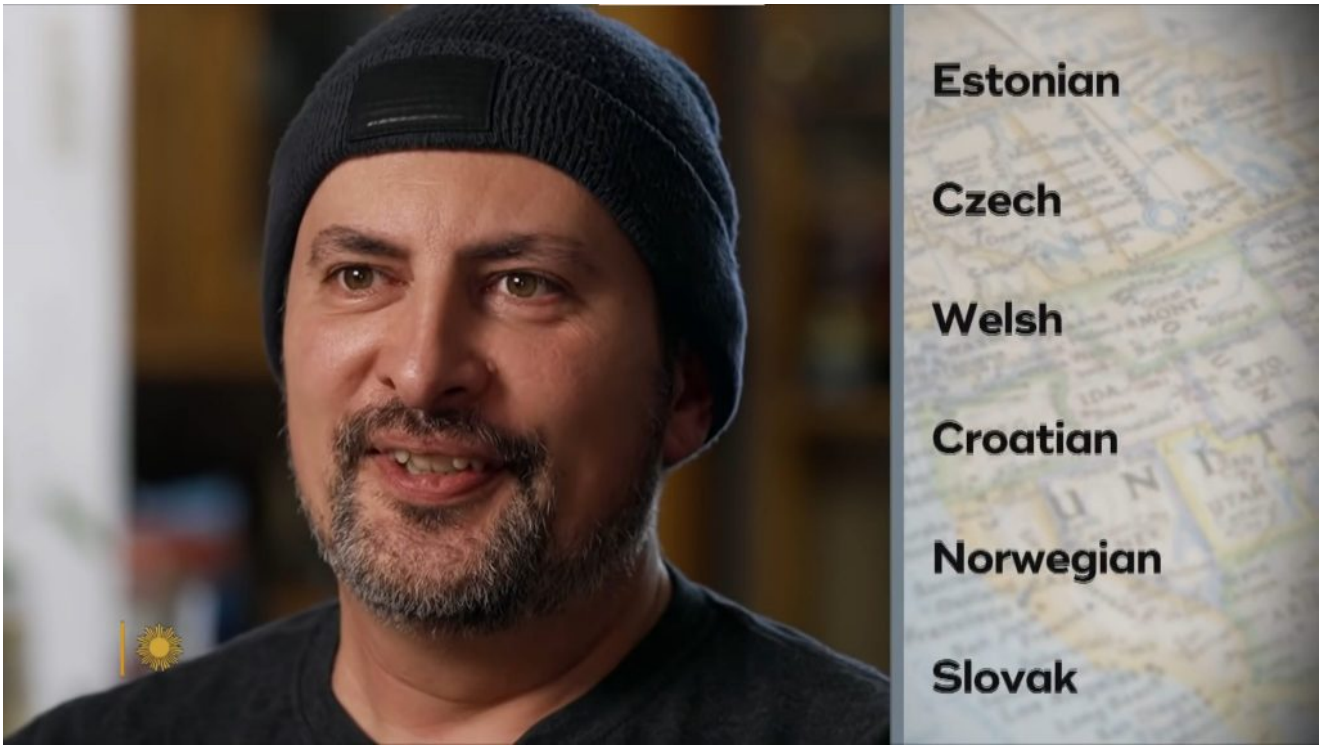
TRENDING

Autistic Carpet Cleaner Speaks 24 Languages. Here's How

By bestfolkmedicine · 21/07/2022 · 3 min read



Despite working as a carpet cleaner, Vaughn Smith's real gift is language. He's a hyperpolyglo , i.e., a person able to speak at least 11 languages.

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The 46-year-old doesn't consider himself the best, but only a simple guy cleaning carpets. This man doesn't just know these languages.

He's actually fluent or able to keep a conversation going in 24 languages. However, Smith notes that he's actually learned more than 40 languages!

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Autistic Man Claims He Has Learned more than 40 Languages

According to Smith, he speaks Hungarian and Finnish. He also speaks Estonian. He also knows Japanese, Norwegian, Welsh, Hebrew, and American Sign Language.

Smith learns languages using books and apps, but his work which includes spending time with people who speak different languages has also contributed to the number of languages he knows and speaks.

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Despite never being diagnosed with autism, Smith and his mom Sandra believe that he's probably autistic.

While growing up, Smith couldn't express his emotions adequately or misinterpreted people's intentions and emotions. According to his mom, he lacked participation and communication.

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Throughout the years, however, he learned that when you try hard to speak to people in their native language, they're very grateful and often befriend you. Smith believes it's all about connections.

He claims that one doesn't need to know a single language to be aware of the importance of connection. He doesn't want to impress anyone. He's able to remember numbers, names, sounds, and dates a bit better than others.

This has always been a mystery for him and his family.

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Hyperpolyglots are rare. The higher the number of languages they speak, the rarer they are. However, there are documents of linguistic geniuses who spoke multiple languages throughout the years.

After high school, Smith has never had the opportunity to take a proficiency test in a specific language. And, the more he learned, the more he realized the true meaning behind knowing a language.

Scanning Smith's Brain

MIT neuroscientists scanned Smith's brain to learn more.

For two hours, he did a series of tests, read English words, watched squares moving around, and listened to languages, some of which he knew and others which he didn't.

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The 3D images taken through all of these tasks break down Smith's brain into two-centimeter cubes and monitored the oxygen levels in each.

When his language-processing areas are watched, researchers can easily pinpoint which of the parts he's using for language.

The analyzed scans revealed two colorful brain maps.

His parts for language comprehension were smaller and quieter. Even when he reads the same words as others, he's using less of his brain.

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This finding is a match with the brain findings in other hyperpolyglots. He needs less oxygen sent to these brain areas when speaking in his native language. He uses language so much that his brain increased his efficiency in these areas.

It may be that he's born with such areas smaller and more efficient.

Or, it has transformed as he started to learn more and more languages. Or, it could be both. Until researchers scan growing learners, the exact answer remains unknown.

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Sources:

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