



**Improving Rural Interpreter Skills**

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# Module 9: The Interpreting Brain



Module content developed by Betty Colonosmos & Kelly Decker  
[ASL lecture](#) by Chris McQuaid

# Module Overview & Objectives

**Overview:** This module explores developing and enhancing supervisory functions in the brain while interpreting in order to better manage the interpreting process. Strategies for maintaining control will be explored.

## Learning Outcomes and Objectives

**Upon Completion of this module participants will be able to:**

1. Identify the factors exerting control over the interpreting process.
2. Analyze possible causes of loss of supervisory control.
3. Explain how the management of control affects interpreting performance.

# Pre-Test

**NOTE:** You have to log into Canvas to complete this pre-test

**1. The brain controls:**

- A. thinking and feelings
- B. thinking and motor skills
- C. thinking, feelings and motor skills

**2. The feeling center of the brain (called the amygdala), is located:**

- A. in the frontal area of the brain
- B. at the base of the brain
- C. in the rear area of the brain

**3. The interpreting “supervisor” (higher order thinking) is responsible for:**

- A. managing and controlling everything
- B. language, memory and understanding
- C. making ethical decisions



# Your Interpreting Brain

## Why does this matter?

Interpreting is an activity that is activated and controlled by various parts of the brain that oversee motor functions, linguistic operations, higher-order cognitive tasks (analysis, problem-solving, synthesis, etc.), emotional responses, memory, and more. Having a clear sense of which brain tasks and operations are being used and/or not being activated provides insight into what may be facilitating or hindering processes you use while interpreting.



# GoReact Discussion: Functions of the brain



**NOTE:** You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

## Original post directions:

Based on your own knowledge, respond to the following questions:

- What parts of the brain are most important for interpreting? Why?
- What tasks related to interpreting do not involve the brain?

## Response post directions:

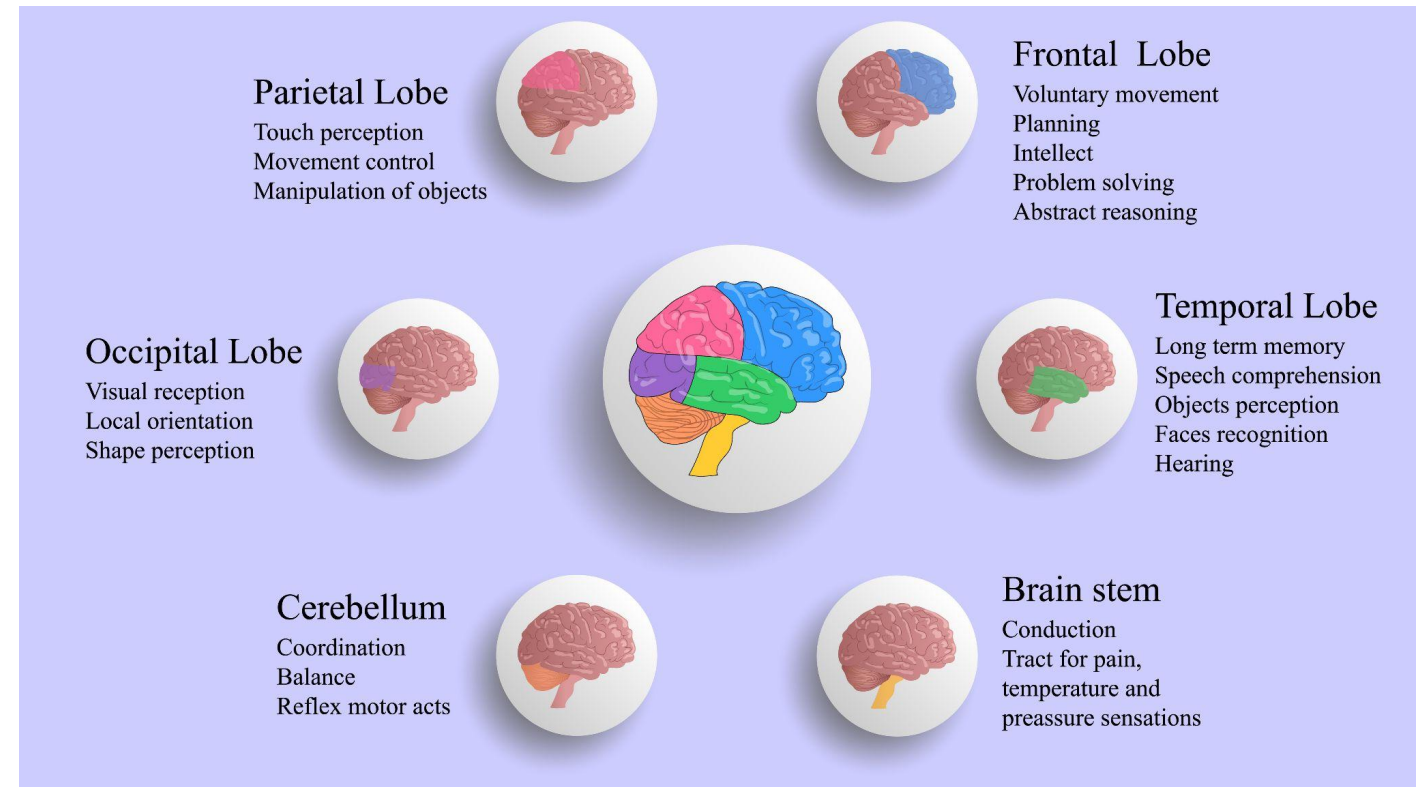
React to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

# Functions of the brain

## What's going on in there?

In looking at this graphic, thinking back to the tasks and parts of the brain you identified in the previous question. What are you noticing?

Be sure to come prepared to the synchronous session ready to discuss this.



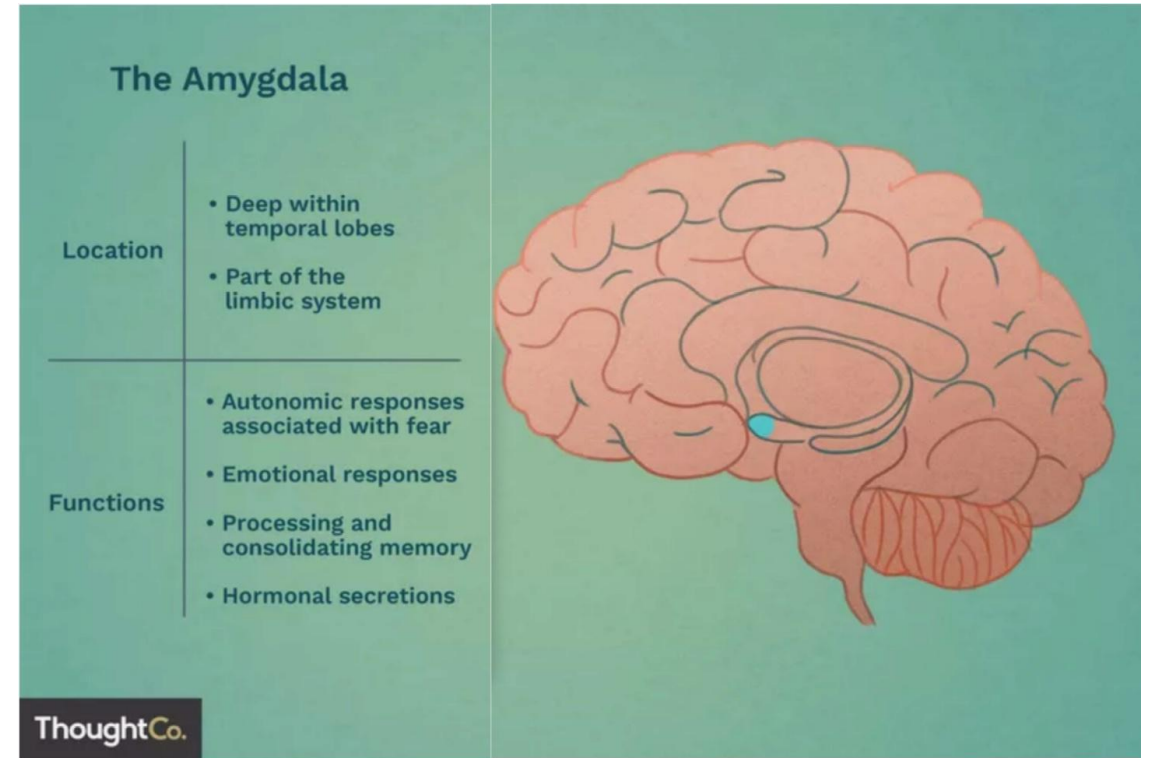


# Amygdala and executive function

## Building Mastery in Interpreting

While interpreting our brains are in overdrive working to comprehend (C) the source, represent the ideas in our own minds (R1), make linguistic and cultural shifts fitting for the audience (R2), and prepare (P) these same ideas for target language delivery. Think back to Module 6 & CRP!

With all this happening in our minds, how are we able to sharpen our thinking while building mastery in interpreting? Most of that lies with our executive functioning which is located in the amygdala of our brain.





# Executive functioning



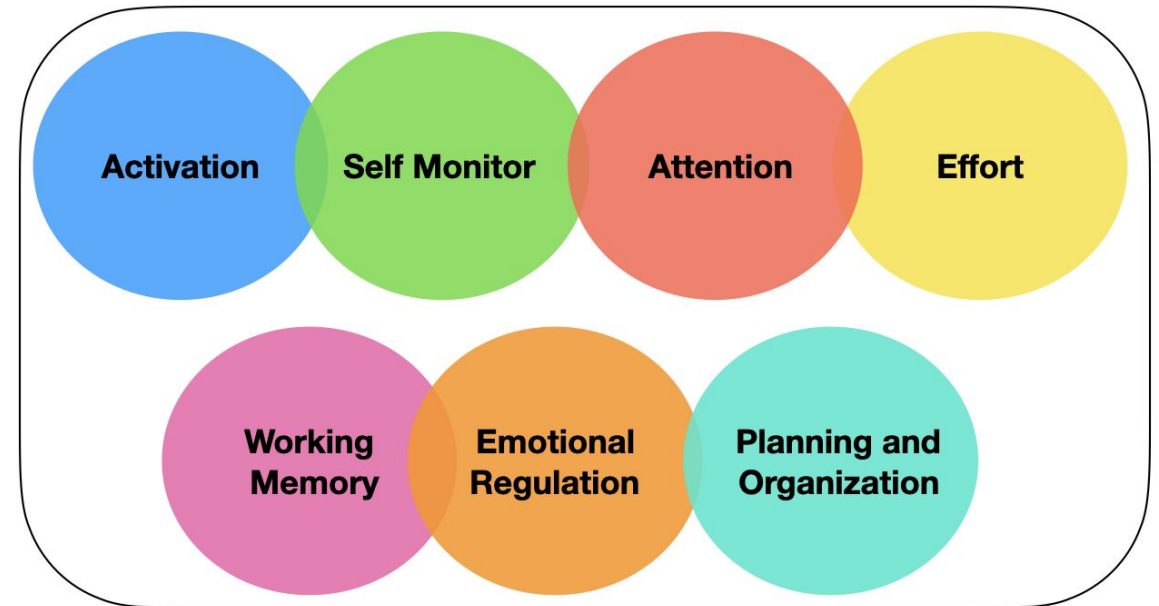
Our brain's air traffic control.

# Your Supervisor

## Supervisor?!

In the previous video executive functioning was referred to as the "air traffic control system" of your mind. In the IMI we call this your Supervisor. This is the part of your mind, while interpreting, that manages and controls everything.

## Supervisor Executive Function



# Your Supervisor: How it works

## One step further

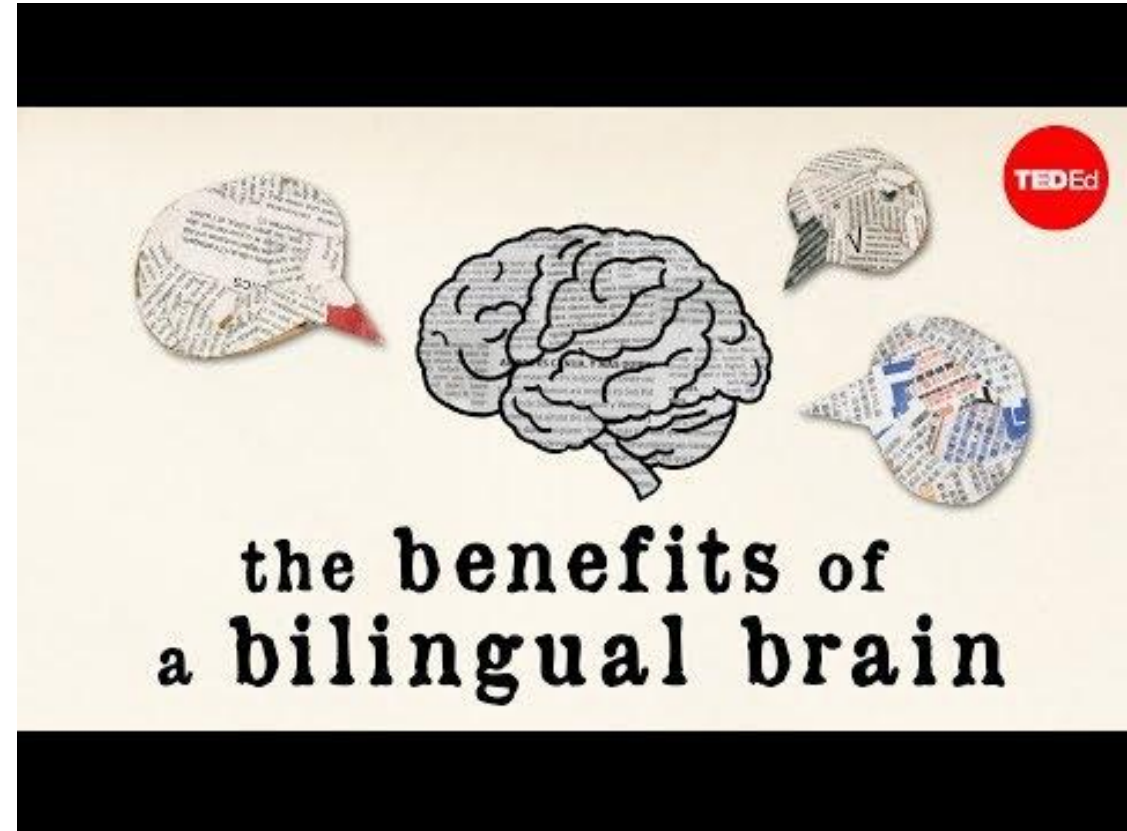
Sabine Doebel shares how your brain's executive function works and how to improve it.



# The bilingual brain

## Benefits of a bilingual brain:

Are there advantages to having a bilingual (or multilingual) brain? Mia Nacamulli, details the three types of bilingual brains and shows how knowing more than one language keeps your brain healthy, complex, and actively engaged.



# References

NSPCC. (2021, January 29). *Our brain's air traffic control (executive function)* [Video]. YouTube  
[https://youtu.be/S5uo\\_Gbi4RA](https://youtu.be/S5uo_Gbi4RA)

TED. (2019, May 30). *How your brain's executive function works -- and how to improve it: Sabine Doebel*  
[Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/qAC-5hTK-4c>.

TED-Ed. (2015, June 23). *The benefits of a bilingual brain- Mia Nacamulli* [Video]. YouTube.  
<https://youtu.be/MMmOLN5zBLY>

# Additional Resource

The world's most powerful computers can't perform accurate real-time interpreting of one language to another. Yet human interpreters do it with ease. See more about this by reading [The amazing brains of the real-time interpreters](#) (2014) from BBC News.

# Post-Test

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*Correct responses: 1.C, 2.B, 3.A*





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