

Crossing the Barrier of Language.
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As a child I always had the desire to speak a second language. I remember faithfully watching Dora the Explorer just hoping that by the time the next episode ended I would be able to head out into the world with an entirely new Spanish vocabulary, but sadly that was never the case. Even to this day I still know very little about the Spanish language even with two years of Spanish class under my belt. Learning a second language is something that everyone should strive to achieve because when you learn a second language you will open yourself up to understand and participate in a culture different from your own. While some may say that learning a second language is unnecessary because English is often taught from a young age in other countries, that idea can be disproven using the four questions of the Rotary Four-Way Test.

The first question we must ask is, "**Is it the truth?**" Yes, learning a second language can be very important. With 13% of America's population being Spanish speakers it is important that we make an effort to be able to communicate with them. Many of them are working hard to learn the English language, which is one of the most complicated languages to learn, and we are sitting around expecting them to do all of the work to make our lives just that much easier. Even countries thousands of miles away are teaching children the English language throughout their entire education, but in America we are only required to take one to two years of a foreign language to graduate. We should begin to strive toward learning the language and cultures of other countries.

The next question to ask is, "**Is it fair to all concerned?**" Again the answer is obviously a yes. It is fair to the native speakers of the language that is being learned because in learning a language a decent knowledge about the culture and lifestyles of the people whose language is

being learned is needed . In getting to know a certain group of people you begin to understand them better as a group and you develop a more positive attitude toward that specific group of people. It is fair to those attempting to learn the language because you are expanding your knowledge and that is never a bad thing to do. When learning a new language one often begins to gain a better understanding of your own language. We rarely give any thought towards how our own language works but when you are figuring out a new language one has to begin to pay better attention to the grammar structure and everyday vocabulary. Everyone that learns a second language is opened up to a new culture and that is very fair to all involved.

Thirdly we must ask ourselves, “**Will it build goodwill and better friendships?**”

Working to be able to communicate with someone in their own language shows that you truly care about them and about their culture. Doing something like that will demonstrate that you truly want to develop a better relationship with that person which will build goodwill. Also, if you show a friend whose first language is different than your own that you are willing to try to learn their language or they show you that they are willing to learn yours you will be able to help each other to better understand each other’s languages which will build a better friendship. Or, from a different side, you and a friend could build a better friendship by committing to learn a new language together and help each other stay dedicated to the goal.

Lastly, we have to ask, “**Is it beneficial to all concerned?**” Truly everyone can benefit from learning a second language. In learning to speak a new language one can expand career opportunities, new cultures will be able to be experienced, and a better understanding of the world we live in can be accessed through new genres of movies and music from other countries. Knowing a second language it makes traveling to that country easier because of the ability to be able to interact with locals and truly immerse one’s self in that country’s way of life.

Learning a new language is a hard process that can take years to accomplish, but the end result is worth the time it requires. Knowing that you worked hard at something and achieved your goal is an amazing feeling and learning anything from sign language to German will benefit you in some way. The Four-Way test proves that learning a new language is a step in the right direction.