Why Study a Second (or third) Language?

Before reading all these great reasons, the foreign language faculty at Texas A&M University – Commerce wants you to know that we are anxious to have you in our classrooms. If you are already bilingual, you can take a placement exam and, depending on your scores, move directly into upper-level Spanish courses where you learn about the history, cultures and literatures of Latin America and Spain. By placing out of the lower level courses, you will be ahead if you want to consider Spanish as a major or minor. Furthermore, if you already speak Spanish, you might consider starting a third language – French! Below you’ll read very convincing reasons for beginning a second language. If you already have that advantage, why not increase your knowledge of the culture and language by enrolling in upper-level classes? We will be happy to assist you in any way to make sure you are placed in a level that is challenging and rewarding. If you are not bilingual, we have a sequence of beginning courses to get you started. And don’t forget, our university offers travel money for students who want to spend the summer immersed in a foreign culture and improving their language skills. The possibilities are endless!

Learn about another culture! Get ahead! Get a better job! The world is full of languages. How far do you have to go from your front door to know that this is true? Think about how many more newspapers and books you could read, movies and TV programs you could understand, websites you could visit, people and places you could really get to know with another language!

Did you know that studying a second language can improve your skills and grades in math and English and can improve entrance exam scores — SATs, ACTs, GREs, MCATs, and LSATs? Research has shown that math and verbal SAT scores climb higher with each additional year of foreign language study, which means that the longer you study a foreign language, the stronger your skills become to succeed in school. Studying a foreign language can improve your analytic and interpretive capacities. And three years of language study on your record will catch the eye of anyone reading your job, college, or graduate school application.

If you’ve already learned a language other than English at home, expanding your knowledge of its vocabulary, grammar, culture, and literature — at the same time you are learning more about English — will also improve your chances for success in school and in your career. More and more businesses work closely with companies in other countries. They need many different kinds of workers who can communicate in different languages and understand other cultures.

No matter what career you choose, if you’ve learned a second language, you’ll have a real advantage. A technician who knows Russian or German, the head of a company who knows Japanese or Spanish, or a salesperson who knows French or Chinese can work successfully with many more people and in many more places than someone who knows only one language.
There are lots of Americans who speak languages other than English. If you’ve ever thought of being a nurse, a doctor, a police officer, a judge, an architect, a businessperson, a singer, a plumber, or a Webmaster, you will multiply your chances for success if you speak more than one language. A hotel manager or a customer service representative who knows English and Spanish or English and Korean may look much better at promotion time than one who knows only English.

Professionals who know other languages are called on to travel and exchange information with people in other countries throughout their careers. Knowing more than one language enhances opportunities in government, business, medicine and health care, law enforcement, teaching, technology, the military, communications, industry, social service, and marketing. An employer will see you as a bridge to new clients or customers if you know a second language.

Visit entirely new worlds! Get an insider’s view of another culture and a new view of your own. Connect with other cultures. Knowledge of other cultures will help you expand your personal horizons and become a responsible citizen. Your ability to talk to others and gather information beyond the world of English will contribute to your community and your country.

What can you expect? You will learn a second language in exciting new ways using technology and focusing on communication (speaking). Learning a language is not just learning grammar and vocabulary. It is learning new sounds, expressions, and ways of seeing things; it is learning how to function in another culture, how to know a new community from the inside out.

How much can you learn? Depending on how long you study, you can gain different levels of fluency. You will probably not sound like a native speaker. Don’t worry; you’re not expected to. To a greater or lesser degree you will, however, be understood, get where you want to go, read magazines or books for information or pleasure, and meet and talk with a whole new group of people. You can’t imagine what a great experience that is. Of course, it doesn’t happen overnight. Like math, English, or other subjects, language learning takes time.

Should you continue language study after high school? Yes! Don’t waste your investment of time and effort; whatever you have learned is a foundation for further study. Stick with it. Use your second language on the job, seek out opportunities to use it in your community, or, in college, take more courses, study abroad at intercession or for a summer, a semester, or a year. And you might decide to start still another language — when you study language, you learn about how to learn languages, so learning the next one is easier. Whatever the case, it’s never too late to get started learning another language. Here at A&M-Commerce, we currently offer classes in French and Spanish, including beginning French classes online. Feel free to visit a class and see if it’s for you!

For more information about French and Spanish at A&M-Commerce, check out our website: [http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/litlang/flmlc/index.htm](http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/litlang/flmlc/index.htm)