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## The Advantages And Disadvantages Of Foreign Language

“Volunteering in the Dominican Republic at a clinic and not being able to communicate with a patient who spoke French was a very hard experience” (Alsharif). My dad told me this to emphasize the importance of knowing a foreign language. Every summer, my dad travels to the Dominican Republic to provide medical care for many families in need. Regardless of the future jobs we have, this experience emphasizes how we would encounter people who speak different languages and why it is helpful to speak the language be able to address their needs and/or establish successful business relationships. In fact, only one in five students in America take a foreign language before college. In a published 2019 article, it was reported that learning a foreign language is not required for high school students but is required for most colleges (“Career Benefits” 1). That is the case in almost all states (“Core Course” 1). For example, at Millard West High School in Omaha, Nebraska, it is not required to take a foreign language, although many students believe it is very important (“Students Requirements” 1). Although students may think foreign language classes are difficult, foreign language classes should be required all four years of high school.

Learning a second language gives people enhanced job opportunities especially if the job requires a second language and the company does business with a foreign country or have customers with English as a second language. It is documented that when people speak a second language they make their candidature for a job stronger (“Supporting World Language” 2). Furthermore, it helps them earn a higher salary, up to 10-15% more than monolinguals (“Career Benefits” 1). “These opportunities exist in marketing, transportation, administration, sales, retail, banking, education, law, communication, public relations, tourism and government” (“Career Benefits” 1). As you can see, this is a majority of the careers people choose from. Also, with the increasing diversity in the population of the United State, it is estimated that there will be a 42% increase in demand for translators and interpreters in the next decade (“Career Benefits” 1). Translators are needed when companies conduct business with foreign companies and to make sure they understand the regulations and other aspects of the business. Interpreters are needed in many segments of society especially in the healthcare system, school systems, law firms and many other businesses. From the perspective of the daily aspects of running a business, customers will be more satisfied when they encounter employees who are able to communicate with them in their language and provide an efficient and culturally sensitive service.

Having good communication skills and knowing a second language also allows you to connect and communicate with a wider range of people. Whether in your local community, travelling in the United States or overseas, you will always be “a local” when encountering people that do speak your foreign language (“Career Benefits” 2). Such encounters are more rewarding and enriching because speaking the local language helps you appreciate the new country or community and the people in ways you would not otherwise (De valoes 1). People are more willing to engage with you. In fact, even if you are not fluent in a language, it says a lot about you as a traveler if you take the time to learn new phrases to help you interact with the locals (De valoes 2). Taking the time to do so, shows you are willing to learn and explore other cultures more. “Traveling is all about experiencing new places and the people you meet. There is no better way to enhance both than speaking the local language” (De valoes 2). For these

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reasons, everyone should take a foreign language all four years in high school.

In contrast, while many advocates for learning a foreign language, some high school students are discouraged from taking a foreign language because of the academic and social pressures of high school. Others believe that it can be difficult for at risk learners to learn another language and they will struggle with it, thus compromising their academic success. Some students may find it difficult to keep up with the class, respond quickly when being called upon and perform well on assignments. Also, not having foreign language teachers who are proficient in the language and who specialize with helping at risk students is another potential problem. "Teachers in general including those who teach a foreign language may not be trained to identify and aid specific learning needs, which makes it more difficult for some students" ("At Risk Students" 3). In addition, at risk learners may need extra individual support by the teachers. For instance, a student's disability can impact him/her from achieving proficiency in a second language ("Supporting World Language" 3). Thus, schools should train foreign language teachers to aid high school students with different learning needs. Overall, while some may argue that a foreign language can be difficult for some learners, there are solutions to aid them in still being able to learn a language.

In general, the benefits of learning a foreign language in high school far outweighs any of the cons there might be. Being bilingual or multilingual is very beneficial because it expands opportunities. It is an important skill to help in connecting with and interacting with a diverse group of people, to be successful personally and in a future career, and to engage with the world in a more meaningful way. The rewards of investing the time and effort to learn a foreign language in high school are numerous as shared above. For many these results become immediate as they are able to interact with members of their family from a different culture, a diverse people in their neighborhoods, exchange students or new immigrants in their schools, diverse population in their jobs, locals while studying abroad and customers they will serve in the future. Please take advantage of foreign language classes at your high school and sign up for them for an immediate and rewarding future.