

All students should be required to study a foreign language essay sample

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



Educators historically have argued over the propriety of offering various academic courses. One recent yet continuing argument on American college campuses tends to put school against school, professor against professor, student against student, school against professor, professor against student and student against school. The issue is whether or not courses in a foreign language should be required to attain a Bachelor's degree. Some believe the idea is absurd, while others believe it is a progressive move toward 21st century education. Although some people believe the entire world should speak English, the reality is that all Americans should have some degree of formal education in a foreign language.

Foreign language skills could have a positive impact on race relations in America. The number of minorities in America is rapidly increasing. In fact, "minority" groups will soon form a collective "majority" of the citizens in America. Considering the facts that many minority groups speak English as a second language and America has no official language, compulsory foreign language classes are viable options. Of course, opponents of mandatory foreign language courses will say that immigrants and naturalized citizens should learn and speak the "de facto" official language of the United States—English. It is a valid point, but misses the bigger picture. People who speak English as a second language are already bilingual, while American-born students typically are not.

Language is the most fundamental aspect of a culture. Students who learn the not-so-foreign language of the predominant minority group in their region of the country will gain at least some insight into the different culture

of their neighbors and perhaps have a better understanding of them at the personal level. If we take these bits of insight and understanding and couple them with compassion, fertile ground for multicultural harmony in America will be sown. While foreign language skills can improve domestic affairs, the same can be said of foreign affairs.

Foreign language skills can be useful in promoting American foreign interests. In a global economy, doing business abroad is paramount, but language barriers can be a burden. Opponents of a foreign language requirement in education would argue that most foreign businessmen already speak English. Admittedly, most foreign competitors do speak English, but only out of necessity. They learned to speak English in an effort to better communicate with their American counterparts and take advantage of the money making potential of doing business in America. By learning to speak English, foreign businessmen are able to communicate effectively and put their counterparts at ease which allows negotiations to be resolved in a manner suitable to all parties.

Accordingly, the converse should also be true. If American businessmen learn the language of their counterparts, they should also be more successful at the bargaining table when attempting to open new markets for their products. Furthermore, the same would be true in matters of foreign relations. If American ambassadors, envoys, diplomats and representatives were able to speak the language of their counterparts, conflicts could be resolved more easily. By communicating face-to-face, without translators, all involved would be more relaxed, and the issues in dispute could be

discussed and resolved with nothing “lost in the translation.” While foreign language skills can prove useful for foreign interests, they can also be a part of a complete education.

From a purely academic point of view, courses in foreign languages are simply elements of a well-rounded education. Dissenters would argue such courses will place an undue financial burden on some institutions, citing the need for more professors and classroom space to accommodate the influx of new students. Also, individual students will voice disapproval because a required foreign language course will leave them with one less elective course. However, proponents of the mandatory courses say the benefits outweigh the costs.

Such advocates see requiring foreign language as no different than requiring history, sociology, or mathematics. Not all students enjoy such courses or would elect to take them, but there are students who discover they truly enjoy these courses and choose to pursue them further, students who would never have been exposed to them had they not been required. As far as losing an elective opportunity, students would be free to choose the language they wish to study. Also, the foreign language chosen need not necessarily be a modern language. For example, though labeled a “dead” language, Latin is considered a foreign language and would fulfill the requirement. Perhaps the thoughts of those who support mandatory foreign language courses can best be summed in the words of Marilyn vos Savant: “The length of your education is less important than its breadth”

A foreign language course is like any other course. It is what you make of it. If you believe the class will be dull and boring, it will be. If you look at the course as a challenge and an opportunity, it will be. Remember, there is nothing wrong with learning and there is nothing wrong with knowledge. Of course, not every class you take will have practical applications in your everyday life, but every now and then you will find some little tidbit of information you learned in the 8th or 9th grade will somehow show itself and have the relevance you asked for way back then. So, take a foreign language class and put effort into it—you never know when it might come in handy.