

Learning a second (or third) language improves tolerance **Health/Science**

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Blackboard used in a Spanish language class at Harvard University reveals students' difficulty in correctly placing the acute accent used in Spanish orthography.

BY [AMY THOMPSON](#) for Newsweek, July 8, 2017 *This article originally appeared on [The Conversation](#).* There are many [benefits](#) to knowing more than one language. For example, it has been shown that [aging adults](#) who speak more than one language have less likelihood of developing dementia. Additionally, the bilingual [brain](#) becomes better at filtering out distractions, and learning multiple languages improves [creativity](#). Evidence also shows that [learning subsequent languages](#) is easier than learning the first foreign language. Unfortunately, not all American universities consider [learning foreign languages](#) a worthwhile investment. Why is foreign language study important at the university level? As an [applied linguist](#), I study how learning multiple languages can have cognitive and emotional benefits. One of these benefits that's not obvious is that language learning improves tolerance. This happens in two important ways. The first is that it opens people's eyes to a way of doing things in a way that's different from their own, which is called "cultural competence." The second is related to the comfort level of a person when dealing with unfamiliar situations, or "tolerance of ambiguity." [...]
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