

## **Benefits of Language Learning: Improved English and World Peace**

**by Professor José Tamez**

Although many students study a second language to earn credits toward a degree, its benefits transcend a diploma. One benefit is an improved understanding of English. We study English grammar for over 10 years to end up with an incipient understanding of how English grammar functions. I realize this when I try to teach *indirect objects* in Spanish. I have seldom encountered a student who can explain what it is in English. This poses a major challenge for a language instructor. How do you teach grammar in a second language, if the student doesn't know how it functions in their native tongue? I am forced to start my Spanish lesson of indirect objects by teaching/reviewing its use in the English language. Incredibly enough, after teaching the concept in Spanish, the student can then explain its use in English, too. They finally get it!

If you want to improve your English, study another language which will serve as the comparison. A knowledge of a second language does not hinder your English, but rather strengthens it. I always tell my students: "If you want to major in English, make sure you take as many Spanish classes as you can." Another benefit of studying a second language is the promotion of world peace. World peace stems from cross-cultural communication. When you study another language, you delve into a new culture. As you do, you realize that to achieve even a

basic level in the target language, you have to invest countless hours, and this, in turn, results in intense frustration which serves an important purpose. As native speakers of a language, we get used to expressing our ideas with such ease to the point that when a foreigner isn't fluent in English, we judge them as incompetent. This divides us. But, when you study a second language, you recognize that improved speaking is a life-long process. Imagine experiencing the frustration of not having the necessary vocabulary to express your innermost desires, on a daily basis. The foreigner simply finds the courage to speak English out of need. When we study other languages, we are more patient and tolerant of imperfect English and therefore, of others. Don't judge them. Teach them. Remember that they too must be patient with you when you try to communicate in your second language. Tolerance begets tolerance. Learning a second language does much more than earn you a degree: it earns you a rung on the ladder of world peace.