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“Why Learn a Second Language?”  
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### A Summary and Reflection of “Why Learn a Second Language?”

“Why Learn a Second Language?”, written by Tamim Ansary, is a commentary on the importance and benefit of being bilingual. Ansary begins by remarking on the supposed unnecessaryness of learning a second language— “After all, English is spoken in most countries now, and it’s spreading.” However, Ansary continues to shut that point down. Language isn’t just a mode of conversation; instead, it’s a lens into a different culture. Ansary then proceeds to use himself as an example; being bilingual, he was able to experience this firsthand.

Tamim was born to a Farsi-speaking Afghan father and an English-speaking American. In being brought up in two vastly differing cultures, Tamim was able to appreciate the opportunity he was given. To portray how language served as a viewpoint to express these rare gems of culture, he recounted an event with his cousins. In this event, one of his cousins used the Farsi word “qukh”— which doesn’t actually have a perfect English definition. It was meant to describe a certain feeling, commonly felt in the weather of Afghan.

This confusion in language doesn’t just stop at individual words either. In poems, or even general literature, wordplay can be lost due to a specific cultural reference. Being monolingual, this reference, even if translated, doesn’t pose the same beauty it brings in the original language.

Now as for me, being a Malayalam-speaking Indian born to two immigrants, I can definitely see the cultural juxtaposition brought by speaking these languages. Rain is a simile used a lot in Malayalam songs, and surprisingly to the Western world, it is used to compare love. Although I have noticed this, I still don’t find it confusing, or even absurd. In fact, rain is one of

the first things I think about when I hear something regarding love. Little situations like these really make me appreciate the opportunity I have received to experience such a cultural comparison.

As I learn Spanish, I would like to learn and experience cultural differences in Hispanic culture as well. After all, it doesn't hurt to see things from a different lens. Culture is a beautiful thing, and it reminds us of the unified variation we as human beings hold. It is amusing how with these differences, even humans don't know what life is for all o humanity. One may enjoy a play by Shakespeare, but a song by A.R. Rahman will remain a mystery to them. I hope to uncover these mysteries and learn just a little more about what it's like to be human.