

## **The Impact of Learning a Second Language on Personal Identity**

Language is not only a means of communication but an integral part of our thoughts, worldview, and even identity. Learning a second language influences one's identity in terms of the way individuals view themselves and their interaction with the world. Although some would say that acquiring a new language does not make any big difference in changing one's identity, the truth is that it increases cognitive flexibility, expands cultural understanding, and allows personal growth. Learning English has reshaped my identity to be more open-minded, adaptive, and self-aware.

The most important ways learning a second language can change one's identity include increasing cognitive flexibility. Research has proved that bilinguals develop higher problem-solving skills and adaptability due to the constant switching between linguistic structures and cultural standpoints. This was not so in my situation, as English was not one of my strongest points until the Absolute English course. The course was a controlled learning environment for me, giving me confidence to improve my skills. Furthermore, the TV series *Dexter*, *Hawaii Five-0*, and *Prison Break* allowed me to finally develop my speaking skills. Therefore, to gain a better understanding of these shows, I used websites like Moviecracker, which exposed me to speech that sounded more natural and a wider vocabulary. This self-motivated learning has shaped the way I think about myself-not just as a language learner but a resourceful and goal-driven one.

Learning a second language brings about cultural awareness, hence reshaping one's identity. Language is closely related to culture, and to learn a new language means access to knowledge about traditions, values, and ways of thinking different from one's own. Through exposure to English-language media, I have gained much knowledge about Western culture, humor, and ways of thought. This enlarged worldview influences me in all my interactions with others, making me more open towards others and helping me when relating to people from other backgrounds. The identity of a person in this globalized society relies on cultural sensitivity, and the learning of languages serves as a bridge to that cross-cultural awareness.

Besides, there is personal satisfaction and a feeling of achievement and self-discovery when one learns to acquire a foreign language. In acquiring a new language, one gets challenged outside of one's comfort zone, which helps reinforce resilience and perseverance. The emergence after the barrier and successful communication in a foreign language creates confidence and forms another layer of identity. In my case, the opportunity to understand and discuss any English media event made me feel part of a greater family of speakers. This wider identity allows me to move with more ease across social and professional environments.