

Hable Espanol?

By Jennifer Kahnweiler, Thursday, April 20, 2006, 08:06 AM
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

People have always told me that it helps to know another language when job seeking or building a business.

Yet I counseled a number of Spanish majors who found it very difficult to actually apply their language skills in a job.

The tide seems to be turning. As Atlanta grows, so do job openings that ask for Spanish fluency. Firms that teach Spanish to a wide spectrum of businesses, health care providers and other professionals are growing.

While you don't have to speak Spanish like a pro, speaking the language can help to build rapport with customers, vendors and even coworkers. You are able to gather needed information to understand how to help or provide service. Lets not forget to mention that studying a language also wakes up new brain cells.

Caveat: It can be very frustrating at times as I rack my brain for the right word to use. I may not have mentioned that I am determined to carry on a conversation in Spanish before the year is out. My patient teacher, Terri Lovell of Sandy Springs, tells me that I should keep practicing. (There are certainly many opportunities to do so all over Atlanta!)

Have you actually landed a job because of your language prowess? For those of you who know a little bit of Spanish, would you like to learn more? Some employers will pay for Spanish classes. Do any of you have classes on-site? How do those work? What is the business case you gave them to win your bosses over?

Should we just leave the Spanish that is spoken in the workplace to the professional translators and not bother spending money and time on learning Spanish? Is it worth it?