

The Benefits of Language Learning

It's a multilingual world...

Did you know there are **6,912** known living languages in the world?

Test your knowledge, part 1...

How many people in the world speak these languages as their mother tongue?

French

Arabic (all varieties)

English

Chinese (mandarin)

Spanish

German

A) Almost 400 million

B) 309 million

C) 65 million

D) 100 million

E) 206 million

F) 876 million

Test your knowledge, part 2 – Closer to home

Do you know how many languages are spoken by young people in

England...	300 languages
Scotland...	104 languages
Wales...	98 languages
Northern Ireland...	70 languages

8? 13? 19? 39? 70? 98? 104? 144? 251? 300?

Who thinks languages are important?



98% of Europeans consider mastering other foreign languages as useful for the future of their children.

Euro Barometer "Europeans and their Languages"
June 2012

Lots of people recognise the benefits of language learning

- A. Curriculum For Excellence
- B. Scottish Government
- C. Employers

A. Curriculum For Excellence entitlements

Language entitlement for learners in Scotland:

“we expect the majority of young people to achieve by the end of S3 a level of performance in each language skill which approximates to the level of performance associated with SCQF level 4. The achievement of fourth level outcomes represents a substantial and useful level of competence closely linked to Basic User level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). ”

B. The government commitment

We will introduce a norm for language learning in schools based on the European Union 1 + 2 model - that is we will create the conditions in which every child will learn two languages in addition to their own mother tongue. This will be rolled out over two Parliaments, and will create a new model for language acquisition in Scotland.

(Scottish Government manifesto commitment, 2011)

C. Employers

Key points from the *CBI UK education and skills survey 2011*:

- 76% of employers are not satisfied with school/college leavers foreign language employability skills. This is the highest percentage of employer dissatisfaction in the report compared to all other employability skills.
- 61% of employers perceive shortfalls in international cultural awareness among school and college leavers
- Only a quarter (27%) of businesses say they have no need for Foreign Language skills

Skills for learning

- Learning a foreign language has a positive influence on literacy in the mother tongue (and other languages known).
- When learning a foreign language children develop and practise skills and strategies which transfer across languages. If taught in an appropriate way, this will also improve their vocabulary in the first language.
- Studying a foreign language helps develop metalinguistic knowledge (knowledge about language) and this enhances communication skills more generally.

T Tinsley, T Comfort - Lessons from abroad:

International review of primary languages CfBT 2012

Skills for Life

- According to recent research done in Canada, being bilingual boosts an area of the brain known as the “executive control system” in the frontal lobe that governs memory, learning, language and reasoning.
- “ Pick a destination, go there, be open-minded and talk to the locals. Eat the things they eat and go where they go. You don't need to be fluent, just as long as you've got a smile on your face - people will be jumping over themselves to show you the stuff they're proud of.”

Jamie Oliver, Jamie Does Marrakesh, Channel 4 2010



Skills for Work

The forecast for 2020



- 12 million fewer low skilled jobs
- 15.6 million more highly qualified jobs of which a HUGE percentage will require more than one language

Cedefop: The Widening Gap, 2012

So what can parents do to help?

- Be open to language learning
- Listen and encourage – share the experience!
- Online materials from companies like Radio Lingua
- Foreign Language films with subtitles
- Cultural Organisations

Points for reflection...

Only 6% of world population are native English speakers. 75% don't speak English at all

Language skills are useful – even if you are not completely fluent.

In the UK, only 38% people can hold a conversation in a foreign language

Native English language speakers required:
chronic shortage of Interpreters in EU

Only 29% of internet "traffic" is in the English language

“English is NOT enough”

Together we must help Scotland's youngsters realise that “English is enough” is a dangerously misleading myth.

Modern Languages Excellence Report



A final thought...

“ If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart. ”

Nelson Mandela