
Languages

WORKSHEET A

Martin

As a British person I'm embarrassed by how poor a lot of us are at speaking foreign languages. In the last year I've been on holiday to Spain and Italy, and in both countries I saw British tourists not even trying to say 'hello', 'please' or 'thank you' in the local language, which I think is really rude.

My guess is that most native speakers of English are lazy when it comes to foreign languages. We know English is the main language of international business, and that in most of the world's tourist destinations the locals are able to speak at least a bit of English, so the attitude seems to be 'why bother?' I've never lived in a foreign country and I'm not great at languages (although I can get by in Spanish, French and Italian, I'm not fluent in any of them), but I do think it's important to make an effort with them when you're travelling abroad.

Liz

I hated languages at school, but as an adult I've started learning two foreign languages and found that I've really enjoyed them. Two years ago I started learning French, just as a hobby, and six months ago I started learning Hindi because my fiancé is from India and next month I'm going over there to meet some of his family. It's difficult, but also really interesting.

My friend Sam is studying Mandarin, which is pretty unusual. Because China is growing so fast as an economic power, she reckons that in English-speaking countries it won't be long before there are more kids studying Mandarin in school than French or German.

Paul

I'm fourteen years old and I go to school in Manchester in the north of England. I study two foreign languages, Spanish and French. They're not my favourite subjects, but sometimes they can be quite interesting, like when we learn slang words, or vocabulary to do with sport and music. But I don't like all the grammar – I can't get my head round all those rules.

When I went to Spain on holiday last month I was able to ask for drinks in a restaurant and also understood a little bit of Spanish TV – I was quite proud of myself.

Louise

I teach French and Spanish at a school in London, so obviously I'm fluent in both languages. I like my job, although sometimes it can be a bit frustrating. It would be good if the students cared more about foreign languages – lots of businesses say they want people who can speak European languages, but young people don't seem to realize that speaking another language can improve their job prospects.

In fact, in Britain, the number of kids studying French and German after the age of fourteen has been going down, although I'm pleased to say the number studying Spanish is increasing.

Languages

WORKSHEET B

A

1 Answer the questions.

1. What part of foreign languages does Paul find difficult?
2. Why is Liz learning Hindi?
3. Why does Louise sometimes find her job frustrating?
4. What are the two reasons Martin suggests for native speakers of English being lazy with foreign languages?
5. Why does Liz's friend think the number of children learning Mandarin is going to increase in English-speaking countries?

2 For which of the four people (Martin, Liz, Paul and Louise) are the following statements true?

1. They can speak at least a little bit of a foreign language.
2. They are fluent in Spanish.

3 Now decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F), or if the text doesn't say (D).

1. Louise thinks foreign languages are interesting but not useful.
2. Paul can understand a little bit of French TV.
3. Liz is enjoying learning Hindi.
4. Martin is fluent in Italian.
5. Paul enjoys some parts of his language lessons at school.
6. Liz is learning French to help her with her job.
7. Martin has travelled abroad in the last year.

Languages

WORKSHEET C

B

Decide if the following statements about languages are true (T) or false (F), then bet a minimum of 10 points up to a maximum of 50 on your choice.

		T/F	Points bet	Points lost	Points won
1	In most British schools it is not compulsory for pupils to study any foreign languages after the age of fourteen.				
2	Most surveys suggest that more than 50% of people in European Union countries can speak a language other than their native language.				
3	In most British schools it is compulsory for children aged 7-11 to learn a foreign language.				
4	In most schools in France, Germany and Italy, children start to learn a foreign language before the age of ten.				
5	The number of indigenous languages in Europe is less than 20% of the total number of languages in the world.				
6	Out of all the world's languages, the one with the biggest number of native speakers is Mandarin.				
7	English has the second biggest number of native speakers.				
8	There are slightly more than one billion native speakers of English in the world (i.e. about 15% of the total global population of 6.6 billion).				
9	The main language in most countries in South America is Spanish.				
10	There are more native speakers of Portuguese than of French or German.				
	Total points lost and won				
	Final total (subtract total points lost from total points won)				