

Why learn languages?

10 good reasons why you should be learning a foreign language

"I speak English, so I don't have to learn a foreign language...."

Everyone speaks English, right? Well, certainly not *everyone* speaks English. According to the CIA World Fact Book, only 5.6 % of the world's total population speaks English as a primary language. That number doubles when people who speak English as a second or third language are counted. By conservative estimates, that means that well over four-fifths of the world's population does **not** speak English.

Learning another language opens up new opportunities and gives you perspectives that you might never have encountered otherwise. Personal, professional, social, and economic considerations all point to the advantages of learning foreign languages. Still not convinced? Here are 10 very good reasons why you should be learning a foreign language:

1. To increase global understanding

Learning another language gives the learner the ability to step inside the mind and context of that other culture. Without the ability to communicate and understand a culture, true access to that culture is barred.

Why is this important?

In a world where nations and peoples are ever more dependent upon one another to supply goods and services, solve political disputes, and ensure international security, understanding other cultures is paramount.

Intercultural understanding begins with individuals who have language abilities and who can thereby provide one's own nation or community with an insider's view into foreign cultures, who can understand foreign news sources, and give insights into other perspectives on international situations and current events.



2. To improve employment potential

Business is not the only area of employment where language competencies are needed:

Multiple government agencies,

The travel industry,

Engineering,

Communications,

The field of education,

International law & economics,

Public policy,

Publishing,

Advertising,

Entertainment,

Scientific research

Economics


..... all have needs for people with foreign language skills.

3. To increase native language ability

"Those who know nothing of foreign languages,
knows nothing of their own."
– *Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe*

Research shows that knowledge of other languages boosts students' understanding of languages in general and enables students to use their native language more effectively. This applies to specific language skills as well as overall linguistic abilities.

Foreign language learners have stronger vocabulary skills in English, a better understanding of the language, and improved literacy in general. Higher reading achievement in the native language as well as enhanced listening skills and memory have been shown to increase with extended foreign language study.



4. To sharpen cognitive and life skills

“We have strong evidence today that studying a foreign language has a ripple effect, helping to improve student performance in other subjects.”

– *Richard Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education under Bill Clinton*



5. To improve chances of entry into college or university

The majority of universities rightly consider knowledge of a foreign language and culture part of what every educated person should know. Many majors in the arts and humanities, in natural sciences and behavioral and social sciences, and in professional fields, also require the study of one or more languages to ensure success in the given field.



6. To appreciate international literature, music, and film

"The many great gardens of the world,
of literature and poetry,
of painting and music,
of religion and architecture,
all make the point as clear as possible:

The soul cannot thrive in the absence of a garden.
If you don't want paradise, you are not human;
and if you are not human, you don't have a soul."

- *Thomas Moore, Irish poet, satirist, and composer*



7. To make travel more feasible and enjoyable

"Here speeching American." – *A sign in a Majorcan shop entrance*

"Cold shredded children and sea blubber in spicy sauce." – *From a menu in China*

"Refund!" – *On a "Caution!" wet floor sign in a McDonald's restaurant in Italy*



8. To expand study abroad options

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –

I took the one less traveled by,

and that has made all the difference."

– *Robert Frost, American poet*



9. To increase understanding of oneself and one's own culture

"The individual's whole experience is built upon the plan of his language."

– *Henri Delacroix, French painter and filmmaker*

"As the traveler who has once been from home is wiser than he who has never left his own doorstep, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinize more steadily, to appreciate more lovingly, our own."

– *Margaret Mead, American anthropologist*



10. To make lifelong friends

"The most important trip you may take in life is meeting people halfway."

– *Henry Boye, author*

Knowing other languages effectively increases the number of people on the globe with whom you can communicate. And people who speak other languages fully appreciate the effort and desire learners expend to get to know their culture and to communicate with them.

Take advantage and enhance your life ... learn a language!

