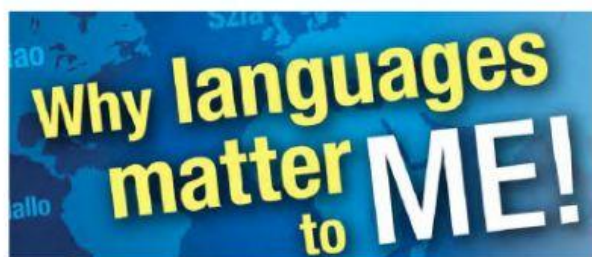




Reading and speaking

Language lovers



How do you think is it important for native speakers of English to learn a foreign language? Why? Why not?

The British have always had a poor reputation for learning languages – and it's getting worse. The number of UK students studying a language at university continues to fall, and most schoolchildren take advantage of the fact that they can drop foreign languages at 14. Is this not understandable, though? Why would any Brit want to spend countless hours struggling to learn a language when most of the world is keen to speak English to them?

Here, two high-profile British language learners explain how learning a language has enriched their lives, and what sparked their passion for learning languages.



Bonjour

THE COMEDIAN:
EDDIE IZZARD

FACT FILE

- Born 1962, Yemen.
- Popular British stand-up comedian.
- Often tours abroad, and has been performing in other languages since 2011.

I describe my language ability in percentages of fluency. I'm about 65% fluent in French, 30% fluent in German, and about half a percent fluent in Spanish. I'm already touring my show in French in

France, and after that I'll be doing it in Spanish, then Russian, then Arabic. They say if you have French and English you should be speaking Spanish pretty well after a month of deep immersion. If I get stuck with a word or a phrase during a show I ask the audience, 'How do you say such and such', and they help out.

I don't find languages easy, but I have a hunger to learn. When you can speak another language you go from being a person in an adult's body pointing at things like a child to being able to communicate with people like an adult again.

There's a political basis for me to learn other languages because if we don't come together in the world, then the world's not going to make it. There's a business case, too – I'm beginning to turn a profit on my foreign shows. Plus, no stand-up has done this before, so there's also the fun, bloody adventure of it.

THE WILDLIFE EXPERT: CHRIS PACKHAM

FACT FILE

In France, where I have a house, it's quite remote and none of my neighbours spoke any English. I rocked up ten years ago and had no more ability in French than being able to go to Paris and survive a weekend. I bought some CDs, but learning it that way didn't work for me, so I had to think of a plan B.

I bought some wildlife books at a local bookshop and because I understood the context, I was able to read them cover to cover and grasp some of what they were saying. Then I said to my neighbours: 'Look, I'll speak to you in French and I want you to constantly correct me. I won't be offended.' And they were great, they did.

I do find it quite difficult. If I was living in the language all the time, I'd get on top of it and it would stick. The longest stint I've had there has been three months, and by the end of that I was thinking in French

- Born 1961, England.
- Nature photographer and author, well known in the UK as a presenter on popular TV wildlife shows.
- Has a house in France.

and putting sentences together in a French way, and it felt really good.

What's brilliant is that I can meet up with my neighbours now and have a laugh with them. They'll gossip with me, whereas before it would have been quite formal and polite. So you feel much more a part of things. People have been extraordinarily welcoming and are appreciative of the fact that I've made the effort to converse with them.



Glossary
gossip (v) talk about other people's private lives
grasp (v) understand
offended (adj) upset
rock up (phr v) arrive
stint (n) period of time

- Why do you think this article appeared in a British newspaper?
- Why do you think each person wanted to learn a foreign language?

Complete the chart:

	Eddie Izzard	Chris Packham
Languages spoken		
Motivation for learning them		
Level reached		
Benefits they see in learning languages		

Answer the questions about these men.

- 1 Who finds learning languages difficult?
- 2 Who has tried different ways of learning a language?
- 3 Who is expecting it to be easier to learn another language? Why?
- 4 Who is using languages to do something very original?
- 5 Who has used what he does for a living to help him learn a language?
- 6 Who says he feels immature when he can't speak a language?
- 7 Who wishes he could spend more time speaking the language? Why?
- 8 Who has learned the language by doing something other than speaking?
- 9 Who asks native speakers of the language to help him improve? How?
- 10 Who says that people treat him differently now he can speak their language? How?

Write the correct prepositions. You can find the examples in the text.

~~for~~ in with on (x2) for at (x2) of

- 1 have a reputation for sth
- 2 have a passion _____ sth
- 3 make/turn a profit _____ sth
- 4 study sth _____ university
- 5 be fluent _____ a language
- 6 get _____ top of sth
- 7 take advantage _____ sth/smb
- 8 point _____ sth/sb
- 9 have a laugh _____ sb

- Are people in your country enthusiastic about learning a foreign language? Why/Why not?
- Are there benefits to learning a foreign language beyond the purely practical ones?
- Has learning a language improved your life?
- Do you want people to correct all your mistakes when you speak English? Why/Why not?

 **Watch** a video about how subtitles are made for film and TV.



▶ Listening and speaking

A world in one family

Do you know anyone who has married to someone of another nationality? Do they have children? What languages do they speak ?

Look at the pic. There are three nationalities.



2.8 Listen to Nicolas talking about his family. Answer the questions and mark the questions you cannot answer.

- 1 What nationality are Nicolas, his sister Sara, and his parents Felipe and Elke?
- 2 How did Nicolas' parents meet? Why did they decide to live in England? Which city do they live in now?
- 3 What languages does the family speak?
- 4 Is Nicolas' English better than his parents'?
- 5 Why did their mother choose the children's names she did?
- 6 When and why did Nicolas first think about his nationality?
- 7 Why is Nicolas not as fluent as Sara in Portuguese?
- 8 What does Sara do for a living? Does she want to continue living in England?
- 9 What is Nicolas doing now? What language skill does he find most difficult?
- 10 What does Elke think are the pros and cons of bringing up children in another country?

2.9 Now listen to Nicolas's mother Elki. Answer the questions you couldn't answer before.