

Read the text then answer the questions.

PART A

CHOOSE THE BEST OPTION.



1. The British are good at learning languages.

True

False

2. A lot of British schoolchildren stop learning languages when they are 14.

True

False

3. The British government wants children to start learning a foreign language at the age of five.

True

False

4. British children only study French at school.

True

False

5. There are plans to offer more languages at school.

True

False

6. Many people are interested in learning Mandarin Chinese.

True

False

7 Choose the most suitable title for the text \_\_\_\_\_

A British worst at learning languages

B the best way to improve languages in Britain

C the statistics about learning languages in Britain.

8 British learners are \_\_\_\_\_ students

A less good than the others

B worse than others

Bad than others

9 the British government tries to improve language learners. They can start \_\_\_\_\_

A less old.

B the oldest

The youngest.

10 Chinese language is considered \_\_\_\_\_ language for some learners in Britain than French and Spanish

A more impressive.

B The most impressive.

C Less impressive.

## Languages

How many languages can you speak? British people are generally not very good language learners. In a recent survey, 62% of the population only speak English!

If you're reading this, then you're probably studying English. Maybe you speak a couple of other languages too. What are the British like when it comes to learning languages?

## Statistics

Brits are famous for not speaking foreign languages. According to a survey published by the European Commission, this bad reputation is totally justified. The results of the survey state that the British are officially the worst language learners in Europe! Let's look at some statistics:

- 62% of people surveyed can't speak any other language apart from English.
- 38% of Britons speak at least one foreign language, 18% speak two and only 6% of the population speak three or more.

The European Union average showed that 56% speak at least one foreign language, 28% speak at least two and 11% speak three or more. The survey confirmed that English was the most widely-spoken foreign language. 51% of EU citizens can have a conversation in English.

**School** Learning a foreign language is not a popular option at school in Britain. In UK schools it is common for children to start studying a foreign language at the age of 11 and many students give up languages completely at 14. So why don't young people continue with languages at school? Research suggests that students think that it is more difficult to get good grades in languages than in other subjects such as science or history. The British government is now looking at different ways to improve language learning at school. One idea is to start much younger; there are plans to introduce foreign languages from the age of 5.

## Which languages?

Another plan is to give school children more choice. The languages traditionally studied in British schools have been French, Spanish and German. Now the government is encouraging teachers to expand the range of languages taught to include Arabic, Mandarin and Urdu.

Mandarin Chinese is predicted to become the second most popular foreign language learned in UK schools. It is already studied by more children than German or Russian. Only French and Spanish are more popular. Gareth from Wales says 'I am learning Chinese, and find it fun.' Another student, Thomas from London, says 'Just telling people that I learn Mandarin impresses people. Even having a very basic level gives you an advantage.' Brighton College has become the first independent school to make Mandarin a compulsory foreign language. Its headmaster Richard Cairns said, 'One of my key tasks is to make sure pupils are equipped for the realities of the 21st century. One of those realities is that China has the fastest-growing economy in the world.' It may be an ambitious task to change the Brits' attitude to learning languages but the government is determined to try!