

# Why is it Important to Learn a Foreign Language?

by **KENDALL DICK** - *Last updated on October 20, 2023*

The advantages of learning foreign languages are mushrooming as the world becomes increasingly globalized and bilingualism is now perhaps the most useful real-world skill to ever exist, rather than just being a nifty party trick. If you're thinking about making the effort to learn a foreign language rather than expecting the world to accommodate your monolingualism, you are a rare breed indeed. Blossoming into the impressive polyglot you aspire to be is 100% feasible with the right approach and mindset.

Foreign language study is all about learning how to truly communicate and connect with others—an incredibly important life skill that can only be cultivated by interacting with people. When you master a foreign language, you can exercise your new superhuman power of being able to understand what someone is saying, recall the proper vocab and grammar, put that vocab and grammar into the proper context, and reply back—all on the spot and in a timely manner. You've connected. And that is what it's all about.

## Why learn a foreign language?

So, why is it important to learn a foreign language? Basically, the advantages of learning foreign languages have the ability to set you up for success in nearly every aspect of your life (NBD). Check out these seven reasons to study a foreign language:

### 1. ....

With its warmth and voluptuous sounds, hearing someone speaking a foreign language is like the sound of gold coming to embrace you. Speaking a foreign language is incredibly sexy and it can make you more attractive, interesting, and gives you an air of intelligence. A lot of people find a certain language or accent to be really sexy—think Penélope Cruz's Spanish or Monica Bellucci's Italian—you get the picture.

Learn a foreign language and you might just have that certain someone hypnotized and drawn to your exotic prowess. Some of the more romantic languages like, **Spanish**, the language of undying love containing rhythm that can make any person swoon, or suave French that is soft as silk and feels as warm as a lover's stroke, and Italian that massages your ears into ecstasy. But really, the rich textures of almost any foreign language can be incredibly sexy.

### 2. ....

It's 10 p.m. You just got off a 14-hour flight and all you want to do is fall face-first into your pillow. If you are solely armed with a smattering of navigational terms in the local language, finding your place to crash could turn into a painfully slow process. Without the right lingo, you are limited to expensive or slower options. So, you save yourself some time, money, and grief when you learn a foreign language. Just as a few key phrases will make transportation that much faster and cheaper, and the

same is true for choosing a place to stay. This means lower rates and a better (even more authentic) experience.

Oh, and the food. When you learn a foreign language, you don't need to be Anthony Bourdain to find the best local grub. You can ask around for yourself. This valuable intel will usually lead you to far tastier and cheaper fare than any tourism board or guidebook ever could.

### 3. ....

It's no secret that learning a foreign language can improve your employment prospects. More companies than ever are doing business in several—often dozens of—countries around the world, but they can't do it without hiring people who have a grasp on at least one foreign language. Even in small, local companies, chances are that the ability to speak a second language will set you apart from other applicants. And in an increasingly competitive job market, why not give yourself every possible edge?

But, it's not just about padding your resume. With globalization in full swing, there's a good chance you'll be working with people whose first language isn't English. Maybe it's a development team in India, or a manufacturing plant in China, or an alternative energy supplier in Germany. Being able to communicate in other languages makes you much more valuable to an employer and having that competitive edge on your resume is without a doubt an eye-catcher.

### 4. ....

Studies have demonstrated the cognitive benefits of learning another language, no matter how old you are. These studies have shown that bilinguals tend to have bigger brains, better memories, are more creative, better problem solvers, etc. Not only do these advantages make it easier to learn yet more languages, they also make it easier to learn, well, anything. The ability to quickly switch between tasks is especially important in today's busy multitasking world. Bilinguals can switch between tasks much faster than their monolingual counterparts and can handle many more tasks at once.

### 5. ....

Meeting new and interesting people and developing lifelong friendships are certainly objectives well worth aspiring for, and learning another language is a sure way to expedite that process. Language helps express our feelings, desires, and connect with other humans around us and forms meaningful relationships. Speaking a foreign language not only opens up a massive pool of potential friends, but it also acts as an instant common denominator when you meet native speakers. Plus, speaking in a foreign tongue can be like speaking in secret code with your new besties. This approach is not exactly a foolproof Enigma machine, but it can make discussing the sordid details of Friday night's debauchery a little less embarrassing.

### 6. ....

Foreign language study is simply part of a very basic liberal education. To educate is to lead out—to lead out of confinement and narrowness and darkness. Learning a foreign language and getting soaked into an entirely new culture and worldview is the surest way to become an open-minded, understanding, tolerant individual, and that is absolutely priceless. Once you are aware of the fact that we are all cultural beings, products of our own environments, and that you recognize the cultural base for your own attitudes and behavior, you are ready to consider others in a more favorable light. Seeing the world from a different perspective, and understanding where you and others come from, is a fantastic, eye-opening experience.

**7. ....**

Learning a foreign language can actually pull a sort of reverse psychology on you and provide you with a better understanding of your own native tongue and culture. This is one of the most unexpected advantages of learning a foreign language. You will become much more conscious of not only cultural customs, but of the grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation patterns of your first language. This likely explains the improvements in listening, reading, and writing skills that foreign language imparts to former monolinguals.

Adapted from *GoAbroad.com*

**Match the headings to the paragraphs**

Number	Headings
	Foreign language study helps you better understand your own language and culture
	Foreign language study grows your brain
	Learning a foreign language is sexy
	Learning a foreign language opens up a world of job opportunities
	Studying a foreign language makes you more open-minded
	Travel becomes cheaper and easier when you learn a foreign language
	Form meaningful friendships when you study a foreign language

# English is GREAT - Part 1

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/general-english/video-series/britain-great/english-great-part-1>

## While you listen

The *Britain is Great* series tells you about some of the things that make Britain so great. There's a lot of fun facts – and lots of good language, too. See if you can answer the questions while you watch the video.

### Comprehension Task 1 - What topics do Richard and Roger talk about? Choose all the right answers.

- a) the number of items in the British Library
- b) how English has evolved over time
- c) the impact of Shakespeare on English
- d) the impact of the Industrial Revolution on English
- e) the impact of the Internet on English
- f) a famous printer
- g) the first dictionary of English
- h) the first text message ever sent
- i) the versatility of English

### Comprehension Task 2 - Fill in the missing information with words or numbers from the video.

1. The British Library has existed for over \_\_\_\_\_ years.
2. Every year, they have to add \_\_\_\_\_ kilometres of shelves to house the new items.
3. The library has \_\_\_\_\_ items from all over the world.
4. A thousand years ago, English was similar to \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The first English book was printed about \_\_\_\_\_ years ago.
6. Chaucer wrote the first \_\_\_\_\_ in the English language.
7. Caxton spells the word French as both '\_\_\_\_\_ ' and 'Frenshe' on the same page.
8. A poem which dates from \_\_\_\_\_ uses 2 for 'to' and 4 instead of 'for', just like modern SMS language.

### Language Task 1 – The nineteenth century poet wrote "I wrote 2 you b4", instead of 'I wrote to you before'. How good is your SMS English? Translate these messages into 'correct' English, one word in each space.

1. Luv u. C u l8r  
I \_\_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. Ru OK? Pls call me asap.  
\_\_\_\_\_ OK? \_\_\_\_\_ call me \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. My hols wr gr8 - & yrs?  
My \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ ?
4. Wld u like dnr 2nite?  
\_\_\_\_\_ like \_\_\_\_\_ ?
5. I need 2 c u b4 I leave.

I need \_\_\_\_\_ I leave.

**Language Task 2** - Richard says 'The British Library's collection just keeps on growing'. 'Keep on' is a phrasal verb that means 'continue'. Choose the best phrasal verb in these sentences - the first six are from the video.

1. Extra shelves have to be \_\_\_\_\_ every year.

- a) built up
- b) got in
- c) made up
- d) put up

2. The British Library is a good place to come to \_\_\_\_\_ about the English language.

- a) find out
- b) look up
- c) pick up
- d) sort out

3. We have documents here that \_\_\_\_\_ a thousand years.

- a) go back
- b) date from
- c) take on
- d) turn up

4. In Shakespeare's period, printing had already \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) come across
- b) come in
- c) ended up
- d) turned out

5. William Caxton later \_\_\_\_\_ to print Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

- a) came out
- b) got on
- c) turned up
- d) went on

6. William Caxton often had to \_\_\_\_\_ how to spell words himself.

- a) call up
- b) get across
- c) make up
- d) see to

7. Texts written in Old English are very hard to read, and it can be difficult to \_\_\_\_\_ the meaning.

- a) get into
- b) work out
- c) take on
- d) turn out

8. Many changes have \_\_\_\_\_ in the English language since the Internet was invented.

- a) broken out
- b) come about
- c) gone through
- d) got on

9. You've spelt 'necessary' wrong. You've \_\_\_\_\_ the second 's'.

- a) left over
- b) missed out
- c) taken off
- d) turned out

10. SMS language has really \_\_\_\_\_ in the last ten years - everyone understands the more common abbreviations now, even my mum!

- a) broken out
- b) caught on
- c) grown up
- d) taken up

## English is GREAT - Part 2

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/general-english/video-series/britain-great/english-great-part-2>

### While you listen

The Britain is Great series tells you about some of the things that make Britain so great. There's a lot of fun facts – and lots of good language, too. See if you can answer the questions while you watch the video.

### **Comprehension Task 1 - Put what happens in the video in the right order.**

- a) Martin explains how technology can help learners of English.
- b) Richard asks about different types of English.
- c) Richard asks about English as a global language.
- d) Richard asks if technology changes language.
- e) Richard talks about the importance of English for work and study.
- f) Richard visits the British Council.
- g) Some people talk about their experiences of studying in Britain.

### **Comprehension Task 2 - Choose the best answer according to the video.**

1. The British Council...

- a) works to make cultural relationships with other countries.
- b) gives help to people who want to learn English.
- c) makes resources available for people who teach English.
- d) all of the above are true.

2. Martin Peacock...

- a) teaches English for the British Council.
- b) thinks there are many global languages.
- c) has a northern English accent.
- d) all of the above are true.

3. Martin says that English is a global language because...

- a) it's used in a lot of different contexts globally.
- b) there are many different varieties of English.
- c) it's spoken by large numbers of people.
- d) all of the above are true.

4. Martin says that technology...

- a) has speeded up the way that languages change.
- b) lets people read more authentic English.
- c) lets people translate languages.
- d) all of the above are true.

5. Clare, Maximiliano, Alexander and Anthony...

- a) are all studying English in Britain.
- b) all agree that British people are nice.
- c) all say that English will help them in their careers.
- d) all of the above are true.

**Language Task 1 - Put the words in the right spaces.**

**a) coined**

**f) scale**

**d) fields**

**e) resources**

**c) engage**

**h) widely**

**b) doors**

**g) turned**

1. The British Council provides \_\_\_\_\_ for people learning English.
2. There are other languages which are used very \_\_\_\_\_ and spoken by many people.
3. In the past, new words were \_\_\_\_\_ by people - it might have been in a speech or a newspaper article or in a book.
4. The Internet allows people to read and translate languages like English, on a massive \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Knowledge of the language is often important in \_\_\_\_\_ like medicine, business and computing.
6. English opens \_\_\_\_\_ to employment, education and mobility.
7. English helps teachers and learners \_\_\_\_\_ across the globe.
8. I just \_\_\_\_\_ twenty-four last February and I'm from Malaysia.

**Language Task 2 - "English is used very widely". 'Widely' is an adverb. But not all adverbs end in 'ly'.**

**Add 'ly' to the adverbs in these sentences - but only if necessary!**

1. Portuguese is a wide\_\_\_\_\_ spoken language.
2. I thought the film was deep\_\_\_\_\_ moving.
3. I wanted to sleep late in the holidays, but I was always wide\_\_\_\_\_ awake at 6.30.
4. The thing I hate most\_\_\_\_\_ about my boss is her bad temper.
5. The pirates hid the treasure buried deep\_\_\_\_\_ beneath the sand.

6. I wouldn't say he's a friend - I hard\_\_\_\_\_ know the man.
7. Time goes really fast\_\_\_\_\_ when you're enjoying yourself.
8. I don't do much on Sunday evenings - just watch television most\_\_\_\_\_.
9. He played well, but he didn't come near\_\_\_\_\_ to winning the match.
10. He threw the ball so hard\_\_\_\_\_ that no-one could possibly catch it.
11. Stay close\_\_\_\_\_ to me at the concert if you don't want to get lost.
12. I ate near\_\_\_\_\_ a whole box of chocolates last night.
13. Don't get so upset - take it easy\_\_\_\_\_.
14. The actor left the nightclub, close\_\_\_\_\_ followed by a crowd of photographers.

## THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH

(from *English File C1.1*)

**Chris:** Hello I'm Chris and welcome to London. But before we move from Big Ben to the London Eye, I need to send .....

Only a few years ago a *tweet* was something only birds did, now everybody's *tweeting*... often using *textspeak* or *emoticons*. But the inventiveness of the English language ..... It has been evolving for over 1600 years.

In AD 43, the ....., conquering the indigenous Celts and taking over most of the country.

In AD ....., they left, and around 50 years later several tribes from around ..... -including the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes, better known as the Anglo-Saxons— started to move in.

They settled in the east, but unlike the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons didn't set out to conquer. They shared many things ....., including language.

Unlike Latin – which had never really caught on with the locals –people started using ..... for lots of everyday things, like *man*, *woman*, and *friend*.

But then Latin made a comeback! This time, it didn't arrive with Roman soldiers; it arrived with ..... Christianity became very popular with the locals, and introduced a whole new alphabet and religious vocabulary.

Then the Vikings arrived in around 800 AD. Their ..... was reflected in their language. They *raced* through the country, *ransacking* towns and villages, armed with *knives* and *clubs*. They *took* ..... but they gave English around 2,000 words.

The Vikings and the Anglo-Saxons battled for almost 300 years until the English King Harold won the Battle of Stamford Bridge.



But only three weeks later the unlucky Harold was killed by William the Conqueror – a Norman from France – at the Battle of Hastings. William became the King of England and ..... all over the country.

French became the language of the ..... It was the native tongue of all *princes, dukes, barons* and *dames*. But English remained the language of the ..... Farmers herded *cows* and *sheep*, which were Anglo-Saxon words... but the nobility ate *beef* and *mutton*, which were French words.

Over the next 300 years, the two languages mixed until English eventually won out, albeit with 10,000 new words from the French.

This richer language was the perfect plaything ....., and one literary genius contributed more than most. William Shakespeare wrote 38 plays and 150 poems. He also ..... new words and his turn of phrase transformed the entire language.

The sixteenth century was also the Age of Discovery and for Britain this meant the birth of ..... that stretched across the globe.

The British colonialists often used native words and soon words like *safari* from the African language Swahili, *pyjamas* from the Urdu language in India, and *boomerang* from the native Australian language Dharuk, had entered the language.

But the country that had the most impact on English was America. The ..... needed a new type of English – American English. American English kept many of the old English words, so today English *curtains* are still American *drapes*, English *wardrobes* are American *closets*, and English *trousers* are American *pants*.

But the language changed a lot too. The father of American English was Noah Webster. He created a new dictionary which ..... of lots of ..... He also introduced uniquely American words like *squash*, *chowder* and *skunk*.

By the twentieth century, there were two main types of English –British English and American English. But throughout the twentieth century, both continued to change and borrow from one another, especially with the invention of ‘computers’ and the ‘internet’. Suddenly we needed new words to describe our ‘blogs’, ‘posts’ and, of course, ‘tweets’.

Today English is truly global. There are around 375 million native speakers, and about 1.5 billion people learn it as a foreign language. But it is always changing and shifting ..... Today the English vocabulary has over 170,000 words...and counting. We are inventing new words every day and if we don’t know them, we just *google* them on our *smartphones* or...send a *tweet*.

# “If That’s What It Takes / Pour Que Tu M’aimes Encore” by Celine Dion

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[Verse 1]

You're the bravest of hearts, you're the .....

*Raisonné et nouveau, C'est ainsi par ici*

You can say it's all right, but I know that you're .....

I see it in your eyes

Even you .....  
..... afraid and alone

That's why .....  
.....

[Chorus] / [Refrain]

*J'irai chercher ton cœur*

*Si tu l'emportes ailleurs*

*Même si dans tes danses*

*D'autres dansent tes heures*

*J'irai chercher ton âme*

*Dans les froids dans les flammes*

*Je te jeterai des sorts*

*Pour que tu m'aimes encore*

*Pour que tu m'aimes encore*

[Verse 2]

You can sleep in my arms, you don't have to explain

When .....  
....., baby, whisper my  
name

'Cause I've reached out for you when the thunder is  
crashing up above

You've .....  
.....

When your .....  
..... that shines through  
the pain

That's why .....  
.....

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*Pour que tu m'aimes encore*

[Couplet 3.1]

*Je trouverai des langages*

*Pour chanter tes louanges*

*Je ferai nos bagages*

*Pour d'infinies vendanges*

*Les formules magiques*

*Des marabouts d'Afrique*

*J'les dirai sans remords*

*Pour que tu m'aimes encore*

[Verse 3]

Through .....  
....., through the smoke  
and the fire

When the fear rises up, when the wave's ever higher

I .....  
....., my body, my soul

I will hold on all night and never let go

.....  
....., that's the promise I make

Baby, that's what I'll give, if that's what it takes

[Outro]

If that's what it takes

*Pour que tu m'aimes encore*

*Pour que tu m'aimes encore*

# KEY

## Why is it Important to Learn a Foreign Language?

Number	Headings
7	Foreign language study helps you better understand your own language and culture
4	Foreign language study grows your brain
1	Learning a foreign language is sexy
3	Learning a foreign language opens up a world of job opportunities
6	Studying a foreign language makes you more open-minded
2	Travel becomes cheaper and easier when you learn a foreign language
5	Form meaningful friendships when you study a foreign language

## English is GREAT - Part 1

*Comprehension Task 1:* a; b; d; e; f; l;

*Comprehension Task 2:* 1.250; 2.12; 3.150 million; 4.German; 5. 500; 6.best-seller; 7.Frensshe; 8. 1867/the nineteenth century;

*Language Task 1:* 1. I love you. See you later.; 2. Are you OK? Please call as soon as possible.; 3. My holidays were great - and yours?; 4. Would you like dinner tonight?; 5. I need to see you before I leave.

*Language Task 2:* 1.d; 2.a; 3.a; 4.b; 5.d; 6.c; 7.b; 8.b; 9.b; 10.b

## English is GREAT - Part 2

*Comprehension Task 1:* f; c; b; d; a; e; g;

*Comprehension Task 2:* 1; d; 2.c; 3.a; 4.d; 5.a

*Language Task 1:* 1.e; 2.h; 3.a; 4.f; 5.d; 6.b; 7.c; 8.g;

*Language Task 2:* 1.widely; 2.deeply; 3.wide; 4.most; 5.deep; 6.hardly; 7.fast; 8.mostly; 9.near; 10.hard; 11.close; 12.nearly; 13.easy; 14.closely

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In AD 43, the **Romans invaded Britain**, conquering the indigenous Celts and taking over most of the country.

In AD **409**, they left, and around 50 years later several tribes from around **northern Germany** - including the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes, better known as the Anglo-Saxons— started to move in.

They settled in the east, but unlike the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons didn't set out to conquer. They shared many things **with the Celts**, including language.

Unlike Latin – which had never really caught on with the locals –people started using **Anglo-Saxon terms** for lots of everyday things, like *man*, *woman*, and *friend*.

But then Latin made a comeback! This time, it didn't arrive with Roman soldiers; it arrived with **Christian monks**. Christianity became very popular with the locals, and introduced a whole new alphabet and religious vocabulary.

Then the Vikings arrived in around 800 AD. Their **warrior spirit** was reflected in their language. They *raced* through the country, *ransacking* towns and villages, armed with *knives* and *clubs*. They *took land, goods and slaves* but they *gave* English around 2,000 words.

The Vikings and the Anglo-Saxons battled for almost 300 years until the English King Harold won the Battle of Stamford Bridge.

But only three weeks later the unlucky Harold was killed by William the Conqueror – a Norman from France – at the Battle of Hastings. William became the King of England and **started building castles** all over the country.

French became the language of the **wealthy elite**. It was the native tongue of all *princes*, *dukes*, *barons* and *dames*. But English remained the language of the **peasants**. Farmers herded *cows* and *sheep*, which were Anglo-Saxon words... but the nobility ate *beef* and *mutton*, which were French words.

Over the next 300 years, the two languages mixed until English eventually won out, albeit with 10,000 new words from the French.

This richer language was the perfect plaything **for poets and playwrights**, and one literary genius contributed more than most. William Shakespeare wrote 38 plays and 150 poems. He also **coined around 2,000** new words and his turn of phrase transformed the entire language.

The sixteenth century was also the Age of Discovery and for Britain this meant the birth of **an Empire** that stretched across the globe.

The British colonialists often used native words and soon words like *safari* from the African language Swahili, *pyjamas* from the Urdu language in India, and *boomerang* from the native Australian language Dharuk, had entered the language.

But the country that had the most impact on English was America. The **newly independent America** needed a new type of English – American English. American English kept many of the old English words, so today English *curtains* are still American *drapes*, English *wardrobes* are American *closets*, and English *trousers* are American *pants*.

But the language changed a lot too. The father of American English was Noah Webster. He created a new dictionary which **simplified the spelling** of lots of **complicated English words**. He also introduced uniquely American words like *squash*, *chowder* and *skunk*.

By the twentieth century, there were two main types of English –British English and American English. But throughout the twentieth century, both continued to change and borrow from one another, especially with the invention of 'computers' and the 'internet'. Suddenly we needed new words to describe our 'blogs', 'posts' and, of course, 'tweets'.

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[Verse 1]

You're the bravest of hearts, you're the **strongest of souls**

*Raisonné et nouveau, C'est ainsi par ici*

You can say it's all right, but I know that you're **breaking up inside**

I see it in your eyes

Even you **face the night** afraid and alone

That's why **I'll be there**

[Chorus] / [Refrain]

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*Si tu l'emportes ailleurs*

*Même si dans tes danses*

*D'autres dansent tes heures*

*J'irai chercher ton âme*

*Dans les froids dans les flammes*

*Je te jetterai des sorts*

*Pour que tu m'aimes encore*

*Pour que tu m'aimes encore*

[Verse 2]

You can sleep in my arms, you don't have to explain

When **your heart's crying out**, baby, whisper my name

'Cause I've reached out for you when the thunder is crashing up above

You've **given me your love**

When your **smile like the sun** that shines through the pain

That's why **I'll be there**

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*Les formules magiques*

*Des marabouts d'Afrique*

*J'les dirai sans remords*

*Pour que tu m'aimes encore*

[Verse 3]

Through **the wind and the rain**, through the smoke and the fire

When the fear rises up, when the wave's ever higher

**I will lay down my heart**, my body, my soul

I will hold on all night and never let go

**Ev'ry second I live**, that's the promise I make

Baby, that's what I'll give, if that's what it takes

[Outro]

If that's what it takes

*Pour que tu m'aimes encore*

*Pour que tu m'aimes encore*