

We are fortunate to speak a global language but in a smart and competitive world, exclusive reliance on English leaves (us) vulnerable and dependent on the linguistic competence and the goodwill of others...

Nuffield Languages Inquiry, UK, 2000

Reasons for Learning Languages

Academic Skills

Language learning develops your study skills (i.e. essay writing, research, planning).

Accessibility

Everyone can gain benefits from learning a language – cultural enrichment, and the ability to communicate and interact confidently with people outside one's own community.

Aesthetics

Language training has an aesthetic and artistic value.

Autonomy

If you do a language degree, your year abroad will show you have many good qualities such as independence etc.

Business

Businesses need languages.

Careers

A language broadens your choice of career.

Citizenship

Languages play a crucial role in defining the idea of citizenship.

Communication

Language learning helps to develop communication skills which are really vital if you're applying for a job or just in daily life, you need to be able to communicate.

Creativity

Plurilinguals as a group think in more flexible and divergent ways than monolinguals as a group: they innovate more, create more new knowledge and dreams.

Critical Thinking

Language learning develops criticality.

Culture

Learning a language really does broaden your awareness of different cultures – you learn things that you would otherwise never come across.

Democracy

Practical language skills and knowledge are crucial to participation in democratic practices.

Diversity

Language and cultural diversity maximises chances of human success and adaptability.

Economic, Social and Political Dimension

The languages deficit in NZ is becoming an urgent economic, social and political question.

Education

Many would argue that knowing a foreign language is part of what it means to be educated.

Employability

Places of employment see a language as a good skill therefore, it's a plus, something in your favour in a job interview.

English Mother Tongue

Learning another language improves your English language skills.

Equality

Language learning promotes equal opportunities.

Experiential Learning

During the year abroad on a language degree, for the first month or so every new day is a dilemma and that teaches you to become much more self-confident and independent.

Global English

Other countries are not learning English for our benefit.

Globalisation

New Zealand is no longer a monolingual state (if it ever was) and the realities of globalisation make the speaking of languages more important than ever.

Health

Learning and using a second language helps to protect the brain from the effects of aging.

Higher Education

A language degree is almost like a gift. It's an amazing advantage over other graduates. They're going to be working in English-speaking countries whereas you have the flexibility to go and work in a foreign-speaking country.

Historical Dimension

The loss of languages is tragic precisely because they are not interchangeable, precisely because they represent the distillation of the thoughts and communication of people over their entire history.

Identity

Languages are also the key to knowing other people.

Inclusion

Languages support communities.

Information Acquisition

As Internet use increases, so does the use of languages other than English and opportunities for English speakers to access information in other languages.

Intercultural Competence

Language learning, by definition, is an intercultural experience.

International Relations

Languages help to keep the peace between countries.

IT Skills

Language students have above average IT skills in comparison with the rest of the population, they can work to deadlines and be flexible and adaptable in dynamic situations.

Key Skills

The multidisciplinary and language-specific nature of programmes in languages and related studies encourages the development of a wide range of key transferable skills.

Knowledge

Language learning widens your knowledge of the world.

Language Awareness

Language learning provides insights into the nature of language and the roots of the English language.

Languages for Specific Purposes

Scientists do need languages: Vocationally-oriented language learning aims to provide learners with the language and cultural means enabling them to participate in the communication processes of an increasingly international world.

Learning

Learning another language demonstrates a willingness to learn and a willingness to look outside the box.

Learning Strategies

Language learning actually helps to develop your memory.

Lifelong Learning

Language learning can contribute to lifelong learning in an inclusive outward-looking society.

Language Learning Skills

Language learning helps to develop concentration and accurate listening.

Linguistics

Each language manifests a fresh coming-together of sounds, grammar and vocabulary to form a system of communication, which while demonstrating certain universal principles of organisation and structure, is an unprecedented event and a unique encapsulation of a world view.

Literature

A language gives you a wider knowledge of literature from different countries.

Less Widely Used Lesser Taught Languages

If you speak one of the less commonly learnt languages, you could have a rarity value in the job market.

Mobility

Languages enable you to travel to other countries and feel part of the culture, respect the people living there by making an effort to communicate and not feel like a tourist.

Multidisciplinary

Students of languages and related studies typically explore a variety of approaches to cultures, communities and societies by drawing on methodologies shared with other disciplines.

Multilingualism

Just as in biology, diversity is the norm. So it is with language multilingualism is the norm.

National Security

There is little awareness among many New Zealanders, along with many other native speakers of English, of the dangerous resentments which can be built up by unequal communication.

Networking

If you enjoy meeting people from different cultures, you'll be able to communicate with them on their terms if you learn languages.

New Zealand

New Zealand lags behind most of the rest of the world in learning languages and we need to catch up.

NZ Community Languages

Community languages have important contributions to make both to issues of equality and diversity within NZ society and to understanding our roles and responsibilities with the global community.

Personal and Social Development

Languages just set you free. If you look at a map and you notice how small New Zealand is in relation to the rest of the world and you look at the size of Latin America, and you think, you can go out there when perhaps the person next door to you...is just going to be working here for the rest of their lives...it's just like liberation.

Personal Satisfaction

It's fun – you feel really good when you can speak many different languages.

Practical Skills

Languages combine the intellectual with the practical.

Problem Solving

The situations that language undergraduates have encountered on their studies train their minds to always be on the look-out for solutions or other ways of expressing things.

Qualifications

A language is a strong qualification to have.

Residence Abroad

If you do a language degree you don't just learn to speak languages but you live in a different country which means that you are exposed to all kinds of different things and you pick up different skills just from independent living in a different place.

Secondary Sector

As students progress through their education at school, a modern language will be of benefit to their personal and educational development in a variety of ways.

Social Cohesion

If people can learn, understand and have an affinity with another language, cultural harmony can only be increased by that.

Study Abroad

A language gives you the option of studying abroad.

Sustainability

Any reduction of language diversity diminishes the adaptational strength of our species because it lowers the pool of knowledge from which we can draw.

Teaching

Language teaching has a crucial role to play in ensuring that communication in the emerging world community is fully multilingual and multicultural.

Teamwork

Language learning develops team-working skills.

Technology

Effective use of technology needs linguistic skills.

Translating

Language learning develops your translations skills.

Understanding

A language is a very rewarding challenge that helps you to better understand your own language and the cultures of other countries.

Uniqueness

Learning another language is itself unique. While requiring cultural and linguistic knowledge – intellectual mastery of new systems – comparable to other disciplines, the learning outcomes expected of a degree level student also include a sophisticated practical command of the foreign language.

Values

Language learning promotes tolerance and understanding.

Adapted from:
“Seven hundred reasons for studying languages”
Angela Gallagher-Brett
www.llas.ac.uk/700reasons