

www.**Breaking News English**.com

Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

Half of Europe's citizens are bilingual

URL: <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0509/050925-bilingual.html>

Today's contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
After Reading	6
Discussion	7
Speaking	8
Listening Gap Fill	9
Homework	10
Answers	11

Buy the Breaking News English.com Resource Book
"1,000 Ideas & Activities For Language Teachers"
\$9.99

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/book.html>

25 September, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Half of Europe's citizens are bilingual

BNE: Residents of the European Union (EU) are becoming increasingly better at languages. Almost 50 percent of the EU population reckon they can speak at least one foreign language very well, with that figure rising to nearly 80 percent for students. To celebrate its linguistic diversity and bilingual, trilingual or multilingual capabilities, a special day is set aside in the EU. September 26 is the European Day of Languages. The day's website* cites a Slovak proverb that says: "The number of languages you speak is the number of times you are human". This aims to encourage all Europeans to brush up on and advance their language skills. The website predicts that Europe's young generation "will fully contribute to enriching Europe's multilingual society".

The results of the "Eurobarometer" survey put Luxembourgers at the top of the language ability list. A staggering 99 percent of the Luxembourgish population is at least bilingual. Those with the poorest language skills are the Hungarians (29 percent) and British (30 percent). The survey also shows that English is the most widely spoken foreign language, used by more than a third of the population. It is followed by German (12 percent), which has for the first time usurped French (11 percent) for the second spot. European enlargement to incorporate former communist countries has elevated Russian to fourth place – tied with Spanish. The EU spends \$36 million a year on language programs.

*<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1179&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en#fn1>

WARM-UPS

1. MY ENGLISH: Chart the history of your English language learning over the years on a piece of paper. Can you remember your first lesson and teacher? What have been the low points and high points? Are you happy with your current level? In pairs / groups, talk about your charted histories.

2. MULTILINGUAL: Talk with your partner(s) about which of the following languages you would really like to learn / know and why? Would you like to be fluent, have a working knowledge or know enough to survive? Would you also like to be able to read and write in these languages?

- German
- French
- Russian
- Spanish
- Chinese
- Arabic
- Korean
- Japanese
- Urdu
- Swahili

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

European Union / languages / students / diversity / bilingualism / special days / proverbs / brushing up on skills / German / French / Russian / communist countries

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. ENGLISH: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the English language. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. WEAK POINTS: In pairs / groups, talk about your weak points in English. How do these weak points make you feel? What have you done to make these points less weak? How long have you focused on improving the weak points? Do they affect your ability to communicate, listen or read?

6. LANGUAGE OPINIONS: How far do you agree with these opinions on language? Talk about them with your partner(s).

- a. The number of languages you speak is the number of times you are human.
- b. If the whole world learned English, there'd be fewer communication problems.
- c. To be successful in the world, it's now better to learn Chinese.
- d. English should become the official world language.
- e. The English language is a form of imperialism. It erodes other cultures.
- f. It's a sin for any nation not to make its citizens at least bilingual.
- g. There should be just one world language in the future.
- h. My mother tongue is too beautiful to die.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Europeans are become increasingly better at other languages. | T / F |
| b. Eighty percent of European students are bilingual. | T / F |
| c. September 26 is the official European Day For the English Language. | T / F |
| d. A European proverb says you are not human unless you are bilingual. | T / F |
| e. Ninety-nine percent of Luxembourgers are at least bilingual. | T / F |
| f. Britons are amongst the top of bilingual speakers. | T / F |
| g. French is the lingua franca among Europeans. | T / F |
| h. Russian has lost ground on other European languages. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------|
| a. reckon | reveals |
| b. set aside | improving |
| c. cites | overtaken |
| d. brush up | allocated |
| e. enriching | whopping |
| f. staggering | forks out |
| g. shows | improve |
| h. usurped | bumped up |
| i. elevated | quotes |
| j. spends | figure |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. becoming increasingly | aside in the EU |
| b. ...with that figure rising | skills are the Hungarians |
| c. a special day is set | 99 percent |
| d. The day's website cites | spoken foreign language |
| e. Europeans to brush up on and | a Slovak proverb that says... |
| f. A staggering | former communist countries |
| g. Those with the poorest language | advance their language skills |
| h. English is the most widely | better at languages |
| i. ...which has for the first time | to nearly 80 percent for students |
| j. enlargement to incorporate | usurped French |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Half of Europe's citizens are bilingual

BNE: _____ of the European Union (EU) are becoming increasingly better at languages. Almost 50 percent of the EU population _____ they can speak at least one foreign language very well, with that figure _____ to nearly 80 percent for students. To celebrate its linguistic _____ and bilingual, trilingual or multilingual capabilities, a special day is _____ aside in the EU. September 26 is the European Day of Languages. The day's website cites a Slovak _____ that says: "The number of languages you speak is the number of times you are human". This aims to encourage all Europeans to _____ up on and advance their language skills. The website predicts that Europe's young generation "will fully _____ to enriching Europe's multilingual society".

The results of the "Eurobarometer" survey _____ Luxembourgers at the top of the _____ ability list. A _____ 99 percent of the Luxembourgish population is at least bilingual. Those with the _____ language skills are the Hungarians (29 percent) and British (30 percent). The survey also shows that English is the most _____ spoken foreign language, used by more than a third of the population. It is followed by German (12 percent), which has for the first time _____ French (11 percent) for the second spot. European enlargement to _____ former communist countries has elevated Russian to fourth place – _____ with Spanish. The EU spends \$36 million a year on language programs.

diversity

proverb

reckon

contribute

brush

residents

rising

set

poorest

tied

language

usurped

staggering

widely

incorporate

put

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'foreign' and 'language'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "ENGLISH" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about learning English and other languages.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- increasingly
- figure
- capabilities
- cites
- brush
- enriching
- top
- poorest
- widely
- usurped
- incorporate
- tied

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Do you like reading articles about language?
- d. How would you describe your linguistic abilities?
- e. What other languages would you like to learn?
- f. Do you agree with the Slovak proverb that says: "The number of languages you speak is the number of times you are human"?
- g. What are your feelings toward your own language?
- h. What are your feelings toward English?
- i. How necessary is English for you?
- j. What do you like most about English?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Are you surprised at anything you read in the article?
- d. Do you think British people are disadvantaged by not being bilingual?
- e. How did English come to be the most widely spoken foreign language in Europe?
- f. Do you think Chinese will one day become the world's most important foreign language to study?
- g. Do you think everyone in the world should study English?
- h. What other world languages are important and why?
- i. Do you think the world should learn your language?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

STUDY AID: In pairs / groups, give each other advice on how to improve different areas of your English. In the middle column, write down the things you do to help the areas in the left hand column. Tell these to your partner(s). Write down any good ideas you hear in the right column.

LANGUAGE AREAS	THINGS I DO	GOOD IDEAS I HEARD
Spelling		
Pronunciation		
Listening		
Vocabulary		
Speaking		
Grammar		
Writing		

Change partners and tell each other the good ideas you heard. Will you change your study tactics and use these ideas?

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Half of Europe's citizens are bilingual

BNE: Residents of the European Union (EU) are becoming _____ better at languages. Almost 50 percent of the EU population _____ they can speak at least one foreign language very well, with that figure rising to nearly 80 percent for students. To celebrate its linguistic _____ and bilingual, trilingual or multilingual _____, a special day is set aside in the EU. September 26 is the European Day of Languages. The day's website _____ a Slovak proverb that says: "The number of languages you speak is the number of times you are human". This aims to encourage all Europeans to _____ and advance their language skills. The website _____ that Europe's young generation "will fully contribute to _____ Europe's multilingual society".

The results of the "Eurobarometer" _____ put Luxembourgers at the top of the language _____ list. A staggering 99 percent of the Luxembourgish population is at least bilingual. Those with the _____ language skills are the Hungarians (29 percent) and British (30 percent). The survey also shows that English is the most _____ spoken foreign language, used by more than a third of the population. It is followed by German (12 percent), which has for the first time _____ French (11 percent) for the second _____. European enlargement to _____ former communist countries has elevated Russian to fourth place - _____ with Spanish. The EU spends \$36 million a year on language programs.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the European Day of Languages. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. MY LANGUAGE: Make a poster about your language. Describe its history, where it's spoken and what it means to you. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to your government about the amount of money it spends on English language education. Write also about the quality of English language education. Give your government advice on its future language policy. Read your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. T c. F d. F e. T f. F g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------|
| a. reckon | figure |
| b. set aside | allocated |
| c. cites | quotes |
| d. brush up | improve |
| e. enriching | improving |
| f. staggering | whopping |
| g. shows | reveals |
| h. usurped | overtaken |
| i. elevated | bumped up |
| j. spends | forks out |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. becoming increasingly | better at languages |
| b. ...with that figure rising | to nearly 80 percent for students |
| c. a special day is set | aside in the EU |
| d. The day's website cites | a Slovak proverb that says... |
| e. Europeans to brush up on and | advance their language skills |
| f. A staggering | 99 percent |
| g. Those with the poorest language | skills are the Hungarians |
| h. English is the most widely | spoken foreign language |
| i. ...which has for the first time | usurped French |
| j. enlargement to incorporate | former communist countries |

GAP FILL:

Half of Europe's citizens are bilingual

BNE: Residents of the European Union (EU) are becoming increasingly better at languages. Almost 50 percent of the EU population **reckon** they can speak at least one foreign language very well, with that figure **rising** to nearly 80 percent for students. To celebrate its linguistic **diversity** and bilingual, trilingual or multilingual capabilities, a special day is **set** aside in the EU. September 26 is the European Day of Languages. The day's website cites a Slovak **proverb** that says: "The number of languages you speak is the number of times you are human". This aims to encourage all Europeans to **brush** up on and advance their language skills. The website predicts that Europe's young generation "will fully **contribute** to enriching Europe's multilingual society".

The results of the "Eurobarometer" survey **put** Luxembourgers at the top of the **language** ability list. A **staggering** 99 percent of the Luxembourgish population is at least bilingual. Those with the **poorest** language skills are the Hungarians (29 percent) and British (30 percent). The survey also shows that English is the most **widely** spoken foreign language, used by more than a third of the population. It is followed by German (12 percent), which has for the first time **usurped** French (11 percent) for the second spot. European enlargement to **incorporate** former communist countries has elevated Russian to fourth place – **tied** with Spanish. The EU spends \$36 million a year on language programs.