

## Re: French native speakers and foreign languages

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- *From:* "Marc Frisch" <[marcfrisch@xxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:marcfrisch@xxxxxxxxxxx)>
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Marc> I disagree, the (French-speaking) Swiss I've met are not  
Marc> much more fluent in German than the French living close to  
Marc> the German border.

Such as the Alsatians? Hey, Alsatians speaks a German dialect. It's  
not surprising that they can pick up German easily. They learn French  
because French is the language of administration there.

That's not the whole truth though, among the young Alsatian is rarely  
spoken. I've met maybe a dozen Alsatians in their mid-twenties who  
don't speak Alsatian, but no one who actually speaks it. They may have  
picked up some words or expressions from their grand-parents, but with  
their parents they speak French. As with other minority languages in  
France such as Breton, it's a dying language... (especially as there is  
hardly any effort to revive it). However, they learn German quite well,  
because it's traditionally the first or second foreign language at  
school and they cross the border to buy cigarettes...

Marc> And most (young) Dutch I meet don't speak another foreign  
Marc> language than English. To my mind, most young people today  
Marc> think that English is THE world language and knowing it well  
Marc> is absolutely sufficient.

Necessary but not sufficient. Why is Mandarin gaining popularity as a  
L2?

Is it really? Where? Right now, there's a hype around Mandarin, because  
the Chinese economy is booming, and everybody wants to do business with  
China. But for the average  
European it's just not a very useful language compared to French,  
English, Spanish, or German.

Marc> To some extent, they are right: I'm working in a scientific  
Marc> field and English really is all you need to  
Marc> communicate.

Re: French native speakers and foreign languages

That's true. But as a scientist, you always want to learn more and quickly. Learning one more language exposes you to one more repertoire of information. Doesn't that sound attractive?

It sure does. I can only speak for mathematics and I think there not too many people left that do not publish in English except some Russians. And their work is usually quickly translated to English, because otherwise it will not get noticed internationally.

The point is that the time you spend on learning a language is time lost for your research.

I like learning foreign languages, and I'm currently trying to learn another, but I consider it to be a pastime, which will not have too many benefits for my professional life.

Best regards,  
Marc

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