

READING**READING PASSAGE 1**

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 1 - 13**, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.

Learning a Second Language

Various studies of second language learning have all shown that the benefits of learning a second language are much broader than simply the ability to speak in another language. Research affirms the importance of second language education regarding intellectual potential, scholastic achievement, first language skills, citizenship and the economy.

Learning a second language in this context is not learning a second language as a natural process when one acquires a first language. After childhood, the areas of the brain that are responsible for language acquisition become more fixed, and the process of picking up additional languages becomes more academic and less organic. The specific context concerns a person who has learned his or her first language automatically and is now learning a new language through a teacher, self-teaching or teaching oneself with a book or maybe online.

School children can get unexpected benefits from learning a foreign language. Educational research shows that results in English and Science are better for students who study one. The reasons for this are not altogether clear: perhaps the study skills acquired and used for studying another language also strengthen study skills used in other areas and it could also strengthen the ability to analyse and interpret information. It also seems that knowledge of the grammar of students' native language is often made clearer to them through explicitly learning another language's grammar. A foreign language is a whole new system with distinct rules, etymology, and meaning, which are just a few of the complexities of a language. Learning a new one puts the brain to task by recognising this new language structure. As the brain works out meaning and makes full use of this new arsenal to express ideas, it seems that it sharpens skills on reading, negotiating, and problem-solving.

Multi-tasking is stressful to those who are not skilled at it. People who are multilingual are proficient at slipping from one language system to another and using totally different language mechanics. This is very distracting and demanding work, not only for the tongue and language faculties, but also especially for the brain. People who have developed multilingual ability are highly proficient multi-taskers and commit very few errors when juggling various activities.