

UK leader tells schools - Mandarin, not French

10th December, 2013



Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron is implementing a big change in the languages taught in UK schools. On a visit to China, he told journalists that British schools should teach

Mandarin instead of French and German. He told his hosts that he plans to double the number of students studying Chinese in British schools to 400,000 in the next three years. He will also provide subsidies to schools that start teaching Mandarin. He believes stronger educational ties with China are a necessary element in keeping Britain competitive in the Chinese market. He said: "I want Britain linked up to the world's fast-growing economies, and that includes our young people learning the languages to seal tomorrow's business deals."

Mr Cameron explained to journalists the importance of introducing Mandarin in UK schools. He said: "By the time the children born today leave school, China is set to be the world's largest economy, so it's time to look beyond the traditional focus on French and German and get many more children learning Mandarin." The initiative includes a tie-up with the British Council and the Chinese office for teaching Mandarin as a foreign language. They have already signed an agreement to double the number of Chinese language assistants in UK schools. The British Council puts Mandarin in the top five most important languages for British children to study to improve their job prospects.

Sources: Daily Mail / Financial Times / Belfast Telegraph

Writing

Compare and contrast the importance of English and Mandarin.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

big change / journalists / hosts / subsidies / competitive / learning / business deals / importance / traditional / focus / initiative / foreign language / double / assistants

True / False

- David Cameron is removing French from the curriculum in UK schools. T / F
- The British Prime Minister was speaking to reporters in China. T / F
- There will be 400,000 Mandarin teachers in Britain by 2016. T / F
- Mr Cameron said Britain is one of the world's fast-growing economies. T / F
- Cameron said China will become the world's biggest economy. T / F
- The British leader said more children should also learn German. T / F
- The number of Chinese language assistants in UK schools will double. T / F
- The British Council said Mandarin will help people find jobs. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. implementing | a. reporters |
| 2. provide | b. agreements |
| 3. ties | c. further on than |
| 4. seal | d. links |
| 5. deals | e. carrying out |
| 6. journalists | f. emphasis |
| 7. beyond | g. penned / inked |
| 8. focus | h. offer |
| 9. signed | i. chances |
| 10. prospects | j. conclude |

Discussion – Student A

- What springs to mind when you hear the word 'Mandarin'?
- How important is Mandarin?
- Are the languages taught in schools in your country very useful?
- How important are French and German?
- Will countries whose schools teach Mandarin do better in the world?
- What other languages would you like to study?
- Why is learning another language good for us?
- Are young people lucky today with the language-learning opportunities available?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. David Cameron is implementing | a. ties with China |
| 2. he plans to | b. the traditional focus |
| 3. stronger educational | c. business deals |
| 4. linked up to the world's fast- | d. assistants |
| 5. seal tomorrow's | e. introducing Mandarin |
| 6. the importance of | f. world's largest economy |
| 7. set to be the | g. growing economies |
| 8. it's time to look beyond | h. a big change |
| 9. language | i. prospects |
| 10. study to improve their job | j. double the number |

Discussion – Student B

- How important is Mandarin compared with English?
- How will China becoming the biggest economy change the world?
- Why do you think British schools traditionally taught French and German?
- Do you think Mandarin will become the world's global language?
- Have you noticed Mandarin becoming more important in your country?
- How important is your language in the world?
- Would you like a job in which you need to speak another language?
- What questions would you like to ask a Mandarin teacher?

Spelling

- tgipmelenin a big change
- he told nrstsoujila
- provide dsbiseisu to schools
- stronger dlaceontaiu ties
- a necessary eteemnl
- the world's fast-growing meioeosc
- the importance of rcniugdotin Mandarin
- look beyond the attdraliino focus
- The ieittaivin includes a tie-up
- Chinese language sassasitnt
- study to porvmei
- job pcpsteors

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. c	3. d	4. j	5. b
6. a	7. c	8. f	9. g	10. i

Role Play

Role A – Mandarin

You think Mandarin is the most important language to learn. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what problems there are with their language. Also, tell them which is the least important of these (and why): Arabic, Spanish or English.

Role B – Arabic

You think Arabic is the most important language to learn. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what problems there are with their language. Also, tell them which is the least important of these (and why): Mandarin, Spanish or English.

Role C – Spanish

You think Spanish is the most important language to learn. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what problems there are with their language. Also, tell them which is the least important of these (and why): Arabic, Mandarin or English.

Role D – English

You think English is the most important language to learn. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what problems there are with their language. Also, tell them which is the least important of these (and why): Arabic, Spanish or Mandarin.

Speaking -

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the language you most want to study at the top. Change partners often.

- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| • Spanish | • Mandarin |
| • Hindi | • Japanese |
| • Russian | • Portuguese |
| • Arabic | • Swahili |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	F	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.