



# Wirral Multilingual

The limits of my language are the limits of my world



## Local organisation aims to increase cultural awareness

Do you speak one or more foreign languages, either privately or professionally? Evidence suggests that if the answer is no, then you could be missing out...

A recent survey of senior managers found that 61% believe not knowing the local language is the biggest obstacle in the way of successfully conducting business negotiations abroad, yet only 37% of those questioned said their company actually offered language training to their employees. "There is an image of Brits abroad - and amongst our European neighbours in particular - that we are reluctant language learners, and assume we can easily get by simply speaking English wherever we go", says Stuart Burke, founder of 'Wirral Multilingual', a new venture based in Hoylake that was set up to promote the world of cultural diversity - and opportunity - that exists on our doorstep.

Unfortunately, it seems that this rather negative stereotype is backed up by the facts... Traditional A-level disciplines such as French and German are in "freefall", following a record decline in entry rates over the last decade. According to the most recent official figures, currently about one in ten state primary schools offers no language lessons at all, and a further 20% only offer it to some year groups.

The Government has taken heed of this alarming drop in language teaching - particularly noticeable at secondary school level - and has moved to make languages a requirement from age seven, as part of a new primary National Curriculum taking effect in 2014. More than half of pupils taking GCSEs in 2013 will be doing a language, compared to 43% in 2010. "Learning another language is good for young children and it will give them more options in education and work [in later life]" said Michael Gove (Education Secretary) in June; a statement with which Stuart whole-heartedly agrees: "I have always enjoyed learning and speaking other languages, and it has certainly opened up my eyes to the rich tapestry of cultures around the world. I would encourage everybody to learn at least one foreign language, from the earliest possible age. But it is also never too late to start!" It has been proven that countries with high-performing education systems begin teaching foreign languages at a much younger age than in England. New Zealand and Singapore teach languages from age six, and Finland at age nine. In Hong Kong, English is compulsory from the start of primary school.

The aim of 'Wirral Multilingual' is to enable Wirral residents to learn a new language, improve their current language skills, or meet and chat with other nationalities. It is also expected that the service will provide Wirral-based companies with access to professional translation/interpreting services, a source of multilingual staff, and the tools to expand their business operations across Europe and beyond. For more information, please email Stuart on [wirralmultilingual@gmail.com](mailto:wirralmultilingual@gmail.com).



Wirral Multilingual was born out of a passion for learning about other languages and cultures from around the globe, and aims to promote the world of cultural diversity - and opportunity - that exists on the doorstep of those currently living and working in the Wirral Peninsula.

For more information, please contact Stuart Burke at **Wirral Multilingual** by phone on **07956 120474** or by email on [wirralmultilingual@gmail.com](mailto:wirralmultilingual@gmail.com) Website address is [www.wirralmultilingual.weebly.com](http://www.wirralmultilingual.weebly.com)