

# Introduction: Learning Languages

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NLN 101 Language & Writing Skills-2

## 1 Things needed for every class

- Notebook + Pen
- Phones (fully charged!) + Headphones

## 2 Every tongue that a people speaks is valuable

“A language is a dialect with an army and a navy” — Uriel Weinreich

1. The language of the powerful is often the language of governance, commerce, and education. It is considered a language while every other tongue/code is considered what is called, a “dialect”.
2. Is your home language considered is “language” or a “dialect”?

## 3 We all have Language

Language is the most human thing about us.

1. Humans are the only species with the capacity to express themselves, and think and communicate **novelly**.
2. And we usually do this best in the language that we learn as children, in our homes, speaking to our families and in our neighbourhood and village/town.
3. Sometimes these are different languages. Then as children we grow up learning more than one language. So we are **bilingual** or **multilingual**.
4. We may be equally comfortable in all these languages.
  - Are you equally comfortable in all the languages you speak? What about English?

## 4 Learning language as an adult and as a child

1. The way a child learns language is not exactly the same way an adult learns language. Children are believed to have some “advantage”.
2. The scientific study of human biology shows that the brain is most “plastic” before attaining puberty. This means that the brain is highly capable of adapting to its changing environment, with neural connections in the brain easily wiring and re-wiring themselves.
  - **Think about the activities you have heard people say one must learn early or in childhood.**
3. This is also considered the best time to learn languages.
4. Every language one does not have the opportunity to grasp as a child from their natural environment, one will be relatively less comfortable in and will be less proficient in.
5. This is natural and true of every language, and not just English.

## 5 The BBC article

1. Read this article.
2. What are key points it makes?
3. Does it tell you what I have told you so far in class? Or does it contradict it?