Unit 2 Language and culture

Task 1 Speaking

Think of answers for the questions below.
   a) How easy is it to learn a language?
   b) Which languages are spoken most in the world?
   c) How many languages are endangered?
   d) What is the best way to learn a language?

Match the answers 1-4 with the questions a-d from above.
 1. It is claimed that 2 500 languages are in danger of disappearing. Some have less than 1 000 speakers.
 2. This varies from person to person – no single way has been found. If you understand your learning style, you can identify the way that works best for you.
 3. The most spoken languages are Mandarin Chinese and English. Spanish is the third most common language.
 4. It is easy to learn a language that is similar to your own. Therefore, e.g. a Polish speaker will find Slavic languages easier to learn than others.

Task 2 Reading
   a) *At what age did you begin learning English? Do you think there is an age when you can learn more easily?*
   b) *Read the text below. Does it suggest a correlation between language learning and age?*

   Researchers constantly disagree about age and the ability to learn language. One theory is that there is a ´critical period´ and if you try to learn after this period it is more difficult. Others disagree and believe it is other factors that make it more difficult. One study from 1989 investigated how quickly immigrants learnt a language and found that those who began youngest were able to learn the most.

   c) *Read the text below about a study of language learning, then draw a bar chart and complete it with information from the text.*

   The bar chart illustrates the results of an English test taken by four groups of immigrants, all of whom arrived in the USA when they were different ages. The groups were made up of those who arrived in the USA between ages 3 and 7, those aged 8 to 10, a third group covering 11 to 15 and <u>finally</u> those who emigrated after the age of 17.

   Overall, it is evident that the immigrants who were younger at their time of arrival achieved a much greater level of proficiency in the language. Those who were 3 to 7 when they emigrated scored an average of 98 percent in the test, the highest overall outcome. <u>However</u>, this level of proficiency dropped rapidly for those who arrived age 17 or over; the oldest group achieved an average score of 76 per cent, which is the lowest proportion. This trend is further supported by the scores of the other age groups; those who arrived aged 8 to 10 <u>also</u> did better than those arriving aged 11 to 15, achieving 93 per cent and 85 per cent respectively.

In conclusion, we can see that the bar chart demonstrates a consistent decrease in the proficiency levels of immigrants according to their age on arrival. It seems the younger they arrive, the quicker they are likely to learn English to a proficient degree.

d) *Put the underlined words from the text above in the correct place in the table below. Then add the words from below.*

although – as – but – despite – due to – for example – for instance – firstly – furthermore – in addition to – in order to – moreover – nevertheless – next – on the other hand – since – so – subsequently – such as – therefore – unless – whereas – while

Ordering ideas	Additions	Contrast	Concession
Showing reason	Showing result	Showing purpose	Exemplification

e) *Complete the sentences with an appropriate linking word or expression. More than one answer may be possible.*
   1. It is hard to learn a language. _____ many people make the effort.
   2. _____ he frequently travelled abroad, he never spoke a word of a foreign language.
   3. _____ he wants to study science, he is taking biology, chemistry and physics at school.
   4. The population has risen dramatically and _____ there is pressure on housing.
   5. _____ learning various sports, the children said they hadn´t got much exercise.
   6. You can study a number of courses, _____ art or interior design.
   7. The exam was tough _____ she passed it with flying colours.
   8. Students will not be excused from class _____ they have a doctor´s note.
   9. _____ James is very good at languages, his brother Tom is absolutely hopeless.
   10. The train was late _____ snow.

f) *Discuss. Learning a second language is often seen as important nowadays but many people fail to do so. What measures would help more people to learn?*

Extra task: Parallel change

e.g. "the younger they arrive, the quicker they are likely to learn"

Study the examples below:

The sooner, the better.
The more, the merrier.
The better the sleep, the more rested the mind.
The better we sleep, the more rested our minds.

What might these sayings refer to?
   a) The stronger, the better.
   b) The more you give, the more you receive.

Complete the gaps.
   a) The more you learn, the ………. you earn.
   b) The more you pay, the ……… quality you get.
   c) The older we get, the ………….. we are.