

## Unit 11 Describing a table

### Task 1 Speaking

#### A) 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?

#### B) 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 Are the tips for writing a description of a table true or false?

1. The introduction should restate the question in your own words.
2. You should include everything from the table in the answer.
3. You should think of reasons for the statistics and include them in your answer.
4. You should use a variety of language for comparing.
5. You must always include a conclusion.

### Task 3 Speaking

#### A) The table below gives information about some of the world's most studied languages. Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features and make comparisons where relevant.

Language	Number of people learning the language	Number of native speakers	Number of countries where the language is spoken
English	1.5 billion	527 million	101
French	82 million	118 million	51
Chinese	30 million	1.39 billion	33
Spanish	14.5 million	389 million	31
Italian	8 million	67 million	29
Japanese	3 million	123 million	25

**B) Highlight useful phrases for descriptions in the sample answer below:**

The table illustrates some interesting facts about some of the world's most popular languages to learn. It allows comparisons between the number of people who study a language versus those who speak it as a mother tongue and shows how many countries have speakers of each of the languages.

The prominence of English is striking. 1.5 billion people are learning English compared to only 82 million studying the second most popular language to learn, French. English is spoken in 101 countries, roughly twice as many as French and three times more than Chinese. English is the only language with more learners than native speakers.

In terms of native speakers, Chinese is the most spoken language, more than double English with 1.39 billion. It is the third most popular language to learn with 30 million learners. Spanish has over five times more native speakers than Italian, but proportionally fewer learners at 14.5 million for Spanish and 8 million for Italian. As for Japanese, it is the least studied language of those given with 3 million learners.

Overall, more people are learning English than the other languages combined and English is spoken in the highest number of countries. However, Chinese has by far the greatest number of native speakers. There seems to be little correlation between how many native speakers there are of a language and the number of learners, but there is a stronger link between the number of learners and how many countries have speakers.

*Please note: This page was designed for writing practice only. Information and statistics in the table may not be accurate.*

**C) Match the words and phrases with the same meaning.**

- |                  |                            |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. altogether    | a. 50 per cent fewer       |
| 2. almost half   | b. double the number of    |
| 3. half as many  | c. combined                |
| 4. twice as many | d. roughly half the number |
| 5. a correlation | e. more than               |
| 6. over          | f. a relationship          |

**Task 4 Can you add any other phrases to the list?**

- making comparisons, e.g. *slightly more than, by far the highest, as ... as, .....*
- approximating, e.g. *nearly, almost, .....*
- stating what you are referring to, e.g. *in terms of ... , as for ... , .....*

### Phrases of Comparison and Contrast

Comparison	Contrast
one similarity	one difference
another similarity	another difference
both	conversely
like	in contrast
likewise	unlike
similarly	while
in a similar fashion	whereas

(adapted from <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing>)

### Task 5 Study the information in the table and use it for writing a description of approx. 160 words.

#### An estimate of global water distribution

(Percents are rounded, so will not add to 100)

Water source	Water volume, in cubic miles	Water volume, in cubic kilometers	Percent of freshwater	Percent of total water
Oceans, Seas, & Bays	321,000,000	1,338,000,000	--	96.54
Ice caps, Glaciers, & Permanent Snow	5,773,000	24,064,000	68.7	1.74
Groundwater	5,614,000	23,400,000	--	1.69
<i>Fresh</i>	<i>2,526,000</i>	<i>10,530,000</i>	<i>30.1</i>	<i>0.76</i>
<i>Saline</i>	<i>3,088,000</i>	<i>12,870,000</i>	--	<i>0.93</i>
Soil Moisture	3,959	16,500	0.05	0.001
Ground Ice & Permafrost	71,970	300,000	0.86	0.022
Lakes	42,320	176,400	--	0.013
<i>Fresh</i>	<i>21,830</i>	<i>91,000</i>	<i>0.26</i>	<i>0.007</i>
<i>Saline</i>	<i>20,490</i>	<i>85,400</i>	--	<i>0.006</i>
Atmosphere	3,095	12,900	0.04	0.001
Swamp Water	2,752	11,470	0.03	0.0008
Rivers	509	2,120	0.006	0.0002
Biological Water	269	1,120	0.003	0.0001

(Source: Igor Shiklomanov's chapter "World fresh water resources" in Peter H. Gleick (editor), 1993, *Water in Crisis: A Guide to the World's Fresh Water Resources* (Oxford University Press, New York).