



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Episode 31:

“It’s Never Too Late to Learn English”

Duration: 12:56

How to use this transcript:

1. Print this transcript:

We try to reduce our paper consumption, but we really recommend that you print out this document.

2. Write on it and take notes:

Circle, highlight and note anything that you want. We have even provided space for you to do so!

3. Listen first **without** the transcript:

Don’t worry about understanding every single word. Just focus on training your ears to the sound of English.

4. Listen again **with** the transcript:

Listen a second time with the transcript, pausing whenever you want to

00:00	<p>Hello there, dear listeners! Welcome to <i>The Déclis Anglais Podcast</i>, my name is Tom, your teacher from Déclis Anglais. And as usual I am very glad to have you here with me today.</p> <p>If you're new to the podcast, this is <i>the</i> podcast for intermediate francophone learners of English. And as with every episode of this podcast, there is a downloadable transcript available that will help you follow everything we cover here today. So, sit back, relax and enjoy this episode.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
00:44	<p>Today, we're talking about an interesting topic related to language learning: When is the best time in our lives to learn a language? And also: Is it ever too late to learn English?</p> <p>If we don't learn a language (like English) as a child, does that mean that we will never be able to master that language? And especially, is there a point in our lives where it is completely pointless, <i>useless</i> to learn a foreign language?</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
01:19	<p>So, whenever I talk to my French friends and acquaintances about languages, I am <i>always</i> told how French people are terrible at languages. <i>Tu vois, Tom, les Français on est vraiment nuls en langues, on parle l'anglais comme des vaches espagnoles...</i> etc. (I love that expression, by the way!)</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

01:38	<p>Well, believe it or not, compared to the British, French people aren't so bad when it comes to foreign languages. Back in 2016, a Eurostat study found that in France, around 60% of people aged between 25 and 64 years of age could speak a second language. Not necessarily like a native speaker, but they could hold a basic conversation. 60%, that's not bad at all, is it?</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
02:13	<p>Now, compare this to the results from the United Kingdom. In the same survey, they found that only around 34% of British people aged between 25 and 64 years old could speak another language <i>other</i> than English. Only 34%! That's crazy, isn't it? That's nearly half of the French result.</p> <p>We see just how bad this is when we look at the results of some Scandinavian countries like Norway or Sweden. In the same survey, Sweden scored an amazing 96.6%. 96.6%, that's amazing! And it's also one third higher than the French result.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
03:06	<p>So, why are France and Britain so far behind countries like Norway and Sweden? Well, I think there are a lot of reasons why, certainly too many for today's episode of <i>The Déclit Anglais Podcast</i>. But one reason that many people give is related the French and British education systems. Basically, French and British school children start learning languages too late. And even then, the approach to language teaching is substandard, it isn't good enough, it's substandard.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

03:45	<p>I know that I started learning French and German very late. I first started learning German at the age of 12, and it was only compulsory for 3 years. A year later at 13 I started learning French, and that was only compulsory for 2 years. Afterwards, you could drop those subjects, you didn't need to continue learning French and German.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
04:12	<p>We were lucky, we had very good teachers, but we only had about 2 hours per week. We had the basics, but after only 2 or 3 years of study, most of my classmates stopped learning languages. And now they don't remember much, maybe just:</p> <p><i>Guten Tag, Aufwiedersehen, un, deux, trois, merci beaucoup...</i></p> <p>Hardly proficient, you know?</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
04:35	<p>So, as many people would agree, the earlier we start learning a language, the better. I was unfortunate to start so late. But children who are exposed to foreign languages at a young age learn much more quickly than adults. When we are children our brains are like language learning machines, a child's brain is like a sponge (<i>une éponge</i>), a sponge that absorbs vocabulary. That is why we try not to swear (<i>dire des gros mots, jurer</i>) swear in front of young children! So for children, the earlier they start the better.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

05:19	<p>As many of you know already, I currently live in Alsace, just on the border with Germany and Switzerland. In Alsace, certain schools give lessons in German to promote bilingualism in the region. It really warms my heart to see this, to see young children being introduced to a foreign language so young because it will open so many doors to them. Not only professionally or culturally, but also because learning a language at a young age develops the learning centre of the brain (<i>le cerveau</i>) the brain. I've heard people say:</p> <p><i>Pourquoi est-ce qu'ils apprennent l'allemand ? Il vaut mieux qu'ils apprennent l'anglais, non ?</i></p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
06:02	<p>Honestly, when you are a young child IT DOES NOT MATTER which language you learn. The children could learn English, German, Chinese or Swahili, it makes no difference because the results are the same. The children will all receive an enormous boost to the learning centres of their brains. When kids learn languages young, their brains create the neurological connections - the infrastructure - necessary to learn one language, two languages, three or four...</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
06:38	<p>It's like an athlete who runs marathons. Ok, they are a runner but their cardiovascular fitness would maybe mean they could easily start bicycling or swimming. So a French child who starts learning German will learn English easier later. And that same child who knows German and English will find learning Russian even easier, and Turkish even easier than that. It's like a snowball effect (<i>un effet boule de neige</i>) you see?</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

07:12	<p>Ok, so what about us unfortunate people who didn't get to learn a foreign language as children? Does that mean we are condemned (<i>condamnés</i>) condemned to never be good at languages? Does that mean you will always find English difficult?</p> <p>Well, there's some good news and some bad news. The good news is that your brain is just as capable of learning languages at 50 years old as it was at 5 years old. Our brains never lose their ability to learn and acquire new skills. The bad news is that we do lose this childhood ability to acquire language so easily. Let's say that a child can acquire a new word by repeating it 3 times. Well for an adult it might be, for example, 10 times. Ok? So it's not impossible to remember the new word, but an adult might need to apply three times the effort than a child. See?</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
08:22	<p>Furthermore, it is true that as we move from childhood into adulthood that our brains start to make certain features more concrete. I'm not a neurologist by any means, but I have read studies that suggest it becomes increasingly difficult to speak a foreign language with a good accent as we get older. So let's imagine you start learning English at 30, you can still achieve a really high level in English and be comfortable speaking. But you will find it much more difficult to hide your French accent than if you had started as a child. So again, not impossible, but much, much more difficult.</p> <p><i>Bon, c'est très bon à savoir Tom. Mais moi je serai bientôt retraité, ou je suis déjà retraité... Cela ne vaut plus la peine d'apprendre l'anglais à mon âge, non ?</i></p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

09:21 Well, let's forget about travel or your private life. Let's talk about the health of your brain (*votre cerveau*). After retiring from a long working life full of activity, some people fall into the trap of inactivity. They suddenly have a lot of free time but don't know what to do with it. (I think many of us can sympathise with that following the lockdowns in 2020!). Inactivity is *poison* for the human brain and body. When it comes to our brains: "You use it or you lose it!" The less you use your brain, the weaker it becomes. But the more you use it, the stronger it becomes. This is especially important in later life.

(Ecrivez vos notes ici).

10:19 Learning a new language forces us to use our brains and to continue developing new neurological pathways that keep our brains healthy into old age. It has been proven time and time again that learning languages later in life slows down the progression of Alzheimer's disease. The health of our brains is so, so precious. We need healthy brains in order to live and function normally, and to be present for our families and friends for as long as possible. When we look at language learning from this perspective, we can see how studying English (or any other language) is not just for travel but can have serious health benefits (*des bienfaits sur la santé*) health benefits.

(Ecrivez vos notes ici).

<p>11:13</p>	<p>If keeping your brain healthy is not strong enough motivation for you, I don't know what is! You could therefore argue that the BEST time to learn another language isn't necessarily when you are a child. From a mental health standpoint, the best time is actually from your 50s or 60s.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
<p>11:34</p>	<p>So, to wrap up, to end this episode, dear listeners, I would like to really remind you that even if (like me) you didn't learn another language like English at school, hope is not lost. I have had students ranging from 6 years old to 65 years old – all of them have been able to make progress in English.</p> <p><i>Les seuls élèves que j'ai eus qui n'aient pas fait de progrès, étaient ceux qui ne faisaient aucun effort et qui espéraient que les progrès allaient tomber du ciel.</i></p> <p>Big mistake!</p> <p>It is never too late for anyone who is motivated and willing to make an effort.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
<p>12:17</p>	<p>And on that note dear listeners, it's time to end this episode of <i>The Déclic Anglais Podcast!</i> Thank you so much for listening, and don't forget to sign up for <i>The Déclic Anglais Club!</i> This is our online learning platform where you can improve all of your English skills in one place. Just go to our website: declicanglais.com, that's declicanglais.com for more information.</p> <p>I look forward to seeing you there. Bye for now!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

How did it go?

Take a moment to revisit the notes that you took.

List here 3 words or expressions (minimum) that you would like to remember from this podcast. We recommend that you consult a free, online dictionary like www.wordreference.com to ensure that you have the correct definition and context.

WORDS/EXPRESSIONS THAT I WANT TO REMEMBER:

1.

2.

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