

# This Guy Speaks 9 Languages Like A Native

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Matthew Youlden speaks nine languages fluently and understands more than a dozen more. He's what is known as a polyglot, a member of the multilingual elite who speaks six or more languages fluently. He's also a sociolinguist who studies the revitalization of minority languages. But to see him in action on a daily basis – deftly and comfortably talking to native-speakers in their own languages – suggests that he's more than a polyglot. Matthew, who is originally from Manchester, England, is a language chameleon: Germans think he's German, Spaniards think he's Spanish, Brazilians think he's Portuguese (he proudly speaks the good-old European variety).

By his own account, Matthew has mastered a staggering number of languages by utilizing abilities that we all possess: persistence, enthusiasm and open-mindedness. If your classic polyglot is an über-nerd who studies languages full-time, then Matthew is something different. His version of multilingualism doesn't isolate him in an ivory tower; it connects him to people all over the world. According to Matthew, the more languages you speak, the more points of view you have:

“I think each language has a certain way of seeing the world. If you speak one language then you have a different way of analyzing and interpreting the world than the speaker of another language does. Even if they're really closely-related languages such as Spanish and Portuguese, which are to a certain extent mutually intelligible, they are at the same time two different worlds – two different mindsets.

“Therefore, having learned other languages and been surrounded by other languages, I couldn't possibly choose only one language because it would mean really renouncing the possibility to be able to see the world in a different way. Not in one way, but in many different ways. So the monolingual lifestyle, for me, is the saddest, the loneliest, the most boring way of seeing the world. There are so many advantages of learning a language; I really can't think of any reason not to.”

<http://www.babbel.com>

*Answer the following questions in correct Dutch.*

1. Hoeveel talen verstaat Youlden?
2. Waarom is Youlden een kameleon als het gaat om het spreken van een vreemde taal?
3. Welke drie vaardigheden heeft hij gebruikt om zoveel talen te leren?
4. Heeft het leren van zoveel talen hem tot een wereldvreemde nerd gemaakt? Motiveer je antwoord.
5. Wat heeft de beheersing van zoveel talen te maken met zijn kijk op de wereld?