LEARNING LANGUAGES

Posted on February 11, 2010 by Eddie

Category: Language Learning

Very few things in life have given me as much pleasure as learning to speak French fluently. Let me correct that: learning to speak French was painful, frustrating and humiliating, but being able to speak French is wonderful! The pleasure of being able to converse, pray, teach, laugh and make friends across the language barrier is immense. My life is so much richer because of it. I wish my Kouya was as good as my French - though I'd have much less opportunity to use it these days.

Now, I can't feel too smug about this. If it weren't for the work I do, I would never have got beyond the rather broken o'level French that I had when I left school. The only reason that I was able to reach my current level of ability is that I was given the time and opportunity to learn along with the encouragement that comes from necessity. Despite that, I was sad to read this on Nick Baines' blog:

> *I studied German and French at the University of Bradford from 1976-1980. Bradford was leading the way in a degree that put heavy emphasis on the spoken language, translation and interpreting. But it was made clear to new students on day one that there is no point being able to speak a language if you have nothing to say in it. It was an excellent and demanding course and one I was not very good at: unlike some of my colleagues, I was never a natural linguist and had to work hard at it, often with not much confidence.*
>
> *Yesterday I discovered that the University of Bradford has discontinued both its undergraduate courses in Modern Languages and its postgraduate course in Interpreting and Translating. The reason? Not enough young people are learning foreign languages or wanting to study them at university level. To make matters worse, I was told recently that the EU in Brussels is now having to employ non-native English linguists as interpreters (you always work into your own language) because of the lack of suitably qualified linguists from the UK. (Read the whole post.)*