



UNIT 3 — Why is a language important?

INFO SHEET 3: Why is a language important?

Extensive research, particularly in relation to links between cultural identity and language have found that 'language is fundamental to cultural identity' (Reference: Kakadu National Park, Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre NT).

'As languages disappear, cultures die.' Ken Hale, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, quoted in Davies, W. 1999.

"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."

Nelson Mandela

Mandela's remark above, captures one of the core functions of language, which is to express identity.

Irish is the oldest surviving Celtic language and as such is a valuable resource and guide to the other Celtic languages.

Irish is considered to be the root of two other Celtic languages, Scots Gaelic and Manx, to which it remains closely related.

Irish is a valuable source of many English words and expressions such as: Whiskey (uisce beatha), lake (loch), glen (gleann), smithereens (smidiríní), shoe (bróg), galore (go leor).

Irish placenames, surnames and personal names are well established through out the world and are not just limited to Ireland itself. The Irish language provides the key to understanding the rich, fascinating milieu of Irish heraldry, genealogy and place names.

Source: Gaeilge.org



Watch the short film, "What The Focal?"

Tap on the button to the right, or alternatively search for the video, "What The Focal?" by Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin on YouTube. This film looks at what happens when Maggie from East Belfast enrolls in an Irish language class, much to the horror of her staunchly loyalist husband.