Exploring Challenges and Perspectives in Teaching and Learning a Third Language in Contemporary Contexts.

A Case Study of Malta, a Bilingual Nation.

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Malta's linguistic environment is both unique and complex, characterized by the official bilingualism of Maltese and English.

Maltese - a Semitic language with significant Italian, Arabic, and English influences, deeply rooted in the island's history and culture.

English - was introduced during the British colonial period and has since become an integral part of the Maltese identity.

Malta's Educational Framework: Navigating Challenges

Societal Shifts:

- ☐ Globalization impact
- ☐ ☐ Technological advancements
- ☐ Evolving economic landscape

Linguistic Complexities:

- ☐ ☐ Balancing Maltese and English proficiency
- ☐ Limited capacity for third language
- ☐ Influence of global media

Demographic Changes:

- ☐ Increased immigration
- ☐ Cultural diversification

Malta's Multilingual Reality

- National Statistics Office (www.nso.gov.mt)

YEAR	POPULATION	Non MALTESE	%
2004	402.668	11.999	3
2014	429.344	27.476	6.4
2017	460.297	54.315	11.8
2018	493,559	98,918	20.1
2019	514,564	100,000+	21+
2022	533,307	115,449	22.25
2023	542,051	137,376	25
2024	563, 443	157,795	28

Challenges in Language Learning

Rethinking Language Education in Malta

Current Challenges:

- Shift from European to global focus
- Overcrowded curriculum
- Changing perceptions of language value

Adaptation Needs:

1. Reassess language offerings
2. Update teaching methodologies
3. Redefine educational goals

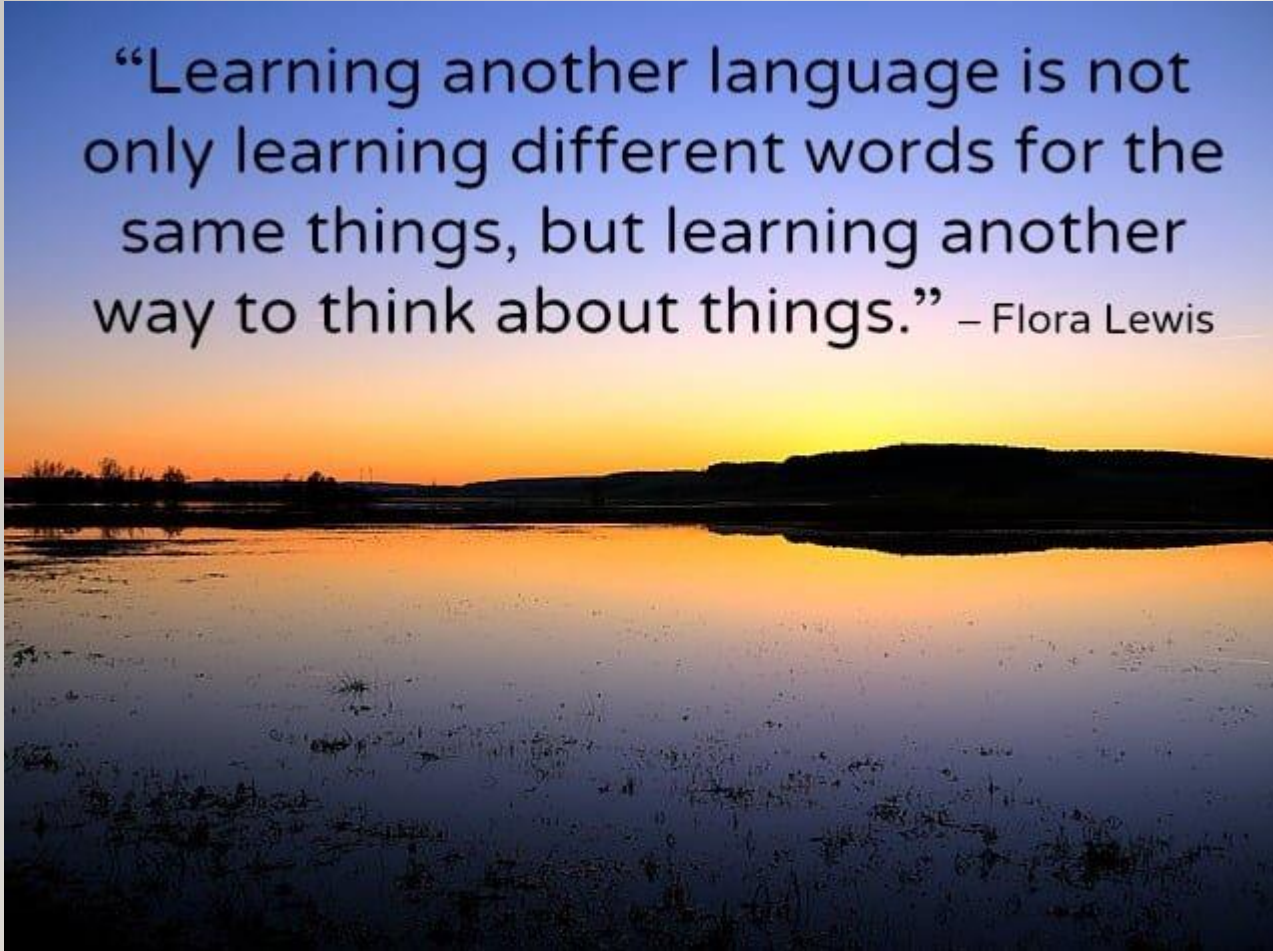## Foreign language Students at Post Compulsory level (1st Year) in Malta & Gozo

	"Advanced" level	"Intermediate" level
Scholastic Year 2017-18	163	324
Scholastic Year 2018-19	129	259
Scholastic Year 2019-20	145	284
Scholastic Year 2020-21	113	135
Scholastic Year 2021-22	101	230
Scholastic Year 2022-23	80	218
Scholastic Year 2023-24	87	281

"Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things." – Flora Lewis

The Fading Appeal of Foreign Language Learning

Key Factors:

1. **Global English Dominance**
   - Perceived career sufficiency
   - Reduced motivation for other languages

2. **Curriculum Overload**
   - Core subject prioritization
   - Exam-centric focus

3. **Outdated Pedagogy**
   - Traditional vs. modern learning styles
   - Need for interactive methods

4. **Tech Integration Gap**
   - Resource limitations
   - Training deficits

5. **Shifting Student Focus**
   - Career-driven choices
   - Short-term benefit orientation

Adults studying a foreign language at the Lifelong Learning Centres in Malta and Gozo.

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Arabic	37	54	59	60
Chinese	30	9	27	36
English	1542	448	817	988
French	199	136	256	205
German	225	130	181	186
Greek	35	17	31	43
Italian	573	223	359	392
Japanese	60	37	44	62
Russian	40	21	39	32
Spanish	637	228	378	461
Turkish	37	24	52	45
TOTALS	3415	1327	2243	2510
Maltese FL	834	643	514	439

Bridging the Gap: Toward a Comprehensive Language Learning Strategy

Challenges:

•Divergent trends between young students and adult learners
•Need for flexible, diverse educational opportunities

Key Strategies:

i.   Foster collaboration: Schools, universities, LLCs
1. Shared resources
2. Cross-institutional training
3. Coordinated learning pathways

ii.   Tailor approaches:
1. Youth: Technology-driven, interactive methods
2. Adults: Flexible options (evening classes, online courses)

Goal:
Create an integrated, flexible system supporting lifelong language learning

Policy Implications & Recommendations

Addressing Challenges in Malta's Language Education

1.Curriculum Reform
1. Introduce relevant, career-oriented courses
2. Implement interactive, tech-enhanced learning

2.Professional Development
1. Equip educators with innovative teaching methods
2. Provide regular training opportunities

3.Promote Multilingualism
1. Highlight career benefits and cognitive advantages
2. Launch educational campaigns

4.Stakeholder Collaboration
1. Align education with economic goals
2. Develop industry-specific language programs

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