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WORD PERFECT
By EILEEN VAMOS

A SECOND language can add a new dimension to your life, creating opportunities socially, culturally and in business.

Travellers who know the language of the land they are in gain a deeper insight into a country's people and culture, and they can explore beyond the typical tourist attractions. A second language is also a distinct advantage for business people wanting to advance in the corporate sector - or, in fact, for anyone entering the job market.

The popular ones for business are Mandarin, Indonesian and Japanese. Other relevant languages are Spanish for those heading to Latin America; Portuguese if working in Brazil; and French, particularly as links develop with French-speaking Africa in the mining industry.

Vocational Language Learning Centre course co-ordinator Jo-anne Ammerlaan says unemployed graduates have discovered that knowing another language broadens their opportunities.

She cites the case of one graduate who learnt Japanese, travelled overseas, found a job in the hospitality industry and had new skills to offer on returning to Australia.

Others used their Japanese-speaking skills for tourism jobs in London which involved greeting travellers at the airport and being tour guides.

"These graduates achieved their travel goals, improved their career prospects - and at the same time enjoyed themselves."

Any idea that age may be a barrier to learning is quickly dismissed by language centres. Corporate Language Communications director **Maggie Bracher** says: "Anyone can learn a language but it depends on people's motivation and the time they put into studying. People can have unreal expectations."

"Some people have an ear for languages and a natural talent and others have to do a lot of work."

Mature-age student Anne Matrenza discovered she had a flair for languages and she has dabbled in French, German, Italian and more recently, Japanese.

"Go to classes not with the idea of perfecting a language - but with the idea of enjoying it," she says.

Japanese Seminar House academic director Yuriko Kitaoji believes a flexible outlook and determination are necessary for success.

"There is a limit to learning Japanese only by conversation. Anyone who wants to master the language has to study basic grammar for at least two years.

"Business people may need longer. Business conversation is polite and difficult to learn, and to negotiate well, people need to be able to write Japanese," she says.

The most popular languages at the Council of Adult Education are French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese and German.

Fifth-year CAE French student Jenny Rizzuto visited France in 1993 and wished she had known the language. When she returned two years later, she was able to converse with people.

She studies regularly, watches the French news and searches in secondhand bookshops for easy-to-read French novels.

"Learning French is interesting and stimulating, but it's a struggle because I want to be fluent," she says.

END OF STORY

Caption: DEEPER INSIGHT: JAPANESE LANGUAGE STUDENT ANNE MATRENZA WITH TEACHER CHIEKO YAZAKI AT THE JAPAN SEMINAR HOUSE. PICTURE: NORM OORLOFF

Section: LEARN

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