

He's English, but he can speak 11 languages

Alex Rawlings has been named the UK's most multilingual student, in a competition run by a dictionary publisher.

- 1 Hallo
- 2 Guten Tag
- 3 Bonjour
- 4 Shalom (שלום)
- 5 Privet (привет)
- 6 Hello
- 7 Geiá sou (γειά σου)
- 8 Bon dia
- 9 Hola
- 10 Goedendag
- 11 Cíao



The German and Russian student from London, who is only 20 years old, can speak 11 languages **fluently**. In a video for the BBC News website he demonstrated his **skills** by speaking in all of them, changing quickly from one to another.

Rawlings said that winning the competition was 'a bit of a shock'. He explained, 'I saw the competition advertised and I heard something about a free iPad. I never imagined that it would generate this amount of media attention.'

As a child, Rawlings' mother, who is half Greek, used to speak to him in English, Greek, and French, and he often visited his family in Greece.



He said that he has always been interested in languages. 'My dad worked in Japan for four years and I was always frustrated that I couldn't speak to the kids because of the **language barrier**.' After visiting Holland at the age of 14 he decided to learn Dutch with CDs and books. 'When I went back I could talk to people. It was great.'

He taught himself many of the languages with 'teach yourself' books, but also by watching films, listening to music, and travelling to the countries themselves.

Of all the languages he speaks, Rawlings says that Russian, which he has been learning for a year and a half, is the hardest. He said, 'There seem to be **more exceptions than rules!**' He added, 'I especially like Greek because I think it's beautiful and, because of my mother, I have a strong personal **link** to the country and to the language.'

'Everyone should learn languages, especially if they travel abroad. If you make the effort to learn even the most **basic phrases** wherever you go, it instantly shows the person you're speaking to that you respect their culture. Going around speaking English loudly and getting frustrated at people is tactless and rude.'

The next language Rawlings hopes to learn is Arabic, but 'only once I've finished my degree and got some more time on my hands. For now I need to concentrate on my German and Russian, so I can prepare for my finals.'

Glossary

finals the last exams that students take at university

Adapted from a news website