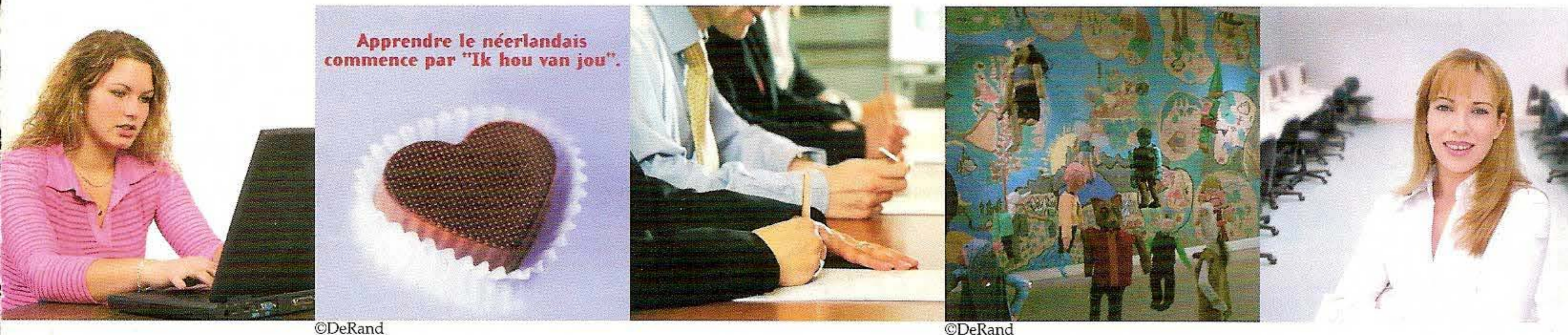


LEARNING THE LANGUAGES



How often do people say 'I don't have a gift for languages' 'I find the language too difficult' 'I'm too old to learn' 'I don't like the language'? Let's dispel some of these myths with some motivating facts and advice. Belgium is a culturally rich and diverse country, so why not submerge yourself into Belgian life by learning one of Belgium's three languages.

GIFTED OR NOT GIFTED AT LANGUAGES?

Clearly, not everyone has the same language learning capacity, which means that some of us will take longer to reach our objectives. Learning a language is not unlike taking up a sport. For most people, the aim is not to become a professional sportsman or woman but simply to enjoy playing the game. The same goes for studying a language: What matters is not to speak perfectly, but to be able to communicate effectively, to understand and to be understood, and to enjoy using the new language.

One thing is certain: Everyone is able to learn a language. Haven't we already learnt one - our own? It has nothing to do with IQ, but everything to do with motivation and learning style. Once we have discovered our style and have learned how to learn, progress will be rapid, gifted or not!

IS ONE LANGUAGE MORE DIFFICULT THAN ANOTHER?

In absolute terms, all languages are equal in their degree of complexity and subtlety.

Language is the mirror of attitude, culture and ways of thinking. Advocating one language as superior to another would border on 'racism'.

Each language has certain aspects that may be considered more advanced than in other languages. However, it can be said that for each individual some languages are easier to learn than others. For example for a Japanese, the Chinese language is a familiar one.

"Learning a language has nothing to do with IQ, but everything to do with motivation and learning style"

Learning a language in the same family of languages as our own is clearly easier, and once we understand this, we can stop feeling bad about the difficulties we encounter when we try to learn a language that is fundamentally different from ours.

