



Language Training

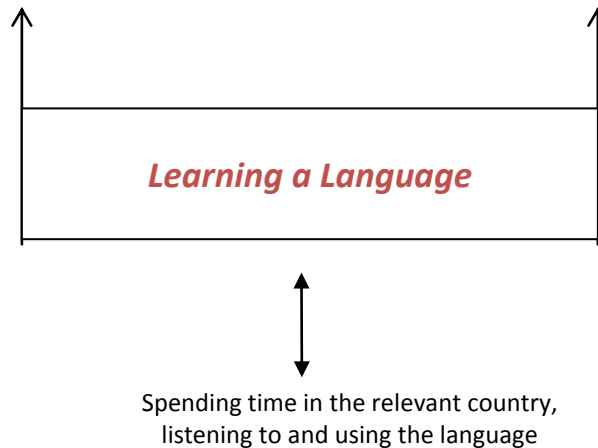
A Guide to...

Learning to Learn

People learn foreign languages by using one, some or all of the following methods:

Attending a course with a tutor

Learning on their own



Many people would like to spend time in the relevant country but this is often not possible for people with a busy lifestyle: or it may be possible but only for a short time, to attend a language course.

Most people would agree that attending a course with good tutors is vital.

It is important to recognise that learning is not necessarily the same as being taught and that the learner has to take some responsibility for his or her own learning.

Learner responsibility

So how can learners take responsibility for their own learning? First of all by recognising that learning does not only take place inside a classroom with a tutor. A great deal of real learning takes place outside the classroom. If you attend a lesson or a whole course and then go home and forget about the language you have wasted your time. Language learning is an on-going activity.

You can take some of the responsibility for your own learning by spending some of your own time studying independently, away from the tutor, and by practising the language. You can do this before, during, and after the course.

Self-study

Language is a skill and like most skills [from playing tennis to sailing, to driving a car] once you have learnt it to a certain level, if you do not practise it for some time your competence will decrease.

Self-study helps you to maintain the level of language that you have reached. Lessons, however good are not enough. Self-study does not only mean sitting in a room on your own with a book. Any contact with the language is an opportunity for you to develop your skill.

Learning to learn

The first and most important thing you can do is think about how to learn. We all learn in different ways, we enjoy doing different activities and therefore it is important to consider what aspects of the learning you enjoy and what are the most effective activities for you. There is no one perfect way of learning a language that applies to all learners but there are some techniques that are important to know.

What sort of a language learner are you?

Try the following quiz. "Tick" your answers to the questions.

	Usually	Sometimes	[Almost] Never	Don't know
1. Did/do you get good results in grammar tests?				
2. Do you have a good memory for new words?				
3. Do you hate making mistakes?				
4. In class did/do you get irritated if mistakes were/are not corrected?				
5. Is your pronunciation better when you read aloud than when you have a conversation?				
6. Do you wish you had more time to think before speaking?				
7. Did/do you enjoy being in a class?				
8. Do you find it difficult to pick up more than two or three words of a new language when you are on holiday abroad?				
9. Do you like to learn new grammar rules, words, etc, by heart?				

How to calculate your score:

3 points for each Usually

2 points for each Sometimes

1 point for each [Almost] Never

0 points for each Don't know

TOTAL SCORE:

What sort of a language learner are you?

KEY

SCORE	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<p>Score 20-27 points ANALYTICAL?</p> <p>You may feel it is very important to be as accurate as possible all the time. You probably prefer the sort of language learning where you need to think carefully: for example when you are doing grammar exercises, working out the meaning of words, practising pronunciation, etc. This is often the sort of language learning you do in class or when you are studying alone. You may be able to improve your language learning. Look at the suggestions.</p>	<p><u>To improve your fluency:</u></p> <p>-Try to speak more -Do not worry too much about making mistakes [people won't be listening for your mistakes but for what you are trying to say!] -Depend on yourself [Outside the classroom you won't always have a dictionary or tutor to help you]</p>
<p>Score: 14-19 points MIXTURE?</p> <p>You may find that you do not fall into either of the categories marked Analytical? or Relaxed? Many people are a mixture and learn in different ways at different times, depending on the situation and what they are doing.</p>	<p>Look at the description of Analytical? and Relaxed? This will help you to think about areas of your learning you might improve</p>
<p>Score: 8-13 points RELAXED?</p> <p>You seem to "pick up" languages without really making too much effort and you usually enjoy communicating with people. You may sometimes feel, however, that you should be learning more grammar rules, but you probably don't enjoy this and quickly lose interest. You may be able to improve your language learning. Look at the suggestions.</p>	<p><u>To become more accurate:</u></p> <p>-Try to find more time to be more accurate [You may need to spend more time thinking and practising your grammar and pronunciation]</p> <p>Try to be more self-critical</p>
<p>Score: 0-7 points NOT SURE?</p> <p>Your score does not mean that you are not, or cannot be a good language learner. Perhaps this is the first time that you have thought about the way that you learn. The fact that you are now thinking about the sort of learner you are is the first stage in forming your language learning strategies.</p>	<p>-Try to become more aware of the way you learn [This will help you to decide which areas of your learning you might improve]</p>

[From: *Learning to learn English*, Sinclair & Ellis C.U.P.]

What is your attitude towards learning a new language?

It is important to be aware of your own attitude towards learning. This questionnaire will help you to find out more about your feelings.

Tick one of the boxes next to each statement.

SA = strongly agree

A = agree

DK = don't know

D = disagree

SD = strongly disagree

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
I enjoy travelling to and meeting people from other countries					
I like trying out some of the local language when I travel overseas					
Learning a language will be of great benefit both personally and professionally					
I feel reasonably confident about my ability to learn a language					
It is important to set myself realistic goals and work towards achieving them					
I appreciate that learning the language will require a commitment to regularly review and practise outside of lesson time					
I believe that ultimately I am responsible for my own learning					

If most of your ticks are in the "strongly agree" or "agree" boxes, you are likely to have good language learning potential because you are both positive about learning a language and aware of the personal commitment required.

If you have a number of ticks in the "don't know" box, you will add to your knowledge about language by reading this booklet. If most of your ticks are in the "disagree" or "strongly disagree" boxes, then you may find that this booklet will change some of your opinions and have a positive effect on your learning.

Characteristics of successful language learners

- They are tolerant and outgoing in their approach to the new language
- They take an active approach to the learning task
- They have insight into their own learning styles and preferences
- They are willing to "take risks" with the language
- They are good guessers
- They try out any language items newly learnt and incorporate them into their existing repertoire
- They learn not only the meaning of words and sentences but how they are put together
- They try to think in the new language and not translate everything

What is a language?

- Excuse me, what platform does the next train for Bristol leave from?
- From platform 6

What does this mini-dialogue involve?

A SITUATION	→	At the railway station
A FUNCTION	→	Asking for information
VOCABULARY	→	Platform/train
CULTURAL/FUNCTIONAL PHRASE	→	Excuse me
GRAMMAR	→	Preposition "from"
	→	Construction "does.... leave"?
PHONOLOGY	→	"leave" [li:v] not "live" [liv]
PARA LINGUISTICS	→	Gestures/body language/ tone of voice, etc

Grammatical Concepts

You may well be unfamiliar with some of the grammatical "jargon" but a knowledge of the commonly used terms or "labels" will help you better understand explanations given by your tutor. Try this quick test based on English grammatical categories. Don't worry if you find it difficult, as you will be able to find the answers and explanations of the terminology in the attached glossary.

A study of the glossary will give you a basic understanding of grammatical terms though not all terminology will necessarily apply to the language you are learning. Your tutor will introduce you to, and give you explanations for grammatical concepts specific to the target language.

Quick Test:

Can you label the bolded items in this text with the 10 grammatical labels as given in the box? Use each label once only.

imperative, preposition, adverb, adjective, superlative, pronoun, infinitive, past participle, definite article, noun.

- Try and attend **regularly** [[1] _____]. You need to build on each thing you learn and you may miss **valuable** [[2] _____] 'building blocks' if your attendance is erratic.
- If you have problems with the pace of the class – **it** [[3] _____] may be too fast or too slow – discuss it with your language coach straight away. S/he will welcome any feedback.
- **Try** [[4] _____] and keep to the target language. It is frustrating at times not to be able **to express** [[5] _____] oneself fully but the rewards will follow. The more you are active in your language sessions; the more comfortable you will feel using the language. Times have changed since our school days when the teacher was **the most important person** [[6] _____] in the language class and did all the talking; you are **the** [[7] _____] learner and you need the practice, not your teacher!
- If you have any suggestions as to how the sessions could be **improved**, [[8] _____] talk to your coach.
- **On** [[9] _____] a basic note, always bring to the language session, a pen, a notebook and ring binder file for photocopied notes from your **language teacher** [[10] _____].

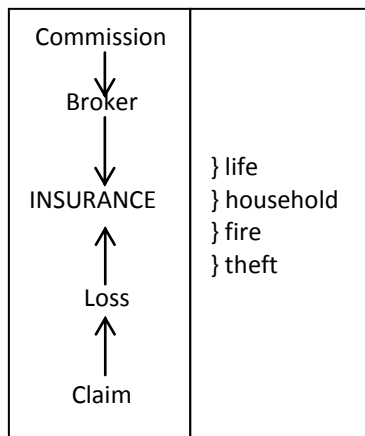
Keeping a record of the lessons

During the lesson you will probably take notes. It is very important that you are careful when and what you write. There are times during the lesson when your tutor will want you to devote your full attention to what he or she is saying, for example during an explanation of a grammatical point or to listen to the pronunciation of a word. Note-taking at this stage would be counter-productive.

The tutor will usually make it clear when you would benefit from noting down a grammatical rule or newly introduced vocabulary item. It is important to be sure that your note taking is accurate, memorable and legible! It may mean something to you at the time but will it still be meaningful a week later?

Ask your tutor for advice on how best to record new vocabulary, grammatical explanations and functional expressions. The important word here is context. New words should not just be listed in an ad hoc fashion, record them along with related words or alongside an example of the word in a sentence. Likewise a verb form should be noted down with any related noun or adjective, and a functional expression should be recorded with a few examples of situations in which it can be used. Here are a couple of examples of ways of recording new vocabulary.

A Word Diagram



Word Families

Verb	Noun	Adjective	Adverb
compete	competition competitor	competitive	competitively

Even when time for self-study is limited you should at least ensure that your notes are organised logically. You can classify them in categories such as: grammar, vocabulary, business functions, etc or chronologically lesson-by-lesson. Cross-reference your notes to your course book and other useful sources.

The four main skills

Speaking:

Try not to worry too much about making mistakes when you speak especially at the beginning. Everybody makes mistakes at some time. Try to view mistakes as a means of finding your way through the language path, by trial and error. The error should tell you what you are doing wrong and should help you the next time. Use your fund of language to the full when speaking, try to practise newly learnt words and phrases so that they become part of your active vocabulary as quickly as possible.

Listening:

Understanding what is being said is difficult at first when learning a new language as you have little control over what is happening, unlike speaking when you can take time to compose your question or statement. However, the more you expose yourself to the sounds and patterns of the language, with audio and videocassettes, visits to the country, etc, the easier it becomes. Slowly, you will start to recognise individual words and the patterns and this will help you predict what comes next. Predicting what will follow is what we naturally do in our native language, so try to get into the habit doing it in the foreign language.

Reading:

It is important to realise that you do not have to understand every single word to understand the whole meaning of a text. Sometimes when you read in your mother tongue, there are individual words that you may not fully understand, but you read around them to get the 'gist' meaning. You should try to get into the habit of using this technique of guessing words in the foreign language. So even at an early stage in your learning you shouldn't be afraid of trying to glean some information from a newspaper in the target language.

Writing:

Even if you don't need to develop skills in writing, it will help strengthen your grammar and structure if you try to write something every week, even if it's just a diary or e-mail. As with speaking don't be afraid of making mistakes, your coach will help you to correct any errors or suggest alternative ways of phrasing a sentence or expression. Surprise your foreign colleagues or other contacts by replying to their emails at least partially in their language!

Self-study

It is important first of all to think of how much time you have available for self-study. You may have more than you think!

Any contact with the language is an opportunity for development of your language skills. For example, in addition to any free time you may have at home or in the office, you may have time when:

- waiting at airports in the country where they speak the language
- driving [you could listen to cassettes/CDs]
- traveling to the country for business. Notice the signs, listen to people
- on holiday in countries where the language is spoken
- on the train, take the opportunity to look through your course notes
- seek out colleagues or other contacts that speak the language, [ideally native speakers] and try to sustain a conversation for as long as is feasible
- watch a video in the language [try watching it first with the subtitles covered to see how much you can understand]
- visit websites relevant to the target language [check out the Babel website which recommends several useful sites for language learners] and take a look at sites specific to your area of business

Try to regard your study of the language as an ongoing project, of which your coaching sessions with Babel are an important part but nevertheless only one of several means by which you will reach your target level of fluency. Vary the learning stimuli that you incorporate into your self-study programme. In this way you will not only make progress across the range of skills, but will be more likely to remain motivated to continue in your quest for fluency.

A basic Grammar Glossary

If you are having difficulty with some of the grammar jargon and you feel this is hindering your progress in grasping the foreign language, here is a very basic glossary based on English grammar to give you some help.

Grammar Word	Explanation where necessary	Example
Nouns	Used as names of persons, places, events or things and ideas etc.	<i>I'm afraid of dogs.</i> <i>I live in London.</i> <i>He went through private education.</i> <i>Jealousy is a destructive emotion.</i> <i>They got 2 pop-up toasters for Christmas.</i>
[Ordinary] verbs	A 'doing word' or a word used to describe an action, state or occurrence. Note that there are regular and irregular verbs in English and many other languages.	<i>We played chess all night.</i> <i>I love coffee.</i> <i>It rained all day.</i>
Auxiliary verbs	Verbs that are used to show tenses or moods. Sometimes called helping verbs, because they 'help' the main verb.	<i>I am learning Italian.</i> [am = helps to show this is present tense for the first person or 'I'] <i>The company has merged with its old rival.</i> [has = helps to show present perfect tense, 3rd person]
Past Participles	Used to make some tenses and passives. They don't stand alone. Here are examples of English past participles: Note that there are regular and irregular past participles in English and many other languages.	<i>E.g. gone, loved, done, seen, played, swum, forgiven, watched, served, enabled, been, slept,</i> <i>He must have gone home early.</i> <i>The show was watched by a huge audience.</i> <i>Are you being served?</i>
Imperatives	Orders or commands to do something.	<i>Mind</i> the gap! <i>Read</i> the text and <i>answer</i> the questions.
Modal verbs [or sometimes called modal auxiliaries]	These types of verbs usually express things like permission, possibility, obligation, deduction, etc. The verb that follows usually follows a particular pattern, but these may change from language to language.	<i>E.g. can, could, must, should, will, ought to, may</i> <i>You must buy a ticket first.</i> <i>[must + infinitive verb without 'to']</i> <i>We should examine the document carefully</i> <i>[should + infinitive verb without 'to']</i>

Grammar Word	Explanation where necessary	Example
Active or Passive sentences	<p>Active sentences are probably used more than passives and you usually learn to make these before passives when you are learning a foreign language.</p> <p>The passive is used <i>generally</i> when you want to hide the 'do-er' of the verb, stress the importance of the action or thing as a result of the action, and not the thing/person who does 'the action'.</p>	<p><i>Plans were laid.</i> It doesn't matter who laid the plans, just that they were done! If you wanted to stress who laid the plans, you might say the active version: <i>The designer laid the plans.</i></p> <p><i>Smoking is not permitted here.</i> We don't usually say the active version: <i>We do not permit smoking here.</i> The sign wants to stress the action is not allowed.</p>
Infinitive	The title verb or the one you will find when you look up a verb in a dictionary. Also used as part of other verbs patterns	<p>To be or not to be. <i>I am glad to meet you.</i> <i>The assistant is able to help you tomorrow. [able + infinitive]</i></p>
Pronouns	<p>Words which can be used in place of nouns [see above]. There are different types of pronouns. Here are some of them: Personal: I, you, he, she, it, they Possessive: mine, his, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs</p>	<p><i>Jo is a PA. She works for Jeff.</i> [She is a pronoun, in place of Jo] <i>This bag belongs to me. It's mine.</i> [Mine is in place of belongs to me]</p>
Adjectives	A describing word for nouns; shape, size, colour, etc,	<p><i>The influential manager.</i> <i>The city offers great prospects for new businesses.</i> <i>We had a really successful show.</i></p>
Adverbs	A describing word for verbs. Usually describing <i>how</i> something was done. [Also used for adjectives, but don't worry about that at this level]	<p><i>He spoke softly.</i> <i>The project worked beautifully.</i></p>
Articles	<p>There are usually two types of article: Definite= The, Indefinite= a/an In some foreign languages the article changes to show masculine/feminine or neuter and singular/plural.</p>	<p>In some other languages: French: le/la un/une Spanish: el/la un/una German: der/die/das ein/eine</p>
Prepositions	Used to show something in relation to something else, such as position, time, etc,	<p>Some of the main English prepositions: <i>in, at, on, to, from, about, for, by, between, next to, behind, through, in front of, on top of, under, around, before, after, since, etc,</i></p>

Grammar Word	Explanation where necessary	Example
Persons	Here are the grammatical 'persons': I = 1st person You = 2nd person [In many other languages there is a Second Person <i>Plural</i> when you are addressing more than one person, e.g. <i>vous</i> in French or <i>ustedes</i> in Spanish] He/She/It = 3rd person They = 3rd person plural	
Direct Objects	Where something is 'a result of an action or verb'. A Direct Object <i>Pronoun</i> is a substitute word for the 'result thing'.	<i>I made a cake last night.</i> [<i>cake</i> = Direct Object] <i>I made it last night.</i> [<i>it</i> = Direct Object <i>Pronoun</i>] <i>She played a tune.</i> [<i>tune</i> = Direct Object] <i>She played it well.</i> [<i>it</i> = Direct Object <i>Pronoun</i>]
Indirect Objects	The person or thing that receives the result of the action/ verb Indirect Object <i>Pronoun</i> is a substitute for the receiver. Often used with <i>to, for, from</i> in English.	<i>I made Joe a cake.</i> [<i>Joe</i> = Indirect Object] <i>I made him a cake.</i> [<i>him</i> = Indirect Object <i>Pronoun</i>] <i>She bought a collar for her puppy.</i> [<i>Her puppy</i> = Indirect Object] <i>She bought it a collar.</i> [<i>it</i> = Indirect Object <i>Pronoun</i>]
Comparatives	Used when comparing things, something is more than something else.	<i>Better than ...</i> <i>More beautiful than</i> <i>Worse than</i>
Superlatives	Used to say something is 'the most' of something.	<i>The best</i> <i>The most expensive</i> <i>The worst</i>

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