

Making language learning fun and effective: Best language learning strategies

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Session objectives

Increase awareness of how you tend to approach foreign language learning

Examine characteristics of successful language learners

Discover strategies that can help you become better at language learning:

- Increasing confidence
- Dealing with grammar
- Learning new words
- Seeking opportunities for practice
- Boosting motivation
- Workshop 3 spoiler: Improving metalinguistic awareness

What kind of a language learner are you?

- <https://www.menti.com/al79rwm1a1bt>



Characteristics of good language learners



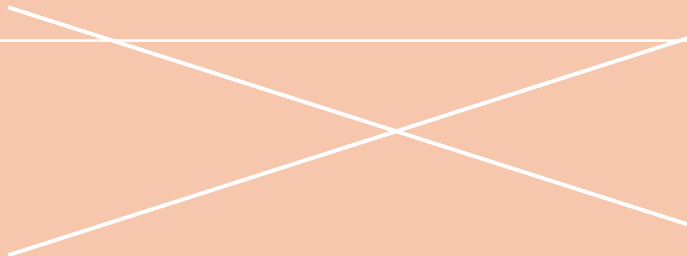
Learning Strategies:

Intentional behaviors and thoughts used by learners to help them understand, learn, or remember new information



Successful language learners use a range of strategies to help them develop their skills in a new language

Brainstorming with a partner (10 min): What are some of your tricks for language learning?

SPECIFIC TASK	MY TRICK	A NEW TRICK I LEARNED TODAY
Overcoming the fear of speaking		
Communicating even if I am not entirely sure that what I will say or write is 100% correct		
Understanding and learning new words		
Practicing language outside of the classroom		
Increasing my motivation to study a foreign language		
Understanding how language works (e.g., patterns of grammar and pronunciation)		



Increasing confidence

- Take out a piece of paper and answer the following questions:
 - Do you consider yourself:
 - A monolingual (1 language)
 - A bilingual (2 languages)
 - A multilingual (3 or more languages)
 - Why?
 - How do you define a person who is bilingual?
 - How do you define a person who is multilingual?

Increasing confidence

- **Common misconceptions**

- The goal of foreign language learning is to become as proficient as a native speaker
 - Native-like pronunciation
 - Grammar without any errors
- Bilinguals speak both their languages equally well
- Multilinguals are highly proficient in three or more languages



Increasing confidence



- Accept that:
 - Bilingualism is rarely balanced – successful language users can have **different levels of proficiency** and often employ each language they know for different purposes (e.g., one for school/work, another one with the family)
 - Multilingual speakers tend to know **several languages to varying degrees**, and they often add/learn new languages while at the same time stop using/forget other languages
 - You **do not have to have a perfect knowledge of a foreign language** to use it – in fact, most people don't! Even native speakers make mistakes when they are tired, nervous, or distracted
 - **Mistakes are a part of the learning process** – so, treat them as an opportunity to improve
 - Use **compensatory strategies such as body language or machine translation** when you don't know how to say something (more on that later)

Dealing with grammar



- Many language teachers and learners continue to think that grammar is of central importance in language teaching and learning
 - However, formal grammar instruction develops declarative knowledge of grammar structures (i.e., students are able to state the rules), not the procedural knowledge needed to use grammar in communication
 - At the same time, teaching grammar does not have to be about presenting and memorizing rules – **there are other ways to work with it!**

Dealing with grammar

- Pay attention to patterns – increase your awareness of how grammar works
 - I **usually have** eggs and bacon for breakfast.
 - Mary **always has** pasta with Alfredo sauce for dinner.
 - I **will only eat** fish and vegetables **next week**.
 - Mary **will have** steamed broccoli for dinner **tomorrow**.
- Notice feedback from your teachers and classmates
 - Learner: **Boun** nuit
 - Teacher (recast): **Buonne** nuit
- **Read, read, read**
- **Write, write, write** – and use tools such as DeepL or ChatGPT to check if what you have written is correct
- Your knowledge of grammar **does not have to be perfect** to have meaningful communications – accept that everybody makes mistakes, and just **speak, speak, speak**



Learning new words



- Notice and recognize new words:
 - Form – spelling and pronunciation
 - Meaning – definition, equivalents in other languages you know
 - Use – context
- Figuring out meaning
 - Easy: cognates and borrowings
 - E.g. pizza, internet
 - Difficult: false friends and idioms
 - E.g. actuellement - now, at present VS actually - en fait, en réalité

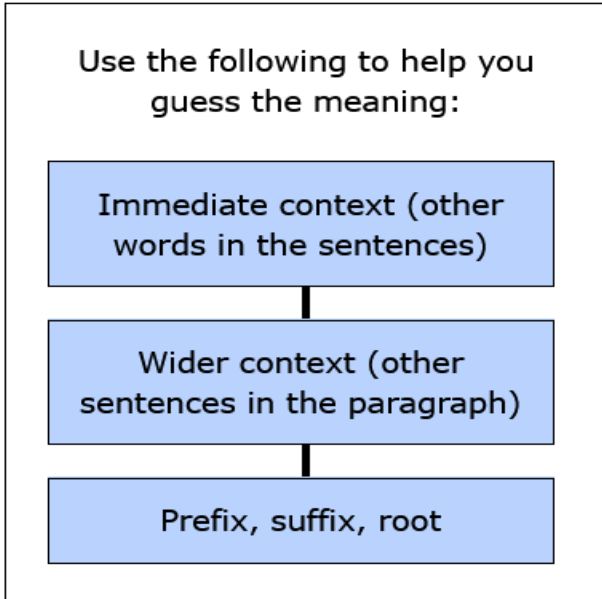
Figuring out meaning of words while reading



Do I need to know the meaning of the word?



Is an approximate meaning enough?



No → Keep reading

No → Use a dictionary

Guessing word meaning from context



- Consider the following sentence:
 - *Although the company's income from sales was higher than expected, its high costs in the form of salaries and other overheads put it in a **disadvantageous** position.*
- How can we guess the meaning of the word **disadvantageous**? The immediate context of the word tells you the following:
 - It comes before a noun → **it is probably an adjective**
 - It relates to 'high costs', which are not usually good for a company → **it is probably negative**
 - The sentence begins with 'although', a contrast marker, so the idea in the second clause contrasts with the first clause, which is positive ('high income' is good for a company) → **it is probably negative**
 - It begins with a prefix dis-, which denotes something negative (think about other words you might know such as dislike, disapprove, distaste → **it is probably negative**)
- A good guess for the word at this point would be **bad**. This is probably close enough for you to understand the main idea, and you can keep reading without consulting a dictionary

Learning new words



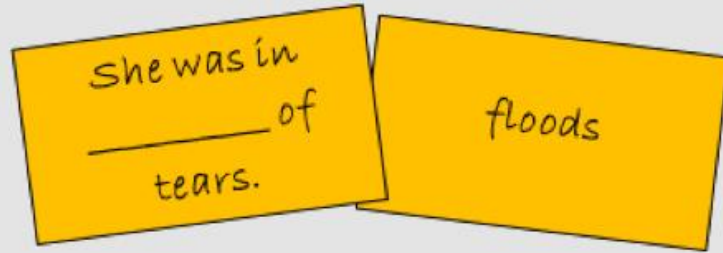
- Frequency of input
 - Seek opportunities to expose yourself to the language(s) you are learning
 - Listening
 - Conversations
 - Reading
 - Most learners need to see or hear a word **at least seven times** to learn it
 - Pay attention to the context and use
 - Collect examples of sentences and nuanced differences in meaning
 - Use flashcards or vocabulary logs to keep track of your new words
 - Make comparisons to other languages you know, e.g., Küste, coast, costa, côt
- Frequency of output
 - Just like with all other aspects of language learning, you need frequent **opportunities to practice new words**
 - Speaking
 - Writing

Learning new words



Different types of flash card

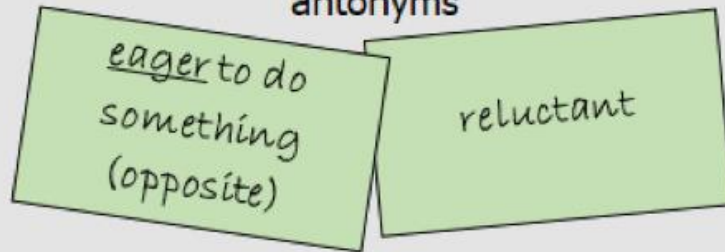
gapped sentences



synonyms



antonyms



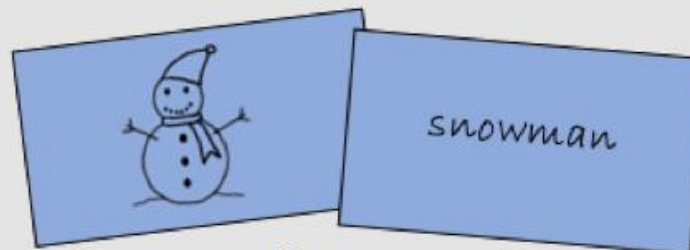
definitions



translations



pictures



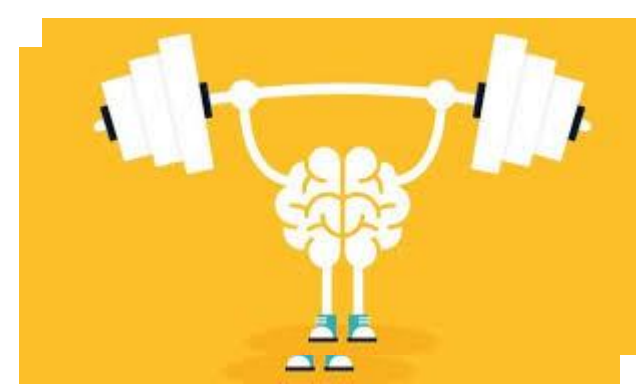
Seeking opportunities for practice



- You will not learn a foreign language if you limit yourself to classroom activities and homework assigned by your teacher
- You need to **seek opportunities outside of classroom to practice**
- You can benefit from language input and practice that has the following characteristics:
 - It is **comprehensible**, that is, **at the right level** (not too difficult but also not too easy)
 - It is **compelling**, that is the materials and topics are so **fascinating**, that you almost forget that it is in a foreign language

Seeking opportunities for practice:

Find something that interests you and do it in a foreign language



- Where can we find materials that are both **comprehensible** and **compelling**?
 - Foreign movies with subtitles
 - Listening to music and following lyrics
 - Interactive video games
 - Audio books and podcasts
 - Children’s literature
 - A news app in the target language:
 - German: Deutsche Welle
 - French: TV5 Monde
 - English: BBC, NPR, CNN
 - Norwegian: NRK, Klar Tale
 - If you live in the country where the language is spoken, find a fun group activity where you will have to use the language to participate (e.g., Nordic walking, a book club, a cooking class, volunteering at an animal shelter or a retirement home, etc.)

Seeking opportunities for practice



- Examples of resources:
 - Coursera www.coursera.org



 University of California, Davis

Spanish Vocabulary: Meeting People

Skills you'll gain: Communication, Writing

★ 4.6 (3.2K reviews)

Beginner · Course · 1 - 4 Weeks



 University of California, Davis

Spanish Vocabulary: Cultural Experience

★ 4.5 (552 reviews)

Beginner · Course · 1 - 4 Weeks

Seeking opportunities for practice



- Examples of resources:
 - BBC English <https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/>

Welcome to BBC Learning English



WORK ENGLISH



VOCABULARY



GRAMMAR



COURSES



NEWS ENGLISH



PRONUNCIATION

Seeking opportunities for practice



- Examples of resources:
 - Deutsche Welle <https://learngerman.dw.com/en/learn-german/s-9528>



Learn German



Seeking opportunities for practice



- Examples of resources:
 - France Université Numérique (FUN) <https://www.fun-mooc.fr/fr/>



Seeking opportunities for practice



- Examples of resources:

- Language Transfer <https://www.languagetransfer.org/>



Seeking opportunities for practice



- Examples of resources:
 - Bookbeat www.bookbeat.com offers audiobooks in many different languages, including English, German, Spanish, French, Italian, Norwegian, Dutch, Danish, Finnish, and even Polish!

B BookBeat

Click on "Profile" in the bottom right corner of the app and open the header "Book Filter" under "Settings". Here you can (among other options) see which languages BookBeat offers books in. Choose the languages that you want to be able to access in your app and press "Done" in the upper right corner. Books in all of your chosen languages will now be visible in categories and search results.

Seeking opportunities for practice

- Examples of resources:
 - Readle: <https://readle-app.com/>



Rapidly **Learn German** with News and Stories

Readle turns fun & bite-sized A1 - B2 stories into language lessons. Learn Languages the new way!

I WANT TO LEARN **GERMAN**



Local resources at your university

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Centre de Ressources en Langues
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¡Actualiza tus idiomas en el CRL!

Montag, 20:35 63%

Günter Grass und Ingeborg Bachmann

Wie kann ich meine Sprachfertigkeiten im CRL verbessern?

Nimm' doch mal an einer Diskussionsrunde teil.

Mach' einen Termin mit einem Sprachberater aus.

Oder teilt' dir Bücher, CDs und DVDs aus.

Sieh' dir mal einen fremdsprachigen Film im Originalton an.

Nimm' unser Kulturangebot wahr.

Arbeite online mit Programmen, die deinen Bedürfnissen entsprechen.

Super! Ich kann es kaum abwarten anzufangen!

Lunedì, 20:35 62%

Alessandro Manzoni e Elsa Morante

Come posso migliorare le mie conoscenze venendo al CRL?

Partecipo a un atelier di conversazione.

Prendo un appuntamento con il nostro responsabile pedagogico.

Prendo in prestito libri, CD, e DVD.

Guardo i film italiani in versione originale.

Partecipo a un'attività culturale.

Studio le lingue online con un software che corrisponde al mio livello e ai miei bisogni.

Bellissimo, non vedo l'ora di iniziare!

Lunes, 20:35 62%

Gabriela Mistral and Miguel de Cervantes

¿Cómo puedo mejorar mis habilidades en el CRL?

Participo en un taller de conversación.

Solicito una cita con el consejero de idiomas.

Pido prestados libros, CDs y DVD.

Miro una película extranjera en el idioma original.

Asisto a una actividad cultural.

Trabajo en línea e con el software que corresponda a mis necesidades.

¡Genial! ¡Me muero por probar el CRL!

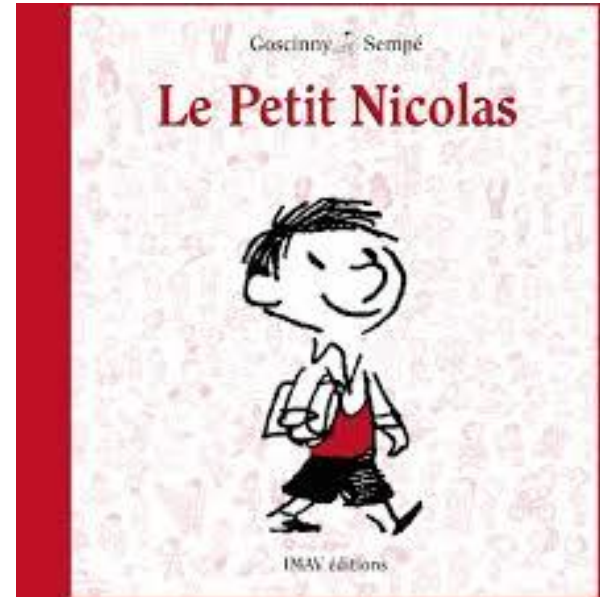
Boosting motivation



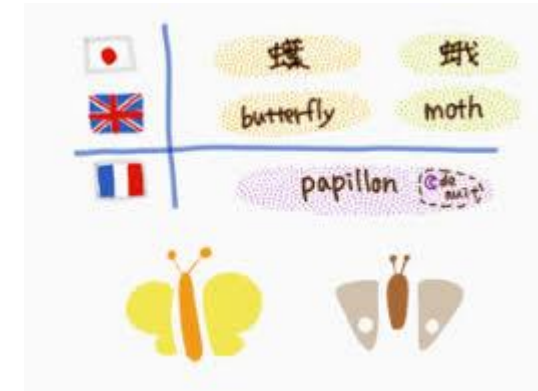
- Complete the following sentence with your own information:
 - I am learning **language x** because ...
 - (1) ...
 - (2) ...
 - (3) ...
- Stand up and walk around the room
- Find at least one person who listed the same reason as you (you can have different languages)

Boosting motivation

- **Extrinsic motivation** - powered by an external source:
 - Studying a language for a particular purpose – to get a job, a qualification, to travel
 - Because a parent has sent you to language school to study
 - A requirement in college
- **Intrinsic motivation** – some personal reason:
 - An interest in the language
 - An interest in a culture or cultures associated with the language
 - A drive for self-improvement
 - A specific goal – for instance, to study in a country where the language or to read literature in this language
 - Meeting new people



Workshop 3 spoiler:



The power of metalinguistic awareness and cross-linguistic comparisons: Activate your prior language knowledge to give your language skills a natural boost

November 12, 12:30-2pm

November 13, 3:30-5pm

“You know, somebody actually complimented me on my driving today. They left a little note on the windscreen; it said, 'Parking Fine.' So that was nice.”



 **preservative**

 **préservatif**

Summary and reflection

SPECIFIC TASK	MY TRICK	A NEW TRICK I LEARNED TODAY
Overcoming the fear of speaking	<i>Practice at home in front of a mirror</i>	
Communicating even if I am not entirely sure that what I will say or write is 100% correct	<i>Try not to worry about mistakes</i>	
Understanding and learning new words	<i>Look up new words in a dictionary</i>	
Practicing language outside of the classroom	<i>Do my homework</i>	
Increasing my motivation to study a foreign language	<i>Plan a trip to the country where the language is spoken</i>	
Understanding how language works (e.g., patterns of grammar and pronunciation)	<i>Memorize grammar rules</i>	

References

- EAP Foundation. *Guessing unknown words*.
<https://www.eapfoundation.com/reading/skills/guess/>
- Krashen, S. (n.d.). *The Compelling (not just interesting) Input Hypothesis*.
http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/articles/the_compelling_input_hypothesis.pdf