

Learning a Language: 6 Effective Ways to Use the Internet

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Sample of Content:

There are many ways to learn a new language: you can go live in a country where the language is spoken, attend a formal language class, get a private language tutor or use books and written materials. Other ways to learn a foreign language are to listen to CDs or audiocassette tapes, watch TV, movies and video programs, memorize phrase books, use the Internet or employ a combination of all the above.

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use the Internet or employ a combination of all the above.

But not everyone can arrange to live in a foreign country. Native speakers of the language may not be available. Written or recorded commercial materials may not be available in the language you're interested in (Cochimi, Cibemba or Kukapa, anyone?) True, many major languages like Spanish, French, German, Italian, and Portuguese broadcast TV programs via cable. Even Korean, Catalan, Arabic and Japanese have venues available in cosmopolitan areas worldwide but the vast majority of the world's thousands of spoken tongues are simply not at large outside of their local areas. So what's a prospective polyglot to do?

One answer of course, is the internet. Plug "foreign language courses" into an internet search engine like Google or Yahoo and more than 62 million hits instantly come up. From Afrikaans to Punjabi, and Hebrew to Zulu, thousands of listings lay before you only a mouse click away. How exactly then, can the internet be used to tackle learning a foreign language? Start off effectively by using these six ways:

1. Do an initial evaluation

The first thing you may want to know is where you are in the scheme of learning the language. An initial language skills evaluation is in order are you a raw beginner? False beginner? Intermediate level? Higher? Let's take English as a second or foreign language as an example. English proficiency diagnostics tests are free online at:

• General English Test with instant results <http://nll.co.uk/test/english.shtml>

• Parlo <http://parlo.com/> (diagnostic tests in English, Spanish, and French)

• Upper Intermediate Test

<http://www.wordskills.com/level/caeform.html>

If you score above 80% in this test, you should take the next one and also show your teacher or tutor a copy of the results.

2. Become familiar with language learning strategies

How do YOU learn? Knowing this can make the daunting task of foreign language learning less like study and more like play. Are you a Visual "Spatial learner who likes pictures, drawings, graphics and extensive use of color? A Musical "Rhythmic type that would benefit from having your lessons and materials set to music, rhythm or rhyme? Perhaps you're the athletic type who'd derive more success with learning by motion, movement, mime or even dance? Playing the works of Mozart in the background while studying has been shown to enhance learning in a number of areas. To find out more about your manner of learning visit these sites for starters:

â€¢ Learning Styles Explanation <http://www2.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/ILSdir/styles.htm>

â€¢ Index of Learning Styles Questionnaire <http://www2.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/ILSdir/ilsweb.html>

â€¢ The Success Types Learning Style Indicator <http://www.ttuhsc.edu/SOM/Success/LSTIntro.htm>

3. Practice reading skills

Literacy is one of the 21st centuryâ€™s most innately valuable compound skills. After all, youâ€™re reading THIS now, arenâ€™t you? Few would wish to be illiterate in their new foreign language so practice of reading skills is paramount. Online newspapers, magazines, newsletters and blogs can provide the needed practice and learning materials. Check out these reading comprehension skills sites:

â€¢ How to Read Your Textbook More Efficiently <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/lrnres/handouts/1422.html>

â€¢ Self-study reading lessons <http://www.english-to-go.com/>

â€¢ Read the article in the following address:<http://www.pacificnet.net/~sperling/quiz/read1a.html>

In the address that follows, take the quiz to verify your understanding of the reading passage: <http://www.pacificnet.net/~sperling/quiz/read1b.html>

4. Help in developing listening skills

Considered to be the most difficult of the language skills to develop, listening cannot be taught. Rather, you must practice, practice, practice and then practice some more. Every week, twice a week I passed a street vendor at the same spot, absolutely clueless as to what he was saying. I knew what he was selling â€“ I just peeked over at his wares. But his entreaties in street Spanish fell on my language-clogged ears for months. Then one evening, without warning, it happened. Just two days before, his cries were the same incomprehensible slur theyâ€™d been for months. That one evening however, when he launched into his hucksterâ€™s spiel I suddenly understood every word. My listening comprehension skills had clicked in. Why then? No one knows. Especially not me, and Iâ€™m a post-graduate-degreed Language Education Specialist!

Practice your listening skills with radio programs in your target language for a change at www.live365.com which has live global feeds 24 hours a day in multiple languages.

Foreign language internet radio and foreign news radio in 27 European, 4 Middle Eastern, 9 Asian languages and audio feeds from 19 African countries are broadcast on: <http://www.multilingualbooks.com/online-radio.html>

5. Playing games and having fun

Vocabulary is often referred to as the building blocks of language. Knowledge of vocabulary is one aspect that separates the language learning levels. The more vocabulary you know, the more communicative you are. Here are some unique linguistic sites that help build your language as you play:

The <http://www.manythings.org/> site offers interesting things for ESL students like songs, jokes, quizzes, word games, puzzles, slang and even podcasts to help stimulate English language acquisition.

The foreign language course site at: <http://www.foreignlanguagehome.com/topics/courses/index.htm> has activities in 27 languages including Finnish, Mandarin and Quechua.

At the Transparent Language site you can play games in any one of more than 100 languages from Afrikaans to Farsi or Guarani to Yoruba. And yes, they have Zulu too. Check out all their listings here: <http://www.transparent.com/games/>

6. So what language tickles your fancy?

While the selection of language courses, tutorials, news feeds, music and other audio visual materials online is extensive, ALL the world's languages simply aren't available. Sorry. But many are and here's how to find yours if it's online.

108 FREE online foreign language courses are posted at: <http://www.word2word.com/coursead.html>

The PARLO language website offers courses in English, Spanish French and Italian at: http://www.parlo.com/parlo21/home/courselist/courselist_en.asp

The E. L. Easton Language Institute offers 14 languages online from Albanian to Japanese, Latin to Croatian to Russian and Spanish. The site is online at: <http://eleaston.com/languages.html>

A plethora of language learning activities for the world wide web are online for practice activities from the University of Hawaii here: <http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/lss/lang/nflrc.html>

Although the internet may not be the complete answer to all your foreign language learning needs it nonetheless can be a tremendous resource in your efforts to hablar, parler, or sprechen. The prestige, financial gains, personal satisfaction, envy and opportunities that frequently follow with knowledge of a foreign language are without equal. Why don't you start today trying out some of these effective ways to use the Internet to learn a language. Be sure to read the companion article "Six Quick Tricks for Learning a Language" at: <http://>

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