

LEARNING LANGUAGES



1

Warm up

Name the official languages that are spoken in the countries below.

1. The Netherlands: _____
2. Switzerland (4 languages): _____
3. China (2 languages): _____
4. Tanzania (2 languages): _____
5. Iran: _____
6. Iceland: _____
7. Brazil: _____
8. Thailand: _____

Now discuss these questions about the languages above.

1. Do you know any of these languages? Which would you be most likely to learn?
2. Which language do you think would be the hardest to learn? Why? Which would be the easiest?
3. Which language do you think would be the most useful to learn? Why?



Listen to Simon talking about how he learned several languages in a variety of different ways.

Before listening

Do the preparation task first. Then listen to the audio and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

Definition

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. to be a struggle | a. clearly the best |
| 2. to rehearse | b. a certain level |
| 3. to get over | c. to be difficult to do |
| 4. a degree | d. to notice |
| 5. a catchphrase | e. to do something quite badly |
| 6. to pick up on | f. to feel better about something upsetting |
| 7. by far the best | g. to practise something you plan to say or perform |
| 8. to make a right mess of | h. a short, popular phrase that makes you think of the person who says it |

Now complete with the words you hear

I want to talk about learning languages. I've lived in many different countries, both inEurope, Middle and now here in Hong Kong. And during all of that time, I've learned five or six different languages to one or another. I love learning languages. Not only are they important when you to a country, I just find them fascinating.

Before I came to Hong Kong, I lived in Barcelona, Spain, for ten years. And when I first, the most important thing was being able to with people locally. I don't attend I don't think I'm particularly good in classes. I prefer to learn by just to people, finding out what I need to say, by looking at and listening carefully.

Other things that me when I first moved to Spain were watching the kinds of programmes we see every day on channels around the, for example the weather. This is great, because they always say the same, so you can really quickly hear the same wordsagain and again. And the pictures help of course.

Other types of programme that helped me learn Spanish quickly were things likeshows, where the same thing happens. They have a catchphrase or a slogan that they repeat endlessly when contestants or when they are called to compete.

As well as that, I used to pick up the Spanish First of all, I just accepted there was no way I was going to understand but one or two words. But gradually, I found that I learned lots of new things about this. I was because I wanted to know what was happening in the I lived in. But I also that I could learn a lot of language this way. So I'd take a dictionary with me sometimes, or I'd notice a word and I'd ask other people what ... it meant.

Anyway, by far the best practice I ever had was just talking to people in the or in shops, where I'd rehearse in my head what I wanted to say beforehand, before I went in. Usually, I made a right mess of it first of all, but after you get over the embarrassment, it's quite really. And people are very sympathetic and supporting in most cases.

Complete the sentences with words from the box.

over	degree	find	way
typical	again	mess	far

1. I've learned several languages to one or another.
2. I just them fascinating.
3. The kinds of programmes we see every day
4. You can really quickly hear the same words repeated and again.
5. There was no I was going to understand everything.
6. By the best practice I had was just talking to people.
7. Usually, I'd make a right of it first of all.
8. But after you get the embarrassment, it's quite funny really.