LC Learning Languages.

Before you listen. Match the words and phrases in the table to their definitions.

a. do something badly	1. attend
b. earlier	2. beforehand
c. encouraging	3. by far
d. feel better after something bad	4. channels
e. go to regularly (formal)	5. compete
f. level	6. decent
g. notice	7. degree
h. quite good, acceptable	8. get over
i. take part in	9. make a right mess of
j. television stations	10. pick up on
k. very difficult task, an effort	11. struggle
l. very much	12. supporting

Choose the correct answer to each question.

1. Which continent has the speaker ***not*** lived in?
a. Asia
b. Europe
c. South America

2. Which two things does the speaker do to learn a new language?
a. go to classes and speak to people
b. speak to people and use a dictionary
c. watch TV and listen to the radio

3. Why does the speaker think watching game shows is useful?
a. because of the pictures
b. because contestants are always winning
c. because the language is repetitive

4. What does the speaker say about using newspapers?
a. it was easy to learn a lot of new words quickly
b. a lot of things were happening in the country
c. other people could explain new words the writer found

5. What does the speaker say about talking to people in the street?
a. preparation was necessary
b. the embarrassment made it a failure
c. people reacted negatively

6. Why were colloquial expressions a problem for the speaker?
a. they took ten years to learn
b. they were never written down
c. they were often unnoticed

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Transcript

I wanna talk about learning languages. I've lived in many different countries, both in Western Europe, Middle East, and now here in Hong Kong. And during all of that time, I've learned five or six different languages, to one degree or another. I love learning languages, not only are they important when you move 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 arrived, the most important thing was being able to communicate with people locally. I don't attend classes. I don't think I'm particularly good in classes. I prefer to learn by just talking to people, finding out what I need to say by looking at dictionaries and listening carefully.

Other things that helped me when I first moved to Spain, were watching the typical kinds of programs we see everyday on channels around the world. For example the weather. This is great, because they always say the same things. So you can really quickly hear the same words repeated again and again. And the pictures helped of course.

Other types of program that helped me learned Spanish quickly were things like game shows, where the same thing happens. They have a catchphrase or a slogan that they repeat endlessly when contestants win or when they are called to compete.

As well as that, I used to pick up the Spanish newspapers. First of all, I just accepted that there was no way I was going to understand anything but one or two words. But gradually, I found that I learned lots of new things about this. I was interested because I wanted to know what was happening in the country I lived in. But, I also knew 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 street, or in shops where I'd rehearse in my head what I wanted to say beforehand, before I went in. Usually, I'd make a right mess of it first of all, but, after you get over the embarrassment, it's quite funny really. And people are very sympathetic and supporting in most cases.

It took me a long time to develop a good level of Spanish. I lived there for ten years, and I think I'm very fluent now. But I think for the first two years I was there, it was quite a struggle to hold a decent conversation. There were always lots of words or expressions that I didn't pick up on. In particular with the colloquial expressions, idioms, that kind of thing, that people use in everyday talk, but you don't necessarily see written down. I didn't find those very easy to learn at all. But it was a lot of fun. And people as I said are really supporting when they know that you are genuinely interested in learning their language.

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