

Which Language To Choose?

Over the years I have collected books and cassettes to learn different languages. I have them lined up(1) on my desk, all in a row: Spanish, French, Chinese, Arabic, and Russian. Unfortunately I don't speak all of them, only Spanish and French. I learned a little Russian as well, but only a few sentences. I would love to know all of these languages, but I know that it would take me years and years to both study and practice(2) them. I pick up the books sometimes and look at the Chinese and Arabic characters. "Wow!" is usually what I say to myself as I look at these beautiful but unrecognizable(3) shapes. So, what are the steps to learning a language? First, decided which one you need to learn. That sounds obvious, but, if you're like me, you will want to learn several. Limit yourself because you need lots of time to learn a language. Perhaps you can plan to(4) listen to 2 podcasts a day, read a paragraph, and practice singing a song. If you did this five days a week, you would progress quickly(5). Memorize some basic conversation sentences. Make a list of the twenty most important verbs and expressions. Read a joke book in that language, perhaps a children's joke book. What do you think? Do you have any suggestions? Is there a better way to learn a language? Personally, I think that the ear is the key. If you hear a language a lot, it will become part of you. And then, you must repeat what you hear, to hear yourself speak the language. And, finally you must have fun! Humor, laughter, and silliness can make you relax and remember.

1. 'To line up' is to put in a line or a row. It can be used for things or people. It is similar in meaning to 'to queue up'; however, we would not use 'to queue up' with objects.
 - a. The child lined up all of his cars in a straight line.
 - b. We queued up outside the cinema, and the taxis were lined up on the street.
2. 'To both study and practice'. The use of 'both' here gives a nice sound of fluency in English. It can be used in front of two verbs, or two adjectives, and two nouns in many different occasions.
 - a. He will both run and swim in the race.
 - b. She has both intelligence and generosity.
 - c. The bank employees are both unprofessional and slow.
3. 'Unrecognizable' means something that you don't recognize, that is not familiar at all.
Un-re-cog-niz-able un-re-cog-niz-able un-re-cog-niz-able un-re-cog-niz-able
4. 'To plan to ..' is useful when talking about the future.
 - a. I plan to travel this Summer if I can get plane tickets.
 - b. He plans to finish his exams and then look for an apprenticeship.
5. 'If you did this....., you would progress quickly'. This is an example of subjunctive with conditional. The simple past is used in the first half of the sentence, then 'would' plus the infinitive with no 'to'.
 - a. If you drank this, you would feel better.
 - b. If he read the letter, he would understand.
 - c. If they came early, they would have time to talk.
 - d. If they invested now, they would make an early profit.

Thanks for joining me today. Please send your questions and comments to acupofenglish@hotmail.com, and feel free to join my FACEBOOK page at Anna Fromacupofenglish.