

Lýdia Machová: Ten things polyglots do differently (2017)

Good morning everyone. Hello, hello.

Welcome to the second day of our talks, really happy you made it all on time.

Did you guys have a good time yesterday at the Culinary festival? and the Amos's concert? It was amazing, right? I'm glad to hear that.

But today we're continuing with the talks and I would like to share something with you which is really important to me, and something that I feel passionate about. And that is the way polyglots learn languages, as opposed to the way languages are often learned in the traditional way, that means in schools and language schools. Because I think there is a great, great difference. And I've been trying to deal with this problem for several years now, because I think that the ways that majority people learn languages and the ways that polyglots learn languages could be combined.

And I think that, clearly, the way that we polyglots learn languages—that way seems to work, right? So I'm trying to apply these methods also to help other people to achieve just that.

I have a special name for a type of people who are struggling to learn a foreign language and cannot succeed even with one language. I call them the *timekeepers*. A timekeeper is a person whom you ask, 'Do you speak German?' and they will reply, 'Oh well, I have had 8 years of German at school' or they say, 'I've been going to a course in French or whatever language for 4 years', and they always tell you the time. Have you noticed that? But they hardly ever speak the language. So I call them the time-keepers, they always count the time that they've spent learning the language, but they don't have many results to show for that.

And, on the other hand, we have the polyglots, people just like you, besides their name tags from last polyglots gathering, who manage to speak several foreign languages fluently. Now the question is how is that possible? How is it possible that there are these 2 groups of people, that seem to be so different which such different results when it comes to their language learning, and this is exactly the question that I've been asking myself and trying to find the solution for that.

First, before I start. I'll quickly introduce myself. First of all, I'm a passionate language learner. I really, really enjoy learning languages. I learn usually a new language every two years. This is the system that I've had so far, and I like to practice them anytime I can, for example, at the polyglot gathering.

I also happen to be a professional conference interpreter. And maybe some of you saw the talk at the polyglot gathering 2015, where I talked about the pleasures and pains of working as a conference interpreter, where I tried to explain what this profession is really about.

And I have a new profession. I'm a language mentor. And this is something I made up because I realised that I want to help people learn languages, but I don't want to teach them. And this is my approach to teaching people languages: I mentor them so that they can learn languages just like polyglots do, using the same techniques and strategies.

And, finally, I happen to also organise the Polyglot Gathering this year, so you might know me in this role as well.

Now, I will start my presentation with showing you a few examples of how some polyglots learn languages. I picked a few that I'm sure you will probably know of, and I will briefly introduce their strategies to learn their languages, so we can see what it is actually. How do

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROh_RG3OVg

Véase también:

Lýdia MACHOVÁ. The secrets of learning a new language. TED, 1019.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_XVt5rdpFY

Timekeepers

Professional conference interpreter

Language mentor

polyglots approach language learning? And what methods do they use?

Benny Lewis: speak from day 1

So the first person I'll introduce probably does not need any introduction at all. I'm sure we all know Benny Lewis from *Fluent in 3 Months*. Well, Benny has a very interesting method, an interesting way to learn languages. It's called 'Speak from day 1'. So Benny goes out there, doesn't speak the language at all; he just collects a few words, phrases, goes among the people in the country where the language is spoken and starts speaking with them and learning from what he receives as a return. And so he collects more and more vocabulary and practices and practices, makes a million mistakes a day and this is his approach of learning languages. And I'm sure—well this is the languages he's learned so far. It may be not totally updated. Maybe they are a few more missing ones, but this is just to show what can be achieved with such a method.

Steve Kaufmann: a lot of input first

I'm sure you all know Steve Kaufmann, who is here with us as well, at this gathering, who has a slightly different approach. So he doesn't go for speaking right away, but instead he gets a lot of input first. So he listens and reads massively before speaking, before producing a speech and in this way he's been able to learn a bunch of languages himself. I think this is also not the complete list right now, and actually I had a Skype lesson with Steve before the gathering where he was learning Slovak. And I was really impressed in his Slovak skills after just one week of learning and he told me that he's listened and read a lot of Slovak stories and clearly it works really amazingly.

Lucas Bighetti: Esperanto in one hour

Then I don't know if you know Lucas Bighetti, but he's also here with us, in this gathering. And Lucas has quite an interesting method himself. I saw him at the last polyglot gathering with all these languages on his nametag and I practised a few of them with him and I was really impressed at the level that he was able to use those languages. And I looked at them and I said, "Lucas, you have all these languages there but I see no Esperanto, have you ever really thought about that?" He was like 'no, not really. I don't know'. I said 'You know what? Let's make a challenge: I'll help you learn Esperanto and I think it would take you maybe 3 days or so'. It actually took him an hour. In that 1 hour, I explained the 16 grammar rules that Esperanto has that you need to know in order to really know this language.

So after an hour, we were speaking Esperanto and I said 'gosh, this is too easy'. So I said 'OK, challenge number 2: I'll help you learn Slovak, and of course this would be easier for Lucas than for many other people because he already spoke 3 Slavic languages very, very well; Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian. And it took us about a day before we did a recording on video about how we speak Slovak. It was just amazing. Whenever I show this to Slovaks—the conversation after one day—they just cannot believe it. They say, 'This is impossible. No one can learn our language in just one day'.

Lucas Bighetti and Jan van der Aa: Language Boost (500 most frequent words)

And Lucas seems to have a method for that, it's a method that he developed with Jan van der Aa, who you might know as well, and they call it "Language Boost". And it's about 500 most frequent words in a vocabulary in a language that they learn with example sentences and then, using these sentences and these words, they can express many, many things in very simple terms, and they can communicate with just this 500 words and then of course they continue learning different vocabulary. So this is Lucas's approach.

Gabriel Wyner: flashcard system with no translation

Then I don't know if you've heard about Gabriel Wyner. And Gabriel has an interesting method based on flashcards, based on spaced repetition system. And what is interesting is that he doesn't use translation at all. So he uses pictures of things that he can take a picture of, or he uses a cloze test (a word missing in a sentence) when he wants to practice grammar. And in this way Gabriel managed to learn a lot of languages himself. And he has a very interesting story about how he actually came up with this method, but we don't have time

for that today, unfortunately. So this is the flashcard system with no translation.

And then we have Luca Lampariello who bases his learning mainly on translation and this is interesting, because Luca doesn't use flashcards at all. He's not a flashcard friend or a flashcard user. And yeah, it works amazingly for him. He's learned a bunch of languages to a very high and impressive level. I think we all know that, and his method seems to be working just as well.

Luca Lampariello: translation

And then I would like to introduce 2 more people to you. Robin McPherson. I don't know if you met this guy. He was told several times by his parents, teachers, friends when he was young that he doesn't have a talent for languages. He's just not good at languages and probably should dedicate his life to something else, because languages don't seem to be the thing for him. Well, he proved them wrong later on, because today he speaks a bunch of languages really well on a very fluent level. And he does this by using a special method which I personally call the "Dissection method". I don't know whether he uses it particularly, but he basically takes a recording on YouTube, for example, a short video with subtitles in 2 languages, and he dissects it to very little parts, chunks of phrases that he puts into Memrise, and he keeps learning them over and over and over again, and this way he manages to speak the language very well after a very short time. So this is Robin's method.

Robin McPherson: dissection method

And, finally, I'd like to introduce David James, who I'm sure many of you know; "Uncle Davey", who's not with us at this gathering, unfortunately, but you know him probably from the previous ones. And David's method is called "the Gold List method". Have you heard about that? If you haven't, check it out, because it's really cool. I love it. And I've been using it for several years and it works amazingly. You basically just write lists of vocabulary and you re-write them every 2 weeks or more in order to distil the vocabulary that you have in your long-term memory, and keep re-writing the vocabulary that you still don't. This is really a fascinating process which works, because, anytime you rewrite a list, you find out that your brain has remembered 30% of the vocabulary and you have it in the long-term memory. It's just an incredible method: very simple, very easy to use and very effective. Now we could continue, now—this is David's languages that he's learned.

David James: Gold List method

And we can continue with many other polyglots. Many of them are here with us today. I took just a few random pictures from the last gatherings, and I could have a presentation about every single one of you, and describe the methods that you use and it would be very different, right? Because everybody has their own system to learning languages, and all these systems seem to work clearly because all of you have several flags on the nametags; the languages that we can speak.

So what I'm trying to say with this is that every polyglot has their own way, and the question is: "what do these polyglots have in common?"—right? And I'm going to discuss this in the second part, but, firstly, I'll just briefly explain my own method. (I'm sorry, the discussion would be right after the talk.)

So just to briefly explain my methods, I start with the "bidirectional translation method" or "the back translation method", as I call it. So I translate whole texts from my mother tongue into the foreign language, so that I can use the phrases and learn them in context. That's very similar to Luca Lampariello's method.

Bidirectional translation method = back translation method

And afterwards I have 4 pillars of learning a language. And I always keep these 4 pillars [fun, quantity, frequency and system], and it's helped me to learn all the languages that I speak today.

4 pillars: fun, quantity, frequency and system

First of all, I make sure that my language learning is fun. If it's not fun, if it's not enjoyable, it's not a method for me. So that's why I work with materials that I pick myself. I like them. I'm interested in reading the texts or listening to the recordings, etc., and I do it in a way which

1. fun

is fun for me. So, for example, the Gold List method is fun for me. Flashcards—me—personally, not so much, so I prefer that method.

2. quantity

Secondly, I do a lot of that. I do a lot of learning. So, for example, when I watch something, I make sure I go for a lot of TV series, because it has a lot of episodes and, in this way, I get to see an episode every single day. And this gives me massive input that I can use in order to improve my listening comprehension. This way I have seen all of the episodes of *Sex and the city*, *Desperate housewives*, *Friends*, *Lost*—you name it—in several languages, and this is what I do in order to really understand the languages well.

3. frequency

Thirdly, I decide to work with the language frequently in small chunks. So I learn, for example, half an hour or maybe an hour every day, but rarely more, because I think it's really more effective to learn in small parts but frequently—really every day—for some periods of time.

4. system

And, finally, I have a system in the language learning, which means that I always pick priorities, that I have for a certain period of time, 2 or 3 months. And I work on them a lot. I concentrate on them, so I never develop all the 4 skills at the same time (writing, reading, listening and speaking). I always concentrate on what is the most important for me at that period and I work on that. Plus, I have a system when I do the things that I do. So when I wake up, one of the first things I do is I distil some vocabulary in the Gold List method, do some grammar exercises, etc., etc.

Go all the way until you get fluency

And these are the languages that I've applied these methods to, and all—besides the Slovak sign language that is at the bottom—I'm able to use more or less fluently today. And this is exactly the goal I am trying to achieve. I may be a little bit different from many of you in the way that I don't dabble in languages. So I don't learn the basics of several languages, because I decide to either go for it or not. You know, I don't want to spend a lot of time learning the basics of a language, because I feel that, if I don't cross a threshold where I use the language fluently, then I would probably lose all of that time I spent with the language. And this is why I prefer to really go all the way until I feel comfortable with the language: I can read books in it, I can listen to whatever I want and speak to the people.

So now let's get to the main question of this presentation. What do these polyglots do differently? What do they have in common? And what is different in their language learning from the way that languages are learned by the majority—language learners, by the majority of people who are struggling to learn even a single foreign language.

I have 10 things for you, because 10 is a nice number.

1. Polyglots do not have a special talent for languages

1. So I'll start with the first one and I would like to clarify that polyglots do not have a special talent for languages. And I think you will agree with me, because this is not a gathering of super-talented people who happen to be very lucky to have been born that way. This is about the approach that we take to language learning. And I have a proof for you to show you that we are not super-talented, because all these people we have mentioned before, who speak a lot of languages today, were not able to speak a foreign language until they were adults. Now I'm thinking: if these people had the super talent, wouldn't they have been the best students in class when they had some lessons of English or whatever language they were learning at school? I supposed they would. If the talent was there, it probably would have shown earlier—right?—not at the age of 21, 23 when they started to learn a foreign language. For example, Lucas is from Brazil and he's had several years of English at school, but when he was 17 or 18, he could not speak at all. He's had several years of English at school, just like the time-keepers, but couldn't use the language. How's that possible? Such a talented language learner, such a talented polyglot. So I believe that this really proves the fact that it's not about the special talent; it's about something else.

I have a nice quote by Henry Ford, who says: "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't, you're right". So I personally decide to believe that I have the language talent and it works for me. And so many people out there just tell you, 'Ah you speak so many languages. It's so easy for you. But you know, me, I just don't have the language gene. I don't have the talent, so I'm not even trying. It doesn't make any sense'. Or they will not speak the foreign language, because they decided that they don't have the talent.

2. Secondly, I think that every polyglot has their own special method, which I think I've demonstrated in the first part of the presentation, and there is not one good method that people need to pick, or adopt or repeat by other people. You need to develop it yourself. And that's what I said about all of you. Everyone of you has learned the language in a different way, and probably—hope you'll agree with me—we even each language in a different way. So we sometimes go for more listening, sometimes go for more speaking, sometimes reading, etc.

3. Thirdly, polyglots learn languages mostly by themselves. And I believe that this may be the key difference in the way polyglots [i.e. languages] are learned out there in schools and language schools and the way that polyglots learn languages. And this is because people—the majority of people learning a language, when they want to learn a language, what do they do? They find a language school or a teacher, they pay them and expect to be spoon-fed, because they pay the teacher so that the teacher teaches them. And the only thing that they are willing to do is come to the lesson and wait to be taught. And I believe this is the whole thing. This is the whole problem with unsuccessful language learners, because, if they did not approach language learning like that, if they were willing to actually give it the effort and the energy that all of us are giving it, then they would have very different results. Luca Lampariello put it very nicely when he said that 'languages cannot be taught. They can only be learned'. And I totally agree with that, because it's just the way it is. And all of us have not simply been taught the languages by very skilled teachers, but we have learned them ourselves. We may have teachers, we may go to courses, we may have conversational classes, etc.—there's nothing bad with that—but it shouldn't be the main thing, the main time we spend with a language.

4. Fourthly, polyglots create their own language material. I think we all agree to that. We don't have just one book that we follow when we learn Spanish. We don't just have one book when we learn Portuguese. Instead, we create the materials that we want to use. So we create our own flashcards, our own collection of books, our own texts or recordings, YouTube videos etc. Or sometimes we go a little bit over the top, and we collect a bit more books that we're able to use in the language learning. You all recognise this, your little piles of books for all the languages you want to learn. I know. But I think this is still the good approach, even if we overdo it sometimes a little bit.

5. The fifth point is that polyglots learn one language at a time. Now, some of you may disagree with me, and I'll be happy to discuss it in the discussion, but my personal opinion is that this is the best way how it works. A question for you: How can you learn to speak 10 languages in 2 simple steps? And I know many of you know the answer because it was mentioned at the first polyglot conference in Budapest by Anthony Lauder, who said: "Step 1, you speak 9 languages. Step 2, you add one." Simple, right? Now the logical question: "What happens when you want to speak 7 languages?" You speak six, and you add one. What happens when you want to speak 5 languages? You speak four, and you add one. And if you want speak two languages? Speak one, and add one. Makes sense, right? So this is my reply to people asking me, "How can I learn 2, 3, 5 languages at the same time?" I tell them: "Don't!" Learn them one by

Limiting beliefs

2. Every polyglot has their own special method

3. Polyglots learn languages mostly by themselves

4. Polyglots create their own language material

5. Polyglots learn one language at a time

one. It doesn't mean you cannot do anything with the other languages while you're learning one, but I think you should concentrate on one language. And I personally spend at least 80% of my time with one language, and then I spend maybe 20% with the other ones too, to keep them up, etc.

6. Polyglots spend more time listening and speaking

6. The sixth point is polyglots spend much more time listening and speaking than the majority of learners. And I believe these 2 things are also the key to learning a language well and to having different results. Because most people just go for reading, learning vocabulary, grammar, but nicely in their comfort zone. But they don't want to speak, because they're not ready yet. They will speak when they will feel ready. And I believe that listening is probably the most neglected skill that is used in traditional school language learning system. I don't know about you, but, when I was learning English here in Slovakia, we would have a teacher come with a tape recorder once a week and play one recording of English. And we would do the exercises, listen to it again. That was all the listening I ever got in the lessons. And no one told me at that time that I need to listen to much, much more of language material in order to understand English well. Only later did I find that out and now I apply it to all the languages that I learn. I just listen, listen, listen to podcasts, to YouTube videos, to TV series—anything I can, because, otherwise, I would not be able to understand the language. It just doesn't go without that, and I think this is something that teachers often forget to mention to their students.

And secondly, I believe there is no better activity to help us improve in the language actively than speaking. I believe that speaking is the key to actually having different results, because, once you start speaking, you see the improvement that you've had and it motivates you to learn more and get more vocabulary, etc. You activate all the knowledge you have. And that's why I believe this is the no. 1 skill that we should concentrate on, which is often neglected in the traditional school learning system.

The moment you become fluent is worth the effort

There is a moment in the language learning which I totally adore, and that's the moment when I feel free in the language—you know what I'm talking about—when you suddenly understand the language, it doesn't cost you that much energy and it kind of feels your own. I had it last with Russian. This is the language I'm learning right now. When I went to Russia, after one year of learning, and I heard people speaking Russian in the street, and I was like 'Oh, there are Slovaks out there'. And, after a few seconds, 'Wait, this is Russian'. I just happened to understand it so well that it feels like Slovak or it feels like Polish, which was my other language which I had a good level. So I really, really love this moment and it feels like it's totally worth spending 1 or 2 years learning the language in order to achieve this level and just feel OK and free in the language.

7. Polyglots are not afraid to make mistakes

7. Point Number 7 is that polyglots are not afraid to make mistakes. Now, how does an average language learner feel when they're supposed to say a sentence in a foreign language and they might make a mistake? Something like that. I think everybody knows that feeling—right?—of 'Oh, my God, I'm going to say a sentence in a foreign language. What if I make a mistake? Oooh! Tragedy!' And I think polyglots approach it differently. They go out there and they make many, many, many mistakes, because that's the only way to learn—right? And I feel that we're just at ease, speaking the language and using it with many mistakes. Actually, this is something one of my students told me, because some of you have been learning Slovak before coming to the gathering. And one of them is Michael Miskot. And he had a lesson with one of my students when they were practicing Slovak. And the student said after this lesson: "Well, this was amazing! I just saw how Michael was just so relaxed about speaking the language. He wasn't worried about making mistakes, just took it easy, enjoyed the process. And he was at ease".

And he said, "It was so inspirational for me to see that, because I'm always so stressed when I speak English. And I saw that it can be fun and OK and relaxed". And I think this is what we all have in common, don't we? When I had a lesson of Slovak with Steve Kaufman or with Richard Simcott, who have both been learning Slovak, I saw how OK they were with making mistakes. They don't worry about that. That's exactly what it takes in order to improve in your speaking skills.

8. Point number 8 is that polyglots have mastered the art of simplification. I think this is the key to speaking at the beginning, when you don't really have the vocabulary, when you don't have so many words. Now, as an example to illustrate how I simplify things: when I was learning Spanish—I was just at the beginning, maybe A1 or A2 probably—and I was out with some friends, Spanish-speaking friends, Erasmus students here in Bratislava, and we were doing some shopping, etc. And, afterwards, they said they were hungry. So they asked me: "Is there any restaurants [sic] out there?" And I was trying to explain to them in Spanish—my very, very limited Spanish—that "yeah, there is a shopping center nearby, and there is a food court that we can all go to, and we can pick several types of restaurants, several types of cuisines, you know, and have a good meal". But with my very limited Spanish, all I said was: "En esa casa hay mucha comida" ("There's a lot of food in that house"). And it worked, you know. I didn't have to say much more. They all laughed, of course. We all laughed together, but I was not worried about making that mistake. And they got the answer they wanted. So that's the art of simplification, isn't it? And if we apply this to any speaking lesson, then we can really improve quickly. This was what Lucas does with his 500 words, the most frequent words in the vocabulary. He just simplifies all ideas that he wants to express. So, if you get good at this skill, you're good to speak any language, even from Day 1.

9. Ninth point is that polyglots learn in small chunks. And I would like to debunk the myth that polyglots spend ages learning languages, that they don't do anything else all day long. Well, there are days when we're really eager about the language, right? But usually not. I don't know about you, but I have a life, actually. I don't spend hours learning a language a day. That would be boring, so I spend maybe an hour—an hour and a half tops—but I do it every day. I do it regularly. I do it in small chunks and, that way, I know that the progress will come. And it does, and it feels very good. We all know that learning a language is a marathon, not a sprint. So if we try to rush it, it won't work. But if you enjoy the process step by step, much better, much more effective.

10. And, finally, the final point that I want to make is that polyglots really enjoy learning languages. And now I know many people will think, "Ah, ok, that's the thing. Language learning is not my hobby. That means I will not be a polyglot. I will not speak any foreign language well, because, you know, I just have other hobbies but not language learning". But I think this is wrong. The question is not whether you happen to have language learning as a hobby. The question is, "How can you make language learning a hobby if you need to learn the language?" And I think there are so many ways, so many beautiful ways how to do this, because you can, for example, watch your favourite series. I always tell people, "Watch Friends with English subtitles or with no subtitles at all in English". I told this to people in Slovakia or mostly learning Slovak and they were like "Well, I actually could do that. I enjoy Friends". But they said, "But what if I don't understand?" I said, "don't worry about it. You will later on. Just give it the time. You need to give it a lot of input. It will improve. Trust me". And they come to me after a month or two and say, "I understand so much of Friends already. This is cool". This is because they enjoy this process of watching series. You can also read many interesting articles; for example, about healthy lifestyle, if that's

8. Polyglots have mastered the art of simplification

9. Polyglots learn in small chunks

10. Polyglots enjoy learning languages

what interests you. I tell people, "Don't go for the texts in the textbooks. Instead, find blogs about the topics that you care about. And in this way the learning will be just fun. And you will enjoy it. And it will be great." You can listen to podcasts about traveling, for example, if you're passionate about travelling. It doesn't need to be a podcast, you know, that is meant for language learners. Just try to go for native material. Give it a lot of time and input. It will work. You can read books about personal development. I think that reading non-fiction in the foreign language is so much easier than reading fiction. Many people go for these old, old books from the 18th-19th century, which I think are pretty difficult to learn if you're starting with a language. But go for Brian Tracy, or something like that; you know, personal development, where someone is using the current language to express ideas, to tell them to you to give you advice. It will work perfectly. Or, for example, you can learn grammar through an app. It doesn't need to be a book. I have a good example of a student of mine, Erik Hoffmann, who is pretty well known as a marketing specialist in Slovakia, who had a huge problem learning English. He said he was learning it for 20 years as an eternal beginner. He couldn't cross the fluency level. He couldn't have a conversation with me. But afterwards he said, "I've improved my English more in half a year than in 20 years of being an eternal beginner". How's that possible? One of the keys for him was to learn grammar through an app. He said "I really need to improve my English grammar, but I don't like books". So I told him, 'Ok. There is an app', you know, Murphy's English Grammar in Use. You know the book? I think the best English grammar there is. It's an app now, you know. You can download it and do the exercises in the app. You don't have to go through a book and check the key, etc. And this for him was a revolutionary thing. He was addicted to learning English for several months and really improved amazingly. I would like to quote Steve [Kaufmann] on this one, who said "Success in language learning depends on you finding ways to enjoy the process". And I totally subscribe to that.

So these are the 10 things that I believe are the key to learning languages successfully, learning them the way that polyglots do. And I believe that if anyone out there, whether they're talented or not, copy these strategies, they find their own way and just apply these techniques, they will definitely have to succeed.

And Tony Robbins said, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got". Makes sense, right? And yet the people out there still keep trying the same things all over again for many years. They've been learning English at language schools—and just language schools, no learning at home—for many, many years, and they think that if they change the language school, it will work. But I think the system is just not set correctly. You need to change your approach to language learning, and that's when you can actually achieve great, great change in the results that you have with the language learning.

The question now is, "So what do we do about this?" There is a huge gap between the way polyglots learn languages and the way they are taught at schools and language schools. What do we do about that? So this is the question I've been dealing with for a long time and my answer to this question is language mentoring. That is my approach to learning languages. And you may remember—some of you—last year at the gathering, I had a talk about language mentoring ("Don't teach me; make me learn") where I explained to you that I had an experiment with a hundred students at the Comenius University in Bratislava. And I told them, "Don't expect this university to teach you, go for it and learn yourselves". And a miracle happened, a revolution into learning, seriously, because they started learning and their results were just amazing. I then continued—after the last gathering that we had in Berlin—I continued and started to teach this to people in Slovakia. I've done a lot of seminars. I'm trying to spread

the message by giving talks all over Slovakia and telling people that polyglots are not the super-talented people. You can all learn the languages yourselves. And it's really, really fascinating to see what a change this makes in many, many people's lives. They write me often emails. Actually, I quote them. They say, "You've changed my life, because now I've learned this language, I can use it to go work abroad, you know, to communicate with so many people out there", etc., etc. And just last week I received a really beautiful email from a guy that attended one of my talks in Žilina, a city in Slovakia, who said that "I've been trying to learn English for such a long time, and it just never, never worked. And when I went to your talk and I heard you say that I don't need a talent to do that. He actually quoted the quote by Henry Ford ("Whether you think you can or you think you can't you're right"). And he said, "This totally changed my life. Now I'm learning English 2 or 3 hours a day. And I started going to interviews in Bratislava looking for a job, and I just enjoy it. I speak and speak. And before I was always stuttering. I was not sure of myself. And now, suddenly, it works, and it's amazing. So thank you for that, for sharing this polyglot message with us".

So I would like to end this presentation with a quote, which all of you have received as a bookmark so you have it as a little souvenir: "The best time to start learning a language was when you were a kid. The second best time is today". So I hope this inspires you to keep on learning your languages, even though sometimes it's a lot of hard work, it's not always fun. But I hope it helps keep you motivated and inspired. If you have any questions, I would be very happy to answer them. Thank you.

So the question is whether in this half hour to one hour a day that I recommend there is also the other contact with the language. I think that this one hour of contact a day is enough. Whereas most part of that should be active learning where you actually sit down and concentrate on that, but I usually spend 20-30 minutes a day just listening to podcasts, for example, when I walk, when I do something else. Usually, what happens is that I fall in love with something that I use, like a material. For example, right now I'm watching *Кухня* to learn Russian—amazing series, very recommended. So I make plans. 'OK so I will watch an episode every day', but then the episode is so good that I actually watch another one. So it often happens to me that I spend more time with the language, but it's not planned. It's not part of the system, but I just enjoy it that way. Thank you.

One hour a day is enough

How can I apply this methodology of teaching this way on a more structural level? Yes, I'm working on that. I've just been spending a year on that, so give me some more time. And actually this can be applied massively to a lot of people. Now in my current course I have a hundred and twenty people learning very different languages all at the same time. And this is the language mentoring group that I have. It's all online. They don't even need to be in one place. And they're all improving with their own plan, with their own system. And it seems to be working well. So I'm trying to find ways to spread this and get more people into this. But it seems to be working massively pretty well. Thank you.

So the question is what has been the resistance so far to the methods that I'm trying to spread. Well, of course, this is not a method for everyone. As everything, there will be haters and people who oppose. I'm OK with that because I'm not trying to make everyone learn this way. What I'm trying to spread is that, if there are so many people out there, polyglots just like all of us, who manage to learn languages, then there must be something about their learning. And it's worth looking to those methods in more detail. But so far I haven't experienced anyone fighting against this, because clearly there's results. So if someone shows me a different approach which works much better, then I'm open to discuss that, of course. But I'm not saying, "Languages should be learned this way". All I'm saying is

you should spend more time with the language, make it fun, make it frequent and have a system in that. And I think no one really opposes this or says that 'Oh, well, this doesn't work'. People like to add different things that are the most important things. And I'm very open to revising them, but other than that, I don't think people are against that idea in general.

That's a great idea. That's a call for action. Let's spread these ideas in other contexts, not just in Slovakia. I totally agree but I actually don't think the context is so different for Slovakian learners than it is for New Zealand learners. I know that for you it's not so easy to go to another country and practise their language, of course. But people that I'm working with mostly are people that cannot go to a different country. They have a family here, they work, etc. Maybe they can go for a week-long holiday, but that's not enough. But I think, especially with the internet, you don't really need to go to another country in order to learn the language. So with the internet, we can be anywhere, you know, just using online teachers for example to practise, etc. And in that case I think that's very similar. But yes, I agree with you. And, please, share the message on in New Zealand or anywhere else. Thank you for that.

I am sorry, I am afraid we'll have to end now. Or one more minute, okay? One more question.

What do you think of total, physical response method for kids as a starter, and do you think we can make this suitable for adults?

I don't know the details of this method, so, unfortunately, I cannot tell you much more about that, but I think that any method can be applied within the system, like this is not a particular method. But, actually, whether you apply flashcards, whether you apply the direct conversational method or anything else, it can work, if you do a lot of it and you do it frequently. That would be my answer.

OK. Thank you very much for coming and enjoy the rest of the Gathering.