

# Should You Practise **LESS** to Speak Better Spanish?

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# Should You Practise **LESS** to Get the Results You Want?

It sounds wrong, doesn't it?

You've probably spent most of your life being told you have to **try harder** if you want to do better.

*'This isn't good enough! You've got to do more homework! You've got to work harder!'*

Does that give you any nasty flashbacks?

Sadly, it does for a lot of people.

I say sadly, because recent research in neuroscience shows that:

**It doesn't have to be like that.**

## **Speak Better Spanish by Practising **LESS****

It probably still sounds wrong to you, doesn't it? Wrong as in *unbelievable*. It's amazing what a strong hold our experiences at school have over us, even when we're adults.

**So check this out:**

A team of research scientists in the University of Illinois, Chicago\*, tested people to see what happened when they learnt 13 new made-up words. Unsurprisingly, the group who learned by immersion instead of normal classroom teaching processed the words in a more 'native-like' way.

**Here's the kicker, though:**

About **5 months** later, without *any* warning, they gave both test groups another fMRI scan...

...and **BOTH GROUPS** were processing the language  
**MORE LIKE NATIVE SPEAKERS.**

Are you amazed yet?

Let me repeat that.

After doing ZERO HOURS OF PRACTICE over five months, *both groups* were using their new 13 words **MORE like native speakers.**

When the brain is given time to get used to new material - and tests have shown that this is true for people who sleep after learning something new, too - it processes that material better, faster, more naturally.

## So what are the implications for you?

Sadly, I'm not saying that the less work you do, the more Spanish you'll speak - wouldn't that be lovely?! It's a pity that the world doesn't work quite like that, or I'd speak at least 100 languages already...;-)

But if you have the **RIGHT KIND of materials** to practise speaking and listening, you can do less and *less* practice while your brain quietly turns you into a better and *better* speaker.

## Here's an example of what I mean:



I did an intensive day with the sessions in SaySomethinginDutch. Because I'm happy to make mistakes (which are vital for learning), I galloped through 10 sessions in a day - even if it was quite a long day! At the end of the day, I had a chat with a Dutch speaker - in fact, you can see the results on YouTube here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IE01-4iThcl>

Most people would say you'll forget what you learnt almost immediately after a day like that - but neuroscience shows it's not true.

**So, I left it for a week. An entire week.**

And then I just did the LAST two sessions again. *[This works because we re-visit almost everything you've learnt in every set of two sessions].*

I remembered some things better than I expected, but other bits were slow to come back. That's fine.

**THEN I left it for three months. Seriously.**

After 3 months, I did those last two sessions again. And I got a bit of a surprise! I remembered almost everything, and some of the things that were a bit slow after a week came out quickly and easily after a 3 month break... and I was even able to survive a trip with my five year old daughter around a town in the Netherlands without using any English (okay, except when my phone ran down and I had to ask the good folk in a T-Mobile shop to recharge it!).

Now I'm on the final step.

**I've made a note in my online calendar, and I'm leaving it FOR A YEAR.**

Yes, I'm entirely serious. I've been inspired by Louis - more about him below.

By the time I revisit those last two sessions again, I'll have 80% or more of that material IN MY HEAD FOR LIFE. (In fact, I can kind of feel it's pretty much all still there already).

## **Maybe you want to take it to the **extreme****

You might like to do the same interesting test as Louis, a security architect and friend of mine who lives in Australia.

Louis spent a day studying Spanish, and got through 10 sessions before having a conversation in a café with a Spanish speaking friend. You can see the five minute video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVJ1jtyRMb0>



Here's the extreme part - Louis spent that day learning Spanish on the **28th of April, 2013.**

## **Then he left it, *entirely*, for more than **14** months!**

On the 3rd of July, 2014, he revisited the 10th session - yes, just that one session, which covered everything he'd studied in the intensive day the year before.

Louis says he remembered about 40% of the material *immediately* and easily, but he could remember **at least 80%** of it without *any* difficulty after revisiting the session.

In other words, **it took about 30 minutes** to re-activate almost everything he'd learnt.

So, after 1 day of study, and 14 months of doing nothing with Spanish at all, Louis now finds it easy to go into any restaurant and order whatever he wants in Spanish.

## **But what if you want to keep on learning *more*?**

No problem.

I'm not saying you should wait for a year, three months and a week before learning more!

### **Look at a different example.**

January 1st - an intensive day - up to Session 10.

January 8th - revisit Sessions 9 and 10.

February 1st - intensive - up to Session 20.

February 8th - revisit Sessions 19 and 20.

March 1st - semi-intensive - finish Level 1 (up to Session 25).

March 8th - revisit Sessions 24 and 25.

June 8th - revisit Sessions 24 and 25 again, and make a note to come back to them in a year.

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## **So, how much Spanish would this give you?**

We know from experience that people who finish Level 1 are capable of surviving for an entire week without using any English.

That's not the same as completely fluent - you'll need to point at things sometimes, or ask how to say them in Spanish - but you'll be able to eat, drink, laugh, make new friends and enjoy yourself in Spanish.

Does that sound like what you're looking for?

## **One last tool to make it even easier**

So far, we've been talking about the prompt -> speech audio games that make up SaySomethinginSpanish.

But we're working on something new - that will let you take a 'Less Practice' approach while still getting a quick daily fix.

We're building natural dialogues that use EVERYTHING you've learnt - they're going to help you predict what will happen next in conversations, which will help transform your listening skills.

They're not quite ready yet, though.

I'll drop you a line as soon as they are...:-)

Hasta luego,

Aran

### **Footnotes:**

'Second Language Processing Shows Increased Native-Like Neural Responses after Months of No Exposure' - Kara Morgan-Short, Ingrid Finger, Sarah Grey, Michael T. Ullman, published March 28th 2012. <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0032974>