

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

Aran Jones
SaySomethingin.com

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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.

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>