

## **I made a mistake**

[Russian version](#)

Or rather I had been making one for a long time: the last three years. And that had been slowing down the whole process of learning languages.

When I started learning Italian (back in 2013), I had no idea on how to learn a foreign language. But I knew for sure that the way it was taught at school, and afterwards in the university, was not giving me almost anything.

### **What did I do? I started Googling.**

I found some polyglots on YouTube, whom I listened to very closely. I'm not talking here about polyglots and their insights, but about the fact that through them I came across a channel called [Italiano Automatico](#). Thanks to that channel I started to understand Italian, literally over a few months of intensive listening.

Italiano Automatico has seven rules, one of which reads as follows: you need to go over the same podcast/video multiple times.

And I was doing it. When you're being reminded of it a million times, there's really no other way not to do it.

The result, as I just said, was that, literally, in a few months, I started to understand a new language, which unfortunately didn't happen with English for years.

### **Time went on, and I decided to learn new languages. It was time for French.**

On the recommendation of Alberto Arrighini (the author of Italiano Automatico), I started learning French with the podcast [Français Authentique](#). And that podcast also repeatedly told me how important and necessary revising the same content many times is.

I did this with French and again I started to understand French after a couple of months of learning the language from scratch. It's worth saying though that I already spoke Italian and these two languages have a lot of shared vocabulary and grammar.

### **Then I decided to learn Spanish.**

Here I hadn't gone over the same material anymore. Instead I listened to different podcast episodes and videos only once.

And what do you think happened?

Nothing. Everything was OK. When I started learning Spanish I already knew half (if not most) of the most frequently used vocabulary and grammar, thanks to the similarity of Romance languages, of which I already knew two.

### **The same was true for Portuguese.**

But once it came to **German**, I didn't revise a lot either (that is, I did not repeat the completed material at least five times). Instead I completed one lesson after another, listened to dozens of different podcasts, and watched several videos every day. Long story short, I was absorbing German for days on end (without much pleasure, on top of that).

My logic was: the more content passed through me, the faster I would become fluent in German. How wrong I was.

Yes, it's partly true that, to learn a language, one needs a lot of practice. However in case you're just starting to learn a language and are up to the intermediate level, you have to focus on quality work, and not on quantity.

Guys, whoever's reading these lines, **please pay closer attention to it:**

Until you've reached the intermediate level (i.e., you still don't understand what is said when you're listening to any podcast on the internet), you've got to focus on quality, and not on quantity.

Namely:

— instead of completing one lesson a day, go through the same lesson two, three, or four days in a row.

— instead of listening to the podcast once, listen to it three to five times.

— do not watch ten different videos, one after another, but rewatch the same video, until you understand at least 90 percent of it.

The same goes for grammar. Simply understanding is just not enough.

Some of my students, and I myself very often, when they something completely new is explained to them, say, "OK, I get it" and they think they're all done. They think that once you understand something, that's it, and you don't ever have to waste time on going back to it.

You do indeed.

Otherwise, the benefits of such lessons are close to zero, if after just a week you forget everything. You'll have to constantly come back to what you've already gone through and fill in the gaps, which is quite annoying.

Sure, you'll have to repeat it anyways, but if you do so immediately, revising the material and consolidating new knowledge, you'll be more self-confident while using the language. You've worked through all of it dozens, hundreds, and maybe thousands of times.

And I, someone who's been learning languages nonstop for almost five years, only now fully realize that to effectively learn a language, you need to repeat the same material over and over again.

### **I actually realized it just recently, while learning Thai.**

I've been working on Thai every single day for about five months now. Each day I do something new, because again, I thought that covering more material, I'd learn the language faster. But there is still no video of me speaking Thai on my YouTube channel and do you know why?

Because someone (me) knows nothing about Thai.

I am sure, that if I initially focused on consolidating the acquired knowledge every time I started a new lesson, I'd already have been able to, at least, understand a little bit of spoken Thai and started to speak it. I am still very far from that goal today.

But what can I do if listening to just one time is horribly boring, let alone listening to that same thing over ten times?

**You've got to use only the content you like and are interested in.** And I am not talking about the courses, although there are some great courses out there. But there's also music, podcasts, YouTube, and all the fun stuff.

Do you find the topic native speakers talk or write about interesting? If so, that's great! Break down their speech and listen to and read through the same message over and over again. Only then go to the next video, podcast, or unit.

As a result, you'll perfectly understand a tiny portion of a language, then the next one, and finally you'll notice the snowball effect. That snowball of avresult will reach such a size that one day you'll go out to your balcony and, bursting the buttons on your shirt, happily shout, "I've learned a new language!"

At least, that's what I do all the time.

I think I can end this post here. I could add something else, but it's already too long. If you reached the end, hit "like." I can't wait to read your ideas. Thanks for reading!

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**Do you want to speak Russian better? Then go [here!](#)**