

Foreign languages

WORKSHEET A

Kate:	What evening class did you say you were doing? Spanish?
Alison:	Spanish conversation, yeah. It's good.
Kate:	Is it difficult?
Alison:	Well, it said online that the course was for people who were fluent or near-fluent, so I thought most people would be above my level. But when I went to the first class I found out I was one of the best.
Kate:	I'm not surprised. Most British people's idea of near-fluent in a foreign language is being able to order a coffee and ask for directions.
Alison:	You're exaggerating.
Kate:	I know. But there's a friend of mine who's got 'intermediate level French' on her CV and I'm not sure she can count to twenty. I shouldn't laugh, though. I've always been useless at languages.
Alison:	Didn't you do French at school?
Kate:	Yeah, I did, but I never went to France when I was a kid. I never met a French person to have a conversation with. I didn't have a connection with the country, so, you know, I couldn't see the point of learning the language.
Alison:	That's totally different from me with Spanish. Living in Spain for a year, I was surrounded by the language every day. And that's by far the quickest way to learn.
Kate:	I guess it was difficult when you first arrived, though.
Alison:	Well, about three months before I went I bought a beginners' Spanish course on CD, and listened to it quite a lot. That gave me the basics, but I started to improve much more quickly after I arrived. I had to use Spanish with colleagues in the office every day, so, you know, it was sink or swim.
Kate:	That's different from being a tourist, isn't it? I've been to Spain on holiday three times with Pete, but always to the resorts on the coast, where all the locals speak some English. So neither of us has ever made any effort with Spanish, I'm ashamed to say.

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WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

Decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F), or if the text doesn't say (D).

1. Both Alison and Kate have been to Spain.
2. Kate has never been to France.
3. Alison didn't know any Spanish when she arrived in Spain.
4. Alison had a job in Spain.
5. Kate is much better at foreign languages than when she was younger.
6. Alison has met Pete.
7. Kate is going to make an effort to speak Spanish when she next goes to Spain.
8. Kate studied French at school.
9. Alison studied French at school.
10. Kate didn't know Alison was doing any evening classes.

Exercise 2

Answer the questions about the text on Worksheet A.

1. What surprise did Alison have when she started her Spanish evening classes?
2. How long did Alison live in Spain for?
3. In what way does Kate think her friend probably isn't being honest on her CV?
4. Alison mentions some of the people she spoke to in Spanish when she was living in Spain: who were they?
5. Why didn't Kate make an effort with Spanish when she was on holiday in Spain?
6. Do you think Kate was being completely serious in what she said about 'British people's idea of near-fluent in a foreign language'? (Explain your answer.)
7. What do you think Alison meant by 'sink or swim'?
8. What does Alison think is the quickest way to learn a foreign language?

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 3

Fill in the gaps to complete the text.

Kate:	What (1) e _ _ n _ _ g _ lass did you say you were doing? Spanish?
Alison:	Spanish (2) convers _ _ _ _ n , yeah. It's good.
Kate:	Is it difficult?
Alison:	Well, it said (3) on _ _ _ _ that the course was for people who were fluent or near-fluent, so I thought most people would be above my (4) I _ v _ l . But when I went to the first class I found out I was one of the best.
Kate:	I'm not surprised. Most British people's idea of near-fluent in a foreign language is being able to (5) o _ _ er a coffee and (6) a _ _ f _ r dir _ _ t _ on _ .
Alison:	You're (7) _ _ aggerating .
Kate:	I know. But there's a friend of mine who's got 'intermediate level French' on her (8) _ V and I'm not sure she can count to twenty. I shouldn't (9) I _ _ gh , though. I've always been useless at languages.
Alison:	Didn't you do French at school?
Kate:	Yeah, I did, but I never went to France when I was a kid. I never met a French person to have a conversation with. I didn't have a (10) co _ _ _ _ tion with the country, so, you know, I couldn't see the (11) p _ _ _ t of learning the language.
Alison:	That's totally different from me with Spanish. Living in Spain for a year I was (12) surr _ _ _ ded by the language every day. And that's by far the (13) q _ _ _ _ _ t way to learn.
Kate:	I guess it was difficult when you first arrived, though.
Alison:	Well, about three months before I went I bought a (14) be _ _ _ ners' Spanish course on CD, and listened to it quite a lot. That gave me the basics, but I started to (15) imp _ _ _ e much more quickly after I arrived. I had to use Spanish with (16) _ _ _ _ eagues in the office every day, so, you know, it was sink or swim.
Kate:	That's different from being a tourist, isn't it? I've been to Spain on holiday three times with Pete, but always to the (17) res _ _ ts on the coast, where all the (18) loc _ _ _ speak some English. So neither of us has ever made any (19) _ _ fort with Spanish, I'm (20) _ sh _ _ ed to say.