

Foreign languages

WORKSHEET A

Kate:	What evening class did you say you were taking? Spanish?
Alison:	Spanish conversation, yeah. It's good.
Kate:	Is it difficult?
Alison:	Well, it said online that the class was for people who were fluent or nearly 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 Americans' idea of being "nearly fluent" in a foreign language is being able to order a coffee and ask for directions.
Alison:	You're exaggerating.
Kate:	I know. But I have a friend who has "intermediate-level French" on her résumé, and I'm not sure she can count to twenty. I can talk, though. I've always been terrible at languages.
Alison:	Didn't you take French in high school?
Kate:	Yeah, I did, but I never went to France or 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 so close to the border, I am 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 moved there, though.
Alison:	Well, about three months before I moved, I bought a beginners' Spanish course on CD, and listened to it a lot. That gave me the basics, but I started to improve much more quickly after I arrived. I have to use Spanish with co-workers in the office every day, so, you know, it was sink or swim.
Kate:	Yeah, that's very different from being around another language as a tourist. I've been to Mexico on vacation three times with Pete, but always to the resorts on the coast, like Cancún, where most of 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 Mexico.
2. Kate has never been to France.
3. Alison didn't know any Spanish before she moved.
4. Alison has a job in Spain.
5. Kate is much better at foreign languages now 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 Mexico.
8. Kate studied French in high school.
9. Alison studied French in high school.
10. Kate didn't know Alison was taking 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 study Spanish before she moved?
3. In what way does Kate think her friend probably isn't being honest on her résumé?
4. Alison mentions some of the people she speaks to in Spanish: who are they?
5. Why didn't Kate make an effort with Spanish when she was on vacation in Mexico?
6. Do you think Kate was being completely serious in what she said about most Americans' idea of being "nearly 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 blanks to complete the text.

Kate:	What (1) e _ _ n _ _ g _ lass did you say you were taking? Spanish?
Alison:	Spanish (2) convers _ _ _ _ n , yeah. It's good.
Kate:	Is it difficult?
Alison:	Well, it said (3) on _ _ _ _ that the class was for people who were fluent or nearly 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 Americans' idea of "nearly 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 I have a friend who has "intermediate-level French" on her (8) _ é _ _ _ é , and I'm not sure she can count to twenty. I can (9) t _ _ _ , though. I've always been terrible at languages.
Alison:	Didn't you take French in high school?
Kate:	Yeah, I did, but I never went to France or 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 so close to the border, I am (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 moved there, though.
Alison:	Well, about three months before I moved, I bought a (14) be _ _ _ ners' Spanish course on CD, and listened to it 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) _ _ - _ _ rkers in the office every day, so, you know, it was sink or swim.
Kate:	Yeah, that's very different from being around another language as a tourist. I've been to Mexico on vacation three times with Pete, but always to the (17) res _ _ ts on the coast, like Cancún, where most of 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.