

# Three tricky questions about language learning

All of us know what studying involves. We have done many courses, known many teachers, and learnt a lot, at school, university and beyond. We also know that language learning is different from studying other subjects in some ways. Understanding these differences can help you learn better. Here are 3 common misunderstandings that people have about language learning.

"I only need to speak, but just speaking is not enough."

People come to ESADE principally to speak better. To improve your speaking you need lots of speaking practice, which you get here in ESADE - ELC. However, just speaking is not enough to help you speak better. Learning to speak a language well also involves:

- Memorising words, expressions, structures.
- Listening to / reading lots of the new language.
- Learning appropriate grammar and vocabulary for different contexts.
- Constantly looking for opportunities to use English.
- Experimenting with the language in both writing and speaking etc.
- Identifying mistakes and correcting them.

To be successful in a foreign language, you need to do most of these things as well as speaking practice. If you do not, you deprive yourself of important tools which help you speak better – which is your objective.

"Why should I study grammar if I just need to speak?"

Whenever we speak we use grammar, whether we like it, or not. Grammar expresses the meanings we want to communicate. Different grammar and words communicates different meanings. Using inappropriate / incorrect grammatical structures can communicate something you do not wish to say, or can even mean that the people you are talking to do not understand you properly.

What is more, when we listen to English, grammar knowledge helps us understand. English speakers change the way they pronounce words when speaking in normal conversation (see GET 3). They do not pronounce all the sounds as they are written. Grammar knowledge tells you which structures are possible, and therefore, which meanings are possible. So, even if you do not hear all the words when they are spoken, grammar makes understanding other speakers easier for you.

"The person beside me seems to speak better."

We are often impressed by other students who speak faster than us, or appear more confident when they speak. We have to be careful about this because you cannot decide someone's language level just from listening to their speaking. A faster speaker does not necessarily have the best level. One student can pronounce well, but may not speak at a natural speed. Another student can have good vocabulary, but may not be able to use it quickly. The fastest speaker may make the most mistakes. Faster speakers may be harder to understand, etc.

No-one has the same level in all these things, (pronunciation, speed, vocabulary, correctness, being understandable, etc.). You cannot see all the different levels a person has in a short conversation.

Learning languages is different from learning other things and that effective language learning involves more things than we suppose when we start studying. The more you know about how people learn languages well, the better you will learn. In ESADE we can help you understand your personal learning style, and reach your objective – to speak English well.