

# BE A ~~GOOD~~ GREAT TUTOR!

Module 3, Language Acquisition



## LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

**“THE LIMITS OF MY LANGUAGE MEANS THE LIMITS OF MY WORLD.”**

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

**“YOU CAN HAVE BRILLIANT IDEAS, BUT IF YOU CAN'T GET THEM ACROSS, YOUR IDEAS WON'T GET YOU ANYWHERE.”**

LEE IACOCCA

**“COMMUNICATION LEADS TO COMMUNITY, THAT IS, TO UNDERSTANDING, INTIMACY AND MUTUAL VALUING.”**

ROLLO MAY

**“GOOD COMMUNICATION IS AS STIMULATING AS BLACK COFFEE, AND JUST AS HARD TO SLEEP AFTER.”**

ANNE MORROW LINDBERGH

# LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

## Listening

- First of four language skills
- Active, not passive
- Takes patience, practice, and persistence

## Speaking

- A primary goal of language acquisition
- Critical for communication
- Takes patience, practice, and persistence

## Reading

- Necessary for adult functionality
- Easier for many learners than speaking
- Takes patience, practice, and persistence

## Writing

- Affected by learner's educational level
- Emphasized for advanced learners
- Takes patience, practice, and persistence

# LISTENING

## Listening

- First of four language skills
- Active, not passive
- Takes patience, practice, and persistence



Listening is an active skill as distinguished from hearing, which is passive.

(<https://www.englishclub.com/listening/guide.php>.)

It is therefore a skill which does not come naturally. It must be learned, and it must be practiced.

Great tutors include frequent and varied listening practice sessions in their lesson plans. The more advanced your students, the more listening practice you should include.

Remember that listening is challenging for students who are struggling with new sounds and new vocabulary, contracted words, slurred words, and idioms! Present lessons on listening which include slow and clear speech as well as explanations of contracted, slurred, and idiomatic speech.

There are countless ways to practice listening. See, e.g., <https://www.englishclub.com/listening/guide.php>.

One proven method is for you, the tutor, to read, slowly and carefully, a paragraph or two. Keep it short. Allow your students to take notes as you read. After reading, ask specific questions about what you just read. Let the students talk about it and ask questions of you.

Encourage your students to spend as much time as they can listening to English outside of class. Remind them it takes patience, practice and persistence to perfect this necessary skill.

# SPEAKING

## Speaking

- A primary goal of language acquisition
- Critical for communication
- Takes patience, practice, and persistence



Speaking is often the primary goal of second language learners. The ability to communicate verbally is necessary for adults to function in society.

Adult students are therefore generally extremely motivated to acquire speaking skills as fast as possible. This desire, however, will be counterbalanced by the desire to not appear incompetent. No one likes to embarrass oneself trying something new in front of an audience. If the audience is critical or judgmental, the reluctance with increase exponentially.

Great tutors take care, therefore, to ensure their class environments are comfortable, relaxed, enjoyable places. Mistakes should be accepted and even expected.

Remember that adult musculature has matured. When a baby is born, that infant is capable of making any human sound. But by adulthood, abilities to use the tongue, the jaw and throat muscles, and breathing patterns in different ways have been lost. Adult learners will normally and naturally struggle with sounds not included in their first languages.

Use modeling. Use mirrors. Use repetition. Have patience. Encourage your students to be patient with their own progress. Great tutors are great cheerleaders!

# READING

## Reading

- Necessary for adult functionality
- Easier for many learners than speaking
- Takes patience, practice, and persistence



**YOU  
ARE  
INVITED!**



Inability to read necessarily results in a “limited ability to obtain and understand essential information.” ([https://www.fondationalphabetisation.org/en/causes-of-illiteracy/consequences-of-illiteracy/.](https://www.fondationalphabetisation.org/en/causes-of-illiteracy/consequences-of-illiteracy/))

Adult language learners are intelligent individuals who are hyper-aware of this handicap vis-à-vis their target language and are seeking to remedy the situation. Great tutors admire their students’ fortitude.

English is written in the Latin or Roman alphabet. For an English learner whose first language does not use Roman letters, or for one who is illiterate, the challenge is enormous. An English learner who is able to read and write French or Spanish or German will obviously have a much easier time of it.

Great tutors adjust their lesson plans to accommodate the students’ skill levels. For learners unfamiliar with the Roman alphabet, tutors must take the time to teach the alphabet and phonics. There are multiple helps, books, practice sheets, videos, and websites available, such as [http://www.poenglishcake.com/.](http://www.poenglishcake.com/)

Great tutors start with the basics and are certain their students have mastered necessary fundamentals before moving on. Begin with the alphabet, move on to Dr. Seuss, proceed to young adult fiction, and end with great English literature! What a world of wonder you will open for your students!

# WRITING

## Writing

- Affected by learner's educational level
- Emphasized for advanced learners
- Takes patience, practice, and persistence



As with reading, an English learner whose first language does not use Roman letters, or one who is illiterate, will be enormously challenged learning to write. Whereas, one who is able to read and write French or Spanish or German will not struggle. Again, a great tutor will adjust according to their students' needs.

Beginner classes may be merely putting letters on a page or screen. But advanced students may want, or may need, to learn other important aspects of composition, such as structure and grammar.

Few people are gifted writers. But everyone who writes should learn to use correct grammar, correct punctuation, correct spelling, and correct sentence structure. The placement of a comma in a sentence can change the meaning entirely. An incorrect word may result in embarrassment or worse.

Advanced students may have career or educational writing assignments. Great tutors may not specialize in the finer points of grammar or composition, but will nevertheless assist students in these endeavors by finding grammar reference materials and checking compositions for readability. Great tutors often learn along with their students!