

Joya

Listening for Languages

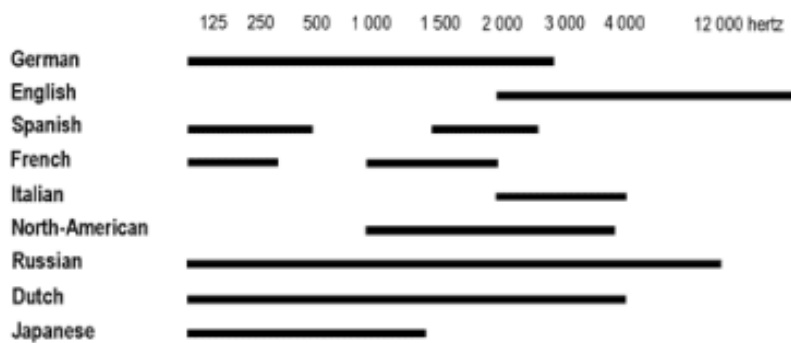
So far the theory of teaching foreign languages is founded in the misconception that we all hear in the same way. We don't!

"We can only speak a language well when we can hear it well." Alfred Tomatis

The human ear can theoretically capture a large range of frequencies and discern an infinite amount of rhythms. The impedance of air and other characteristics of the environment have shaped the more than 4,000 different languages over hundreds of years, giving each their own specific features. To speak a language well, we therefore have to adapt our listening to the acoustic frequencies of that language, which is not always immediately possible. By the age of 14, our ears have settled into a habit and remain efficient only in the frequencies and rhythms of our mother tongue. For those tones that are specific to the foreign language, we are 'deaf'. And because we cannot properly distinguish those unfamiliar sounds, we cannot pronounce nor memorise them easily.

Having a gift for languages is in fact having a gift for listening

All languages use the same base tones varying between 125 Hz to 250 Hz. The overtones however differ from language to language and vary from 2000 to 12.000 Hz. If you look at the following graph you will see why, for instance, French can be so difficult for a native English speaker while for a Russian it is so much easier to pick up and assimilate various new languages.



Listening Starts in the Womb

The very structure of our mother tongue is engrained in us while in the womb. During the last five months of pregnancy, a baby's ears are already fully developed. Constant exposure to the mother's voice gives her child an imprint of the language she speaks. Of course, her voice is filtered through the amniotic fluid. During the Listening Training this process is simulated. All the student does is put special headphones on and listen to a 'filtered' text, spoken in the foreign language. After several sessions lower pitch tones will be gradually added to simulate the 'birth' into the new language.

The Listening Training

There are different programmes available:

1. Acoustic immersion, which opens the ear to the chosen language.
2. Active sessions using words and texts to repeat so that one learns to control the 'music' of the language; its rhythm and intonations.
3. Lessons with a native teacher which enable the student to practice and gain spontaneity and confidence. To bend the ear to the frequency profile of the new language is not the only hurdle that needs to be crossed. Languages also differ in the length of the syllables. If your mother tongue is English and you want to learn French, you will have to speed up the pronunciation of the syllables. With this programme you will be able to fully emerge into those facets of the new language as if it were your mother tongue.

Once born into the new language, you will begin to speak it. You will start by repeating words into a microphone connected to the Electronic Ear. Full sentences will follow and while doing so you learn to control your pronunciation and intonation. By training your ears before you start learning grammar and vocabulary you will first of all win time. Furthermore you will be able to memorise new vocabulary quickly and enjoy the process.

Anybody Can Master a Foreign Language

For seven years Eurocopter, one of the largest helicopter-building companies in the world, devoted a significant budget to foreign language training. The nature of its international business required that people who are sent abroad speak this new language fluently. While the European Council estimates that it takes about 700 hours to become fluent in a foreign language, Eurocopter had set the rather aggressive objective to achieve fluency in 620 hours. With the Listening Training, along with a regular schedule of classes, the results were even better than that. Employees became fluent in a foreign language in 520 hours.

Employees surveyed noted improvement in the following areas:

- Perception (92%)
 - Understanding (88%)
 - Intonation (85%)
 - Rhythm (77%)
-

The Use of Foreign Tongues

Despite New Zealand's proximity to Asia, Kiwis still prefer to learn European languages. Although sitting at the other side of the globe New Zealand's second most important export market is the European Union. We live in an era where distance matters less and less. The business leaders of today are aware of the advantages of 'speaking the same language' as their business partners since that gives them a greater understanding about their culture and its protocols.

Spanish is spoken by 440 million people in 23 countries, German is spoken by 100 million native speakers in 10 countries and French has 77 million speakers in at least 33 countries. Spanish, German and French are the most popular European languages taken at the Joya Centre but we also can assist with Italian, Dutch and Russian.