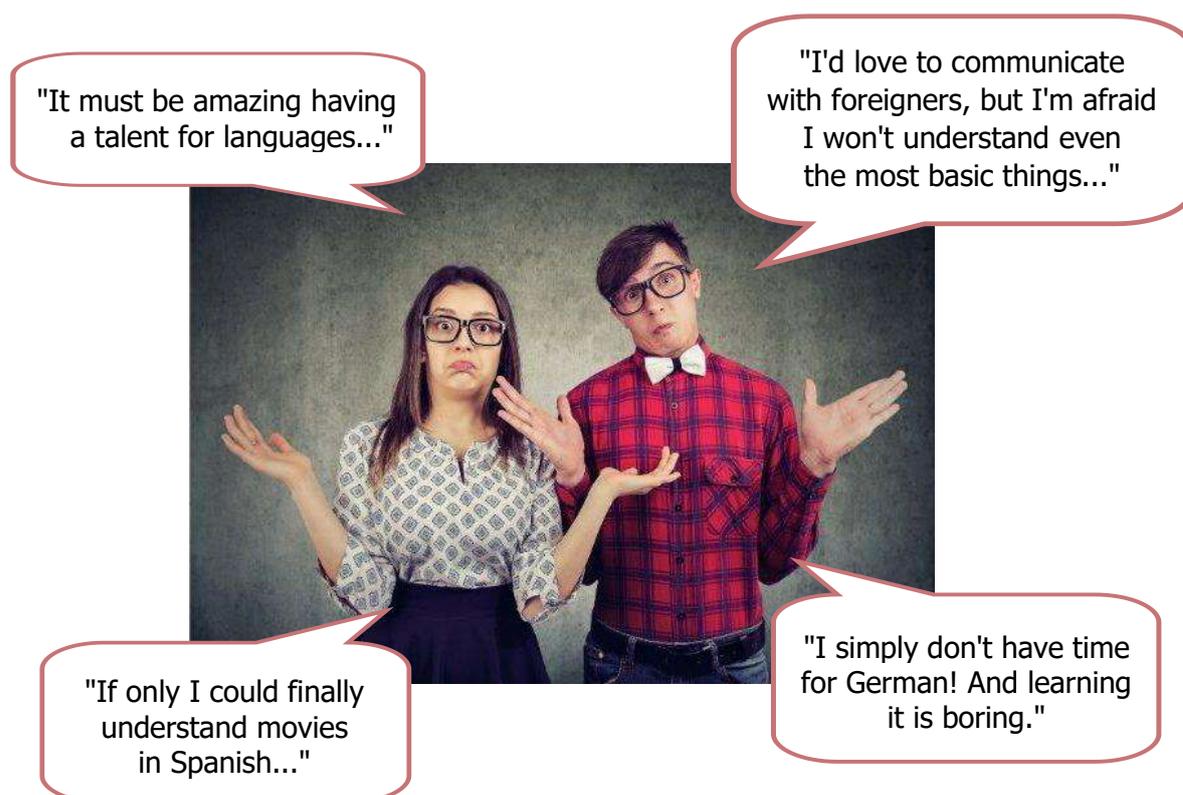


**E-BOOK**

**"You'll  
never learn  
a language  
this way"**

**7 BIGGEST MISTAKES  
IN LISTENING**

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## Do Any of These Sound Familiar to You?

If your Spanish, German or any other foreign language is shaky and you're stuck in a vicious circle of trial and error despite attending language courses for years, it might be difficult to imagine that this year, something will finally change for the better.

That you'll finally be able to **enjoy foreign podcasts, movies and series without subtitles**. That you won't feel like running away **when a stranger approaches you** in the street. That you'll be able to think of **the right words** at the right time and use them with the right grammar.

## The Good News Is... It's not Impossible!

The solution to your long-term problems with languages might be much simpler than you thought: **you just need to LISTEN to your language!**

Listening is by far **the easiest activity in learning foreign languages**. It's an input method, which means that you're only receiving information without having to say or write anything, fish for words or put them into grammatical structures.

Listening is something everyone can manage; even those who have been putting off learning for later and never properly started.

**Do you think it all sounds good, but it's not possible** because you've tried listening to podcasts in a foreign language before and didn't understand a single word? Does it seem unbelievable because you've listened to lots of recordings in your language school, but you still can't make out what the actors in movies are saying? Are you struggling to work out what, when and how to listen, and even when you finally push yourself to do it, **results seem out of reach?**

Well then, let me tell you that not all listening is the same. Listening should be a fun, easy and pleasant activity which you can start doing anytime, even when you're really busy. And even if you're a total beginner! But if you've tried it and don't feel like this at all, **you might be making one of the 7 biggest mistakes related to listening** without even knowing about it. What problems do these mistakes cause and how to solve them?

## 1) “... I’ve been Learning Spanish in a Language School for a Year, so How Come I Still Don’t Understand Anything?”

### ***What’s the mistake?* HIGH EXPECTATIONS**

Once you’ve been learning a foreign language for a while, at some point you might start to feel like you should understand everything as soon as it’s said. I mean, you’ve been attending a course and doing lots of listening exercises and homework, right? So why is it not working?

In reality, understanding spoken language is a separate skill which requires time and practice. The way native speakers of any language actually speak vastly differs from the examples you’ve probably heard in your textbook recordings. The language you’ll come across in podcasts or movies is faster and much less articulated.

#### **SOLUTION:**

**Focus on the essentials of what’s being said**, not on every single unknown word. You don’t have to be able to write an essay about what you’ve heard, a few bullet points will do just fine! And if you start writing down the main ideas of what you’ve listened to on a regular basis, you will soon improve this skill and feel much more confident.

Most importantly, don’t be too strict with yourself. The more you listen, the more you’ll understand. If you don’t understand your foreign language well enough at the moment, it only means one thing: you haven’t listened to it enough.

## 2) “I Played a Podcast in German and Only Understood about One in Every Ten Words.”

### ***What’s the mistake?* OVERLY DIFFICULT MATERIAL**

Even if your expectations are at a reasonable level, it might happen that the recordings, podcasts or series you choose are simply too difficult for you at this stage.

#### **SOLUTION:**

There’s no shame in starting with something easier. I know you’d love to listen to all those interesting interviews with celebrities or scientists, and enjoy all the bestsellers among audiobooks... But you need to start practicing with something a little lighter in order to train your ears to recognise where one word ends and another starts, when the speaker swallowed a letter or two and when they used an abbreviated word.

Ideally, you should listen to **recordings which are just a little more difficult** than your current language level. Choose materials in which you can **understand about 70 – 80%**. If you feel like you don't understand anything at all, you need to go a level or two down and find something much easier. The internet offers an endless supply of listening materials graded to various levels in any foreign language, you just need to look for them.

### 3) “But I Already Do Listening Exercises Twice a Week in My Course. Is that not Enough?”

#### ***What's the mistake?* YOU DEVOTE TOO LITTLE TIME TO LISTENING**

If you've ever attended a language course, you might remember all those short recordings that came on a CD attached to your textbook. Maybe you thought they provided enough listening practice and you didn't have to do anything else. Sorry to disappoint you, but that's far from true. **A few listening exercises from a language textbook simply won't do.**

**THE MORE LISTENING, THE BETTER.** And when we say listening, we don't mean the odd minute-long recordings scattered throughout the textbook, but truly intensive and long-term systematic listening.

#### **SOLUTION:**

Don't be afraid to invest your time in listening. This investment will yield lots of fruit and will help you move forward in your foreign language. Subscribe to an interesting podcast which comes out regularly in short intervals. Or get back to your favorite series and watch one episode every day. **Turn listening into a habit** and find pleasure in your frequent contact with language. The good news is, you can easily incorporate listening into your everyday activities! And this is where we get to mistake number 4...

### 4) “But I Don't Have TIME for Listening...”

#### ***What's the mistake?* THE LACK-OF-TIME ILLUSION**

The idea that you should now spend hours and hours listening to recordings in your foreign language can be quite terrifying in today's fast world. You immediately think to yourself that this is something you simply can't fit into your everyday schedule, since you have **kids to take care of and piles of paperwork on your office desk**, not even mentioning the shopping and other chores you have to do.

This image can paralyze you to the point you decide it's better not to start with listening at all, because it would just add to all the stress you already have to deal with. What to do?

**SOLUTION:**

Your understanding of spoken language can only be improved through listening practice. The good news is that even in your busy life, there are **“empty” moments which you can use efficiently** to your benefit. And you’ll be happy to know that these moments are absolutely ideal for listening!

- Do you like listening to the news? Find news reports in your foreign language.
- Do you travel a lot? Have an audiobook or a podcast ready for all your journeys.
- Do you walk your dog every day? Take your earphones with you and listen to podcasts while on your walk.
- Instead of scrolling through Facebook or Instagram, watch a YouTube video with your morning coffee. Surely you have enough time for that.

Look at your regular day and find all the brief moments when you’re waiting for someone or something. Think about **which activities you could combine with listening**. We do many everyday things automatically, which allows us to listen to something at the same time.

## 5) “... but Good Quality Materials in a Foreign Language Cost a lot of Money!”

***What’s the mistake?* UNUSED POTENTIAL OF THE INTERNET**

If you’ve ever visited a bookstore and looked around for some textbooks meant for language certificate preparation, you were probably horrified by the price tags they came with. Do you really have to invest hundreds of dollars to improve your language skills? Not at all!

While it’s true that some listening materials are paid, there are still **hundreds, if not thousands of high quality and interesting free resources** available on the internet.

If you invest a little bit of time in the preparation and find even just one good source, it’s a great start. The more time you spend listening and **following our self-learners’ community**, the more interesting sources and recommendations you’ll discover.

**SOLUTION:**

Find inspiration among the **tried and true resources** recommended by other self-learners (e.g., on our Facebook page – Language mentoring). Whether it’s podcasts, videos, audiobooks, YouTube videos or various lectures and shows, all these things are a great gateway into the world of listening.

And even if you decide to opt for a paid resource, such as the online audiobook service Audible, just think of it as a great investment in your own development and make the most of it!

## 6) “I’ve Started Learning so Many Times, but it Never Lasted Long.”

### ***What’s the mistake?* NEGLECTED PREPARATION**

Your expectations are under control, you’ve solved the issue of finding time and you even know what you want to listen to. But despite all this, it’s still not working out the way you’d like...

Life can throw various unexpected obstacles our way and sometimes it’s just **difficult to maintain a good balance**. Family, work, friends, rest... And then one morning, you miss your bus to work and as you’re waiting for the next one or walking to another bus stop, you realize that this would be the perfect opportunity to do some listening, but in all the morning hurry, you’ve left your earphones at home, so that plan fails as well.

### **SOLUTION:**

**Good preparation can save your week.** For example, try spending a little bit of time every Sunday preparing suitable listening materials for the coming week and check that everything is working.

- Do you tend to use your earphones both at home and on the road? Buy a second pair and put one in your bag. That way, you’ll never have to worry about forgetting them at home again.
- Are you coming to the end of your series? Start looking for a new one now and add it to your watchlist.
- Do you have a favorite podcast? Subscribe to it and download a few episodes into your phone to make sure you can listen to them even if you’re offline. Lack of internet access will never be a problem again!

## 7) “... but Learning Is so BORING!”

### ***What’s the mistake?* UNSUITABLE MATERIALS**

Why do you feel like this? Does it happen to you while listening to a podcast or watching a series that you suddenly realize you’re not paying attention to it at all? It’s simply not interesting and you **have to force yourself to finish** the episode? And even when you do, you’ll then do everything you can to avoid the next one? Well, that’s a big mistake!

The less fun you find something, the less likely you are to do it regularly and systematically. The same is true for listening. So, what can you do about it?

**SOLUTION:**

You need to face the truth. Even if a series has particularly positive reviews, it doesn't mean you have to enjoy it, too. And if you don't, you should stop watching it, even if you're already in the middle. Take the same approach if you ever start listening to a podcast you've wanted to listen to for a long time, but you find out that the episode you're listening to is just a long and dull monologue. Press the stop button and don't force yourself to finish it.

**If you don't like what you're listening to, try something else.** It's really important to make sure that the things you listen to are enjoyable and make you want to continue. You don't have to explain your preferences to anyone, just choose what you like and discard what you don't. Your options are basically unlimited!

## Don't Wait around until You Have “an Extra Hour of Free Time”

Have you caught yourself making any of these mistakes? Do you like the solutions to the most common problems of self-learners? Listening is **a great activity which doesn't require much effort**. And the best thing? You can start anytime you want! **Don't wait around until you have “an extra hour of free time”**. Start learning right now, even if it's for just 10 minutes a day!

One interesting podcast, YouTube channel or series is all you need to become totally hooked! And this is precisely the best way to get your language skills to the next level – without having to force yourself into anything and by doing things with ease and much faster than you're used to from school or language courses.

Find an interesting podcast, series or YouTuber, put your earphones in your bag and start listening step by step. Even 10 minutes a day is better than nothing. Give it time and you'll see that it does get better!



## Let's Keep in Touch!



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If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us!

Good luck with everything! :)

Lýdia Machová and the Language Mentoring team