



## Pre-Reading Activities

### A: Self-Evaluation

Read the following statements about language learning and put a tick next to the answer that **best describes you as a language learner**.

Statements	Often	Sometimes	Never
<i>I try to develop good methods for improving my pronunciation.</i>			
<i>I listen carefully to native speakers of English and try to imitate their accent.</i>			
<i>When I learn a new word in English, I try to find a good method to remember that word.</i>			
<i>I try to find ways to use English as much as possible outside the classroom.</i>			
<i>I listen carefully when people speak English to help me understand how the language works.</i>			
<i>When I don't understand something in English, I ask someone to explain it to me.</i>			
<i>When I am speaking, I try to listen to my pronunciation.</i>			
<i>If someone does not understand me, I try to say it in a different way.</i>			
<i>I do not worry about making mistakes. I just try to become fluent.</i>			
<i>I try to think of ways to help me become a better learner of English.</i>			

Now share your evaluation results with a partner. Discuss whether you think you are a good language learner or not. Discuss what you think your strengths and weaknesses are as a language learner. Are there any ways you think you could become a better learner of English?

### B: Vocabulary

1. Work in pairs. Read the statements about language learning below so that you understand them. Discuss the meaning. You may use a dictionary to look up any new words.

*Hearing a second language spoken regularly during childhood will not translate into fluency.*

*Second language acquisition requires more than exposure to the target language.*

*Hearing a second language spoken during childhood is helpful for developing an authentic accent in that language.*

*Learning a second language during adulthood almost guarantees a bad accent.*

*Exposing children to a foreign language regularly may encourage children to continue learning that language.*

2. Now match these words from the sentences above with their meanings.

Words	Meanings
authentic	speaking easily, without hesitating
translate into	like a native speaker; real
fluency	the language someone is trying to learn
acquisition	to help; to make someone want to do something
exposure	to ensure; to be certain something will happen
target language	learning or developing something
guarantee	to change into; to become
encourage	being in a situation which might affect you



## Reading Activities

### A: Finding the Main Idea

Read today's article and put a tick next to the statement below (from **Pre-Reading Activity B**) which best describes the **main idea** of the article.

- Hearing a second language spoken regularly during childhood will not translate into fluency.
- Second language acquisition requires more than exposure to the target language.
- Hearing a second language spoken during childhood is helpful for developing an authentic accent in that language.
- Learning a second language during adulthood almost guarantees a bad accent.
- Exposing children to a foreign language regularly may encourage children to continue learning that language.

#### Part One

NEW YORK Tuesday April 30 (Reuters Health) - Hearing a second language spoken day-to-day will not translate into fluency but it may help children speak with a more **convincing** accent, results of a study suggest.

Researchers found that college students who heard Spanish several times a week as children developed more native-like accents than their peers who were not regularly exposed to the language, when they took Spanish classes in school years later.

While learning a second language requires more than mere exposure, hearing that language spoken regularly can help the process along, according to Dr. Terry Kit-fong Au and colleagues from the University of California, Los Angeles.

"Although waiting until adulthood to learn a language almost guarantees a bad accent, having overheard the target language during childhood seems to lessen this predicament considerably," they write in the May issue of Psychological Science.

In an interview with Reuters Health, Au explained that chil-

dren who hear a foreign language can develop a model of what that language sounds like. If they go on to actually learn that language, they have a mental model to which they can compare their own speech.

"Having such a mental model...may help the childhood over-hearers **emulate** a native speaker's accent," Au told Reuters Health.

The results can help researchers to understand the mechanisms behind language acquisition, and also have **implications** for the creation of foreign language programs for children in the US, the study authors suggest.

"If parents or educators have the resources, it could pay off to expose young children to a foreign...language regularly--even just a few hours a week for a few years," Au said.

"Such early language experience could encourage the children to keep on learning the language."

SOURCE: Psychological Science 2002;13:238-243.

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**Glossary:** **convincing** - makes you believe that something is true **emulate** - imitate **implications** - things that are likely to happen as a result of something else

### B: Comprehension

Read **Part One** again and answer the following questions.

1. Which university conducted this study?
2. Which journal was the study published in?
3. What can children who hear a foreign language develop and use if they go on to learn that foreign language?
4. What can the results of this study help researchers understand?
5. According to the study authors, what might be created in the USA as a result of the findings from this study?
6. What do they think parents should consider exposing their children to regularly?

### C: True or False

The following text was taken from today's article. It focuses on the details of the study.

Read the statements below and then read **Part Two**. Write 'T' if you think the statement is true or 'F' if you think the statement is false, according to the text.

1. The study looked at the advantages of early exposure to a target language.
2. Native Spanish speakers rated how well students pronounced words in Spanish.
3. Students repeated Spanish words they heard on a cassette tape.
4. Participants in the study included both those who had minimal and those who had regular exposure to Spanish as children.
5. The study researched many aspects of language acquisition in relation to childhood exposure to Spanish.

### Part Two

To investigate the potential benefits of hearing a second language on language acquisition, the researchers asked native Spanish speakers to rate recordings of 200 college students who were enrolled in second-year Spanish classes. The students read aloud Spanish words and sentences presented on a computer screen.

Students who reported having heard informal Spanish by native speakers for several hours a week for at least 3 years from birth until age 6 had better accents than students who had minimal exposure to Spanish as children, according to the ratings.

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## D: Writing Questions

Write three questions about today's article to ask your partner. Make sure you know the answers to the questions yourself. Be ready to answer your partner's questions.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## E: Language

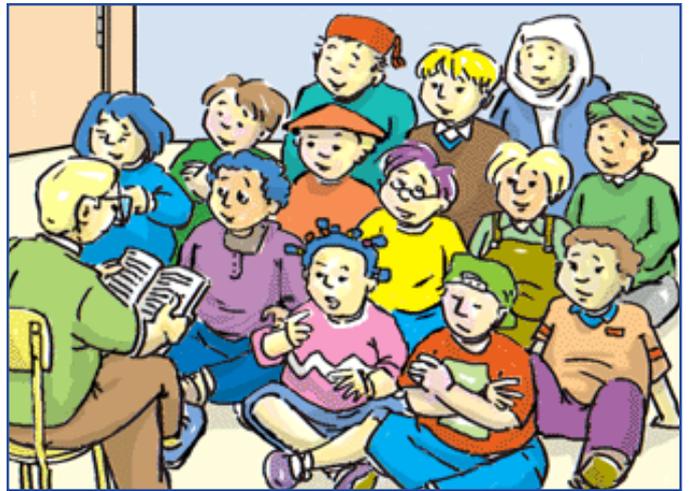
**Part 1:** The following text is a summary of today's article.

Use a suitable verb in each gap in the past tense.

A study \_\_\_\_\_ that college students who \_\_\_\_\_ Spanish as children \_\_\_\_\_ more native-like accents than other students who had little or no exposure to the target language in childhood.

The researcher \_\_\_\_\_ that students who \_\_\_\_\_ having heard Spanish for several hours a week for at least 3 years from birth until age 6 \_\_\_\_\_ better accents later on.

The researchers \_\_\_\_\_ words and sentences on a computer screen, then \_\_\_\_\_ their information from students reading aloud.



**Part 2:** Listen to your teacher say the words below. Then put the words into one of the three groups according to how **-ed** is pronounced at the end of each of the words. The first one has been done for you as an example.

**turned, picked, stopped, believed, filled, invited, reminded, shouted, washed, enjoyed**

/d/	/t/	/id/
turned		

## Post-Reading Activities

You may do one or more of these.

### A: Brainstorming

Work in a small group. Today's article talks about the benefits of hearing a target language spoken in childhood in future learning. Make a list of the five most important factors your group thinks contribute to successful language acquisition. Be ready to present your list to the class.

### B: Writing

Spend fifteen to twenty minutes writing about what you want to achieve in your English course. Say how you will work on the areas you find difficult (e.g. pronunciation, spelling, remembering vocabulary). Read what you have written to someone else in the class.



## C: Pronunciation

**Part 1:** Every learner of a new language has pronunciation challenges, especially when the new language contains sounds that are not in the learner's first language.

1. Make a list of sounds in English that are not used in your first language.
2. Make a list of English words that include the sounds you find difficult. Try to think of words that have the difficult sound in different parts of the word. For example, if you find /**th**/ difficult, you may include: **think**, **birthday**, **fourth**
3. Read your list of words aloud to the teacher and class and think carefully about your pronunciation. Your teacher will give you feedback.

**Part 2:** Listen to a tape of a native speaker of English. Repeat what the person said into a tape and think carefully about your pronunciation. Listen to yourself speak and then repeat the exercise trying to improve your performance.

**Part 3:** Talk into a tape for at least one minute. Think carefully about your pronunciation. Listen to yourself and think about what methods you could develop to improve your pronunciation. Tape yourself a second time and try to improve your performance.

## D: Reading

Read this second article on a study connected with language learning. Write a suitable headline for the article.

NEW YORK Wed May 01 (Reuters Health) - New research indicates that exposure to some type of language in early infancy--be it spoken or signed--is key to language skills later in life for both **deaf** and hearing children. The finding suggests that deaf and hearing children who are exposed to spoken or **signed language** in infancy have an easier time learning a second language later on.

"We know that the visual system requires stimulation early in life for visual perceptual skills to develop completely," Dr. Rachel I. Mayberry, of McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, told Reuters Health. "Our research shows that the same is also true for the language system," according to Mayberry, who is the lead author of a report on the findings in the May 2nd issue of the journal Nature.

Mayberry and her colleagues conducted two sets of experiments to measure the effects of early experience with language on later language learning. The researchers compared two groups of deaf adults who had learned American Sign Language (ASL) when they were 9 to 15 years old. One group had been born with the ability to hear, but later lost their hearing after a viral infection. This group had been exposed to spoken English early in life. In contrast, the second group was born deaf and had little experience with spoken or signed language until they learned ASL in school.

When the investigators tested the ASL abilities of both groups, they found that people who had been exposed to language in infancy were much more fluent in ASL than those

who did not experience language until they were school-aged.

Mayberry's team then set out to see whether learning a signed language early in life makes it easier for children to learn a spoken language later. The researchers compared three groups of adults who had learned English at school between the ages of 4 and 13. One group had been born deaf and had little exposure to language before starting school. Another group of participants had been born deaf as well, but they had been exposed to ASL as infants. The third group was able to hear, but they had spoken a language other than English at home before starting school.

"Deaf and hearing adults who had experienced either a signed or a spoken language in early life showed similarly high levels of performance on the later learned language, English, whereas deaf adults who had little experience of language in early life showed low levels of performance," Mayberry and her colleagues report.

The ability to learn language, the study authors conclude, seems to stem from a "**synergy**" between exposure to language and the brain's early development. If a child does not experience language early in life, the ability to learn language is "seriously **compromised**," they note.

Based on the findings, Mayberry told Reuters Health, "The language difficulties of many deaf children are likely due to linguistic deprivation in early childhood."

SOURCE: Nature 2002;417:38.

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**Glossary:** **deaf** - cannot hear **signed language** - a systematic language that uses hands to communicate **synergy** - extra success achieved by two things working together **compromised** - reduced

# TEACHERS' NOTES AND ANSWER KEY

**Please note:** This lesson also has an accompanying Instant Workbook activity. Select the lesson, get the password and send your students to <http://www.instantworkbook.com>

## Pre-Reading Activities

### A: Self-Evaluation - Notes

The aim of this evaluation is to encourage students to reflect on what kind of language learners they are and to form learning strategies.

### B: Vocabulary - Notes

This task introduces some of the difficult vocabulary in the article. The sentences provide a context for the words before the students have to match definitions, as well as introducing some of the ideas mentioned in the article.

### B: Vocabulary - Answers

**authentic** - like a native speaker, real

**translate into** - change into, become

**fluency** - speaking easily, without hesitating

**acquisition** - learning or developing something

**exposure** - to be put in a situation which might affect you

**target language** - the language someone is trying to learn

**guarantee** - to ensure, being certain something will happen

**encourage** - help, make someone want to do something

## Reading Activities

### A: Finding the Main Idea - Answer

Hearing a second language spoken during childhood is helpful for developing an authentic accent in that language.

### B: Comprehension - Answers

1. the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
2. Psychological Science
3. a model of what that language sounds like
4. the mechanisms behind language acquisition
5. new foreign language programs for children
6. a foreign language

### C: True or False - Answers

1. **T**
2. **T**
3. **F** (They read Spanish words and sentences off a computer.)
4. **T**
5. **F** (It only researched pronunciation.)

### D: Writing Questions - Notes

This task is useful for basic question writing techniques. It is not important that the questions are difficult, rather grammatically and contextually correct. You should check questions before students ask each other.

### E: Language - Notes

**Part 1:** Accept any appropriate verbs. (The answers below are sample answers only.)

**Part 2:** The suffix -ed sounds like /d/ when the consonant sound before it is voiced. It sounds like /t/ when the consonant sound before it is unvoiced. And it sounds like /ɪd/ when the consonant sound before it is /t/ or /d/.

### E: Language - Sample Answers

**Part 1:** A study **found** that college students who **heard** Spanish as children **developed** more native-like accents than other students who had little or no exposure to the target language in childhood.

The researcher **explained** that students who **reported** having heard Spanish for several hours a week for at least 3 years from birth until age 6 **had** better accents

later on.

The researchers **presented** words and sentences on a computer screen, then **collected** their information from students reading aloud.

### Part 2:

#### Group 1 - Words pronounced /d/

turned  
believed  
filled  
enjoyed

#### Group 2 - Words pronounced /t/

picked  
stopped  
washed

#### Group 3 - Words pronounced /ɪd/

invited  
reminded  
shouted

## Post-Reading Activities

### A: Brainstorming - Notes

There are no correct answers here, but the task should generate discussion as well as flag up useful ideas on what constitutes a successful language learner. The hope is that learners will further reflect on their own learning strategies.

### B: Writing - Notes

Accuracy in grammar is not an aim here, rather that students learn to set goals and problem solve for themselves. You may want to collect their writing so you can make a note of their goals and refer to them at the end of the course. Alternatively, you could add your own ideas about how they can take responsibility for their own progress.

### C: Pronunciation - Notes

**Part 1:** It is good for learners to be aware of the sounds they struggle with. While they may not be able to correct their errors immediately, awareness of their difficulties is an important first step in the process. If your students all come from the same language background, you may prefer to do this activity together as a class. This task gives you the opportunity to identify pronunciation problems your students have, and if you have the materials available, set them up to work independently on pronunciation tasks.

**Part 2:** If you do not have access to a tape of a native speaker, you could read aloud your own sentences (formulating your own sentences according to your learners' problem areas), and have them repeat back either in unison or one by one.

**Part 3:** If you have access to a language laboratory, this provides an excellent opportunity to listen to your students and give feedback. If not, you may prefer to circulate around the class during the writing task (Post-Reading Activity B) and listen to the students talk to you one by one, and make note of areas needing work.

### D: Reading - Notes

You may wish to give the students the actual headline of this second article when they are finished: **The Earlier the Better, for Signed, Spoken Language**. This is not necessarily better than what the students will come up with themselves. Emphasize that a headline should incorporate the main idea of the text, and that the first paragraph in the article is important in determining what the main idea is.