



HOW MANY LESSONS WILL I NEED TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE ?

This is not only a complex question. It is also a dangerous one, as it invites misleading answers, mostly wildly over-optimistic.

The main problem is the multiplicity of interpretations that can be given to the word "speak" a language.

As it is impossible to give a single definition to the concept, we have tried to define a number of possible levels that a person might wish to attain.

Below we have tried to assess as realistically as possible the average number of hours of training needed to attain these levels.

A very approximate rule is that, up to level 3, the average learner needs around 30 hours to improve his level by an average of half a grade. Thereafter progress becomes slower and will depend a lot on the amount of personal work, exposure to the language and practice in it. Note that grade six cannot really be attained with lessons, but only through intense use with native speakers in 'real life'.

Average grade after 30 hours:	0,5
Average grade after 60 hours:	1
Average grade after 90 hours:	1,5
Average grade after 120 hours:	2
Average grade after 150 hours:	2,5
Average grade after 180 hours:	3
Average grade after 250 hours:	3,5
Average grade after 330 hours:	4
Average grade after 420 hours:	4,5
Average grade after 550 hours:	5

ASSUMPTIONS

The above rough guide is based on the following assumptions:

- 1) that the learner has a strong motivation.
- 2) that the learner has an average aptitude.
- 3) that the learner is taking one-to-one tuition.
- 4) that the learner understands and accepts the method of teaching/learning being used.
- 5) That the teacher(s) is(are) following a carefully planned programme.
- 6) That the teacher(s) is (are) competent.
- 7) That the lessons are taken over a fairly short period of time (not more than 1 year).
- 8) That the language to be learnt does not belong to a completely different language family (i.e. Urdu, Russian, Chinese, etc.)

Qualifications

Progress will be faster in the following circumstances:

1. If the learner takes intensive training.
1. If the learner is brushing up a language he or she is already acquainted with.
2. If the learner has the opportunity to practise the language outside the lessons.
3. If the learner works and revises lessons - e.g. with the aid of cassettes.
4. If the learner has experience in learning a foreign language.

Progress will be even faster if the learner follows a certain number of learning strategies:

1. Planning regular revision time.
2. Using vocabulary learning strategies.
3. Creating listening and speaking opportunities.

Some possible objectives

Average grade 2:

You will be able to make a good impression socially in the language. Native speakers of the language will be impressed that you have made a serious effort to learn it. If your course has been geared towards your professional needs, you will be able to use the language as a crude tool for professional communication.

Average grade 3:

You will be able to use the language in a variety of social and professional situations. You will be able to discuss business at a suitable level if your course has been geared towards your professional needs.

Average grade 5:

You will be able to use the language as a fairly refined tool; You will be able to deal with individuals and groups, discuss complex matters, cope well with demanding and complex language situations, make presentations and feel comfortable in almost any social or professional situation. Occasional lapses in accuracy do not affect communication.