

Are You Using Foreign Language Audio to its Full Potential?

No dictionary can accurately reproduce tiny variations in pronunciation, volume, and stress. You must listen to a language before you can fully experience its idiosyncrasies. Being able to converse with a native speaker who uses correct pronunciation and grammar is the best way to accomplish this.

However, well-produced MP3s, CDs, and other types of foreign language recordings will work well if you know how to use them properly. This article provides several tips for utilizing your audio recordings to squeeze the most benefit out of every listening experience.

The Brain Creates a Map to Familiar Sounds

The brains of infants and young children catalogue all the sounds they hear. As we grow older, our brains associate those sounds with words, and later with specific spellings after we learn to read. Many foreign languages contain sounds we do not use in our native language. When our brains hear these unfamiliar sounds, they draw from the existing map, and tell our ears that we are hearing something we already know.

Take for example, the German words 'Bach' and 'mich'. The 'ch' combinations are for different sounds that do not have an equivalent in English. An English speaker might hear 'back' and 'meesh'. Even though both German words end with the same letters, the pronunciations are different. Increasing treble levels on a recording often makes it easier to distinguish the differences in such sounds.

Adjusting treble also makes it easier to decipher sounds such as 'f' and 's' in words like 'auffahren' and 'ausfahren'; 'm' and 'n' in words such as 'dem' and 'den'; or to pick out tiny variations in vowel combinations like 'Meer' and 'mehr'.

Coping with Different Volume Levels

If you have purchased or downloaded foreign language audio from different sources, you probably need to adjust the volume when you switch from one recording to another. MP3Gain is a free software download that will non-destructively change the volume of MP3 files. MP3Gain works well on Windows XP and Windows Vista. There is also a MacMP3Gain available for Macintosh users.

vOLume VARIatiONS witHIN A forEIGN LANgUaGE AUDio REcOrdING

Was the above title confusing to your eyes? Volume variations within a recording confuse your ears as well. With good audio software, you can normalize the volume for an entire file, or modify selected portions.

Full Speed Ahead - Or?

The first time you listen to an unfamiliar recording, resist the temptation to slow down the tempo. Play it several times at normal speed. You will pick up a few more words each time through. If there are some sections that seem incomprehensible, play those portions more slowly and listen to them several times. After you have learned the vocabulary for a new piece, try playing it more quickly than recorded. This technique gives the brain and ears a good workout!

Don't Stop Learning When You Go to Bed

Listening to foreign language audio while you sleep speeds up the learning process. Try reviewing vocabulary for a recording just before you go to bed, listening to the audio while you sleep, and reviewing the vocabulary again when you wake up. Many people from around the world have successfully used this amazing sleep-learning technique.

Involve Your Entire Body

Do you listen to audio while walking or working out? Try to incorporate body movements and facial expressions.

For example, consider the following sentences: 'Are the children upstairs? No, they are downstairs.' As you hear the first sentence, look up, raise your eyebrows in a questioning manner, and point up if possible while you repeat the phrase with exaggerated facial expressions. Create a mental image of children playing at the top of a flight of stairs. For the second sentence, shake your head and look down.

Similar to Pavlov's dogs or an athlete in training, this stimulates and maps a brain-body reflex. The more senses you involve while learning, the faster and more complete the process becomes.

Work it - Work it - Work it!

Your brain needs exercise and stimulation to work at peak efficiency. Apply the tips in this article, and you will push your brain to use more of its potential.

(c)Copyright Kathy Steinemann: This article is free to publish only if this copyright notice, the byline, and the author's note below (with active links) are included.

About the Author

Here is a longer version of this [foreign language article](#) with even more tips. You will also find several [German-English short stories](#) and more language articles.

Source: <http://www.articletrader.com>