



## Our Experience of Converting Slow-foreign-language Learners into Quick Ones

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### Abstract

*According to recent surveys more than 50% of the respondents in the majority of the 27 European states admit that they cannot speak a foreign language well enough to make a conversation. What are the reasons for the low number of fluent foreign language speakers? EU has everything that is necessary for efficient language teaching: sufficient amount of hours for the subject at schools, excellent teaching material, modern equipment and highly qualified teachers. However, the perfect educational system does not work for 50% per cent of the language learners. How could the paradox be explained? The main reason is common disillusion that learning a foreign language is easy for an average student. We strongly believe that there are much more slow foreign language learners than it appears to be. If we admit the fact, we should consider slow learners as normal, whereas quick learners should be treated as rather the exception. We have been specializing in teaching slow and extremely slow foreign language learners for more than 25 years and have developed our own very efficient method (the Speech Plasma Method) that converts slow learners into quick ones.*

The Speech Plasma Method is based on the idea that we can speak a foreign language fluently only when we are able to think in the foreign language. Thinking in a language requires a specific, very active, state of mind which is similar to plasma in physics. In physics, plasma is the fourth, highly active, state of matter where electrons and ions react strongly to electric and magnetic fields. Speech plasma is also a very active state of mind with spontaneous reaction to “electromagnetic” fields of our thoughts and emotions capable to convert them immediately into words, sentences and texts. When we speak a language fluently, be it our native tongue or a foreign language, we cannot fully control our speech plasma relying rather on automatic conversion of thoughts into speech.

Being native speakers of our mother tongue we possess an extremely active speech plasma of the language. As foreign language students we usually find it incredibly difficult to learn to speak a new language automatically. We cannot easily create the speech plasma that is as active as our mother tongue speech plasma is.

Quick students are able to form a speech plasma in their minds independently with minimum help from the teacher at a very early stage of learning a new language, whereas slow learners are absolutely incapable to create a speech plasma by themselves and need special fluency practice training to form their own speech plasma and reach a certain level when they start learning the target language as quickly and easily as their more talented classmates do.

Once born in your mind the speech plasma starts living its own life. Like a newly born baby the speech plasma is very vulnerable. You should treat it carefully feeding it regularly with special baby food containing all the necessary ingredients that can be absorbed easily. The stronger the speech plasma gets, the bigger portions of food it can digest, the more various the diet becomes.

When the speech plasma reaches a certain size and rate of activity, there is no need to take care of it on everyday basis. You can neglect it for weeks, for months and even for years – it will stay in your mind and you will be able to use it automatically whenever you want to speak the language.

The speech plasma has a number of features that help acquire the target language:

- 1) It makes it easier to learn new grammar rules because the speech plasma is also the grammar plasma of the target language therefore it acts like a melting pot for more complicated grammar.
- 2) It helps you learn new words because the speech plasma is also the lexical plasma, plasma of words, meanings and notions, where new words can easily find their position.
- 3) It is indispensable for oral comprehension – you understand easily because your speech plasma interacts with the speech plasma of the narrator in the same way it happens in your mother tongue – you will predict what the speaker is going to say next.
- 4) It boosts your reading skills in the target language because your speech plasma interacts with the speech plasma of the author of the book, which helps you understand the text better.

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- 5) It develops your writing skills in the target language because the speech plasma helps you to express your thoughts and ideas– just write down what you have in your mind and your essays will be fine.

Possessing remarkably efficient qualities the speech plasma cannot be possibly seen. You can only detect the existence of speech plasma and measure its activity by your ability to express thoughts and ideas in speech. We have created hundreds of speech plasma fluency practice drills that can be used both for forming the speech plasma and for measuring its activity. Our fluency practice drills are short, one-minute-long texts that are easy to remember. The best way to measure your speech plasma activity in the target language is to compare it with that of you mother tongue speech plasma by saying one of the drills first in your mother tongue and then in the language you are learning. If the difference is not big, e.g. it takes you 50 seconds to say the drill in your mother tongue and 60-70 seconds in the target language, your speech plasma is fine and it will be easy for you to acquire the language. If the difference is significant – more than 100 seconds, you will need special training to activate the speech plasma in your mind.

The essence of the Speech Plasma Method can be explained in a different way comparing language learning with the process of dissolving salt in water. You put some granular salt (NaCl or Sodium Chloride) in a glass of water – as you stir, the white crystals dissolve in water and the solution becomes salty. Water disintegrates NaCl into positively charged Na (Sodium ion) and negatively charged Cl (Chlorine ion). A very similar process takes place in language learning – our mind cannot use crystals of words and granules of grammar structures in the process of thinking – we have to dissolve them in our mind. Quick students are very skilful at dissolving the language material, slow students struggle painfully trying to memorise all the words and grammar. Our special fluency practice drills help slow students to dissolve the first granules in their mind. As soon as they have managed to dissolve the first crystals of simple words and grammar structures, the solution becomes magic – it dissolves the next portion of granules faster. The stronger the solution, the faster it dissolves the material, the sooner slow students turn into quick ones.

It usually takes ten forty-five minute speech plasma training sessions to teach a slow language learner to start speaking the target language fluently. However, the most important fluency practice training session is the very first one. The main goal of the session is “implanting” the nucleus of the speech plasma into the student’s mind. Once “implanted”, the speech plasma starts growing, gets stronger and more active, boosting the student’s language learning skills.

Introducing the Speech Plasma Method in teaching will increase the number of slow language learners. You need neither any extra hours nor changing the textbooks. You should only know that slow learners are not bad students, they just need special treatment to become much quicker learners. Our motto has always been: “If you can teach an extremely-slow-foreign-language learner to speak the language fluently, you can teach anyone!”