

How to learn a foreign language faster!

by Jack Keogh

A Mexican company that I consult with is about to send an employee and his family from Mexico City to Beijing in China. They asked me if Solisten could help the family speed up their learning of basic Mandarin before leaving for their new home. I assured them that Solisten can speed up language learning. Let me share with you why Solisten produces such amazing results and why my company has incorporated Solisten into our consultancy.

In the September 09 edition of the Solisten newsletter I mentioned that English uses a lot of high pitch sounds, ranging from 2,000 to 12,000 Hertz. Chinese uses a completely different set of sound frequencies, most of which our Western ears can no longer "hear". It seems that we lose the ability to hear and reproduce the frequencies which are not native to our "mother tongue" at about age twelve. And, you will remember, that Tomatis showed that we cannot reproduce sounds that we cannot hear.

Musical instruments provide a good analogy to illustrate the differences. The same chord played on a grand piano sounds very different to the exact same chord played on a guitar. This is because of the "overtones" which are generated by each instrument, according to its specific characteristics. These overtones which are not as intense as the basic "tone" distinguish the sound of one instrument from another. That is why a guitar does not sound like a piano which does not sound like a violin. In a sense, it is also why English does not sound like Chinese.

Different languages have different overtones produced by the way they are vocalized. Here the analogy with the instruments comes in handy. The "base tones" of our language are generated by our vocal chords. These tones travel through our mouths, where the overtones are formed. The mouth cavity acts as our "sounding board". If you have learned a foreign language you probably know that you use your tongue and teeth differently in order to produce the characteristic sounds. That is how you generate different overtones. The positioning of the tongue has a lot to do with correct production of the precise sounds in the new language.

All languages use the same base tones. These range from 125 to 250 Hertz. The difference is in the overtones. Our ears, by constantly listening to ourselves and to those around us who speak the same language, are most attuned to the frequencies of our native tongue. We become deaf to "foreign" frequencies.

This is where Solisten produces its magic! By training our ears to hear the forgotten (foreign) frequencies, we can significantly reduce the time needed to learn a new language. Once our ears learn to hear the forgotten frequencies, we will be able to hear the new language correctly, memorize the words quickly and pronounce them well.

This theory was tested in 1976, in an experiment conducted in Belgium. A class of 30 high school students was divided into two groups, based on their listening abilities.

The first group was taught English as usual for the entire school year. The other group received Tomatis listening training for three months, followed by six months of regular English lessons. None of these French speaking students had previously learned English.

An independent judge tested all the students at the end of the school year for comprehension as well as for pronunciation. The judge found that the Tomatis group clearly outperformed the control group! Both groups were tested again at the end of the summer vacation. This time the difference was even more pronounced. The Tomatis trained group retained what it learned, while the control group forgot a great deal.

That is why Solisten can accelerate the learning of foreign languages. Indeed many consultants around the world (especially in France and Japan) use Tomatis listening to expedite the mastery of foreign languages. Mastering several languages has become a requisite for success in a world where business is global.

Eurocopter: a European experiment

Between 1989 and 1995, a control group of 580 people at the European company Eurocopter took the Tomatis Language Training. Their progress was carefully monitored. They reached their goal in only 520 hours – achieving a cost saving of 180 hours.

- ✓ 25% of the employees surveyed found the approach very effective
- ✓ 63% effective
- ✓ 14% moderately effective
- ✓ None of the employees found it ineffective

An unexpected benefit was that 83% of the people felt that they now communicated better with others and that they were motivated to take responsibilities. This is a predictable outcome because, as Dr. Tomatis discovered, “the way we listen” has a profound impact on almost all aspects of our being.

After the **Eurocopter** control group had completed the training with the Tomatis Method:

- ✓ 92% felt that they had a better perception of the language
- ✓ 88% had a better understanding of the language
- ✓ 85% had a more expressive intonation
- ✓ 86% perceived the sounds of the foreign language better
- ✓ 77% had a better sense of the rhythm of the language