

Scott: Alright, so I'm really excited to have Benny Lewis here because Benny Lewis was very important for me when I was learning French so I remember I was living in France and I was struggling through learning French. I have really never done that much formal study of this in school, and I was struggling and mostly English speaking environment and I felt that I wasn't too confident in my abilities. And someone I forget who turned me on to Benny's website and immediately I connected with him because the title of the website was fluent in three months and thought that really struck me. First of all that this is impossible to be fluent in three months because I know myself I certainly spent more than three studying French and I've been living in France for more over three months and I was certainly not fluent and so I was really keen on his idea but Benny seem to be legitimate not only he had learned several languages using this method but he was currently engaging in challenges to learn languages which about in three months. The challenge varies for each of them but I think when I got to your website you were learning Czech in about two to three months to some degree of fluency and, so what really interested me about your approach was that your philosophy was a much stronger than mine. As soon as I read some of your articles, I realized this is maybe what I am doing wrong and your number one advise was don't speak English like unless you are trying learning English as your language

But don't speak your native language and so maybe you could elaborate a little bit about kind of how you came to this philosophy for learning many languages and was been able to help you learn so many languages in your travel

Benny: Well, Thanks a lot for having me. I think it's not just the fact that I do definitely like the core of my philosophy is to speak the language in day one but even before that, before actually doing the work with the language in the title of my site with the way I like to explain to people is I could've just easily have called that Specificals specific time it could've just conversed in two months, could be fluent in six months depending on the time you're putting into it. The key for me is that I have a very specific thing I want to do in a very well defined time limit so

generally I would go to country for three months because that's the tourist visa limit, So that when I have to know the language by fluency rather than vague and all this compensating terms was this concept that I understand very well on the European common framework of what we're very choose B2 which effectively means you can function exactly as you would socially in your native language and instead of finding things. You can't do so having this very specific idea of what are you aiming for being very different people's concept of having New Year's resolution of just learn Spanish which doesn't define anything so with that in mind you are on a lot more pressure because I think a lot of people have this idea of just having to learn French and you could just, you could really just indefinitely be putting more work into it and you're just feeling an endless hole sucking up all your time so that's why I have to speak from day one. It's not about practicing until you're ready day and then you'll explode in certainly using the language, you just use it from the beginning, you pick up a phrase but learn some phrases, say what you want to say, and you will see where you're lacking and you adapt your learning approach to what your problems are, it's not about taking your generic course whether that is software or sitting in the classroom with all the people, it's about using the language yourself with human beings and seeing what challenges you come up with and taking on that challenge as they arise.

Scott: So, what would you say it so sudden, and this is something that you've talked about a lot before, but when you talk about speaking from day one, and this is coming from me because I have also been seeing your advice and trying to implement it. I think a lot of people says that it is easier said than done, that is something for a lot of people if you have low ability or no ability that speaking to someone in that language is frightening you. You're like what if they judge me, what if they don't think that they'll understand me, what if the conversation toll's. What if I don't have anything to say, and then you might realize just that I want to say this? This is the sentence in my head that I want to say in English and I don't know how to translate it, and I don't have the thinking right, so maybe you could talk about little what if the assertive little tricks that you used or couple of them to start assume over that process so that you can actually say ok, when I'm

speaking to someone I don't have that greater ability yet but I can still communicate with them and have that confidence to assertive get starting speaking from day one.

Benny: Right, while you notice like one of the things that I like to be to frame it all in as possible ways as possible. So it's not just I like you said before that I say no English, it's not about having no English but it's about using the language because having no English is something that you are very easily going to fail with. Where speaking the language you can even do that for just five minutes of just using that language. You've achieved something, support, and taught these many segments of success. So ten year example of I want to say something, I don't know how to translate it, and if I was to take the phrase for instance. I want go to or I want to travel Spain in July, I only know how to say Spain, I don't know how to say travel, to say July, to conjugate the verbs in the future. What you do in that case is you try and rephrase it in your head in English, and this for me in the beginning stage is so essential that you take simpler synonyms. So instead of travelling would use the word to go, instead of saying delicious or wonderful I would just say very good so I can take that sentence " I will travel to Spain" and instead of a will. I could choose what's called modal verb and where I can take can, or able to, won't, would, and a couple of other verbs that you can learn very quickly, and then after those you can use the dictionary form or the infinitive form of a word this means you can be much more confident on that you're saying correctly and I can take that sentence and say I want to go to Spain in the summer and you're or might actually not say that correctly, you might say " I want go summer Spain Summer" and that's ok. A lot of people feel as you said that they are going to be frustrating a native speaker and this is not being the case in my experience in most places I've been to, a lot of us, people in Canada I am sure you are aware people or in States when they meet a foreigner they struggle's a little bit but I mean you are not going to slap this guy on the face that's just not happen, you just patiently let them say what they want to say, you'll understand, you'll extrapolate when they commit a little mistake, and this is. Well, I think people really need to embrace making mistakes a little bit I go out of my way to actually force myself to make

hundreds of mistakes a day. It's not about avoiding mistakes priority is communication so it's not about translating exactly what you want to say but conveying the meaning of what you want to say. It is ok to say "bathroom where?" rather than "excuse me, could you direct me to the nearest bathroom please?", because those two sentences could convey precisely the same amount of information. And that if your goal spoken, and I do a lot of people have this spoken goal rather than passing an exam necessarily or writing perfectly in the language, if your goal is communication with a person it is ok to initially speak like Tarzan, let yourself use these single words and with time you will get much more comfortable, you will get the experience, you'll get a feel for the grammar, and you will be out to express yourself on a very very deep level, I would encourage people to be very flexible, don't worry about saying exactly what you want to say, just play around with little English

Scott: So, you bring out the good tip that one of the things you suggested was this idea of learning a few modal verbs and then you could learn a lot of infinitive verbs. So this is something that is true for French, Spanish, probably a lot of other languages that I am not familiar. As you are and basically what Benny was saying is that like in English you would say "I want to go there" and the "want" in English you don't do that much of conjugation but "I want, he wants" you could see a little bit of difference there that depending on who is saying the sentence, "what" will change slightly and this is even more extreme in a lot more European languages than the conjugation that if you wanted to say. That I want or he wants would be very different depending on again what language you are talking about however, if you learn "you want, to go" there is a couple that you can learn and you can use it in a lot of context and then the other ones like to shower, to eat, or those sort of words you can just learn one form of them and replace it after. So that is a little bit sort of language learning trick that you can use and I think that is a very good one that you've talked about. So I just want to provide a little clarification if anybody was left out of that. Another thing that sort of, is on your processing in communicating the language, one these are criticisms that that you might get and I know you have a response for some so I leaving into it here is that

"well, that's easy because you are travelling, you are travelling all the time". So you can be in a country and I know that there's probably a lot of people listening to this video that right now they are saying you I know that I could learn language "x" if only I was in that country, or I could learn English if only I was in America, I could learn French if only I was in France, I could learn Spanish if only I was in Spain. Now, you on the other hand have learned many languages not travelling at all or actually being in a country which is very unusual from learning it. Maybe you could talk a little bit about in what you do to learn through this communicative approach when you are not even in the language that you are speaking?

Benny: I think that the reason for not learning the language may have been valid 20 or 30 years ago and why you have to go to the country because you can't imagine using the language nearby us but it is actually so easy to use the language both in person and over the internet. SO, firstly in person I would find social networking sites that encourage some kind of language exchange or any international environment. My favorite by far is Couchsurfing which many people may have heard of as a means of free accommodation but I see it as one of the largest social networking sites that you can search per language and Couchsurfing is interesting because people who use it are open minded, and they are more like to meet up with new interesting people that are not afraid of strangers. So you can message someone who speaks Japanese or whatever you have to be learning and say "do you want to have a coffee sometime?" And try to use the language with them and you will find unless you live in a very small town and you will find that you can access this Native speaker and there's a bunch of them there's meetup.com, you can even search Facebook putting your city name, the language, and if you are very social in general you will come across in person activities. You just have to find one person and get their contact details and meet up with them regularly. If you are more limited or not so outgoing to meet so many people you can do it very easily over the internet. There are literally millions of people desperately wanting to learn some English and practice some English so

the great thing is you don't need to have to pay any money as long as you're willing to do a language exchange. Help someone in the middle of China, South America, or someone even like you if want to learn French it doesn't necessarily have to be in France, could be someone in North of Africa, where they can teach you French and you can teach them English. It's great because no money exchanges hands and if you can afford it you can actually get an inexpensive private lesson with an experienced teacher all over Skype and the best example that you're thinking of to lead into question was the last language I've learned before this call was an Egyptian Arabic, which I made entirely in Belo Horizonte in Brazil and the city was deep inside Brazil. I have tried but could not meet any Egyptians in the city so I did it all over Skype and I reached a genuine conversation level without ever physically seeing an Egyptian for several months so there is really no excuse and I found it's not about the travel thing travel, people can list many reasons. They can say I don't have enough money, I don't have time, there are so many excuses you can give but if you are really dedicated, you can find a way around.

Scott: SO, this is another question. We've talked a little about if you want like a beginner and you to go to conversational, how do you get there? But I know there is a lot of readers here who maybe already conversational really, maybe they already speak another language in a conversation, they really just don't feel very confident with it yet and so one thing I want to highlight about your experiences is you're not only going to through conversational level with the bunch of languages, you've mastered some as well. So you have written the highest level of fluency for example Spanish, I think you've already done in preparation for another few languages. SO maybe we could take a little about what is the process of going from let's say maybe I am learning Spanish and I could maybe have an hour conversation with Spanish and with too much difficulty, but my Spanish is not really really good and I definitely don't seem like a perfect native speaker or I have that high degree of confidence level where if in a job interview in Spanish that they would of course my language ability would have not even come up. How

do you get to that level of ability? What is the process that you're going from conversation to mastery?

Benny: Yep, well like in general on my blog I do talk way more conversational because I think as beginner learners we don't want to set our sights to mastery level, you need to have short term goals but when you have already reached the short term goals it's about seeing what are your problems that you're having is the lack of vocabulary for instance, if that's it then you should maybe spend some time with flash cards. There is a great flash card that can help you talk better and key where you can review vocabulary but otherwise it really is forcing yourself into something that is above your level so that you are, you have no choice but to improve so for instance to get to that level in Spanish and French I would actually have this intense conversation because I found that my level was being pretty static that I go to social events and have superficial conversations like how are you doing? Are you enjoying the party and that would not really push me up a level so I would go in these exchanges or higher teacher or go to a discussion room and have this difficult conversation and with my French phrases, even now I am maintaining these languages. I am always doing these things. I have to, I had a conversation just last week because the hot topic in France right now is the legalization of gay marriage so I had to personally defend what I think that is a good idea but then a very interesting thing to really push my level up. I had to switch to the other point of view and I had to defend why it would be a bad idea which was very interesting because I had to force myself into this other perspective of traditional, religious person and used terms of vocabulary and argument. Maybe true however that those kind of terminology and that really is a case of forcing yourself out of this comfort zone of listening to things that are much more complicated because we can feel comfortable it is amazing you put the work you can genuinely communicate the language, and we can start to get lazy and think that it's good enough, what I have now is ok but you just have to force yourself to another level. You have to listen to the complicated video tv program, movies. You have to listen to the radio, you have to try and read, definitely read as much as often. Cos I would focus just spoken skills up to a

certain level and I think from then on you do get a lot of more return on investment from reading. Reading newspapers, reading complicated books because they push you to beyond to the kind of the more basic types of things you expose that you've have from social interactions. It can expand with many things as possible.

SCOTT: so, if I could just maybe like recap a little bit of what you've talked about here. You said that what you really based your method on this is having this sort of concrete milestone in language development; a lot of people think vague goals that they want to speak to learn French and they really don't think what that means specifically. And you sort of stressed that the communicative goal in the beginning to be able to have, to be able to communicate is sort of priority number 1 and then maybe intermediate goal would be to communicate comfortably and sort of in a normal sounding way and in the advance goal would be having mastery of this less used topics in conversations and I definitely with my French I was able to see similar kinds of progression that the shift changes but you have to be able recognize the changes in the shift. To some people there is sort of doing mastery type work in the beginning and they're frustrated because they're not seeing any progress and there's also people that maybe are in the intermediate stage and they only have intermediate conversations so they never really get over that hump to that with that really speaking it well, they are always just kind of having the same superficial conversations. I know that one thing, so I have mentioned this that you've done before is you've written fluency exams, and a lot of people that are taking this course are in academic type of situation. Maybe they are studying languages in school and they have to do an exam and what I would ask is what is your process because you've done well in these exams before, what is your process for preparing for fluency exams, if you for example let's say with your Arabic had to do a C-1 or C-2 exam in the next three months what would you do to prepare yourself so that you would feel confident right on the exam?

Benny: Well, the first once again the beginning doesn't so essential somebody's listening to this and they have language schedule enthusiast, but they have an exam at the end of the year I would actually put off the academic side and focus few months on speaking on communicating the language because this will ignite the passion and appreciation for the language is a real living thing because I, a part of my story didn't actually mention that is so essential to people know is that I did very poorly in the language school and I only spoke English when I was 21. I do speak in lots of languages now, but I understand why people do poorly in exams and it's because of the lack of motivation so when you first get into the language as a real living thing, as a means to make new friends then you have this passion and from there when you want to aim for an exam, it's a lot easier to deal with the technical aspects because these are technical aspects you're putting around something you are already genuinely have a passion about. So if I was to sit an exam in Arabic C-1 in the next three months, what I've done in the past anyway has been to get the previous exam examples, and to definitely get private lessons and to focus on each because when you are speaking about language learning you have the written, reading, writing, listening, and speaking aspects of an exam. So, with each one of them separately the spoken aspect you should theoretically be pretty good in but as I said you force yourself up to that level, have a deep of conversations, the reading aspect; you read as much and you answers questions about it later, it's not just browsing about through something but ideally you are reading something that has questions that can test you to make sure you are paying attention the same with listening. I made a huge mistake when I was sitting my German c-2 exam that I thought simply listening to German radio would give me good listening skills but I did get lazy and I failed the exams specifically because of the listening comprehension part of it because of the same thing that I have just said about reading, you have to listen and test yourself for it later and it's constantly going back. I do not recommend people try to for instance listen to an audio course while they are driving or while their or jogging or something. You really do need to give 100% of your undivided attention and I am sure you thought about this by a lot "focus" is such a big aspect of this. You cannot learn a language while learning to juggle while getting in shape and all of these other million things; you need to focus on just that

aspect. So focus just on reading for a couple of weeks. Focus on just writing and so on, get help from a native speaker, if you are writing give those texts to a native and have them correct them for you. Make sure, if you do have a private teacher that they are very strict because we might tend to choose a teacher who is very nice to us and it feels great but it doesn't help us at all. I find when I am spending too much time with people who are constantly complimenting me on my language skills, then I know I am at a rush and I know I need to go up a level. So always pushing yourself and that's what I've done in the past focus on each one of each action, to pass the exams, to test myself and see where my weaknesses are and fix those weaknesses.

Scott: So, we've talked a lot of things here. We've talked about how to get started with the language, how to up your ability, how to take language test, and how to learn even if you don't have native speakers with you. I wanna end on, because for a lot of people they might be thinking about the language or maybe they learn a little bit in school, they learn a little bit of the language but they don't speak it. And, they'd like to but it's just maybe they haven't been connected to it yet and I think maybe you could talk a little bit about because you've obviously have gotten a lot of benefit of learning languages. Normally if you learn many over the course of your time and you maintain around ten but you also continue to learn new language all the time so maybe you could explain a little bit about what is your motivation for language, what gets you up in the morning to practice in this way that is hard for you to speak and to push yourself through that difficulty, what inspires you to do that?

Benny: well, definitely didn't inspire me for my first experience of German, and my six months living in Spain where I didn't learn any Spanish was seeing the language as something academic, seeing as the list of facts like the grammar rules, and vocabulary that I had to squeeze into my head and I felt was like I was downloading from the Matrix, it was just a very factual thing and what really changed, what it ignites my passion in language all the time now is that I am

mutual part about, and I see the language as the purpose that is not what I am trying to do. I am not trying to get fluent in that language, the language is just a means to an end, a language is a door that opens up into a whole new world of different cultures and I just have had incredible experiences in my travels. I mean, I've had Easter dinner with four generations of Italians, I've heard this lady told me that her experience in World War 2, I've met poor people, and I've met rich people, and many people from many countries. It's just an endless list of incredible experiences, and it is because I embraced communication. It's always about getting my messages across and getting the (juice) of their replies and approving upon that. It was never about perfection and then I think embracing a bit of imperfection, being ok with making mistakes, being ok with understanding with only two words in a whole sentence, and extrapolating words are likely its meaning. That will actually get you into a real conversation. Much more, than knowing ten thousand words or knowing all the grammar rules ever will. So, don't see a language as something that you can study, see it as something that you can live.

Scott: So, on that note thank you very much for joining me. I want everybody who has listened through this whole recording and put their time in here. Do check out Benny Lewis websites so its fluentinthreemonths.com, fi3m.com, I think redirects your site if you want to type and it will allow .fluentinthreemonths.com, amazing website I find it personally very helpful when I was learning French, and I know I will find it again helpful when I learn new languages in the future, you can also see on that website Benny has a course speak from day 1, so if you are looking at Benny's philosophy and thinking yourself that you want to have a little bit more detailed instruction for you to get the obstacles. Benny talks a lot about different memory methods he uses in learning, conversational tricks, various ways that you can get language practice for not that much money. So basically you can avoid a lot of the hiccups that he's encountered in his tenure years of learning languages. So thank you very much Benny for joining us

Benny: thanks for having me