ROLE-PLAY

16 principles to be fluent in any language



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FOREWORD

People often ask me how one becomes a polyglot. For many years, the first answer that comes to mind has remained the same: "All it takes is to enjoy learning."

I'm confident that's what enabled me to learn to speak eight languages and play several musical instruments within a few years. It happened while working full-time, exercising regularly, dating, and doing everything most people do. All it took was to invest some time into studying, embrace making mistakes in front of others, and, most importantly, observe how my mind works when I'm learning.

In 2020, I started teaching Dutch. Initially a hobby, it eventually turned into a job. Even though I had only spoken the language for four years by then, in a matter of months, there were so many students wanting to learn Dutch, German, French, Spanish, Italian, and English with me that I decided to start an online language school and hire other tutors to help me out.

The main criterion I considered when recruiting was: "Has this person become proficient in a foreign language as an adult?"

Anyone who's accomplished that must have encountered many of the learning hacks I've discovered through my own experience. Hence, this online language school, where Dutch was taught by

Argentines, Spanish by Italians, and French by Germans, steadily expanded for three years. The growing number of students didn't come to us because we were good at German or French. They could have chosen a native tutor for that. They wanted to know the secret to learning so quickly and effectively.

However, it wasn't until 2023 that I tried to explain our method in a way everyone could understand. By then, I could talk a lot about the principles behind how we taught ourselves and our students. But, there was still a gap between what made sense to me and what my audience understood. I knew I had something precious to share, but I couldn't figure out the best way to explain what I had discovered.

That's when Juan Pablo came into the picture. He's a linguist with academic training who also teaches languages other than his native Spanish. He understood my vision quicker than anyone else had before. He got what I was saying and could explain it more clearly. After discussing the techniques on weekly video calls for a few months, we finally figured it out. We found a way to *show* the methodology instead of just explaining it.

What better way to drive home a message than by asking questions you already have the answers to?

That's how *Role-play* came to be. It consists of 16 principles designed to unlock your learning potential and accelerate your language journey. These principles are closely linked, often referring back to one another. As you read through them, many concepts will resonate with you as they apply to different fields beyond language

learning. They represent overarching ideas that apply to a broad range of situations.

If you've done well in a particular learning task multiple times, you've probably picked up most of these principles without realizing it. The real challenge is to apply them consistently.

This is the right approach for you if you want to:

- Invest in your personal development
- Speed up your learning progress
- Understand how your mind functions
- Enjoy the journey

With that in mind, it would be shortsighted to ignore the abundance of books and mobile apps for language learning. Nevertheless, although some offer reliable content, learners still need a more straightforward, actionable framework. This gap is evident in the many people who cannot make consistent progress despite studying for several months or even years.

Therefore, we've structured every chapter as follows:

1. Principle
2. Application
3. Summary
4. Call to action

Although many examples and cases could illustrate each principle, we have made a careful selection for effective communication and usefulness. It's essential to familiarize yourself with the concepts by applying them directly to your personal language learning process to derive the most benefit from this book.

INTRODUCTION

People fluent in more than one language often sense distinct personalities surfacing when switching between them. This is because each language is a unique system that expresses concepts in particular ways. While translating is sometimes straightforward, bilinguals understand that subtle shades of meaning unique to a language get lost in the process.

As you immerse yourself in a language, you begin to mold your own identity within its cultural and linguistic landscape. Whether French, Japanese, or Hindi, a new *you* gradually takes shape as you interact with others.

That is why we have built our language learning framework around taking on different roles. Drawing from our experience, we've identified **four key aspects of the learning process**, each with its own set of challenges, tools, and strategies to address them. They are represented by symbolic characters. **The Builder** lays the groundwork for efficient learning. **The Detective** embodies curiosity and problem-solving. **The Sailor** charts a personalized course. **The Athlete** emphasizes discipline and progress.

Embracing these four roles should help you find greater clarity, motivation, and success in your learning journey.



THE BUILDER

Work smart

"By failing to prepare,
you are preparing to fail."

- Benjamin Franklin

Does learning a new language leave much space for improvisation, or is planning an essential part of the process?

Learning a new language is a lot like building a house. Before taking the first step in both ventures, you must **sketch your expected result**. Additionally, both endeavors will require **sourcing materials**, using **different tools,** and **learning from your mistakes** to continuously perform each task better as you go.

The appropriate starting point is a **robust foundation**, like any grand construction project. That will be the backbone of your learning journey. To begin raising a structure on top of that foundation, you must procure resources from a trusted supplier. You can start developing your project once you have the tools and materials. To avoid unnecessary delays, you must ensure your tools are well-organized by strategically positioning them for each work session. That will expedite progress, helping you move into your *language house* sooner.

There are plenty of valuable lessons to draw from construction projects. So, to ensure a solid start to your learning journey, begin by **thinking like a builder**.

Chapter One



Define Your Goal

So you've decided to build your new home. Congratulations!

Should you decide what to build before starting, or figure it out as you go?

Plan before you start

Your dream home could be a cottage, bungalow, or two-story house. However, starting construction without deciding on the exact structure will lead to wasted time, energy, and resources. In the same way, you should always define your goal before pursuing it in language learning.

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