

## LANGUAGE LEARNER PROFILE

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### Heike Vogt

#### About Heike

Originally from Frankenberg, East Germany, but moved to Nuremberg, West Germany when she was 12. Currently works for the European Union in London (freelance writer).

**Languages:** Fluent German, English and Spanish, and a bit of French.

#### What made you choose to study the languages you speak?

I fell in love with England and the English mentality and I've always felt there is an "Anglo-Saxon" in me, struggling to come out! Even though I had other, more sensible plans, I ended up studying English translating and interpreting in Germany, figuring that this would help me find a job in the UK. As for Spanish, I simply love – LOVE – Spain! The decision to learn French was made more with the head than the heart. Since I work for the EU I figured that it would prove useful.

#### How have you gone about learning these languages?

For English I still take a notebook everywhere, even though I now write in English and dream in English too! This allows me to jot down ways of saying things I catch on the bus or in other public spaces. I also read film scripts and am fascinated by spoken language. I regularly ask English friends why they said a thing in a particular way. When I go hiking with English mates, I have them explain landscape features to me. I quiz them on their special knowledge to further deepen my vocabulary. There is so much to work with in English, it's a never-ending discovery.

#### What's your favourite language learning tip?

The best thing is just to immerse yourself in the culture, which you can easily achieve even without being in the country: watch TV, meet people 'from there', read books in the target language etc. Find your way into the language. This might be very individual: for example through literature, politics, the environment or anything at all: I think one should NEVER stop learning. Squeeze your indigenous friends DRY for their linguistic knowledge. Everybody has some private or professional speciality. You might know geologists, environmentalists, hair dressers, bakers etc. etc. Squeeze them for their vocabulary. Write it down. First, you'll be able to dazzle others at the next party - second, you'll have conquered another bit of that foreign land. I swear that I know some obscure words that many English people don't know. Every language is worth this effort.