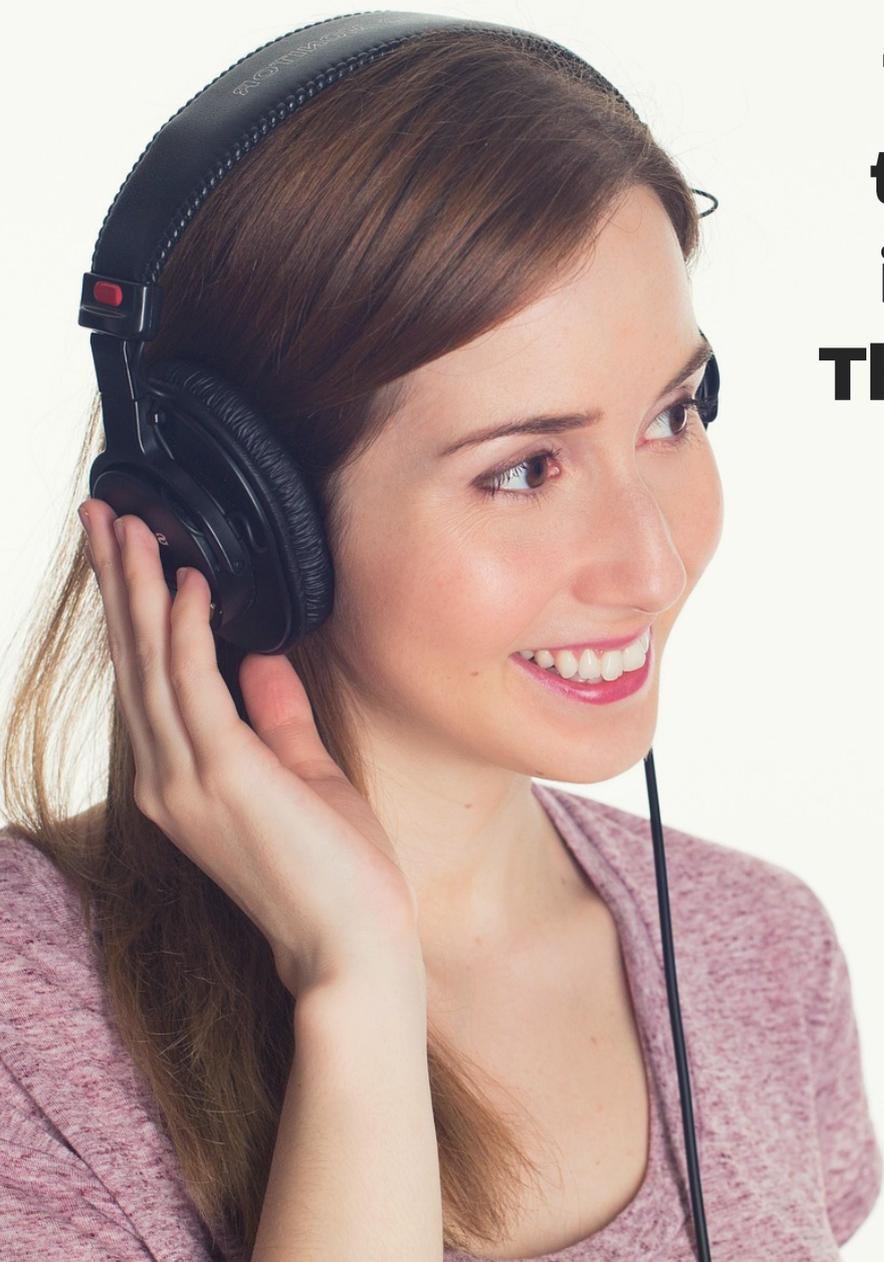


ebook by polyglot Lýdia Machová

MY FIRST ONLINE SPEAKING SESSION

STEP BY STEP



**The fastest way
to learn to speak
is to speak a lot.
This is how to do it.**

Congratulations!

If you're reading this e-book, you've understood the most important thing about learning a language, namely that nobody can ever teach you one. Only you can learn it yourself. To do this, you need to systematically practice the language from total basics until fluency. This is more so true when it comes to speaking a foreign language: nothing but practice can improve our ability to express ourselves.

So, the only remaining question is – how to do it?

If you want to learn to speak well in a foreign language, you've come to the right place :-) In this e-book, I'll give you a step-by-step manual on how you can begin systematically improving your speaking skills in English, German, Spanish, or even Swahili (here, I speak from experience :-)). The rules for speaking are universal and they apply to pretty much every language and every level. This e-book will be particularly helpful to those who are not total beginners in a language, but already know some basics, i.e. the A2 level or higher.

Enjoy reading!

Your language mentor

Lýdia Machová

Where to find people to whom I can talk?

In my **Language Master** video course, I offer a few tips on how to find people who will practice conversation with you for free. Feel free to use all you learn in this e-book with them as well. But here, we're going to focus on a particular website, which makes the search for a conversation partner a piece of cake: [italki.com](https://www.italki.com).

On [italki](https://www.italki.com), you can find thousands of willing language teachers who can have Skype lessons with you. The choice of teacher is up to you. Once you've chosen the one you like, buy credits from the website and book a lesson with the teacher for the price you can see on their profile. After successfully completing your Skype lesson, the money will be transferred from your account to the teacher's account. This means that you are protected in case the teacher does not attend the lesson (which is extremely rare).

Italki is a safe website which I've been using for several years and I personally know a lot of teachers who use it as their platform. I like recommending it to my students and fans because it's really great. If you choose the right teacher, you don't have to worry about not having conversation practice for a long time.

Tip:

Would you like \$10 worth of Italki credits for free? It's easy. Simply use this link <https://www.italki.com/i/B6HFG0> and after your first credit purchase of at least \$10, you'll get another \$10 for free. (Don't panic if you can't see the credits immediately. Sometimes, it takes a few hours, but relax – you will definitely get your \$10 in the end.)

So for €9 (roughly equivalent to \$10), you can have several lessons up to 20 dollars' worth together. Just to be fair, I will mention that when you register on Italki using the link above, I myself will also receive \$10 worth of credits and use them for my own lessons in Swahili or some other language. You can also register directly through the website (www.italki.com), but both you and I are then losing the \$10 bonus :)

What does a good conversation with a tutor actually look like?

I'm often surprised by the "conversations" some people have with professional teachers for years and years, paying huge amounts of money and not improving at all. The most common mistake I've noticed is that the teacher speaks more than the students or that they do a lot of different things in the lesson, thus reducing the actual conversation to a minimum.

A good conversation is first and foremost about speaking and **speaking should comprise about 90% of all lesson activity**. This means that no time should be wasted by reading texts, listening to recordings, watching videos and definitely not by doing grammar exercises! All of these are activities which you can easily do at home yourself, without paying someone to look at you while you're at it. If you want to pay someone, the lesson should be about speaking practice. You can do everything else yourself as a self-learner. (Find out exactly how to do it in my [Language Master](#) video course).

Another major and common mistake about conversation lessons occurs when the speaking is done by the teacher more than the students. Students usually justify this by saying that they're "at least listening to the foreign language" spoken by a native speaker. Listening to others speaking our foreign language is incredibly important, but, once again, it shouldn't be something you're paying for. With your phone, you can find thousands of podcasts in your foreign language within a few minutes.

So, what should it look like? An ideal conversation lesson has the student speaking for at least 80% of the time. The teacher is listening closely and gently correcting the student's mistakes (more on this later) and constantly supports and encourages the student's speaking.

Only this way you'll be able (and willing) to continue your conversation lessons regularly. And only through regular conversation can you learn to speak a foreign language fluently.

Teacher or Tutor?

I've already mentioned both teachers and tutors. So, what is the difference between them?

For our purposes of learning to speak a foreign language: none! A teacher is a person with a teaching degree or a teaching certificate which they obtained in order to be able to officially teach a given language. It's a welcome added value for a person who is supposed to help us speak. A professional teacher should better understand the process you're going through, but this isn't always the case.

We're looking for a tutor, a conversational partner, a person who speaks the foreign language at a high level and can also help *us* get there. **This person doesn't necessarily have to be a native speaker**, but they have to, obviously, speak the given foreign language fluently.

If I were to choose between a professional teacher who's never learnt a foreign language themselves (e.g. an American who teaches English to foreigners) and a person, who themselves learns foreign languages but doesn't have a teaching certificate, I'd go for the latter. **The ideal combination might be a teacher with teaching qualifications who's learning at least one foreign language themselves.**

On Italki, you can choose both professional teachers and community tutors. My advice to you is: don't worry about this distinction at all. **Choose your teacher/tutor based on your feelings.** It is important to feel relaxed and natural and to feel the support of your teacher/tutor. It's not a problem if they're someone with little experience, as long as they're interested in helping others and, most importantly, willing to modify the lessons to match your preferences. After all, you're the paying client and the teacher's job is to provide lessons you're satisfied with. And after reading this e-book, you'll know exactly what you want from the lessons and how to let the teacher know this.

(Just to keep things simple, from now on, I will use the term "tutor", whether this person has a teaching degree/certificate or not).

Ideal conversation step-by-step

1. Preparation before contacting the tutor

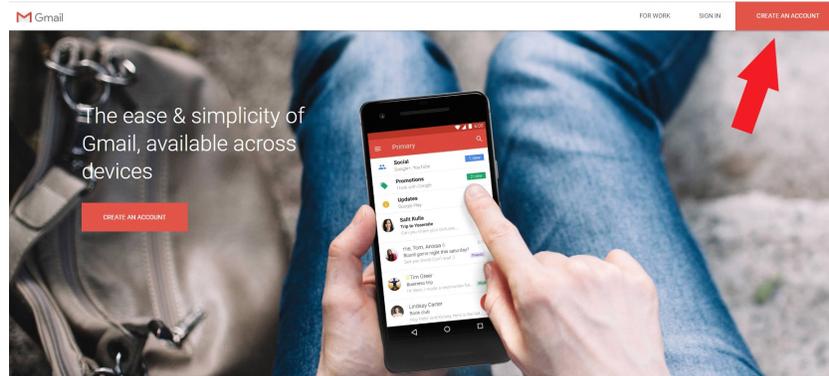
During a conversation lesson, we'll need one thing which we should prepare in advance. **It is very important to have the tutor write down our mistakes**, so that we can work with them after the lesson. If they only tell us about a mistake, we'll forget all about it in 5 seconds and it won't be useful at all.

The most efficient way for the tutor to record our mistakes is using Google Docs or Google Sheets. In case you don't know what this is, it's an online version of MS Word and MS Excel accessible for free. **The tutor will write down your mistakes into one of these and you'll see them in real time.** You can also add a note, a translation into your own language, highlight something in red, or anything else you want. Once the lesson is over, you have the document at hand without having to save it, email it, and without it taking up space on your computer. (Internet and Cloud storage are amazing, right? :))

It is best to prepare such a document before the first lesson and have it at hand. You can work with Google Docs or Google Sheets – that's up to your preferences. I prefer spreadsheets (i.e. Excel), where one column has the expressions in the language you're learning (these are written down by the tutor) and the second column includes the translation into your own language (you can write these yourself or the tutor can do it if they speak your language or if you have another language in common, e.g. English). To give you an example, my tutor Hamdy writes down Swahili expressions along with their English translation for me, so I don't have to write anything and I just watch to see the words in their written form as well.

On the following pages, you'll find a step-by-step **manual on how to prepare a Google Sheet**, i.e. your notebook for mistakes you made while speaking. Don't worry, you only need to do this once and then you'll have it ready for every conversation lesson :)

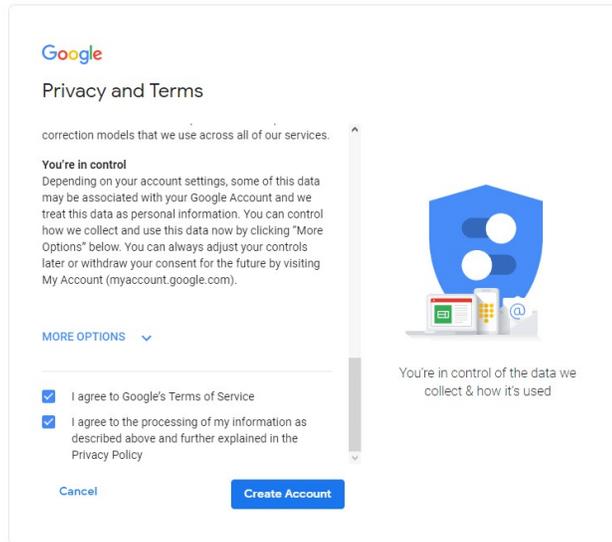
- a. Create a Gmail account. (If you already have a Gmail account, skip this part and go straight to point e.) Go to www.gmail.com and in the top right corner, click on “Create an account”.



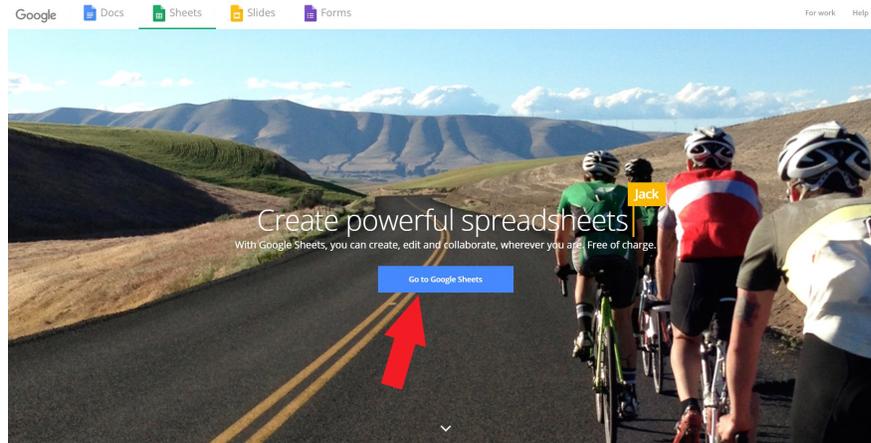
- b. Enter your data and press “Next”.

- c. Enter some more data and press “Next” again.

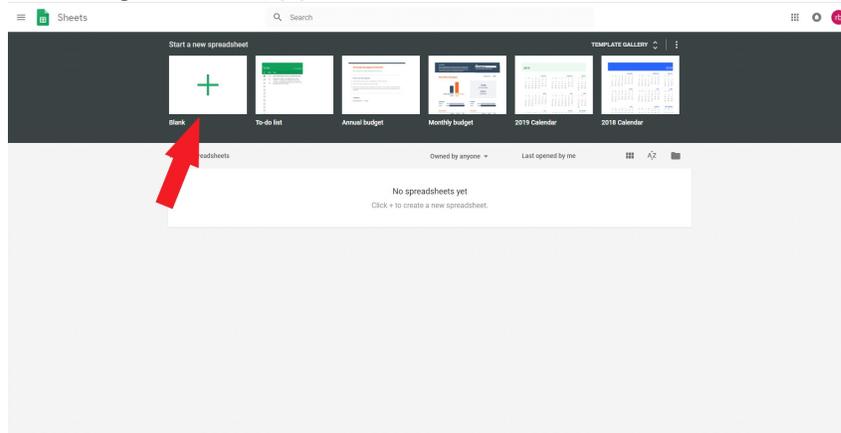
- d. Read through the Terms and Conditions, check the boxes below and click on “Create an account”.



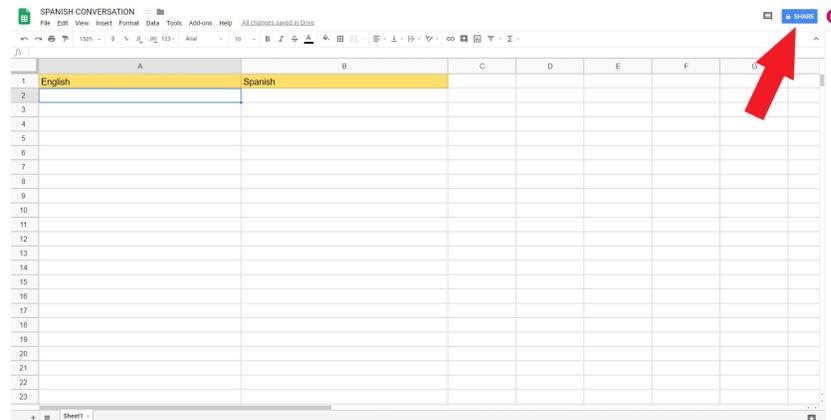
- e. This gets you into your Gmail account. Do not log out, but proceed to <https://www.google.sk/intl/sk/sheets/about/>. Next, click on “Go to Google Sheets”.



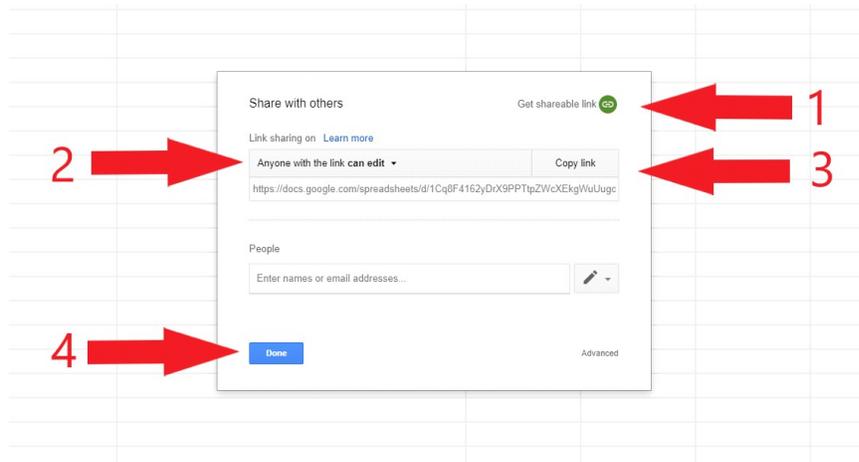
- f. You can see the list of your spreadsheets. Create a new spreadsheet by clicking on the + sign in the upper left corner.



- g. A new spreadsheet will open. You can rename it in the top left corner, widen the first two columns and write your target (foreign) language and your mother tongue in the first row. This is where your tutor will write down your mistakes as well as new vocabulary. Next, click on the blue “Share” button in the top right corner.



- h. A pop-up window with share settings will appear. At the moment, your spreadsheet is only visible to you. However, you need to share it with the tutor, so that they can write into it. To do this, first, click on “**Get shareable link**”, then choose the “**Anyone with the link can edit**” option from the grey drop-down list (this is very important – if you keep the default “Anyone with the link can view”, your tutor will only be able to view, but not edit the spreadsheet). Once everything is set, click on “**Copy link**” (the link will be copied to your clipboard as if you’ve pressed the Ctrl+C combination). Finally, click on “**Done**” and you’re done :)



- i. Save the link you copied as a bookmark in your Internet browser, so that you can easily access the spreadsheet anytime you need to and **send it to your Italki tutor before the lesson**, so that they know where to write down mistakes and new vocabulary.

2. Find a suitable tutor.

Before choosing a tutor, watch the [Instruction Video for the Italki Method](#) in the Language Master video course to find out how to choose the right tutor. If it doesn't work out the first time, don't hesitate to try a different tutor. The important thing is that your conversations with the tutor stay fun for a long time.

TIP:

If you've only just started speaking the foreign language or your level is not very good and you don't feel confident in the language, I recommend choosing a tutor with whom you share a language for your first lessons.

- If you don't speak another foreign language fluently, choose a tutor with the same mother tongue, who also teaches the language you want to learn.
- If you do speak another foreign language and have no problem expressing yourself in it or switching into it, you can choose a tutor who also speaks this language. For example, if you're fluent in English, often use it at work or while traveling, and now you're learning French, feel free to choose a French tutor who also speaks English.

In other words, you don't have to share a mother tongue with your tutor, but it is important that you have a common language which you can switch into if you need to. I'll explain why this is important and how you can use it a little later.

Note: Sharing a language with the tutor is not necessary and you should be able to handle a conversation with a tutor even if your only common language is the one you're trying to learn, especially if you've had previous experience with learning other foreign languages. However, it will require more intensive work with a dictionary to make sure that you can express things for which you lack vocabulary and that you understand everything your tutor is saying.

3. Once you've chosen your tutor, send them a message explaining in detail what you want from them.

This is a very important step which most people skip. **When you're booking a lesson on Italki, you have the option of writing a message to the tutor, introducing yourself and telling them what you need.** However, you can also send a lesson request without writing this message and many people prefer doing it this way. This means that the tutor starts the lesson unprepared (as they had no chance to prepare) or they will conduct the lesson in their own way, using their own materials. If the tutor is experienced, they will probably have a lot of materials at hand, which they'll give to you to read, or perhaps a video on YouTube which you'll watch and afterwards talk about with the tutor.

These are all useful things for learning a language, but right now, **we want to speak and not read or watch stuff!** That's why we're paying for a tutor and that's exactly what we want to practice. You might not believe it, but for some tutors, this is completely new and unexpected information.

What you need to realise is that a lot of Italki tutors are people whose experience with teaching languages revolves around the traditional scholarly methods of the "I'm your teacher so I have to prepare materials and use them in the lesson to teach you the language" kind. Some of them are so consumed in this traditional way of teaching that they are not able to adapt to something new. They are convinced that this is the only way of teaching someone a foreign language and they'll try to get you on the "right" path repeatedly. That's why **we have to be very clear about what we want from the lessons.** (You might not be able to imagine that at the moment, but trust me – we'll work it out in a way your teacher will be happy with and you will move forward in speaking the foreign language :-)).

To make this step a bit easier, I'm going to provide you with a short text which you can simply copy and paste into the message for your Italki tutor. First of all, try writing a short text yourself in the target language, so that the tutor can see your level, and then paste this English text into the message (Apologies to those of you who are learning a different foreign language and have chosen a tutor who doesn't speak English. In this case, you'll have to write the message yourself or you can simply try to explain what you want in the first lesson.):

I am following a language course by Lýdia Machová from www.language mentoring.com and I am copying this message from her course. I would like to have a conversation lesson with you following a few simple rules:

1. This lesson is supposed to be a purely conversational one, that means that I would like to spend the whole lesson just speaking and not working with any text or video, nor doing grammar exercises.
2. I would like you to ask me simple questions about me and my life (my job, my language learning, my family, my country etc.) and listen to my answers.
3. While listening to me, please write down your corrections in this Google Spreadsheet: _____ (***paste the link to the Google Sheet you've prepared here***). Please make sure you write longer phrases (at least two words), not individual words. For example:
 - a. When I say "I don't know much people from Austria" → please write: "I don't know many people"
 - b. When I say "My brother is older as me" → please write: "older than me" or even better "my brother is older than me"
 - c. When I say "I didn't went home yesterday." → please write: "I didn't go home"

If you can, please write down the translation into English in the B column. (If not, I'll add the translations during or after our lesson.)

Before the end of our lesson, please let's get back to some of the most important mistakes and corrections and let's revise them.

I am sure you are a great Italki tutor and I hope this type of lesson is okay with you. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Eureka! You've just provided your Italki tutor with exact instructions on how to go about the lesson. It is therefore highly likely that the lesson will go exactly as we wish. That's because this type of lesson is actually easiest from the tutor's point of view – they only need to listen to you and correct your mistakes. Anyone who speaks the language well can manage that. The only thing they need is to be patient and kind, so that you as a student don't feel stressed out throughout the lesson. If you manage to find a tutor who fulfils these two requirements, you can rest assured that the conversation is going to be great :)

Once you've pasted the text into the message box, you can submit the lesson request and then simply wait for the tutor confirm it (the confirmation will be sent to your email) and appear on Skype at the prearranged time.

4. Preparation right before the lesson

Aaaaalmost there! Feeling nervous? :) That's totally fine. Everyone gets nervous before their first online lesson in a foreign language. I did as well, before the first

lesson of my ninth language, Swahili! I didn't know who was going to be on the other side, whether we'd click, whether the tutor would be nice to me or whether I'd even be able to say something :) Don't suppress the feelings of stress before your lesson with the tutor, take it as part of the adventure called learning a foreign language :-)

Be ready **15 minutes before the start of the lesson**:

1. Log into Skype.
2. Plug in your **headset** (headphones with a microphone). Nowadays, headsets commonly come with phones, so you probably own one. If not, you can also Skype without a headset, but it's good to have one, because it can prevent a lot of technical issues and, in particular, echo while calling.
3. Check that your microphone works properly: On Skype, you can make a **test call** to yourself!
 - a. Click on the phone icon ("Calls") in the top left part.
 - b. Look for "**Echo / Sound Test Service**" in your contacts. Click on it and then on the phone icon next to it.
 - c. A female voice will inform you (in English) that this is a test call and that you should say something after the beep. Follow her instructions and when you hear "beep", **say one or two sentences** in your normal voice, as if you were talking to someone on the other side.
 - d. Wait a few second until you hear another beep. Your message should be replayed to you. Your tutor will hear you just as loudly and clearly as you can hear yourself now.
 - e. If you feel it's not particularly great, try changing your Audio & Video settings (in the top left part, click on the three dots and choose **Settings**, then **Audio & Video** on the left and choose a different microphone input from the ones available in the **Microphone** drop-down menu).

Add your tutor to your contacts. You can see their Skype ID on their Italki profile.

Open a new tab in your Internet browser and open the **spreadsheet** which you created beforehand and sent to the tutor.

If you want, you can also open a dictionary or [Google translate](#) on other tabs. It's a good idea to look up some good dictionaries for the language you're trying to learn, which provide translations into your mother tongue or into another language you speak well before the lesson.

The beginning of the lesson is usually the most stressful part because technical issues tend to occur. Hopefully, this list of useful phrases will help you with that. Keep it at hand at the beginning. The phrases are listed in the most common languages – English and German:

Hello.	Hallo.
Can you hear me?	Hören Sie mich?
I can't hear you.	Ich kann Sie nicht hören.
Yes, I hear you well.	Ja, ich höre Sie gut.
I can hear you but it is a bit quiet.	Ich kann Sie hören, aber es ist ein bisschen leise.
I can hear you but I can't see you.	Ich höre Sie, aber ich kann Sie nicht sehen.
Can we talk without the camera?	Können wir ohne Kamera sprechen?
Please wait a minute.	Warten Sie bitte kurz.
I don't know what the problem is.	Ich weiß nicht, was das Problem ist.
Try calling me again.	Rufen Sie mich bitte noch einmal an.
I'll try calling you back.	Ich rufe Sie zurück an.
Everything is working.	Alles funktioniert.
Nice to meet you.	Es freut mich.

Hopefully, you'll only need the positive phrases, not the ones about technical issues.

TIP:

In case your Skype connection fails completely, there is a service which I personally like using a lot more than Skype: www.appear.in. You need to register beforehand and create a chat room, the link to which you can simply send to the other person. It's completely free. Your chat partner (in this case, your tutor), follows the link and you can see each other immediately and start your conversation. It is not necessary to add anyone to your contact list and the quality of both the video and the audio is usually very good. So, if you struggle with Skype, use [Appear.in](http://appear.in).

5. What is the lesson like?

The proceedings of a lesson are largely dependent on your tutor, but the basic aim is for them to stick to the set criteria as much as possible. You can let them lead you through the lesson the way they want.

An example of what a lesson can look like:

1. The tutor asks you a question.
2. You didn't quite understand what they said, so you ask them to say it again. (Can you repeat that please? Können Sie das bitte wiederholen?). The tutor repeats the question more slowly, clearly, or adds an explanation of a difficult word.

3. Try to answer the question to the best of your abilities, but, above all, just make sure that you say at least something. **Don't hesitate** to say something you think might be incorrect. This is not a test where correct answers are required and **nobody will judge your language level** based on your performance. (Many of you might have this fear deeply engraved in you from school years, but try to fight the negative feelings!)
4. **The tutor can correct a mistake or help you** find the right word, write it in your spreadsheet and maybe add an explanation of why you should say something like this and not like that. Short grammar or vocabulary explanations during the conversation lessons are fine. You just need to make sure they don't become the main part of the lesson.

TIP:

If your tutor speaks your mother tongue or you both speak another language fluently, don't hesitate to switch into it if you need to ask about a word or grammar. Many students are afraid of switching into another language in the lesson, because they think they'll learn more if the whole conversation happens in the target language. This is not true.

If you don't know a word and you can ask for it by simply saying it in a different language, do it. The tutor will give you the word and you can use it in your sentence. In the meantime, the tutor will write it into your spreadsheet and you've just learnt something new, something you actually need. If you tried explaining the word for 5 minutes in the target language, you'd waste too much time and you still wouldn't be sure what the exact meaning of the given word actually is.

For example: how would you understand this explanation of an unknown word: "showing or characterized by quick and inventive verbal humour"? After five minutes of tedious explanation from the tutor, you still wouldn't be sure whether they're describing someone funny, intelligent, resourceful or something else. (By the way, the definition was for the word "witty" and when you hear that someone is "witty", you can imagine quite well what is meant by that, right?)

5. The rest of the lesson is similar. The whole lesson is therefore about **questions and your answers**, which should be as long as possible and you can extend them as much as you like. And you might get into such a long discussion that the first question will be the only question asked! And that's totally fine. The important thing is that the tutor has more questions at hand for when you've exhausted the subject. (The best tutors are those who are genuinely interested in what you want to tell them. When you find a tutor like that, conversations with them will be a lot more fun.)

The lesson was successful if:

- you were speaking for the **majority of it**;
- you have some **output** from the lesson, even if it's just 10 expressions in your spreadsheet;
- you're at least a little **proud** of yourself! (Thoughts such as "Oh my god, I've completely forgotten my German!" are totally fine, but at some point during the lesson, you should also feel that you managed something well. If you have a good tutor, they'll let you know when you did particularly well.);
- you feel like you want to have **another lesson**, even if it's with a different tutor; our main goal is to set things up for long-term conversation lessons, not just for surviving a singular lesson.

6. What next?

After the end of the lesson, you need to do a few more things:

1. **Confirm that the lesson was completed**, so that the tutor can get paid for it.
2. **Give the tutor your feedback** in the form of stars and ideally a short comment as well. Don't be afraid to be honest with them. Some people tend to keep their opinion to themselves so as not to hurt others. However, your comment is very useful for other students like you. If you didn't like the lesson and the tutor at all, if they, for example, kept interrupting you, didn't let you speak, insisted on their lesson procedures or did not appear friendly and supportive, feel free to write it in the comment. A tutor like this should not teach a lot of lessons on Italki, so make sure people know what they're like.

On the other hand, if you were satisfied, it is important to praise the tutor. Let them and everybody else know that they conducted the lesson exactly how you wanted, that you got to speak a lot and that you feel great about the lesson – if it's true, of course.

3. **Process the vocabulary from the lesson!** This is an extremely crucial step (hence the strict exclamation mark :)). Don't let your conversation lesson finish with the conversation part, get the maximum value out of it. After going through the Language Master video course, you'll know exactly how you can process your new vocabulary – through the Goldlist method, with the Anki or Memrise apps or with handmade flashcards. If you choose none of them but regularly have conversation lessons, at least commit to reading through the vocabulary from previous lessons before the next one. You'll see how much this will contribute to your speedy language improvement.

4. **Book another conversation lesson straight away.** Why wait until you “find time” in your schedule? Make the time right now, immediately after completing a lesson. This is a little trick that will lead you to systematic learning. If you’re really serious about language learning, book two or three lessons in advance.

Some essentials to remember about speaking

At the end, let’s just remind ourselves why we should follow this recommended process in language learning. I’m going to summarize things which have already been mentioned in this e-book and which you might have heard me talk about elsewhere, but which are nevertheless important to keep in mind:

1. If we want to learn to speak, we have to speak A LOT. There’s no other way.

This is a big truth about learning languages, which I understood while learning my 9 languages and also when I met hundreds of polyglots with similar achievements. You can read a hundred books in a foreign language, watch all the TV series there are, have a 1,500-day record on Duolingo, and complete all grammar exercises, but unless you start speaking regularly, you will never feel confident at speaking and whenever you find yourself in a situation where you have to speak (e.g. when meeting a foreigner), you’ll always struggle with looking for words and you won’t be able to put them together to make a sentence anyway.

Learning a language without practicing speaking and then hoping to be able to speak is just like learning to drive by watching videos on YouTube. Imagine that you’ve never sat behind the steering wheel, but you’ve seen 50 hours’ worth of videos about changing gears, releasing the clutch, turning the wheel in order to make a slight turn to the left. Unless you actually sit in the car and drive for many hours, you’ll never know how to do it.

Driving schools understand that in order to make a driver out of someone, they have to provide them with plenty of driving practice. It’s a shame that most language courses don’t work on the same principle and their lessons are filled with everything but speaking.

2. Nothing can move us further in learning a language than speaking

Not only is practicing speaking in a foreign language the only way we can learn how to speak it, it is also a very rewarding activity. Once you start doing it regularly, systematically, and intensively, **you’ll see improvement you wouldn’t achieve any other way!** Speaking is incomparable to reading, listening, grammar, or vocabulary. Of course, these skills will also improve with the hours

you devote to them, but with speaking, you'll feel the improvement most intensely, with pretty much every lesson you take. This obviously depends on the level at which you started as well as on the amount of previous contact with the given language. But you'll definitely notice the progress you're making.

3. Just because it hasn't worked out so far doesn't mean you lack talent!

It's incredibly important to realise this. **Many people give up learning a foreign language because they feel that they've tried for many years and never got anywhere.** But when you actually count how many hours of conversation you've had so far (and by this I mean real conversation where you speak a lot and not "conversation" where you're reading a text for half an hour and then ask about new vocabulary or write down expressions related to the topic), how much time has it been per week?

Let's say you attended a group course with 5 or perhaps even more classmates in which speaking comprised about 30% of class time (as language courses tend to also focus on things like grammar, reading, writing, testing, etc.). After three months of this course and 50 hours of class time, **you'd had the "grand" total about 2 hours of conversation.** In three months! That's almost nothing.

I don't know anyone who would be able to learn to speak a language after so little contact with it and remember that I personally know hundreds of polyglots who obviously know how to learn languages and have the results to prove it. If this approach isn't good enough for polyglots, masters of learning languages, why should it be good enough for you?

Failing to speak in a foreign language so far has nothing to do with your "incompetence", lack of talent, not being a "language person" or anything like that. You simply haven't been doing the right thing because nobody has told you what the right thing was. I hope that after reading this e-book and watching the Language Master videocourse, you will have a clearer idea of what you should do. And the best thing of all – you don't have to trust me. Try it out and see for yourself. **Give it one month**, book two or three lessons a week and I guarantee you that after a month, **your speaking will have improved significantly.**

4. Struggling to recall vocabulary is natural

We tend to focus more on the things we don't know when we speak, because suddenly, we need to use words, expressions, and grammar actively, not just understand them in a video! And that's the most difficult thing about foreign languages – fishing a word out of your memory and using it correctly.

Don't be too hard on yourself. It's difficult to acquire this ability and it doesn't come immediately. It will require many attempts until you finally find the right word

and use it correctly while speaking. Don't stress yourself out if you feel that you've asked your tutor for the same word about ten times. It happens to me all the time.

I'd say I only really master a word after having used it in a conversation at least five times. It might sound terrifying, because it seems like a lot of work, but don't worry – the most commonly used words will appear repeatedly so you won't even realise how easily they'll enter your long-term memory after a few lessons.

5. The more frequent and intensive, the better

The same principle applies to both learning languages as such and practicing conversation (and actually to learning whatever else as well) – if you intensify your efforts during a shorter period of time, **the results will be many times better!**

I found out that when I had a lesson of Swahili three days in a row, on the last day, I was achieving incredible results. Suddenly, my speaking was much more fluent, I was able to recall expressions which I had previously fished for many times, grammar somehow seemed to work as well and I could understand my tutor without needing to ask him to repeat what he said. Amazing! Since then, I have always had three **consecutive** lessons, for example, on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

You'd get these results even if you distributed your learning across 10 years. But, first of all, who wants to spend such a long time learning just one language? And, second of all, it will genuinely become easier if you dense it up a bit. You've already decided to work more intensively on improving your foreign language. **Give it all you've got!** Sacrifice some other activity, just for a few weeks, and spend more time speaking and also learning the language as such.

Make a plan in accordance with the Language Master, include vocabulary, listening, reading, and simply start living in whatever language you're trying to learn. Immerse yourself in it to the point where it's literally buzzing in your head! You'll be astonished at how far you've moved in just two months. I've seen this in hundreds of my students. Discovering the beauty of learning a language is an amazing process. Enjoy it to the fullest :)

BONUS: Conversation topics for regular lessons

Ready for the icing on the cake? We've been through the instructions for your first lessons and you've asked your tutor to ask you about your life, job, place where you live, family, etc. These topics are ideal for the beginning, but after about three lessons, you'll run out of things to talk about and the tutor, who works with you long-term, will know quite a lot about you. There's no point in talking about the

same things over and over again, so let's now have a look at what you can do once you've exhausted the first few topics.

Make use of existing sets of conversational questions on the Internet.

The Internet is an amazing tool for learning languages and also for finding topics which you can talk about with your tutor! These are my two favourite websites:

- a. www.esldiscussions.com
- b. <http://iteslj.org/questions/>

Check them out and go through a few topics. It's all in English, but hopefully it won't be an issue for those of you learning a different language. There's such a huge number of topics there that I couldn't go through all of them even if I was using them for conversation lessons in all of my languages :)

Choose 5 topics which you like and which are suitable for your level and interests, and send them to the tutor with a simple request: ask me these questions and I will answer them. There's nothing easier for them to do. And you'll always have something to talk about :)

TIP:

Don't be afraid of philosophical topics even if you're a beginner. A lot of people think that as beginners, they should only be able to talk about their family or job and not go into abstract topics such as achieving goals, happiness, dreams and plans for the future, midlife crisis, etc. However, such questions might actually be easier to answer than questions about your family where you might need to know a lot of family-specific vocabulary. The only key you need to unlock philosophical conversations is simplifying your thoughts. (We'll look at this in detail in my planned Conversation course.)

One more website I recommend: a random generator of questions about an unknown topic:

<https://www.conversationstarters.com/generator.php>

Some of them might be too difficult for your level, but if they are, simply **skip** them and ask your tutor to proceed with the next question. There are so many questions there you won't run out for hours and hours :)

My dear friends, I wish you all a lot of enthusiasm for your studies, lots of fun while speaking and, above all, visible results, because nothing can motivate you as much as noticing your own progress. **Everyone can learn a foreign language if they stick to these four basic principles:**

1. You need to have **fun**.
2. You need to choose **efficient methods**.
3. You need to create a **system** in your learning.
4. You need to devote **enough time** to the language.

I have no doubts that you can do it. If you've joined the Autodidact's Academy, I'll be very pleased to follow your progress and learn together with you.

Let's get to it!
Your language mentor
Lýdia Machová