

UNIT 6 LISTENING TRANSCRIPT

Language Table

(Background noise)

Intro: The sound of communication barriers being broken, and language bridges being built, people learning and practicing a language in an informal environment filled with laughter and casual conversation.

Alicia: As part of the International Year of Languages, The UN language program which offers lunch hour language classes to UN staff, launched, 'Speaking Tables', a fun and exciting way to learn or practice a language over lunch in a relaxed environment, But, there are a few requirements, you cannot be shy and you cannot be afraid to make mistakes, the more you talk the more progress you make.

Alicia: The idea of speaking tables was the brainchild of Javier Zanon, head of the language and Communications program in New York.

Cut 2/Javier Zanon: This is the 2008 International Year of Languages, so we have a series of events taking place along the year, this is our second event in fact but the interesting thing about this is that it's going to be here for the whole year the rest of the year ...and I think is very nice to see the response from our colleagues coming to have lunch and to enjoy the practice of the language.

Alicia: Started on March 18th, these lunch hour sessions will be held in the cafeteria of the Secretariat building, every 1st and 3rd Tuesday.

Cut3/Javier: Well the idea is to look for situations to practice the language you are learning in a relaxed atmosphere, meeting new people, meeting new colleagues and having the opportunity to use one of the six official languages, so we were looking for this type of activity.

Alicia: The hope is to attract people from all departments and to get them to listen, talk and enjoy the initial response has been enthusiastic with each of the six language tables being filled.

Cut 4/Joyce: My name is Joyce Lewis Swennson and I really enjoyed the session because I took Spanish classes here in the 90s and I haven't spoken Spanish for a long time, so the first few seconds were difficult trying to prompt myself but the vocabulary I had I realized was all dormant, the more I speak the more it came back but it was fun I enjoyed it. I got to meet new colleagues coming from other departments, met someone I took classes with several years ago so, overall it was fun, it was a fun lunch. Instead of having lunch with

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people you already know you get to meet new people, learn new experiences, I just met an intern who, from another country it is -- yeah, I would recommend it highly.

Alicia: The reasons for attending speaking tables are many but the goals are still the same. Shahanah Headah spoke to us about her experience:

Cut7/name: I attended 3 levels of the Arabic course and the reason I started on the course was because I'm a Muslim and I read the Qu'ran and that's in Arabic and I thought that I learn the language I would be able to understand a little bit of what I was reading, but I dropped out of that course mainly because I found that it was a lot of homework to do and when I got home taking care of the family doing the homework and taking care of the family and praying and reading the Qu'ran as is prescribed for us, it was a little too much for me. But I still had that yearning to speak the language, so when I saw this email about this speaking tables, I thought thank God this is another way for me to actually not have the burden of doing the homework but actually listen to somebody and speak the language and have the conversation. (laughter)

This is Alicia Austin reporting for UN radio.