

## USER INTERVIEWS

### QUESTIONS:

1. Please, tell me a bit about yourself. Are you a student or professional? How old are you? Tell me a bit about your daily routines.
2. When was the last time you learned or tried to learn a new language or vocabulary of some sort? Which methods did you use?
3. How did it go? Were you satisfied with the results? Which were the main reasons behind the success/failure?
4. What did you find most frustrating in the process? What about things you enjoyed?
5. What is in your opinion the best way to memorise a word? Do you prefer pictures, texts, audio, or something else? How much one should practice?
6. How do you see vocabulary learning in terms sociality? Is it something that is easy to share or rather something personal? Are you interested in other learners and how they are doing? How about the idea of light competition combined with learning?
7. Have you ever used a language app, or especially a flashcard app? If so, which one? What did you like about it? What did you dislike? If not, how do you find the idea?

## INTERVIEW 1.

**Joana**

33 years

German

professional in digital media

lives with her husband and little daughter  
in Berlin

1. "I am 33 years old and I have worked 7 years in digital media. I also have a little girl and a husband, so my daily routines are fairly organised and rigid. I work 28 hours, that is four days a week. Fridays are always free, so I still have time just for myself. On weekends too."
2. "Very recently, because my husband is a Finn. I tried to learn Finnish which is a very difficult language. As a first thing I tried to find apps and online ways to learn the language, but the problem was that Finnish is not a very common language. So it was very difficult to find a good app. Also the online option were not that attractive, so in the end I decided to go for a private teacher." *Difficulty in finding apps for more exotic languages like Finnish.*
3. "Well, the problem with a teacher coming to your home is that it is very rigid way of learning. He comes once a week at certain time and you need to take quite a lot of time, like 1,5 hours. So it wasn't a great success, because I found it difficult to arrange that time and especially find the energy for this long period. Perhaps if I had had a mobile app I could've done it easier, a bit here and there, in a bus, 20 minutes when I have time. So even if the teacher was good, it wasn't very successful because of scheduling the time." *Difficulty to find time even when one day off. She would prefer short, flexible sessions.*
4. "What I enjoyed instead was the personal contact with my teacher and that he could tell me a bit about Finland, so I wasn't only learning about the vocabulary, but also about the culture. I was also having a nice social exchange." *She likes language together with cultural details.*
5. "So I actually ended up learning a very traditional way by using flashcards and I think I quite liked that way. So I think I need to see the words written down, how they are spelled. I haven't tried audio, but I think I would prefer written as that is what I was doing. Rather than pictures too. It would be perfect to learn as often as

possible, a bit every day." *She prefers text, but doesn't really have any experience of other possibilities.*

6. "I am not interested in other learners. There might some nice idea how to do it, but right now I don't have any particular interest in doing that. I am not interested in how others are learning or advancing because I think it is a very individual thing. People learn languages very differently, some easy, some find it very difficult. I am not a big user of social media anyhow, because I don't like the idea that you are automatically drawn to compare yourself with others, so in this case I wouldn't be interested in any idea of competition." *She is not interested in any social aspects, but cannot really say, how it would be. No competition.*
7. "I haven't use a flashcard app. Only a very basic language app, but it was very basic and I didn't think it was good at all. I don't remember the name. I felt that it was very limited in ways that I could use it and in vocabulary that I could learn. I felt like I wasn't necessarily learning the words I wanted or needed to learn. I wasn't sure if the words I was learning were something that people would actually use in their daily life. But what I liked was that it was a very easy, fun and playful way of learning and you could do it anywhere." *The importance of right selection of words. She mentions words 'playful' and 'fun'!*

## INTERVIEW 2.

**Peter**

38 years

Finnish

University researcher

lives alone in Saarbrücken

1. "I am 38 years old and I am currently writing my PhD dissertation on chemistry. At the moment I am quite busy with my work. I work from 9 to 19 everyday, but then on the other hand I have weekends totally off. Then I really try just to relax".

2. "I speak Finnish, Swedish and English, and now after moving to Germany around 2 years ago, I have been trying to learn German. I am taking lesson at the moment, 3 hours per week, since November. Before that I tried to learn by myself using apps and books. But I wasn't doing it very actively." *He has real experience of several language apps.*
3. "This course I am taking, I find it really good. We have a small group of people and it is working really well. The problem is that I work a lot and also in my spare time I communicate in English, because I just don't want to struggle with everyday things. I just want to say what I want to say. And this is the problem, because I am not actively using the language. Even if I don't have any excuse not to use it as I am living in Germany."
4. "I like it when I discover the similarities between languages. Like same expression that you didn't know that the two languages share. There are interesting things to find out in their logic".
5. "I don't know if I have a certain preference, but somehow the words stay as text in my head. In one app that I was using, there was always a picture very strongly related to the word. It is kind of funny, but I don't think that I need it. In german language there are the three forms: masculine, feminine and neutral, and with them I found some context helpful. I try to categorise them and somehow paint them in their nature. To attach the masculinity to the masculine word and so on. However, the most important is the repetition in different contexts. You need to see connections." *He doesn't need pictures, but wants to see the word written. He emphasises the importance of repetition and, if possible, in all kinds of context.*
6. "I personally don't enjoy social learning, even if it may be helpful. It can be really good if you can engage socially and play with the words. Or make it even a competition. I notice that in my course I become sometimes very competitive and find it satisfactory when I can do something better than my colleague." *He doesn't find anything wrong with competition or getting socially engaged during learning.*
7. "I used Duolingo and Memrise, but they didn't really work for me. I downloaded them and played with them a bit, but after a couple of days I forgot about them. They felt more like little games than anything that can really help me or improve my life quality. I didn't have the feeling that I am really learning the words. I don't want to play with my phone all the time for no reason. With both of those apps the most frustrating thing was that it was so easy in the beginning, you don't really need to use your brain. There is a lot of repetition, but the repetition is happening on the screen only. You are not actively using the words, so it feels a bit too detached from the real world." *He used two very popular apps, but didn't get the feeling that they were helping him to learn. He didn't just want to play and have*

*fun, but to learn, and for this purpose he found them too superficial. He missed real activity and challenge.*

### INTERVIEW 3.

**Julie**

27 years

French

unemployed

worked in marketing and communication

lives alone in Toulouse

1. "I am 27 years old and I am currently looking for a job. Usually I work for marketing, communication and social media. At the moment my routine is quite chilled."
2. "Three years ago I had this project to move to Berlin, so I decided to re-learn German, because I already learned it in school. I downloaded an app to do it." *She has experience of a language app.*
3. "I used Babbel. I paid for it because I thought it would work better and motivate myself to learn. It was really good to re-learn the basics and to discover the words I already knew. But then I stopped, because I got bored. I did it for three weeks every day and then I kind of lost interest. But that is perhaps just me." *She used Babbel and lost her motivation after three weeks. But sounds like that it is not the first time.*
4. "What I enjoyed while using the app was that it was very playful. But I don't know if it was that good to actually learn. In order to learn you need to repeat the words and write and so on, but that was more like a game. I really liked it, but sometimes I was feeling bored, while I knew the things already. One thing is that I felt that the app is like a game and sometimes I just wanted to go quick to the next level. I didn't remember what I had learnt. I wasn't sure if things were going to my brain but I knew that I was on level 10 or something". *She mentions the playfulness too,*

*but interestingly sees there a downside. The experience was perhaps a bit too much about playing a game than learning.*

5. "I like audio. That is good for pronunciation. Otherwise you just read the word and pretend that you can say it. You need to say the words out loud. I like writing. That was the problem with the app, because I remember everything when I write it down. That is the problem with digital. I need to use my hand to write in order to learn to spell words." *She wants to hear the words. And say them aloud. She would learn better by writing with hand.*
6. "I think I like to learn by myself till I am comfortable enough to share with someone. I don't like competition." *She prefers keeping the experience private and doesn't want any competition.*
7. "I didn't try any other apps because Babbel was everywhere in commercials and so. But I liked it. It was really easy to use and everything made sense. But it should have sent me reminders when I did not login for, say, two days. Actually I think that I am still paying for the app. I don't know. I don't have it on my phone even anymore. Perhaps they could have done more to try to motivate me." *Babbel didn't manage to motivate her enough.*