

STUDY – A good ear for languages

TRANSCRIPT

There were a few subjects at school I wasn't particularly good at, like maths for instance. I couldn't stand maths. I just couldn't get my head around it. I wasn't very keen on science either, although I find the subjects fascinating now. However, I think I've always had quite a good ear for languages. I've always been able to hear different accents quite easily and I think that helps a lot when you're trying to pick up a new language. I studied French at school and I went to the top group in the first year so when most other pupils did German in the second year I was sent to do Latin with the others who seemed to have a knack for languages.

To be honest, I think it would've been more useful to do German than Latin. German is an important modern language but nobody speaks Latin anymore. We always moaned that there was no point learning a dead language but we didn't have any choice. They told us if we wanted to be doctors or lawyers it would be very useful to learn. Well that didn't happen anyway! Actually, Latin was very interesting as we spent a lot of time reading in Latin about Roman history and I love history anyway. The problem was we had to translate everything we read first and I couldn't understand the complicated grammar rules in Latin.

Anyway, thanks to my time studying Latin at school I was able to understand Spanish and Portuguese much better when I started learning them. The grammar is quite different but I could recognise a lot of the root words. Also, I can understand quite a few words in Italian as well, even though I have never studied it, so it was pretty handy. I really want to learn another language but I would love to learn something that's not a Latin-based language. I'd love to learn Chinese or Arabic. I think it'd be a real challenge. I'd probably need quite a bit more time for that though.

VOCABULARY

couldn't stand – hate, detest, really dislike

get my head around it – understand it

wasn't very keen on – I didn't like very much

fascinating – really interesting

have quite a good ear for – very good at hearing and repeating something

pupils – students of school age, below sixteen years old

have a knack for – have a talent for, find something easy to do

moan – complain

there was no point – no good reason for doing something

translate – change written words into a different language

complicated – difficult to understand because there are many parts

root – the origin, beginning or basis of something

pretty handy – very useful, helpful

a real challenge – something difficult to do but worth the hard work

GRAMMAR

Ability – modal verbs

*I **can** understand quite a few words in Italian*

we use can, cannot or can't to talk about **general ability** in the **present**

*I **could** recognise a lot of the root words*

*I **couldn't** understand the grammar rules*

we use could or couldn't to talk about **general ability** in the **past**

*I've always **been able to** hear different accents*

*I'll **be able to** learn another language when I have more time*

we use be able to for **ability in other tenses**