



### DAVID SOSA: “MOTIVATION IS 90 PERCENT OF LEARNING A LANGUAGE”

*When you are walking in the campus of the Uzbek State World Languages University, you notice a lot of people talking in one of the foreign languages. Youngsters, students, teachers, professors and foreigners, representing tens of countries all around the world. Exchange program students and volunteer teachers from South Korea, Japan, China, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United States of America give a sense of being in a real 'global village'. Being one of them, David Sosa is a volunteer teacher of Spanish language, educating key specialists of Spanish language at UzSWLU. Graduated from internationally recognized universities, David has specialized on teaching Spanish as a foreign language. His tenure in Uzbekistan for over one year has been letting him best apply his acquirements into practice as well as benefitting the faculty of Roman-German philology due to the expertise he shares. We invited him to our editorial office and now glad to share this informative talk on various topics from methodology to peculiarity of romanic languages, from cross cultural communications to learners' motivation.*

— **Hello, David. We are very happy to see you here. Thank you very much for agreeing to talk with us. Today, we will be talking about your foreign language education experience and modern tendencies of learning languages. What do you think? What is the role of foreign languages in the contemporary world?**

— *In the past few years the learning of foreign languages has acquired a major role in the education of younger generations all over the world. I think this happens because we live in a world which is now multi-polarized. As a consequence we are currently witnessing a dramatic growth in the interest in foreign languages everywhere in the world. I have seen this in Europe, in Uzbekistan and everywhere I've been living. Current research in neuroscience and language acquisition stress the benefits of knowing more than one language. They all state that being bilingual, trilingual has many benefits for child development.*

— **How many languages do you speak? What are their levels?**

— *Well, I majored in Romance Philology, so I had the chance to study many different languages. First of all I learned French, Italian and Portuguese as main languages. Then I had the chance of studying abroad, in Romania. Romanian is another Romance language which is very interesting for our field, so I also studied it. By the time I graduated my level in French, Italian and Portuguese was C1, according to the CEFR.*

Romanian was a bit lower, around B2, although I had the chance to follow another formal course years later at the University of Bucharest. Then I studied in Turkey too, so I learned Turkish at the University of Ankara-TÖMER. I attained level C1 there. I can also speak some English and now I am trying to learn Uzbek. This is my next challenge.

— **How did you succeed to learn so many languages and achieve such levels? What methods did you use? What is your secret?**

— *I think there isn't any miraculous secret behind it. I think it's a combination of several factors. First of all, work, work and work — study! There might be some people out there for whom it's very easy to learn foreign languages. But we common people have to study hard and make the best of our time in order to achieve our goal. Another factor which is very important in my case is that I had the chance of being effectively exposed to all the target languages that I learned. I lived several years in France, Italy, Romania and Turkey. So I could study them in the local environment.*



— **What about other methods did you apply into your life in learning non-Romance languages? For example, you learned Turkish which does not belong to this family of languages.**

— *First of all, I would like to say that I find this question very interesting, because I really believe that children should learn a foreign language which does not belong to the family of their native language. I think for example in Uzbekistan this is well done, because children are learning English and Russian which don't belong to the same language family as Uzbek. This is really important, because otherwise it would be very hard, like it was for me to learn a completely different language like Turkish when I was already 27 years old. I think that the best way for learning such languages is to try to “live” the language, focus on communication and interaction, trying not to get too stressed with complicated grammatical features. Of course, ideally we should visit the country where this language is spoken. But if we can't, at least trying to use the most of the means that we have around us, like Internet where we can get many sources and information. We should try to live as if we were living in that country and try to absorb the language.*

— **Could you tell us? Why did you choose teaching Spanish as your specialty?**

— *At the beginning of my career I was about to become a teacher of French in Spain. Then I realized that teaching my mother tongue could be more rewarding. It's a way of making people get to know about your culture. I reckon the satisfaction you get from that cannot be matched with teaching another language. Even if you love the foreign language*

*you are teaching. In my case teaching Spanish as a foreign language would allow me to live in different places and learn many things for myself. It let me become a more complete person, I would say. Those were the main reasons to choose this speciality.*

— **What is the role of Spanish language in the world and in Uzbekistan?**

— *Spanish is one of the major languages of international communication. According to absolute numbers of speakers, it is placed in the top 4 of most spoken languages, alongside with English, Chinese and Hindi. It's the official language of 21 countries, and one of the six official languages of the United Nations. It's the third most learnt language in the world, after English and French, and according to some estimates also the third most used language on the internet, after English and Chinese. In Uzbekistan Spanish has its own place in the present and in the future of the country. Hopefully, in the form of culture and business exchange between two countries, for tourism purposes I think Uzbekistan has the most promising future. I hope it will keep on going.*

— **Could you tell us about some specific sides of Spanish culture and language?**

— *It is interesting to note that Spanish is basically Latin with many influences from the languages which existed before in the present Spanish territory and some who came later. One of the pre-existent languages, which is still spoken in Spain and France, is Basque language. It is a different and original language, still of unknown origin, which has influenced Spanish a lot. Then the German invasions of the Iberian Peninsula provided a big amount of loanwords into Spanish, as did also Arabic. Then we can see the influences of other European languages, such as French and English. The history of Spain is very interesting. Being a European country Spain has always been multicultural. In some moments of our history three religions could coexist peacefully without any trouble. I think nowadays we need to look back to history and to those peaceful moments and we should learn from them.*

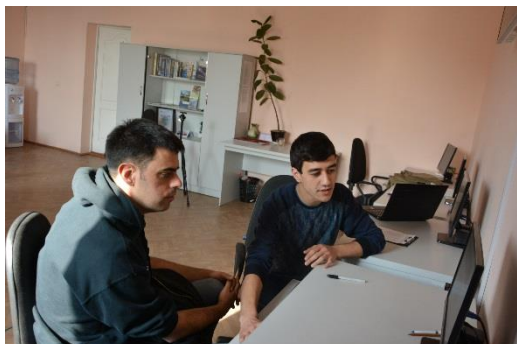
— **What are the difficulties of teaching Spanish to speakers of other languages?**

— *Well, I would say that Spanish is easier to learn for speakers of Romance languages. For example, Italian and Portuguese speakers reach a reasonable level of competence very quickly. That is a fact. For others it is a little bit harder. Because their languages may differ more or less. I would say that there are certain features of Spanish grammar which are quite difficult for almost everyone. One of them would be the difference between two verbs “ser” and “estar”. In English there's only one verb “to be”, where in Spanish there are two. That's a quite difficult issue in Spanish language. Then the Spanish verbal system might be a bit difficult for learners with different mother tongues.*

— **How do Uzbek learners succeed to acquire skills of Spanish language?**

— *I have encountered many young people here with a great command in Spanish. I think this is something that Uzbekistan and people here should be proud of. Because many*

*of them did not have the chance to travel to Spain or Latin American countries. And in spite of this they could achieve great levels. If you ask me about my students in particular, I think they try to study foreign languages in an integral way. I try to focus always on communication tasks. They acquire reading, listening, speaking and writing skills and also improve their vocabulary simultaneously.*



— **What do you like about Uzbekistan, living here over one year? Which cities of our country have you been to so far?**

— *First of all, I have to say I love Uzbekistan. I chose this country and I had chance to stay here for one more year and I took it, because I'm very happy here. So far I have been to Tashkent. It is a big city with many fantastic things and opportunities. I come from a small town, so Tashkent is very interesting. I have been to Samarkand and Bukhara. Samarkand is a gem of cultural beauty. Bukhara is something beyond comparison. I love both historical cities, but Bukhara is magic. It has a special charm which I think can't be matched anywhere else in the world. I also love Uzbek food. I like norin (well, I know this is a Tashkent speciality), of course osh. I love manti, somsa, halim, chuchvara and there are so many delicious foods. Uzbek cuisine is very rich. I love eating and Uzbekistan is from this point of view a nice place to live.*

— **What additions can you make to our talk?**

— *I would like to add that motivation is 90 percent of learning a language. People should try to find their motivation. If you like reading a certain type of books, try to read in the target language. If you like watching TV series, watch in the target language. That is very important. Do the things you like doing in the language you want to learn. If you do this and you are passionate about that, you will succeed, there is no doubt. I am very happy to be here and I enjoyed talking to you. Thank you for having called me and given me the chance to share my impressions.*

— **Thank you very much. It was our pleasure to talk to you and we hope for further cooperation with you.**

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student of International Journalism faculty of UzSWLU