

Statements about language learning generalising practice

All the statements below have the same problem. What is wrong with all of them (especially in an academic situation)?

Free conversation is never a good way to improve your English level.

You can definitely not learn English in your sleep.

The problem with doing conversation exchanges is that the other person is always actually looking for romance.

All English language learning materials produced in this country are rubbish.

No adult can become fluent in another language.

There is no chance that you will improve your spoken English by studying for TOEIC.

Shadowing will certainly have a positive effect on your real speaking.

Learning a whole dictionary is clearly a bad idea.

Pronunciation practice definitely helps your listening more than your speaking.

-----fold, cover or cut-----

All the sentences above are too strong/ overgeneralisations, e.g. are too sure or seem to be about everyone in the whole world. Underline the words above which are too strong and so make the statements bad/ un-academic.

Divide the words that you underlined into three categories by their meaning.

Put together pairs of underlined opposites and decide what kind of question would get those kinds of words as an answer.

Match the words you underlined and matched up to these three questions:

1. "How often...?"
2. "How many...?" / "How much...?"
3. "How likely/ probable is that...?" / "What is the probability...?" / "How sure are you...?"

Brainstorm other answers to those three questions, e.g. other words which could go in the sentences above to make less forceful statements. Then put those phrases in order of strength, with the most negative ones at the bottom of each list.

Divide the cards that you are given into the same categories and put them in order with the strongest positive words at the top. Some cards have the same meaning and so should go next to each other. If you think there is no card that means the same as something, put one of the "X" cards next to it. Then check your answers with an un-cut-up copy of the worksheet.

Cards to cut up/ Suggested answers

always	without fail/ all the time
almost always	X
usually/ generally	typically/ most of the time
often	X
sometimes	X
occasionally	X
rarely	seldom
hardly ever	very rarely
almost never	X
never	X

(absolutely) all	every
almost all/ (very) nearly all	virtually every...
the vast majority	X
most	a majority of...
many...	a large number/ amount of...
a substantial number/ amount of...	a considerable number/ amount of...

quite a lot of...	a fairly large number/ amount of...
some	a number of/ an amount of
(a)few/ (a) little	a small minority of
almost no	a tiny minority of...

definitely	certainly/ no doubt
almost certainly	X
is likely	probably/ the odds are
may well	might well
may/ might	perhaps
could possibly	X
could potentially	X
is unlikely	probably not
is very unlikely	is highly unlikely
almost certainly not	next to no chance/ incredibly unlikely
definitely not	certainly not/ no chance

Brainstorming stage

Without looking above for now, put at least one word into each empty box below.

	without fail/ all the time

almost always	X
	typically/ most of the time
often	X
sometimes	X
	X
	seldom
	very rarely
	X
never	X

(absolutely) all	
	virtually every...
the vast majority	X
most	
many...	
a substantial number/ amount of...	
quite a lot of...	

	a number of/ an amount of
(a)few/ (a) little	a small minority of
	a tiny minority of...
	certainly/ no doubt
	X
	probably/ the odds are
	might well
may/ might	
	X
could potentially	X
is unlikely	
is very unlikely	
	next to no chance/ incredibly unlikely
definitely not	

Use the (mixed-up) cards or the mixed-up answers below to help with the brainstorming task above.

Mixed answers for the gaps

Use this list or the mixed-up cards to help with the brainstorming task above. A few boxes above take two expressions from this list.

- a considerable number/ amount of...
- a fairly large number/ amount of...
- a large number/ amount of...

- a majority of...
- almost all/ (very) nearly all
- almost certainly
- almost certainly not
- almost never
- almost no
- always
- certainly not
- could possibly
- definitely
- every
- generally
- hardly ever
- is highly unlikely
- is likely
- may well
- no chance
- occasionally
- perhaps
- probably not
- rarely
- some
- usually

Check with un-cut-up copies of the original cards. Other answers are possible, so please check if you wrote something different.

Generalising about language learning communicative practice

Work in groups of two or three. Use words like those on the cards to change the original statements above into ones you both/ all agree with.

Useful phrases for discussing generalisations

- “I think it is more/ less + likely/ often/ common.”
- “I think that is exactly right.”

Add suitable words to the statements below to make them suitable, like your changed statements from above. You can make as many other changes to the sentence as you like to make it match your opinions. You can also use other words which are not above, e.g. “While it is generally true that..., one important exception is...” All of the statements below are too strong now and so must be changed.

Language learners in this country lack fluency.

People should correct themselves when they are speaking.

Language learning apps are just fun (not useful).

Rehearsing a conversation in your head before you speak only makes you more stressed.

Monolingual dictionaries are better than bilingual dictionaries.

It's best to watch an English video with English subtitles.

You should always read and listen at the same time.

Language learners must read authentic texts (= texts written for native speakers such as novels)

Learners must read graded texts (= texts written for language learners such as Intermediate-level easy readers)

Recording your own voice makes your speaking worse.

Non-native speaking adults can't get a native speaker-like accent.

Foreigners in this city don't want to speak English.

Automatic translation is useless.

Comedies are too difficult to be useful for language learning.

When your teacher stops you, share one statement you changed and see if other agree, or if they think it is too strong or too weak. Then ask the class about any topics above which you weren't sure about or had different opinions on.