

Beth - Open Access language student

Open Access language student Beth discusses studying Portuguese and Italian before the start of her postgraduate course.

Title [Beth - open access language student at the Centre for Modern Languages \(/facilities/cml/videos/index.aspx\)](#)

Duration 3:35 mins

I'm taking two Open Access courses this year. I'm taking Portuguese at Beginners level and Italian at Level 4, which is approximately A level standard*. I'm taking the classes because I've got a year between my Undergraduate and Postgraduate studies here at Birmingham. I'm working to save up for it but wanting to keep my mind active a bit and I'm kind of addicted to learning languages.

There is a difference in the way that the classes are taught. The Beginners' level one is very structured, you've got a book and everything is based around that. You've got no prior knowledge of the language and so everything has to be there for you. It's good to get the solid foundations for language learning in the future, and then the Italian because it's a much higher level you've got a wider range of resources, you've got things from the media, newspapers, internet, and it really builds on what you've got, and gives you access to other parts of Italy that you wouldn't have had before.

You do get to learn about the countries and their cultures. In Portuguese for instance we've been learning the difference between the cultures of Brazil and Portugal. For instance, we learnt that in Brazil they really try and mirror the United States with their image, they've got high rise buildings, a very modern city, whereas with Portugal because it's the window into Europe, it's very historic, it's based on the European model, so it's really interesting to find out the differences between these 2 countries where they speak the same language but are so different. In Italian we learn more about politics and what's in the news. We learnt about Christmas traditions at Christmas time and watched a series on TV in Italy, and so it was really interesting to find out things about countries which you might not have ever been to so you're discovering them from the outside, and when you've learnt the language you can go to that country and discover it for yourself.

There is work to do outside of the classes. They'll give you some homework to do. Depending on the level of the class it'll take you a different amount of time. Beginners' levels tend not to take very much time depending on how much experience you have of language learning. The higher levels will be more of a starting point and then you can go off, get what you want to get out of the homework, but you really do have to be prepared to put a little bit of your own time into the classes, because otherwise you won't get from it what you want to get from it. There's only so much you can learn in a 2-hour class. On the other hand, if you do turn up just having done nothing more than the 2-hour class, you'll get a lot of fun from it but it's advisable to put in some work in your spare time.

In our classes there are a lot of different types of people. In the Beginners' classes you tend to find a lot of students, a lot of Undergraduates who are just wanting to take a little bit extra, some people take it as an MOMB*, and then in the higher classes you get a lot more External learners. It's really good to have a lot of External learners in your class because they all come from very different backgrounds. We've got doctors, business people, students, retired people, and you pick up a lot more from the class because you get a wider range of vocabulary, people with different strengths and weaknesses, who can then bring different things to the class. All your problems will be covered because people need to know how to solve their problems, whether it's through the teacher or through learning from other people in the class. A lot of it you'll pick up naturally and then not even need to ask.

The aim is to get 10 languages. Like I said I'm completely addicted to learning them and it's really good fun. So who knows what's next?