

1.1 Polyglots

Grammar verbs/adjectives/nouns with prepositions

Can do discuss your language-learning experiences

Reading

1 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- How many languages do you speak? Why and how did you learn them?
- Why might the people in the photos need to know different languages? What jobs require several languages?
- Do you think it is easier to learn a new language when you already know other languages? Why/Why not?
- Do you know any polyglots (people who speak many languages)?

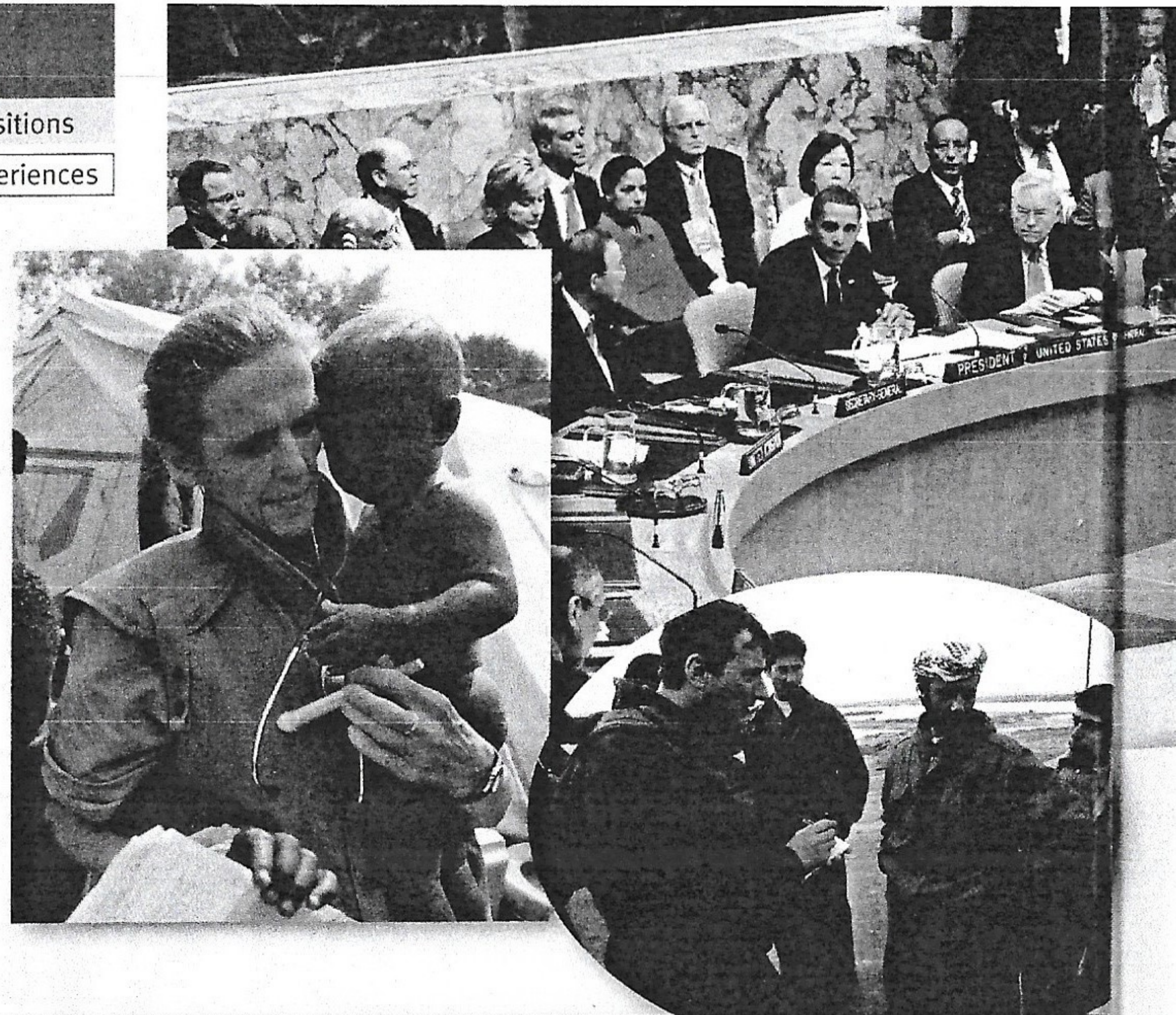
2 a Read the article and answer the questions.

- How did Francis Sommer learn his European languages?
- What advantage did Stephen Wurm have as a learner of languages?
- According to Kenneth Hale, what type of talent do polyglots have?
- How is learning new languages sometimes 'easy', according to David Perlmutter?
- What do polyglots sometimes worry about?
- What bonuses and problems has Ziad Fazah experienced because of his linguistic abilities?

b Work in pairs and discuss your answers.

3 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- What are the benefits of being a polyglot? Are there any drawbacks?
- In your opinion, what personal qualities are necessary to become a polyglot?



Great language learners

According to legend, Cardinal Giuseppe Mezzofanti (1774–1849), who spoke 72 languages, once learned a language overnight in order to hear the confession of two condemned prisoners the following morning. While this story sounds too amazing to be true, there are polyglots who have achieved quite staggering feats of language learning.

Arguably the greatest of all was Francis Sommer. Brought up in Germany, Sommer was still a schoolboy when he succeeded in learning Swedish, Sanskrit and Persian. On a trip to Russia, he mingled with the international community and, so the story goes, learned a dozen European languages. He later moved to the United States, where he worked as a research librarian, and by the

Another great linguist is Stephen Wurm, Professor of Linguistics at the Australian National University at Canberra. Wurm benefited from the fact that he came from a multilingual family. His father, also a linguist, asked everyone in the family to speak to the child in their own language. This meant that his mother addressed him in Hungarian, his father in English, his grandfather in Norwegian, and his grandmother in Mongolian. Because of Wurm's father's work, the family also lived for periods in Germany, Russia, China, Argentina and Turkey. As a result, Wurm spoke ten languages by the time he was six.

To most of us, the achievements of polyglots seem superhuman, but the polyglots themselves don't see it that way. Kenneth Hale, a linguistics professor who speaks around 50 languages, believes his talent bears similarity to that of

Vocabulary | learning languages

4 Match the words/expressions (1–8) from the article to the definitions (a–h).

- master (v) (line 25)
 - let (sth) slide (phrase) (line 58)
 - pick up (phrasal verb) (line 70)
 - garble (v) (line 74)
 - information overload (n) (line 88)
 - babble (v) (line 103)
 - unintelligibly (adv) (line 103)
 - dialect (n) (line 107)
- a in a way that is impossible to understand
 b to neglect something or allow it to get worse
 c a form of a language which is spoken in only one area, with its own words/grammar
 d to speak quickly in a way that is difficult to understand
 e to learn something so well that you have no difficulty with it
 f too much to remember
 g to learn without consciously studying
 h to mix up or confuse words

5 a Complete the sentences using words/expressions from exercise 4.

- It's easy to _____ foreign languages _____ if you don't use them regularly.
- In many countries, people can understand the standard form of their language and also a local _____.
- The best way to _____ new vocabulary is by reading a lot.
- It may be impossible to _____ a foreign language completely.
- For most students, more than ten new words per lesson equals _____.
- Many language learners find that native speakers speak _____ – they use lots of idioms and colloquial expressions.
- When babies _____, they are imitating adult language.
- If you know three or more languages, you're more likely to _____ your words.

b Work in pairs. Discuss which sentences you agree with.

a musician's. And while talent is one factor, a love of languages is essential. Hale recalls the time when he was learning Navajo:

"I used to go out every day and sit on a rock and talk Navajo to myself." Languages became an obsession. "I let everything else slide," he says.

David Perlmutter, Professor of Linguistics at the University of California, likens the process of language learning to a puzzle. Mastery, he believes, stems from the joy of solving the puzzle. "If you know English and German," he says, "it's easy to learn Dutch." Therefore, once you know Spanish and another Romance language, you can pick up Portuguese quickly.

But is there any chance that these super-polyglots might get confused? Do they ever get nervous about garbling their languages? According to Kenneth Hale, it does happen. Occasionally, he begins speaking in one language

that he has drifted into another. It happens especially when it's difficult to distinguish between related languages. "Unless I'm attentive ...

I can mix up languages like Miskitu and Sumu, both of which are spoken in Central America and are very similar." Francis Sommer felt the same. Fearing information overload, he gave up learning new languages in later life.

Of today's polyglots, Ziad Fazah, a Lebanese living in Brazil, is probably number one. A speaker of around 60 languages, Fazah, unlike many great polyglots, was not born into multilingualism. Besides his native Arabic, he learned only French and English at school, and taught himself the other languages. His astonishing abilities have had some interesting consequences. On one occasion, the Brazilian police stopped an undocumented alien who was babbling unintelligibly. They asked Fazah for help. Fazah realised immediately that the man

a dialect called Hazaras. On another occasion, the US Consulate grew suspicious of Fazah's ability to speak Chinese and Russian. Suspecting that he was a terrorist, they brought him in for questioning. After two hours, however, he was released.

Fazah is not widely known, though that may change. In recent years, he has appeared on TV programmes in Greece and Spain, where he was quizzed in multiple languages including Hungarian, Korean, Japanese and Chinese. He passed with flying colours. While this earned him a reputation as a phenomenon, he is still a few languages behind the legendary Cardinal Mezzofanti. Unlike Mezzofanti, Fazah cannot claim to learn languages overnight, but he can apparently learn a thousand words a month – a gift that language students around the world would envy and admire!

Listening

- 6 a 1.02 Listen to Mark Spina talking about language learning. Make notes on the questions.

- How many languages does he speak?
- Where/how did he learn them?
- What special techniques does he use?
- How does he feel about language?
- What problems does he have?

b Work in pairs and compare your answers. Then listen again to check.

- 7 Do you have similar experiences of language learning? Discuss with other students.

Grammar | verbs/adjectives/nouns with prepositions

- 8 a Look at examples 1–5 in the Active grammar box and underline the prepositions. What type of word does each preposition follow?

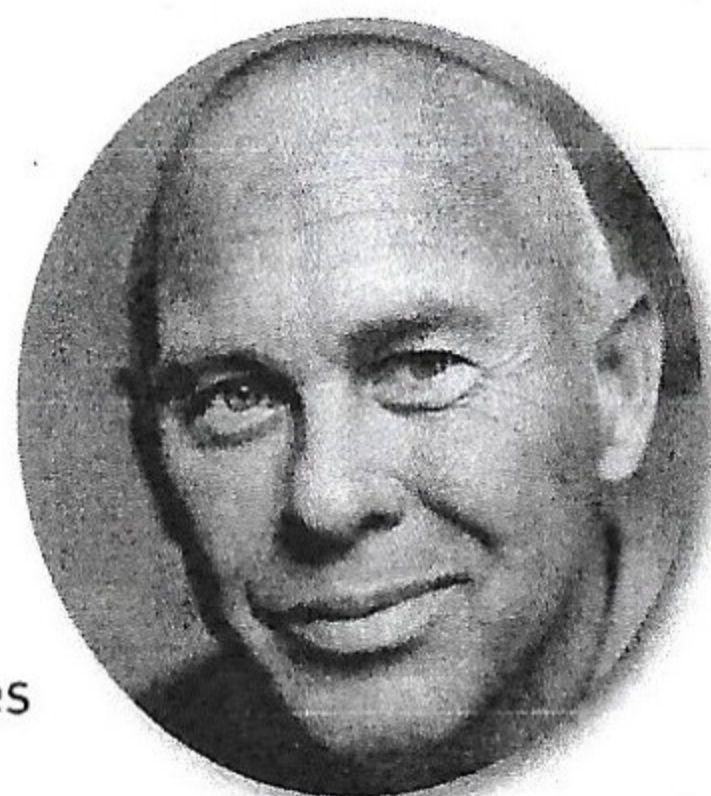
b Answer the questions for rules A and B in the Active grammar box.

Active grammar

- Sommer was still a schoolboy, when he succeeded in learning Swedish, Sanskrit and Persian.*
- Mastery, he believes, stems from the joy of solving the puzzle.*
- Wurm benefited from the fact that he came from a multilingual family.*
- Do they ever get nervous about garbling their various languages?*
- This can happen, especially when it is difficult to distinguish between related languages.*

A Prepositions after verbs, nouns and adjectives always have an object. What is the object in each sentence above?

B When the preposition is followed by a verb, the verb is usually in the *-ing* form. Which of the sentences above use this structure?



- 9 a Complete the sentences with prepositions from the box. Check any new expressions in your dictionary.

from (x3) to in (x2) about (x2) for with

- Do you think you'll succeed _____ passing your next exam?
- If you could improve your English by watching DVDs, by living in an English-speaking country or by studying from books, which would you opt _____?
- Do your problems in English stem _____ poor grammar, or are there other problems?
- Do you feel you are lacking _____ vocabulary?
- Even at advanced level, some students' spoken English is riddled _____ errors. Does this matter or is fluency more important?
- What distinguishes your first language _____ English?
- What types of classroom exercises appeal _____ you?
- Is pronunciation worth bothering _____ or are you happy to keep your accent?
- Are you nervous _____ giving presentations in English?
- How can your vocabulary benefit _____ using the media?

b Match the questions (1–10) in exercise 9a to the possible answers (a–j).

- Some of the vocabulary is similar but the grammar is completely different.
- I always make an effort with the sounds of English, but I know I'll never sound like a native speaker.
- Yes, I think so. I've been studying hard and I really hope I achieve my goal!
- I like class discussions best of all, and also role plays.
- I think accuracy is important, too. It's difficult to listen to someone whose speech is full of mistakes, and it distracts you from the content of what they're saying.
- I'd choose to immerse myself in the language and culture by living in Canada or Australia.
- Listening regularly to the news or looking at websites is good for learning new words.
- Yes. I don't know many idioms, phrasal verbs and informal expressions.
- A lot of the difficulties come from the fact that I can't understand native speakers when they speak fast, but I also need to work on my grammar!
- Speaking in public worries me a little bit, but I think it's a good thing to do in class.

Speaking

- 10 a Work with a partner. Discuss questions 1–10 from exercise 9a. Are the suggested answers from exercise 9b true for you? If not, why not?

b Tell the class what you found out about your partner.

Vocabulary | knowledge

- 1 Choose the correct words in *italics*.

- 'Who won the first Oscar?'
'I haven't *an idea/a clue*.'
- 'What was the first book ever published?'
'I don't know *off the top of my head/hand*.'
- 'What date did Man first go to the moon?'
'I don't know/*I'm sure* offhand, but I can look it up.'
- 'Where did Elisha Gray come from?'
'Who? I've never *heard/known* of him.'
- 'Do you know Paris?'
'Yes. I lived there for years so I know it like *the back of my head/hand*.'
- 'Which state has the smallest population?'
'I'm pretty *sure/positive* it's the Vatican.'
- 'Do you know Eliot's poem about cats?'
'I know it *by/at* heart. I learned it at school.'
- 'What do you know about company law?'
'I know it *inside in/out*. I have a PhD in it.'
- 'What do you know about Belgian politics?'
'I know *close/next* to nothing about it.'
- 'Which country has the biggest population?'
'I haven't the faintest *idea/clue*.'
- 'Are you sure Russia is the biggest country in the world?'
'I'm fairly *certain/positive* it is, but it might be China.'
- 'Are you sure the Nile is the longest river in the world?'
'Yes. I'm *positive/fairly positive* it is.'

- 2 a Complete the How to... box with the underlined expressions from exercise 1.

b How are the expressions different? Which are strongest? Which mean the same?

How to... say how much you know/don't know

I know : I'm pretty sure

I don't know : I haven't a clue.

Speaking

- 3 Work in pairs and do the quiz. Try to use expressions from the How to... box.

WHO DID IT FIRST?

- 1 Who was the first to fly a plane?

(a) Alberto Santos Dumont
(b) the Wright brothers
(c) Ferdinand von Zeppelin

- 2 Who invented the telephone?

(a) Thomas Edison
(b) Alexander Graham Bell
(c) Antonio Meucci

- 3 Who first reached the North Pole?

(a) Robert Peary
(b) Frederick Cook
(c) Roald Amundsen

- 4 Who invented the light bulb?

(a) Thomas Edison (b) Alexander Graham Bell
(c) Leonardo da Vinci

- 5 Which country won the first football World Cup (and hosted it)?

(a) Brazil (b) Uruguay (c) Germany

- 6 Which country first allowed women to vote?

(a) Switzerland (b) New Zealand (c) the United States

- 7 Who was the first woman to sail solo around the world via Cape Horn?

(a) Ellen MacArthur (b) Amelia Earhart (c) Naomi James

- 8 Which country first held the Olympic Games?

(a) Italy (b) France (c) Greece

