

Speak fluent Croatian - pathway design

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What

I want to be fluent in Croatian so I can have proper conversations with the teachers of my kids, give workshops in Croatian, be able to make new friends and organize fun things in our area.

My key needs are:

- improving my speaking skills
- improving my reading & writing skills
- improving my understanding of Croatian culture
- connecting with the local community

Why

I have been living in Croatia for years now and still my Croatian language skills are at A2/B1 level (February 2018); very basic. When I speak to Croats I usually feel frustrated because I cannot express myself well, and I feel ashamed of the mistakes I make and the words I don't know.

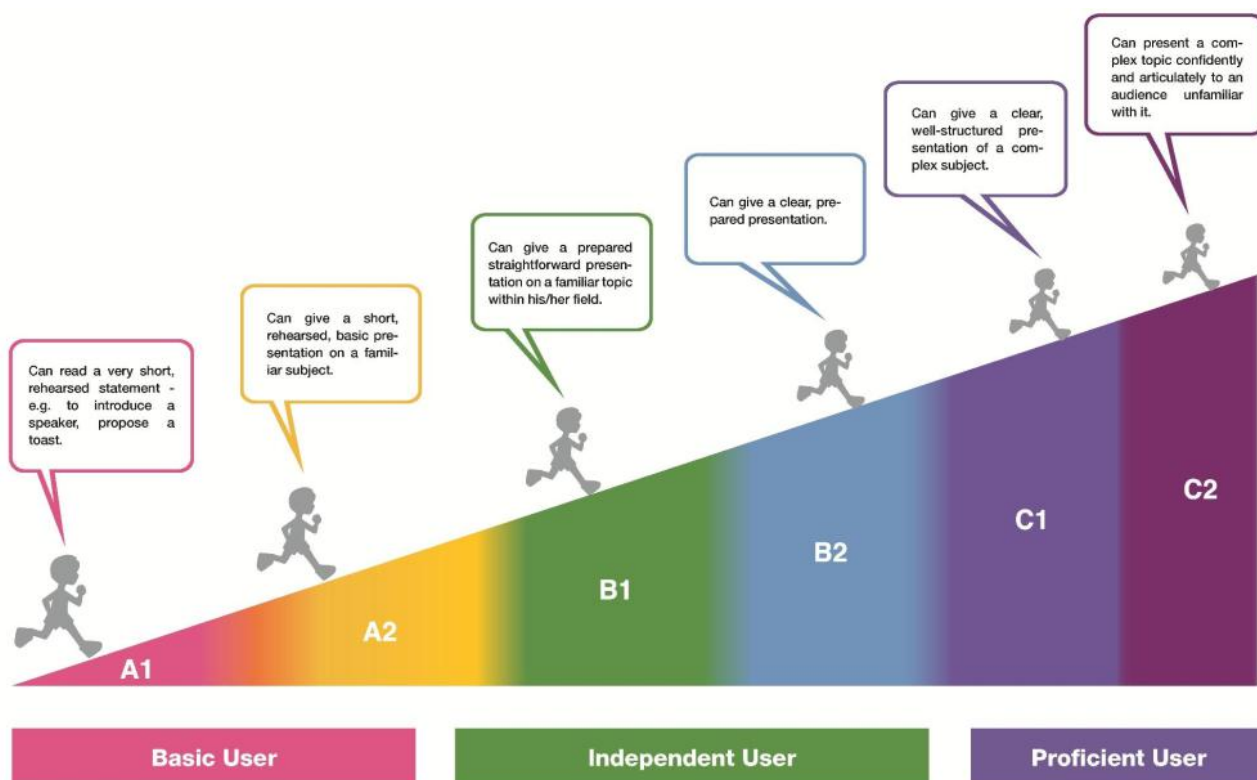
I only speak Croatian in shops or in the post office, and in the school. My friends all speak English with me.

I have a wish to be a more active and a more valued member in our community (around a town called Vojnić). I am a fountain of ideas of how to positively contribute, and the main thing that is keeping me from blooming is my language skills. So I need to learn better Croatian.

Since language skills are measurable

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_European_Framework_of_Reference_for_Languages) my goal is to get from A2 (elementary/intermediate) via a good B1 (threshold/intermediate) to B2 (upper intermediate/advanced).

To get into the next (mastery) level, C1, requires more serious work like reading newspapers and technical stuff that I am not interested in. My goal is to have good conversations with Croats and for that B2 is fine.



How

I am using Looby Macnamara's Design Web to have a different approach of the "problem" and find creative ways to reach my goal. I will follow her 12 anchor points: Vision, Helps, Limits, Patterns, Ideas, Principles, Integration, Action, Momentum, Appreciation, Reflection, Pause.

VISION

I am fluent in conversations and I can have fun in the Croatian language.

Goal

My goal is to speak Croatian at B2 level ("upper intermediate") by the 1st of September 2018 so I can have good conversations with Croats and express my ideas to improve our community.

S	(Specific)	have "normal" conversations with Croats, including jokes.
M	(Measurable)	B2 level
A	(Achievable)	yes, I learnt other languages and my level of Croatian is rising
R	(Relevant)	yes, I live in Croatia!
T	(Time bound)	Before September 1 st 2018

LIMITS

- I perceive to have "no time" because I have many daily tasks and responsibilities and it feels like my daily routine is fixed. I do have time, mainly in the afternoons, but that is also the period of the day that I am tired.
- I don't feel the rest to sit & concentrate on learning Croatian
- I miss the fun in self teaching.
- At home we speak Dutch (family) and English (with volunteers & most workers).
- I speak English when I can; I always ask if people understand English "because my Croatian is so bad". A very limiting pattern & belief!
- I know a lot of words, but I miss the verbs to glue them together. And I freak out when I ask myself how to use the grammar (conjugation) on the words.
- Self belief. Everybody, including Croats, say that it is very hard to learn Croatian and I heard of foreigners giving up. So it's just a small step to tell myself that it is too hard.

HELPS

My motivation to speak fluent Croatian is of help. I would gain a lot of confidence, I could speak to more people and get to know Croatia better, I could ask old people about their history and the history of Yugoslavia... I would also be better in helping my kids with their homework, and I would understand their teachers better.

It is said that it is easier to learn a language when you are young. But older people have more knowledge to relate to and associate with. Adults can put things in a context and integrate their new learnt language. They learn in a different way.

I have good self-discipline and if I set my mind to it, I can create new routines to get to my goals. Especially when I make a planning, I challenge myself to stick to my plans and just DO it. In the past I successfully created new habits and routines; I will continue doing that.

Peter (husband) can be of help because he is also learning Croatian and he is always around.

My kids speak Croatian and sometimes they improve my sentences in Croatian. Or they help me translate letters from teachers. Also my daughter's 1st grade school books can be of help.

My (local) friends Milena and Ivana can help because they want to teach me Croatian, their English is excellent and they seem to enjoy helping me decoding Croats and their language.

Our workers, the neighbours and the people in the shops in Vojnić are of help because they encourage me to speak Croatian and don't seem to mind my mistakes. They are always happy to teach me new words.

Facebook is a big help: I can read community members' texts in Croatian on a daily basis because "everyone" here is on "Fejz" (Facebook).

To read the language consistently, there are blogs and other popular sites on a ranking of top sites per country: <https://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries>

I have the books "Teach yourself Croatian" and "Hrvatski za početnike" (Croatian for beginners) to learn the grammar.

I have three book titles in both English and Croatian. If I read these books I can simultaneously read the translation.

To write the language and get comment on phrases, I can find a language partner on <https://www.italki.com/partners>. Maybe I can find a Croat who wants to learn Dutch!

I have some apps on my phone to learn words and phrases.

We have a radio and we have Croatian music on CD & MP3, or I could find local radio stations online on <https://tunein.com/radio/local/>

PATTERNS

Useful pattern: I learned already a few other languages besides my mother-language Dutch. In school I learned some basics of English, German and French, and I learned Croatian and some Italian by myself. But if I look back:

- English I mostly learned while speaking it, reading books and magazines in English, and travelling,
- German I learned while travelling in Germany with an orchestra and staying with a family,
- French I learned from a French speaking boyfriend,
- some basics of Italian I picked up by playing with the app Duolingo,
- The Croatian I learned so far, comes from "mixed sources". Not so much from speaking with people; more from reading, helping the kids with their homework and the book "Teach yourself Croatian".

Unhelpful patterns

I ask people if they speak English before I try to speak Croatian. Thereby I don't give myself a chance to practise. This pattern I will no longer maintain.

We usually hire workers that speak English. That is the easiest for us, and it prevents miscommunication. But I should break the pattern of only speaking English with them.

When people speak Croatian with me, I get stuck on the first word I don't understand, and miss the rest of the sentence. I feel some kind of panic in my body, my chest feels tight, I stop breathing and my brain stops functioning. This physical pattern needs a solution.

Another unhelpful pattern: when I think of how to use the conjugations, I see the cloud of possibilities & freak out. The cloud becomes fog in my head.

Sometimes when I hear others speak Croatian (to each other), I tune out and do not listen to what they are saying. It might be a more helpful pattern to pay attention and pick out at least 1 word or phrase.

IDEAS

Find out what my preferred learning style is. And above all, what are known effective learning strategies that I do not use yet, but can benefit from.

Find out how I learned languages in the past, and find ways to apply that now.

Find out how "pattern interrupt" and affirmations or positive self talk can help me to overcome my "panic-stop" (when I miss an important word in a sentence) and "freaking out" (when thinking about conjugations) or foggy brain.

I should create good work space where I can also focus on learning Croatian. Where I can be alone, in silence, surrounded by inspiring stuff. If it is "my space" I will probably feel at ease and have the rest to sit down and learn better Croatian.

Drink coffee with local Croats.

Go to the local market on Tuesdays and speak to the old ladies about their products. That will bring back the fun in learning.

Read Croatian books and their translation. Fun!

Watch English movies with Croatian subtitles or Croatian movies with English subtitles. Fun fun!

Listen to or sing along with Croatian music to learn pronunciation. Fun fun fun!

Ask for Croatian volunteers on networks and Permaculture Facebook groups. They can speak Croatian with me/us all day and help us understand Croats and their language.

Hire a Croatian cook for our busy months at the camp site.

Make a schedule for what to learn when, block Tuesday mornings (market in Vojnič) for learning Croatian.

Keep reminding myself of my vision & goal to learn better Croatian: hang it on the wall.



PRINCIPLES

I observe what is happening in my body when I speak Croatian, and now I need to learn to interact when I stop in fear, freak out, get all foggy or blush with shame. I need to find new patterns of behaviour there.

If I look through the lens of the permaculture principle "Use small & slow solutions", that might be the best solution for learning (the details of) a language. I want to make big steps but I have to have patience (with myself).

I should learn from patterns to details: start with using the verbs and later fill in the words/the details. Now I know many words but I miss the glue, the patterns.

If I truly use the edges and value the marginal, I will appreciate my (creative) take on Croatian (with some English, Dutch, German, French & Italian influences and funny mistakes).

The principle of stacking: with hosting Croatian volunteers we can practise all day, or we can play Croatian word-games with the kids.

If I apply Pareto's 80-20 principle, I should focus on the most used words. On the internet you can find a list with *spoken* words ranked in order of frequency used in subtitles

<http://www.101languages.net/common-words/>

And most common phrases: <http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/index.htm#lang>

Principles of learning:

- Readiness – I am pretty eager but mentally not fully prepared yet.
- Exercise – I need to find new places/new people to exercise with and I should value even a few minutes of exercise.
- Effect – I am aware of the effects of my learning and I get compliments regularly.
- Intensity – watching movies in Croatian could help with intense learning

The 7 principles of accelerated learning:

1. Learning involves the whole mind and body – use all senses, receptors and emotions.
2. Learning is creation, not consumption – integrate knowledge and skills, make new patterns.
3. Collaboration aids learning – find a social base, cooperate with other learners.
4. Learning takes place on many levels simultaneously – engage conscious and sub-conscious, mental and physical.
5. Learning comes from doing the work itself (with feedback) – learn in context, learn from doing.
6. Positive emotions greatly improve learning – positive feelings accelerate learning, and joyful, relaxed and engaged learning is more effective.
7. The image brain absorbs information instantly and automatically – better 1 picture than 1000 words. The human nervous system is more of an image processor than a word processor. Translating verbal abstractions into concrete images will make them easier to remember.

INTEGRATION

Use my learning styles

I did a test on learning-styles-online.com and found out that I mainly learn physical and visual. Also logical and aural score good, but verbal doesn't work well for me. And solitary works much better than socially.

For all learning styles I wrote down some activities that might work for me:

Physical

- Learning by doing: go to the market & talk to people
- Write Croatian in a different handwriting

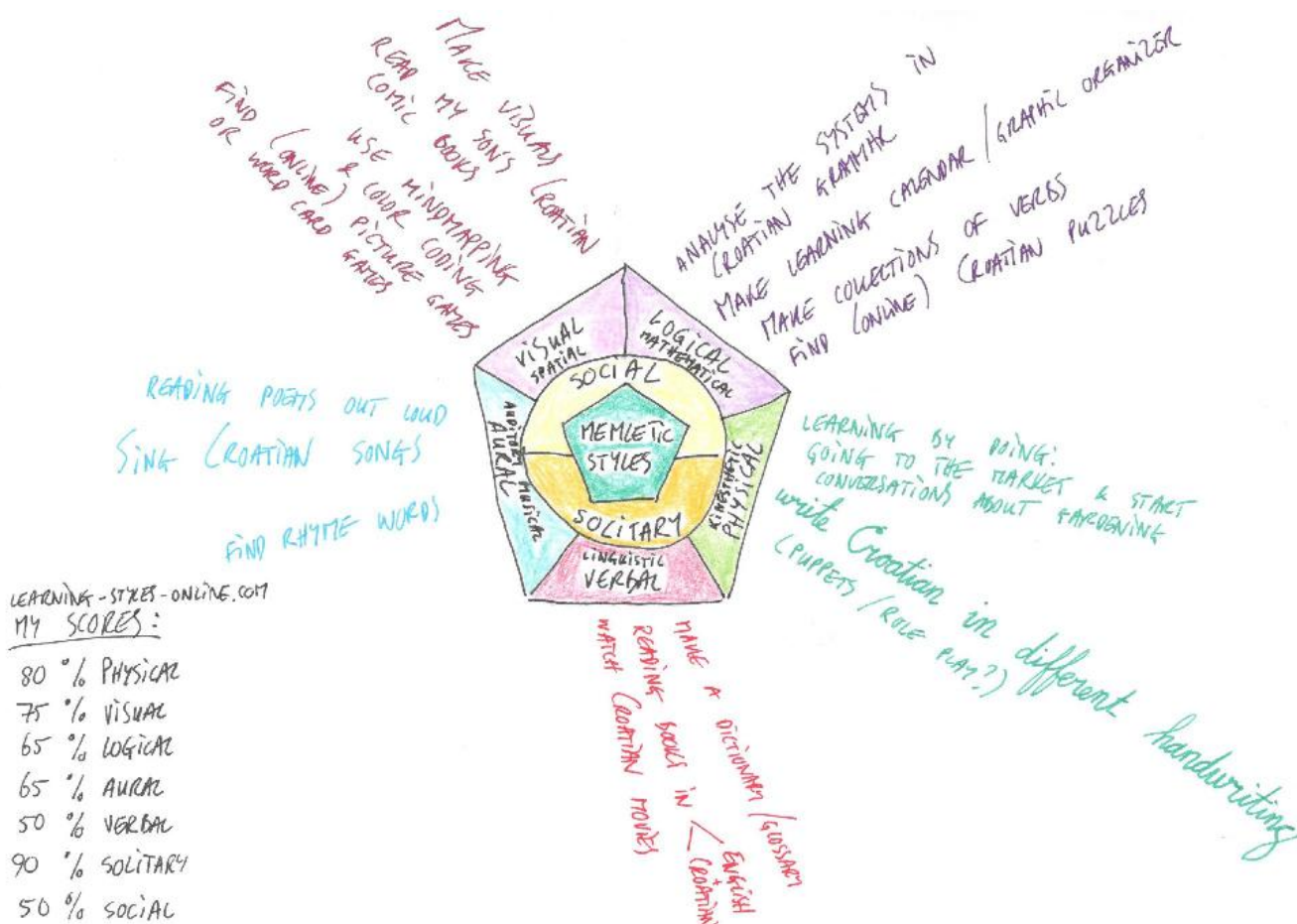
- Play Scrabble in Croatian with my kids

Visual

- make visuals, mind mapping & colour coding (on verbs? **Past**, **presence**, **future**?)
- read my son's comic books
- find (online) picture games or word card games
- make flip cards (find phone app for that?)
- visit a museum & get a tour
- hang post its with verbs in strategic spots (on mirrors, coffee pot, tea pot, bathroom wall...)

Logical

- Analyse the systems in Croatian grammar
- Make a learning calendar/graphic organizer
- Make collections of verbs



- Do Croatian crossword & word search puzzles

Aural

- Read poems out loud
- Sing Croatian songs
- Do rhyme word games with my 7 year old daughter

Verbal

- Make a dictionary/glossary
- Read books in both Croatian and English (translation)
- Watch English movies with Croatian subtitles or hear Croatian & read the English translation (and enjoy the visuals!).

Pattern interrupt

I have unwanted physical patterns when I speak Croatian and don't know the right conjugation, or am aware that I don't know an important word.

I decided that from now on, as soon as I realize that I miss a word, I will ask (when someone speaks to me) or explain around the word (when I speak) and at the same time I will gently rub my fingertips and ask myself: "Do I want to blush? Do I need to be precisely in my wording?"

"If you think adventure is dangerous, try routine, it is lethal."
~ Paulo Coelho

The idea behind it is that I create a pattern interrupt that has nothing to do with the behaviour (without making a fool of myself), to change my state or "strategy".

The next time I become aware that I am in or are about to start a limiting pattern, I use my fingertips to stop it and to give myself a choice in how to respond, instead of just reacting habitually. According to NLP professionals, it will be harder, each time I interrupt a pattern, to get back into it and if I interrupt it enough times, eventually I will not automatically get into it any more.

Pattern interrupts are useful to shake up a person's typical thoughts and actions and open up the possibility for something new to take place.

What makes pattern interrupts even more powerful is that they themselves become habitual after you have used them for a while, so they will automatically interrupt your unsupportive patterns whenever they occur.

Create good circumstances for learning

I need a good work space to be able to be alone, concentrate, surround myself with my stuff and feel inspired. Besides a desk I will put my wool-stuff there, and my spinning wheel and sewing machine.

I will clear out the biggest room in the house that is now in use as storage, and make it my work space, fully equipped to meet my learning styles. A white board to write (in my new Vimala handwriting) the "verb of the week", a comfortable spot to sit & pause or make something beautiful, and I will add plants or even small (citrus) trees to bring nature in and help me feel grounded.

Find a Croatian cook on the market

If I ask an English speaking friend (Milena or Ivana) to go with me to the local market on Tuesdays, I have a real time translator and help for constructing the right sentences. While getting to know the people from our community better, I can find out who would fit in our team to cook and clean for us in the busy months.



Market in Vojnić

The people of Vojnić

With talking to local Croats, I get to know my community better. What if everyone in the community can benefit from that! People have hobbies, interests, special tools, ideas to improve our community...

I can interview community members and setup a Facebook page "The people of Vojnić" (after "The people of New York") with these texts. It teaches me to have (deeper) conversations in Croatian, it improves my vocabulary when I translate the texts to English and my writing skills will improve by writing it all down.

Pause & family time with Croatian movies and music

I want more music in my life and in my family's life, so learning to sing Croatian songs, maybe even with guitar chords or piano accompanying, maybe together with my family, would integrate a few wishes.

We can also watch Croatian movies together. That will teach Peter and me to speak better Croatian, and it might help the kids to hear different accents and learn vocabulary from other parts of the country.

If I read a book about permaculture ("permakultura") in Croatian, I learn a vocabulary that interests me.

ACTION

- ✓ Stop asking if people speak English; from now on I will always start with speaking Croatian.
- ✓ Read Croatian Facebook posts from local friends and try to respond in Croatian, and post Croatian messages myself.
- ✓ Go to market every Tuesdays and invite Milena to come with me for language help.
- ✓ Write Croatian in a new handwriting. Maybe copy a (simple) children's book or the book "Permakultura" by Karmela & Miroslav Kiš.
- ✓ Suggest the kids to play games in Croatian, like scrabble.
- ✓ Ask my son for his Croatian comic books.
- ✓ Download an app in which I can make my own flashcard quiz (= Ankidroid).
- ✓ Make a list with 20 verbs, write them out (I am – you are – he/she... was, have been, shall be) and learn 2 per week.
- ✓ Find Croatian crossword puzzles or other word games.
- ✓ Ask my friend Jasenka for poems.
- ✓ Find Croatian songs with their lyrics on YouTube and sing 1 song a week.
- ✓ Start reading Dan Brown's "Inferno" in Croatian and English and:
- ✓ Find the notebook with glossary I started and start using it again when I find unknown words.
- ✓ Look on YouTube and other sources for English movies with Croatian subtitles and Croatian movies with English subtitles. Download them and make the family enthusiastic.
- ✓ Write a short text to find Croatian volunteers before April 2018, select networks to publish it.
- ✓ Clean out & redesign the biggest room in the house as my office & creative work space.
- ✓ Make a (paper) calendar for these actions so I can stick to my plans!



MOMENTUM

I need to plan my actions and do it. Stick to the plan. Tell my family, ask them for help and create new routines.

And on the other hand: there are so many possibilities and opportunities that I need a different mindset: "I speak Croatian". I will repeat that until I do it (enough).

Going to the market on Tuesdays, write Croatian in a new handwriting, creating a good work space and working with a calendar/planning, all help to keep momentum.

The easy part of keeping momentum is that I live surrounded by native speakers Croatian. They will make me speak and learn new words.

I hold myself accountable by creating a calendar and writing down my goals and sticking them to the door of my work space. In that way I see them when I enter and exit my work space.

APPRECIATION

I appreciate all the new, creative ways of learning better Croatian! Just by sitting down and taking some time to find solutions, I found new joy in learning.

I appreciate myself and my creativity with languages! I notice that I make word-jokes in Croatian, by combining other languages that I speak. It makes me more flexible and I am proud to be able to understand 5 (+ soon Italian as no. 6) languages.

I will celebrate milestones, like

- I will install a weekly celebration ritual for the words learned,
- I celebrated making my first (good, not stupid) joke in Croatian (8 April 2018),
- finishing a book in Croatian (March 2018, "Srebrna lampa"),
- having a conversation with an old lady about her life and past,
- I will celebrate when I get the panic under control when I miss a word.

REFLECTION

By designing this fluent Croatian-pathway, I found so many new ways of learning the language! With that I found new fun in learning.

I noticed that I am more confident now, I never ask people to speak English any more, and I think that the physical reactions to not understanding are occurring much less. Instead I ask what people mean by that word/sentence.

About my ideas:

I found out what my preferred learning styles are and how I learned languages in the past. It helps me being more effective, I think (... it's hard to measure).

I implemented almost all other ideas in my life: I grab every chance to drink coffee with local Croats, I go to the local market almost every Tuesdays and speak to everyone that wants to speak to me, I read Croatian books and their translation, I watch English movies with Croatian subtitles or Croatian movies with English

subtitles, I tried to sing along with a Croatian rap group but that was a bit difficult, now I sing along with more slow songs that I found on YouTube with subtitles, and I asked for Croatian volunteers on networks and Permaculture Facebook groups (but without result).

Next on my list is to read the book Permakultura so I learn a vocabulary that interests me, and we still need to find a Croatian cook for our busy months.

I did not take the language level test yet so I am not sure if my Croatian improved "officially".

The Vimala Alphabet®

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg
Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo
Pp Qq Rrr Ss TtT Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

About my solutions:

I write in Croatian in a NEW handwriting and WOW that's cool! I found a great new way of writing: the **Vimala handwriting**. "The Vimala Alphabet is the only writing system designed specifically to build self-esteem with each stroke of the pen", according to Vimala Rodgers.

I used to handwrite in all capitals; now I more & more write in the Vimala handwriting.

I have lists with verbs but I did not learn 1 of them. I don't like it; it frustrates me! I need to re-write that solution to make it do-able. Maybe not learn 2 but 1 per week.

I did download an app in which I can make my own flashcards and I made a few. I could make a SMART planning for that to do a bit more with it.

I do go to market every Tuesday, sometimes also Friday and/or Saturday and sometimes I invite Milena or someone else for language help. But also without help I have nice conversations.

I did ask for Croatian volunteers but apparently I wasn't clear: I get many people that want to help me learn Croatian but no-one that wants to stay with us.

I found many Croatian songs with their lyrics on YouTube and I try to sing 1 song a week. I am not a singer...

Learning a language with crossword puzzles is not a good idea. Crossword puzzles tend to use crazy words that nobody ever uses.

I noticed that I picked up the basics of Italian easily with the popular app Duolingo. Unfortunately you cannot learn Croatian with this great app! I asked a befriended translator if she will look into setting up a Croatian course for Duolingo.



About the design process:

I enjoyed sitting down and thinking of new ways to become more fluent in Croatian. It gave me many new ideas and I found much more joy in learning a language.

Thinking about the limits and patterns both gave me many helpful insights. Before writing up this design, I

wasn't really aware of the unhelpful patterns and limits/limiting beliefs. With bringing them out I could find and implement solutions for them. Looking at patterns has set me on the right track and I think that observing your patterns can be useful for anyone that wants to learn a new language.

Thinking about the helps and making a list of them, gave me a lot of courage and a feeling of gratefulness.

It was fun and inspiring to look at principles, to find principles for (accelerated) learning, and Pareto's 80-20 principle is really encouraging. It lead me to a list of 2000 most used words in movie's subtitles!

The most fun I had was with the integration anchor point and finding ways to use ALL learning styles. Like singing along with this Croatian rap group to appeal to aural learning, or reading my son's Croatian comic books for visual.

In this design I could see the pause anchor point as a functional part of the design, where in other designs (elderly care community) that was challenging. Also the step from ideas to integration was easy to make in this design.

In general this design taught me that slowing down, looking at a "problem" from different angles and putting things on paper, can be really helpful to reach your goals.

PAUSE

Pausing for me is relaxing and recharging. I relax and recharge by reading, making music or playing games. So if I read books in English & Croatian simultaneously, do Croatian puzzles or word games, or sing Croatian songs, and/or accompany myself on the piano or guitar while singing in Croatian, I work on my vision while pausing. Also having coffee with Croats can be a nice and effective break in the day.



Moja domovina - My homeland - croatian and english subtitles