



MOOC

LINGUISTIC ASSERTIVENESS FOR MINORITIZED LANGUAGE SPEAKERS (ML)

LESSON 5:

How to set goals and change your linguistic habits.

In this lesson you will learn more about goal setting and making a plan to change your linguistic habits. You also learn a bit more about how your brain works and what benefits you may have by starting your conversations in your ML.

1. How to set goals and make a plan

If you want to change your linguistic habits you have to set some goals in order to make those changes happen.

It is important to set yourself concrete goals. What kind of **language change** do you want to achieve? Think about **where and when** you want to practice that. The more concrete you are, the greater the chance that you will succeed.

For example: This month I will start in my ML when I order my coffee in the company canteen, or: this week I'm going to speak my ML with my neighbours, because I know they understand it very well. You can also plan to speak your ML in the supermarket at the checkout or in a clothing store, at the hairdressers,

or with that particular colleague at work or a relative or friend. It's just what suits you best.

When setting your goals, think about how **realistic and relevant** they are. Speaking your ML in court probably will not happen too often, so you have to ask yourself if that is a good goal to start with.

1. **Describe** your goals and **rate** them.
2. Choose **the easiest** goal to start with.
3. Describe your goal in a **SMART way**. What, with whom, where, when, how often? (SMART means: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**imely)
4. Make a **plan**: how do you want to do it? What could happen? Think about which resources you want to use, for instance 'Pole position' or 'Assertive demand'.
5. **Evaluate**: how did it go? If it didn't go to plan, what would you do differently? What **resources** do you want to use next time?
6. **Repeat**.
7. If you mastered your first goal and changed your linguistic habit, **move on to the next** goal you have set for yourself, and start at 2.

→ ***It's a journey: Keep a diary of your progress***

Switching to the DL is a habit, and just like any behavioural habits they cost a bit to change. Keep a diary of your progress. Behaviour habit trackers help detect changes and make it easier to visualise progress, affecting motivation in a clear way.

Simply mark when you were able to hold on to your ML. Over time, you will feel motivated. You will be surprised at how many people you meet are able to speak or understand the ML!

Goal Setting Form

Describe your goal	Difficulty (0-10)	Where?	When?	With whom?	Success (0-10)	Comments

2. Beating your reflex brain

When speaking, most people use their **reflex brain** when it comes to making a choice which language to speak. That is very logical. Having conversations is a common occurrence. It takes extra energy to make a conscious decision about your language choice all the time. That is why your brain creates habits. A lot of minority language speakers for instance created the habit to start in the dominant language when they are outside their minority language bubble. *(In the previous lessons you have learned why they are doing that.)*



The reflex brain

- detects patterns at the speed of light
- uses a lot of unconscious shortcuts
- is guided by habits
- relies on firm beliefs that are difficult to change
- is black and white (no compromises)
- does not require conscious attention or willpower and therefore takes little brain power
- takes over when you are tired or insecure

When you want to change your linguistic behaviour (or any behaviour), you have to make use of your reflective brain to make those changes.



The reflective brain

- makes conscious decisions
- is proactive and focuses on goals
- can deal with a lack of consistency
- is rational
- can master habits
- can deal with nuances and compromises
- requires conscious attention and willpower and therefore takes more brain power

Using your reflective brain takes more time, effort and energy. After some time and with practice your brain will make new connections; because you have learned new behaviours, by starting every conversation in your minority language for instance. You then can rely on your reflex brain again.

(Information about the reflex and the reflective brain comes from: *BrainChains: Discover your brain, to unleash its full potential in a hyperconnected, multitasking world*. Author: Dr. Theo Compennolle MD. Phd.)

When changing a habit it is important to know that motivational factors such as willpower, awareness, sensitivity and intention are not enough to successfully change your habits. People tend to overestimate the role of motivation in habit change. You have to be motivated, but you also need a SMART plan!

Planning, setting reminders, reviewing your goals to ensure they remain realistic and attractive, and receiving intrinsic rewards are essential.



START SMART!

START	Start interactions in ML Try it at least
TEST	Challenge your prejudices and do not accept at face value that people are not able to understand you
AVOID	Offering explanations about your language choice Entering in an argument/confrontation Speaking too soon, endure the silence Getting irritated
RESOURCES	Use learned techniques Frame it as a game Remember your chosen resources
TRY AGAIN	Keep using the ML and see how it develops

3. Rewards and benefits

If you have trouble to imagine what benefits you will experience if you change your linguistic habits, don't worry, we have listed some benefits for you to help you on your way:

The benefits of starting every conversation in your ML:

*(including replying to people in your ML, when you are approached in the DL. *)*

- you do what feels right for yourself and your language;
- you will end up having much more conversations in your language, sometimes in very unexpected situations;
- you will build more relationships with other people in your ML
- you will be more relaxed about bilingual conversations and become better at it (it will become a habit as well);
- you will have more meaningful and interesting conversations, even with people that don't speak your language;
- you will start to experiment more with your language choice in other situations and see it as a game;
- using your language will feel less stressful and more fun.

** esp. when your language is mutual intelligible with the dominant language*



**Test
yourself!**

[You can find the test to lesson 5 here](#)

[You can find the assignment here](#)