

MEMBERS ONLY

2017



DECEMBER 12

INNER CIRCLE

THIS MONTH

WHAT YOU LEARN FROM
FAILING A LANGUAGE
PROFICIENCY EXAM

innovative LANGUAGE.COM

How can I see the success in failure?

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Welcome to the Inner Circle, listeners.

Last time, you learned..

- About taking a 180-degree reverse approach to language learning

We're at the end of the year, and it's time to look at the results of my language goals. Last time I was prepping for the third level of the Chinese Language Proficiency Test. And I took the test, on December 3rd. And to find out what happened with that...

Let's jump into this Inner Circle.

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WHAT YOU LEARN FROM FAILING A LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY EXAM

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You'll learn:

- 1. The Results Of My 2017 Language Goal**
- 2. The Successes Gained From Taking on this Challenge**
- 3. The Most Useful Tools I've Used to Prepare for the Test**

But first, let's jump into the first part.

1

The Results Of My 2017 Language Goal

Actually, listeners... I have a very anticlimactic answer for you.

I failed.

Actually, the test results are not in yet, but you kind of know when you fail, right? Maybe I'm speaking to soon, but I'm pretty sure I failed, hence the title. I think I overshot and should have probably tried a lower level. I was guessing at a lot of the answers.

The listening section was fine because of all of the ChineseClass101 lessons I've taken. But the reading parts were hard.

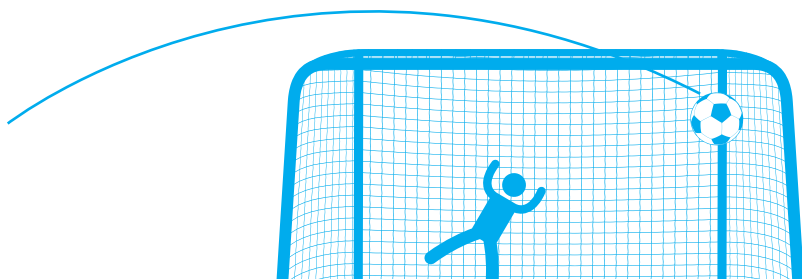
It's funny because you can know 98% of the words in a passage, but if you don't know a few key words or a certain grammar pattern, you miss the meaning. I ran into that more than a few times.

As for the vocabulary, that was pretty straightforward. I either knew it or I didn't. I had to take educated guesses on maybe a third of the questions.

But you know, this wasn't complete failure either.

How can I see the success in failure?

Let's jump into the second part. Spinning it.



2

The Successes Gained From Taking on this Challenge



Listeners, do you know the quote “It’s about the journey, not the destination”?

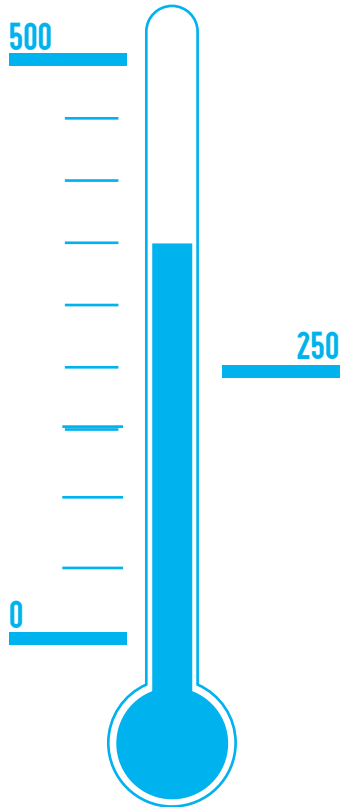
There is some truth to it. Let’s go through where this truth comes from.

Every time you set a goal and your actions align with it (meaning you put in work), you make progress.

For example, if you want to speak Japanese, so you practice speaking 10 minutes a day, or even 3 measly minutes.

The result? You end up much closer to your goal than you would just fiddling around without a clear, specific goal.

But, if you’ve ever failed a goal, before you write it off as a loss, **take a look at how far you’ve come.**



Word-o-Meter

Measurable Results

If you've been setting small monthly goals like learning 100 words, or speaking 1 minute of conversation by the end of the month, then set yourself to 200 more, or 2 minutes, the following month, you can easily tally up your progress to see how much you've learned.

Remember, learning a language is simply a matter of time. It may not come as fast as you had hoped, but with time it will come.

I may have not passed the test, but in my case, you can measure my improvement.

The Level 3 HSK had 80 questions. You need 180 points to pass. The max you can get is 300.

I first started taking practice tests in June, but from June to September my scores were low. Around 100. I was just running through the tests without really reviewing. Towards the end of November, when the urgency kicked in, I was hovering around 170 points. That's almost a passing grade.

I've also learned around 500 Chinese words. That's not my total knowledge of Chinese, but that's 500 I could measure because I studied them with our flashcards.

Balancing My Learning

The next benefit is aiming for this test balanced out my learning.

I usually skip the grammar and go straight to speaking. But, the test forced me to sit down, learn proper grammar and vocabulary. I went out of my comfort zone. I went from passively taking ChineseClass101 lessons, to writing out characters, and writing out sentences for my Premium *PLUS* teacher. I had to force myself to spend more time on the lessons!

Towards the end, when I really locked in, I was putting in an hour a day!

But overall, now I have measurable proof that this year did not go to waste:

- 500+ words learned
- 70 point improvement on the practice tests

Remember, the big lesson is it's just a matter of time. You may not be able to reach your goal as fast as you'd like to, but if you put in the time, it will come. And if you're setting SMALL goals, reaching them is not a problem.

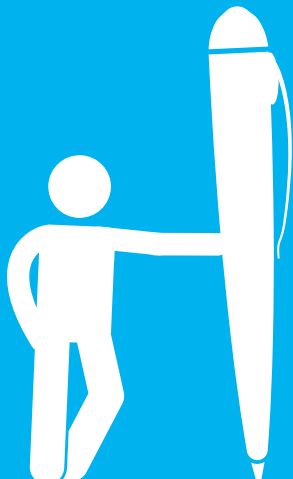
In a way I broke my own rule and aimed for a very big goal.

Proficiency tests are a big deal.



3

The Most Useful Tools I've Used to Prepare for the Test

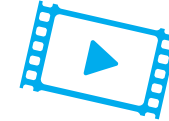


Since I focused on 3 main areas for the test, Reading, Grammar and Vocabulary, and did some listening too, the most useful tools from the site were conversations from the lessons.



Audio & Video Lessons

You hear fast native-level conversation in the lessons. Not a slow, beginner-level, one-person speech that you'd hear on most audio programs.



Dialog Tool

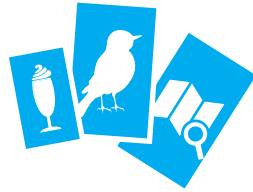
If you have a hard time catching what's said, the Dialog tool breaks down the conversations into individual lines that you can play again and again. It's super powerful for understanding native speech. The dialog tool is available in every lesson.



Lesson Notes

The grammar points in the lesson notes were useful too. I would read the notes, then I'd create a few examples of my own using that rule. I'd then send that to my Premium *PLUS* teacher to get confirmation that I was using it properly.





Lesson Vocab Lists

Next, the vocab section and the sample sentences helped with reading and vocabulary. Reviewing sentences is a big help. With words, you learn them one by one. With sentences, you see how words are used, you might learn a useful thing to say...and you review grammar indirectly. That's what makes reviewing sample sentences so powerful.

Spaced Repetition Flashcards

Flashcards were also useful in helping me master vocabulary. I had no problem recognizing the words I studied on the test. Unfortunately, you can't predict what will be on the test! Not all the words I studied were there.



Extensive Reading Books

Finally, what I think would be useful for Japanese learners are our new extensive reading books. These are simple books. And the goal of these books is to turn you into a fluent reader by reading and absorbing a lot. I recommend that you read without a dictionary. You can skip the words you don't know and jump to a new book if the current one is too tough...or not tough enough!

The point of this is, so that you read more, practice more, and get exposed to more text without getting stuck and frustrated over one little detail. Right now these books are only available on JapanesePod101 for Absolute Beginner and Beginner Level, but next year, they will be available on all sites.



Onto a New Year!

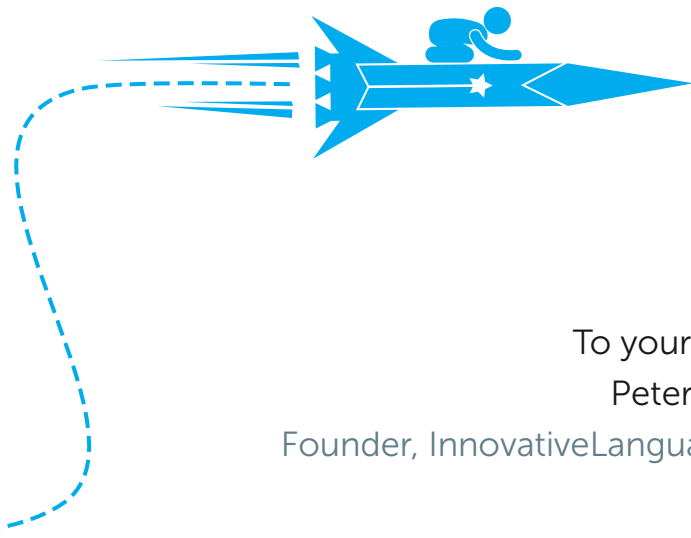
With the test over, it's time to think about a goal for next year. I think I'm definitely going back to a speaking-listening-centric goal, and I think January will be a great time to let you know what the decision is. What do you think listeners?

What are your language goals for the new year?

Shoot me an email at

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Have a Happy New Year, and I'll see you in 2018



To your fluency,
Peter Galante
Founder, InnovativeLanguage.com

