

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IS A

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SUPERPOWER

A MODERN-DAY RENAISSANCE MAN

- ALAN LEE ON NAVIGATING MULTILINGUAL SPACES
- THE IMPACT OF TRAVEL ON LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY
- PURSUING ACADEMIC GOALS FOR GLOBAL SUCCESS
- *AND SO MUCH MORE!*

“A well-made test will gauge your language skills accurately, so just practice and show them your skills.”

Alan Lee is a modern-day renaissance man. Born and raised in Brazil, he is a native speaker of Portuguese, and he is also fluent in English and German. Commanding more than one language has served him well from a career perspective as an international mergers and acquisitions subject matter expert. “Wherever I have been in my life, I was in the top percentile regarding English among non-native speakers. At school, the university, and at work such skills have always been respected,” he shares.

Alan started learning English when he was five years old. It was the 1990s, and it was not common for people to learn a second language at such a young age. As a teenager, he would travel every year during his summer vacations to a different city (Toronto, Vancouver, New York City, the Gold Coast in Florida, Berlin, Freiburg), to study either English or German.



“Language was just one part of the experience of learning other cultures. The things that I learned during these trips have made me a very flexible and an intercultural person,” he explains.

While he also studied some Italian, French, Japanese, Mandarin, and Latin in the past, he feels he has only basic knowledge of these languages. Alan also feels confident speaking German as he completed two semesters as an exchange student in Germany, studying electrical engineering. “Having learned German in school, I had the opportunity to study in Germany during my college years. I did two semesters in Germany - Munich in 2011 and Bamberg in 2013,” Alan recalls. “In my second experience, I was more experienced in such environments [being an exchange student] than other students,” he adds.

He quickly took it upon himself to organize gatherings of college students from different cultures, encouraging interaction and sharing of experiences.



After a while, many such groups were formed where students found friends and could learn about other cultures. This initiative was appreciated by many students, some of whom approached Alan when the semester ended, and thanked him for all the help that he had provided.

A modern-day Renaissance man, Alan paved the way for them to find good friends and helped them around when they first got to the college. “During my exchange student programs, I made friends for life. I have learned so much from them, and they all helped shape who I am today,” he states.

On occasion, Alan does have to speak German and English at work, attracting the admiration of co-workers. Now he plans to do his MBA in the United States and have a career there. With his “global investor” mindset, he believes that not only English, but Portuguese and German will help him better navigate business environments in other regions of the world.

Alan has always viewed language proficiency certification as an end-result of knowing multiple languages. For him, the ultimate goal is to get better at a language, knowing that the certification will happen sooner or later. “A well-made test will gauge your language skills accurately, so just practice and show them your skills. I got an Advanced-Low in German when I took the OPI test,” he offers. “If you have not achieved your goals, learning a language takes time. You will eventually get there with effort.”