

Polyglots Anonymous is back online!

Happy New Year, everyone!

Another year has passed, and a new year offers promise of a clean start, new opportunities, and yet another chance to define and realize goals. A chance to better oneself, to learn and grow, to correct the mistakes of the past year...if only to fail 3 weeks later and go back to eating donuts every day for breakfast. And lunch.

Eons ago, when I started *Polyglots Anonymous*, I wanted to create an outlet for my passion for languages. I wanted to share stories, review products, connect with polyglot communities, and most of all, study as many languages as humanly possible. Ideally, all of them. Yep, all 7,000+ of them.

I made a dent. I did study a number of languages (that number being roughly 45, or approximately 0.6% of my goal). I would only learn a fraction of the language, and I would retain only a fraction of what I learned. I would often cram a language for an upcoming trip, using it with flair and fluidity during my travels, but then I would promptly forget most of it a week after my return. Other languages have stuck with me, but I've never reached true fluency (even in German, which was my major in college! I even LIVED IN GERMANY FOR A YEAR!!).

Over the past several years, I've worked 70-hours a week, socialized a lot, and traveled very little, so there would be long stretches of time when I couldn't (or chose not to) find time or reason to study vocabulary cards, read a textbook, or watch a DVD dubbed or subtitled in a foreign language. For the most part, I was content with being a polyglot wannabe. Quantity over quality became the laurels I was content to rest upon.

But after a change of lifestyle and a chance to attend a few polyglot events in 2016, my passion for learning languages has been rekindled. And my loins burn with a desire to do it right this time! (At my age, do I even still have loins?) I'm still in love with my diverse collection of books, CDs, DVDs, and bookmarked websites in literally hundreds of languages. (My language books sit on shelves in what I call "the trophy room.") And I will still dabble in survival vocabulary as the cravings hit. But I'm also incredibly excited and motivated to focus on quality over quantity.

Whatever happened to *Project ALOT*?

I started *Project ALOT* three years ago in an attempt to raise awareness for endangered languages. The idea was to learn a minimum of a thousand words in a number of endangered languages in order to encourage others to do the same. And while I was reaching my goals for the first few languages, I realized that I was

learning the words and phrases as planned, but not organically. I was using my survival learning skills to learn vocabulary quickly, but that didn't translate to long-term retention. So I ended up with a large amount of random words and phrases that I could use in isolation but not in the setting of a conversation. And I was also immediately losing what I learned after moving on to the next language. And often the language I moved on to had limited resources for learning. So what seemed like a good idea didn't really pan out. No one could have foreseen that result, except for perhaps almost everyone.

But *Project ALOT* will be coming back. I'll be working on and with endangered languages in the next few months, and I'll be putting some ideas together soon. Right now, the goal is to use *Polyglots Anonymous* to promote general language learning awareness, and *Project ALOT* will focus on endangered languages.

So for 2017, I already have a short list of things to work on, including

- applying to grad school for an M.A. in Linguistics,
- learning about a joint initiative that focuses on teaching less commonly taught languages (and hopefully attending some of the actual classes),
- auditing classes on Digital Humanities, Phonology, and Languages of the World,
- working with my local community to create and improve resources for learning languages,
- working with language groups worldwide to promote language education, share ideas, and (hopefully) create new resources,
- looking into opportunities to publish my own print and online resources,
- creating ways to make activism easier for my readers,
- attending (and ideally presenting at) polyglot events and language conferences,
- (re)connecting with the polyglot community and interviewing and promoting the work of other polyglots,
- trying new products and platforms, even if it means getting out of my comfort zone (you kids and your electronic gadgets! Get off my lawn! *shakes fist*),
- studying (and maintaining!) lots-o-languages, slowly, steadily, and solidly, and
- blogging about all of this on a weekly basis!

So watch for a post every Monday, as well as for weekly recaps on Sundays. And keep an eye out for the *Polyglots Anonymous* [1] and *Project ALOT* [2] Twitter feeds and Facebook pages! And hey, maybe I'll set up Instagram and Pinterest accounts...

(Coming soon: *Polyglots Anonymous* on Tinder!? Better lay off the donuts!)

One more thing: one way I'm hoping to improve blog posts is by making them available as a PDF. So look for a link at the bottom of every post that will let you print a hard copy or save it to your favorite e-reader for off-line reading.)

So here's to 2017! I'll see you next week with more languages stuff!

~dave prine

[1] <https://twitter.com/polyglotsanon>

[2] <https://twitter.com/projectalot>