

# Language Transfer

*A one-man vision to turn you into a language guru in 20 hours for free*

BY May El Khishen

Ever been infatuated by a certain country, its people, culture and language, but never had the time or means to travel there? Caught up in the vicious cycle of the corporate world and never seem to have time to take that Spanish course you've been planning to? What if there were a way that you could learn a new language of your choice in 20 hours from the comforts of your living room couch, completely free of charge. Thanks to Language Transfer, there is. Language Transfer's ingenious new method is the brainchild of the unconventional language expert Mihalis Eleftheriou. Despite having earned a degree in teaching from Essex University, Eleftheriou has always been rebelling against the education structure and has refused to fall into the trap of confining himself to the traditional teaching methods that establishments usually resort to. "Regardless of where we grow up, we all do so with a certain set of 'truths', which in turn create value systems. These value systems are in part and sometimes nearly entirely unhealthy and damaging, both for ourselves and one another. For me, learning a new language is one of the best ways to break out of these molds and begin to rethink and unlearn those 'truths'. That's why I created Language Transfer."

Eleftheriou devised his alternative teaching method seven years ago, and ever since has been traveling the world to perfect it and make it public to as many people as possible.



Eleftheriou is a Cypriot of the diaspora, born in the outskirts of London but has lived in more than one part of the world including Cyprus, Argentina, Cuba, and now Egypt.

### What is Language Transfer?

Eleftheriou struggles to describe the project in all of its amplitude and opts for the term 'socio-cultural activism'. The courses promise a unique learning experience allowing the student to acquire a foreign language in record time using a methodology that excites and empowers the learner. "Learning a foreign language give us an opportunity to consider the conditioning of other people from different backgrounds and hence to also consider our own," he adds. "In this way we can begin to free ourselves from this conditioning and all that it prescribes."

According to Eleftheriou, there is nothing mystical or intangible about the dubbed "Thinking Method", and he wants to use its concepts and results as a practical critique of the education system. "So with this method you can learn a language in 20 hours, as crazy as that sounds! From there, we can begin to question what our minds are capable of, how we were taught at school, and most importantly, why?" says Eleftheriou.

The Thinking Method, originally named ironically, steps away from the traditional education system, whereby we are taught to memorize and

not to think. "There is a terrible emphasis on memorizing as opposed to promoting new and creative thought. We are all born extremely intelligent, responsive and curious, and this often dissipates as we get older as a result of the rigid social, educational and cultural paradigm in which we live," he says.

All Language Transfer courses can be downloaded online, free of charge. The courses are currently hosted by web giant RapidShare with whom Eleftheriou was able to establish a collaboration. "I wanted to find a free hosting website, and when I approached them, they expressed great interest and also agreed to put the courses in their online shop for free download. The first ever course I uploaded was Greek, which received 2,000 downloads in the first month! Not bad for a new project and a language that not many people want to learn, no?" says Eleftheriou smilingly.

Each audio is a one-on-one intensive lesson that is orchestrated on not having to memorize anything. In each course, Eleftheriou is teaching a student in a live learning environment- he assured me that it was an actual student that doesn't know the language and not an actor with a script- by simply explaining something about the language and then asking "so how would you say...?" The student has to think out their answer, speak out loud, and then move on with the recording. "For those who choose to learn via The Thinking Method, all they have to do is download the free course and after every question I ask, click pause and try to answer it. We work together stimulating and satisfying the student's curiosity, making sentences in the new language right from the beginning which is extremely rewarding," he explains.

Despite lack of funding, which is also his main obstacle, Eleftheriou never thought of making his students pay for these courses, as he strongly believes that language learning can be a catalyst for great and varied change in the individual and in the world.

### Transferring Language Transfer to Egypt

Before making Cairo his new temporary home, Eleftheriou was in Cyprus working on creating his Greek course. He is currently designing two new courses; one for teaching English to Arabic speakers and a second one that teaches non-Arabic speakers Egyptian Arabic. "My courses are all very specific to the language you are learning. All courses are designed for English and Spanish speakers. In other words, Spanish speakers do not have to learn English to be able to learn Arabic," says Eleftheriou. "Egyptian Arabic is very important. If you want to go anywhere in the Arab world and be understood, you speak Egyptian Arabic because of the presence of Egyptian music and movies," explains Eleftheriou.

Eleftheriou also believes that learning Arabic is becoming increasingly important as a result of what he calls the 'binary east-west fiction'. And that nowadays, more and more people from the 'west' are becoming curious about the language and this part of the world. "Arabic is my favorite language!" Says Eleftheriou. "We have our own Maronite dia-



Photo by Faris Hassanein

lect of Arabic in Cyprus too!" He adds.

The first Arabic course is expected to be ready sometime in 2013. Eleftheriou is currently the only teacher at Language Transfer, yet he is working on expanding his team of teachers with the little resources he has. He is collaborating with people from Cyprus on a project that will enable other language teachers to use Eleftheriou's method to teach the Cypriot dialects of Greek and Turkish. He hopes that the material from this initiative can then be used to spearhead an effective e-training environment, which will enable any language teacher or linguist to learn how to teach other languages via his method, instead of having himself to learn a new language every time he wants to devise a course for it. "I hope that in five years Language Transfer will become a household name, the first port of call to learn a new language, regardless of what it is; Arabic, Persian, Portuguese, Swahili. I also hope that this project can become self-sustainable with enough funding and a large team of international professional teachers, then I will continue with Language Transfer and also venture into something new!" He says with a big smile on his face. □

For more information on the courses or how to help this ambitious project, go to: <http://www.languagetransfer.org> or email: [info@languagetransfer.org](mailto:info@languagetransfer.org)

Eleftheriou allows us a glimpse at the design process of new language courses

