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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Learning a foreign language is a laborious job though it might seem uncomplicated at first glance: working desperately, studying consistently and spending headily much time you will sooner or later cope with the peculiarities of a language you study. But, in terms of psychology, it is not as simple as it seems to be.

Many psychological factors such as your reasons for learning a foreign language and the methods used to learn new vocabulary can to a great extent affect the language-learning process. In addition, learning a language gives some practical and cognitive perks that you might not expect. From the point of view of psychology Motivation, Memory and Mind are three Ms that are of great importance while learning a foreign language.

M1: Motivation. Falling in love is one of the ways to learn a foreign language [4, p. 53]. There is no doubt that you must be motivated in order to succeed in any kind of learning: if you do not have motivation, you will not be obsessed with the idea to go to the classroom and open your textbook. There are a lot of different forms of motivation that form the desire to act. If you are thinking of studying Japanese, for example, you might be motivated to understand this language because you adore anime and want to experience it in the original. As an alternative, you might be motivated as you are applying for the job which demands you speak with people in Japanese.

These two examples demonstrate a distinction between two kinds of motivation. Intrinsic motivation is your internal desire to act; it is related to personal interests, such as love for anime. Extrinsic motivation is pushed by an external factor; it is our desire to earn a reward in the form of a raised salary or a prize you are going to win.

In fact, intrinsic motivation is more powerful than extrinsic one: if you are interested in learning a language for the purpose of learning it, you succeed faster with greater outcomes.

That is why to become more confident in a foreign language you are to fall in love with a foreign language speaker: communicating with your beloved can be a powerful motivation.

M2. Memory. If you perfectly memorise any picture or chunk of a text for a short period of time, learning a foreign language promises to be fast and easy process. Sad to say, there are not so many human beings who would demonstrate incredible memory prowess, but at the same time there are some techniques to optimize our ability to train our memories to remember words and phrases, to make the process of learning language much more efficient and thorough.

Spaced repetition system is the most effective approach for memorization [3, p. 98]. Spaced repetition was firstly proposed by C. A. Mace at the beginning of the XXth century [1]. This learning technique, which is believed to be optimal to help people remember and recall vocabulary productively, can be used both with complex computer-generated algorithms and Anki digital flashcards [5]. In the memory ability context it is worth mentioning that there is one more effective way to improve people's ability to keep new collocations, phrases and chunks in mind which is known as context-dependent learning. It refers to the idea that our brain stores not only the word we learn but its surroundings. Here the process of memorizing is similar with that when the memory was originally formed surrounded by our environment. In other words, you will not have any chance to remember new vocabulary words that have no association with anything real. You have to correlate language with the experience and recall the specific moments such as location, time or materials which were used while learning a new word for the first time.

M3. Mind. It is proved that bilingualism benefits your brain [2, p. 29]. Learning a foreign language gives a possibility to communicate with new people increasing networking skills and as a result better understand different cultures. In addition to that there are some amazing mental benefits that come from learning a new language.

Bilinguals have been shown to have a greater memory capacity than monolinguals. It is because learning a foreign language makes your brain physically grow in size. Multilingual people have a sharper mind. It means that they are better at observing surroundings and solving complicated problems. Bilingual people possess multitasking ability as they are able to switch between two languages. They show more cognitive flexibility, adapt to unexpected situations and make decisions easily. And at last, you avoid neurodegenerative diseases that often appear later in life if you pick up a foreign language dictionary. Indeed, bilinguals have a lower risk of developing Alzheimer's or Dementia than monolinguals. So, learning another language makes a contribution to your mind like physical training makes a contribution to your body.

To conclude, the first step to succeed in learning a foreign language is to be motivated. Next and important point is to follow memory-improving strategies, like keeping a permanent study surrounding. In that context you will be on your way to fluency that will allow you either speak another language or improve your multitasking skills.

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