

## *Learning a language as a second language*

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The word 'Globalization' is no longer a new term to the current modern people. With the prevalent globalization, they are able to interact more closely with one another. This phenomenon has brought enormous changes to the current life we have, and those changes range from international trade and frequent travelling abroad to a movie industry, and so on. Meanwhile, all of the changes which globalization has brought about come with language.

The purpose of this research is to suggest the general guide for adults to study a second language properly. Nowadays more and more people are forcefully required to be fluent enough in a second language to communicate with foreigners. Unfortunately, not everyone has had a chance to grow up as a bilingual speaker. A majority of those second languages may be major languages of the world such as English, Chinese, French, Spanish, Japanese, Korean, German, and so on. In this research paper, types of languages are mainly going to refer to those major languages in the world.

With its new aspects in the twenty first century, people live under the war of second language acquisition in many parts of the world. Some of them are more than willing to learn a second language just because they like learning a language and get to enjoy it. On the other hand, many of those who are forced to learn a second language are just stressed out as much. Why are people who do not want to learn a second language forced to do so? It is because they believe acquiring a second or a third language may provide them with more opportunities of success throughout their lives. Perhaps this would be one of many reasons why parents are more eager to raise their children as a bilingual speaker.

As much crucial a second language acquisition is for children, it is also urgent for adults to learn a second language since many parts of the world require them to be fluent enough in

foreign languages right now. One of the examples in Korea is that every single job seeker tries to study a second language such as English, Chinese, and Japanese only for the sake of getting more opportunities for a job. However, in many cases, a majority of the jobs they are seeking have literally nothing to do with a language they are pursuing. The example above explains why it is urgent for adults to overcome their language learning issue. Hence, this research paper is geared more toward adults than children.

To begin with, a very first question would be this: Why should we learn a second language? We live in such a competitive world. Every day, people are spending a lot of time and money as well as efforts by acquiring some helpful skills and certificates hoping that they become more competitive and qualified. On top of everything, learning a second language is being considered one of those skills. Although there are many people who are gladly learning a second language for fun, still the majority of those people are forcefully learning a second language just for more opportunities in business such as job seeking, a promotion at a company, and a raise in salary in their lives.

Beside a chance of success, there are many merits and benefits we can get by acquiring a second language. A learning process of language itself can help our brain work efficiently in some ways. According to a cognitive neuroscientist, Ellen Bialystok, “the executive control system in human’s brain makes it possible for you to hold two different things in one’s mind at one time and switch between them.” “So if you use more than one language interchangeably on a regular basis, the executive control system sorts through the languages you speak and attend to what’s relevant in the moment.”(Dreifus 2011)

In addition, learning a second language is proven to make our brain more efficient in multitasking. Based on Bialystok’s experiment, “bilingualism is also closely related to the

executive control system, and by improving the function of that part of brain, a bilingual speaker gets to be able to do a multitasking better.” (Dreifus 2011)

This shows that language learning means more than just being able to use two languages.

Then, who learns a second language? For the reason above, more and more people in many parts of the world are getting their interest in becoming a bilingual person. If you think that only those who are committing to language - related occupations such as an interpreter, a translator, a school teacher, and an international trader learn a second language, the idea would be completely wrong. Language learning has so deeply infiltrated into our lives. It would not be too much to say that almost every occupation requires its workers to be fluent enough in more than one language for the sake of better performances. For instance, it would be better if you learn how to speak Japanese when you hope to be a sales person in Waikiki, Hawaii in order to attract more Japanese tourists. Another example is that celebrities such as movie stars and singers who are considering expanding their career abroad may have to learn a language of their target country to perform and charm their fans better. Not to mention, English is the most dominant and acquired language around the world in that it has substantially become a world second language. So the phenomenon of second language learning is happening everywhere.

With is the increasing interest of second language learning, it has become such a trend that now a days, parents are seeking to start an early education for their offspring even from an infant period. They are just eager to make their child a bilingual speaker, knowing that it is crucial for a kid to start learning a language during a critical period to be a genuine native speaker in more than one language. The critical period is not precisely set but known to work until puberty in general. Unfortunately, it is generally said to be almost impossible to acquire

a language to a native level once a person passes a critical period. However, just because you missed the critical period, it does not mean that you are not incapable of learning a second language at all. Nevertheless, it is important to know that the better you start on second language learning, the more fluent you are likely to be in that language. In other words, with an assumption of the same amount of an effort, a person who starts learning a second language in his early twenties may possibly pick up the language faster and better than a person who starts in his fifties or more.

Then, how should we learn a second language? First of all, just like any other from studying, the crucial value for language learning is motivation. There is no doubt that learning a language is no easy task. Without an appropriate motivation, you are more likely to give up on your studying. Just because many people learn a second language, merely following others's path does not guarantee you success in second language learning. In order to achieve what you truly want through a second language, you should clearly know what you really want. Secondly, what is required for second language learning is patience. "Learning a second language is metaphorically same as a marathon. You should manage your own pace, not rush to the point where you knock out yourself in the beginning of the race". (Kim, 2009 pg 5) No matter how hard you study, you will not be fluent overnight. Being fluent in a second language takes time, although it depends on an individual as everyone has a different pace. Once again, you should not rush.

There various are ways to categorize the process of second language learning. However, in this research paper, all of the processes are going to be distinguished through five stages. In addition, each stage may require different strategies to continue learning a second language. So it will provide suitable suggestion for the each stage.

“The stage I: Pre-production. In this stage, students are referred to as a beginner. “They may have up to 500 words in their receptive vocabulary but are not yet speaking.” Therefore, they may be pretty limited to understanding a second language, and thus we can hardly expect them to speak and communicate in a second language. (Haynes) So it is better for those who are in this stage to just focus on as many vocabulary items as they can learn and memorize. “Language learners at this stage will need much repetition of language.” (Haynes) However, the point of memorizing vocabulary is that they should try to learn a vocabulary through a proper example, and to figure out when and how to use the word. Otherwise, all the efforts of memorizing tens of hundreds of vocabulary items will end up in vain.

“Stage II: Early production”. “This stage may continue up to six months and students will develop a receptive and active vocabulary.” (Haynes) At the same time, they may have a hard time combining words and make full sentences. During this stage, they are encouraged to spur up in grammar studying as there might be a lot of errors in what they say. In order to be able to form an appropriate sentence, learning grammar is necessary. “It is good to know that mistakes are an inevitable and important aspect of learning a new language.”(S. Krashen)

“Stage III: Speech emergence.” Now, students are no longer beginner as “they have developed a vocabulary of about 3,000 words and can communicate with simple phrases and sentences.” (Haynes) However, there still may be a few mistakes and errors. Their comprehension is good enough to understand a simple context and thus, they are in capable of responding. From this stage, they need to move on to the next level of what they have studied. For example, it is better to start on taking a look at longer sentences and contents, rather than just vocabularies.

“Stage IV: Intermediate fluency.” In this stage, “students are beginning to use more

complex sentences when speaking and writing.” (Haynes) Severe errors are not found in their phrases and utterances, and the number of their mistakes is quite few. From this time, they are required to boost up the amount of what they study and focus on the value of quantity. Since it is common for many students to stay long in this stage, they tend to feel discouraged and fall into a dilemma. However, “Being aware of the fact that progress is rarely constant will help take the pressure off the students”. (S. Krashen) This stage begins to show why a second language student needs a motivation and patience. They need to be patient and just keep on studying even without a payoff and a reward.

“Stage V: Advanced Fluency”. “It takes students from 4-10 years to achieve cognitive academic language proficiency in a second language”. (Haynes) Although they are not as fluent as a native speaker of the language they learn, their level of comprehension and speaking is advanced enough that they rarely make mistakes throughout their speech. From this stage, “it will be better if students start focusing on some content areas such as history/social studies and in writing.” (Haynes)

Another important thing we should not look over is grammar. Second language students somehow have begun to ignore the importance of grammar, as second language learning is now more focused just on the purpose of communication. However, it is dangerous to think that knowing grammar does not have a lot of effect on communication per se. Of course, you might be able to communicate to a certain extent by simply saying a series of words or using body language. However, you may not refer to that sign-exchanging action as a full communication. Therefore, the idea that learning proper grammar is unnecessary is a contradiction. “Why does grammar matter?” “Here is how it begins: Grammar is important because it is the language that makes it possible for us to talk about language”. “But to be able to talk about how sentences are built, about the types of words and word groups that

make up sentences, you should know about grammar.”(Nordquist) If you keep overlooking grammar and turn your back against it, one day, you might encounter a severe problem of continuing second language learning.

Learning a second language has now emerged as another method to adjust to new globalized world. In other words, more and more people try to acquire a second language not just for academic purposes, but for their survival in the modern era. They know that being fluent in more than one language may help them to gain extra opportunities and to be more competitive by developing a multitasking ability. This may possibly provide them with a chance to get ahead in their society.

In order to be successful in second language learning, you need a motivation and patience, knowing that acquiring a second language is a long-time process. Five stages were introduced in this research, (1) Pre-production, (2) Early production, (3) Speech emergence, (4) Intermediate fluency, (5) Advanced Fluency. In addition, you should not overlook the importance of grammar for the purpose of efficient communication.

Learning another language other than one’s own mother tongue means more enlightenment to a person as second language process usually comes with cultural learning. The further this second language learning trend goes, the more bilingualism will spread across many countries in the world. Eventually, this bilingualism might potentially help those countries be more competitive.

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