

Learning How to Learn **LANGUAGES**



Learning How to Learn Languages

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**A THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL GUIDE
FOR LEARNING ADDITIONAL
LANGUAGES**

KELI YERIAN; BIBI HALIMA; FAITH ADLER; LOGAN
FISHER; CAMERON KEATON; ADDY ORSI; AND
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A Letter to Readers

FAITH ADLER

“Seek first to understand, then to be understood,” – Stephen R. Covey.

We write this book during a time of great unrest all around the world. Through a variety of media, we are surrounded by news of violence, prejudice, hatred, and genocide on a daily basis. We have written this text with heavy hearts as new (and continued) acts of violence have developed between neighbors, cities, states, and nations.

We strongly believe in the importance of seeking to understand before asking to be understood and have embedded the heart behind that message all throughout this text. We hope that this can serve as even a small encouragement and reminder to seek out the voices of victims affected by tragedy, especially those with traditionally marginalized voices, and listen to what they have to say.

When others are silenced, we are given the opportunity to be a voice for those who remain unheard. We hope, in our heart of hearts, that you will take anything you might learn from this text and use it to do just that. Though with the seemingly never-ending

rise of exploitation of media-consumers through flashy headlines, biased news, and false information, hope may seem further away than ever before, there has truly never been such a time as this to have and spread hope.

Faith Adler, on behalf of the Open Pedagogy Team

In Gratitude

KELI YERIAN AND BIBI HALIMA

All worthwhile efforts are collaborative, and this one is no different, particularly in its spirit of open pedagogy. We would like to extend our deepest appreciation to the following supporters.

We received grant generous support from:

- The **[Williams Instructional Fund](#)** at the University of Oregon. This fund was established in 1996 by Tom and Carol Williams to support faculty who are “willing to search for better and more effective ways of learning”. We are grateful for this vision and the concrete resources it provides to make it possible.
- **[Open Oregon Educational Resources](#)**. These grants are designed to support faculty and institutions to develop fully accessible and openly licensed course materials in higher education institutions across the state of Oregon.
- **The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)** at the University of Oregon. Funding from CAS was awarded to departments for supporting diverse student participation in research projects. The Linguistics Department awarded a portion of these funds to our Open Pedagogy project.

The Open Oregon grant included a stipend for an OER project mentor. **Liz Pearce**, author of the Open Pedagogy OER Pressbook [Contemporary Families: An Equity Lens](#) accepted our request to fill this role. We are indebted to Liz for her advice, stories, and conversations with Halima and Keli over coffee during her visits to Eugene.

The Open Oregon grant also included a stipend for our University of Oregon OER Librarian, **Rayne Vieger**, who went the extra mile to support our team throughout the year from start to finish. She created a Pressbooks OER called [The Open Pedagogy Toolkit](#) for our team to use as a resource on Open Pedagogy and Open Educational Resources, one that also served as a model for how to create and structure a book using Pressbooks. Rayne met with our team as a whole and individually for consultation multiple times, and aided in troubleshooting formatting issues at the end of the editing process.

We would like to thank a number of other individuals who contributed to this project:

Cameron Teubner-Keller, who was a teaching assistant for LING 144 in Fall 2023 alongside co-author and project manager Bibi Halima. Cameron provided support to our project through writing feedback, student support, and glossary contributions for the project.

The team of faculty who first collectively proposed and brought to life the LING 144 course in 2020: **Kathie Carpenter, Spike Gildea, Harinder Khalsa, Jeff Magoto**, and **Melissa Baese-Berk**. We also thank former instructors of this course **Spike Gildea, Harinder Khalsa**, and **Robert Elliott** as well as former teaching assistant **Nicole Williams**. All of these individuals contributed significantly to the conceptualization and development of the course materials that inspired our own Pressbooks content.

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The collective support of the **many friends, colleagues, and family members** that cheered all of us on for this project. Their care, encouragement, and yes, even admiration for attempting to do such an endeavor kept us going through all the fun and less fun moments of writing, creating, and revising.

Meet the Authors

FAITH ADLER; LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; CAMERON
KEATON; ADDY ORSI; ABHAY PAWAR; AND KELI YERIAN

Authors are introduced below in alphabetical order, and project roles are described beneath each author introduction.

Authorship of each section of the 10 chapters is shown at the top of each page. The lead author for each section is listed first, and the two editors, Bibi Halima and Keli Yerian, are listed at the end of each section. Occasionally other significantly contributing student authors are listed in second or third position in sections where there are more authors listed. Also, in cases where Halima or Keli are listed as first authors, this signifies that they contributed most of the content in that section.

Addy and Abhay are not listed as section authors but are given attribution for their important contributions at the bottom of each page on which their illustrations or multimedia work appears.

FAITH ADLER

Faith was a junior at the University of Oregon at the time of this project, studying Japanese and Second Language Acquisition and Teaching. Her love for Japanese language and culture began in her junior year of high school when she studied abroad in Ise-saki City in Gunma Prefecture. Since then, she has fallen in love with language and started studying Mandarin and Korean as well. She hopes to teach language in the future



and spread the message of the importance of communicating across barriers like differences in language and culture.

Faith's primary role on the team was as a writer. She was the lead author for Chapter 4 *Culture, Intercultural Competence, and Pragmatics*, the 'intermission section' on integrating skills, Chapter 9 *Writing Skills*, Chapter 10 *Facing Fears and Finding Opportunities*, and our *Letter to Readers* in the Front Matter and the *Closing Statement* in the Back Matter. She also contributed significantly to Chapter 5 *Metacognition and Metacognitive Strategies*, created some H5P materials, and appears in one of the project videos in Chapter 2.

LOGAN FISHER

Logan is a 2027 graduate of the University of Oregon, pursuing majors in Linguistics and General Music, a Spanish minor, and two Second Language Acquisition and Teaching (SLAT) certificates in English and Spanish. When not studying languages or linguistics, you can find them in the Oregon Athletic Bands where they play mellophone for the Oregon Marching Band, Oregon Basketball Band, and the Yellow Garter Band where they are the logistical director, or in the School of Music where they play french horn. They are also a member of the Wayne Morse Scholars program. They hope to pursue a career in second language education while continuing their passion as a researcher in the field of linguistics.



Logan's primary role on the team was as a writer. They were the

lead author on Chapter 2 *Approaches to (Language) Learning*, Chapter 6 *Listening and Viewing Skills*, and Chapter 7 *Speaking and Signing Skills*. They also contributed significantly to Chapter 1 *The Secrets of Language Learning* and to the introduction sections of the Skills chapters. They also helped to design H5P materials and conceptualized (and appears in) one of the project videos in Chapter 2.

CAMERON KEATON

Cameron was a senior at the University of Oregon during the creation of this OER, graduating with a B.S. in Political Science and a minor in English. He is driven to make education more affordable and accessible. One of his passions is language learning; he has taken a variety of language courses, including classes in French, Spanish, and Arabic. He hopes these OER materials will be the first of many in the



genre of Open Pedagogy. His hobbies include watching Detroit sports, traveling, reading, and collecting sports cards.

Cameron's primary role on the team was as a writer. He is lead author on key sections of Chapter 3, *Access and Power in Language Learning*, and in Chapter 8, *Reading Skills*. He also helped to design H5P materials and appears in one of the project videos in Chapter 3.

ADDY ORSI

Addy was a first-year student at the University of Oregon at the time this project was created. They are studying Linguistics and Communication Disorders and Sciences. As an illustrator, Addy wants to assist readers' learning experience by creating supporting images to help convey information. They are proficient in Spanish and are learning American Sign



Language; they look forward to improving their skills in these languages and others in the future. Addy's hobbies include making art and crafting, creating ceramic sculptures, spending time with their cat Wilfred, and gardening.

Addy's primary role on the team was as illustrator for the entire book. All of the original images throughout the chapters were created by Addy. They also created the time-lapsed video in Chapter 5 and contributed to some sections of Chapter 5 and some H5P design. Please note that the illustrations and time-lapse video have a different Creative Commons license from the rest of the content from the book.

ABHAY PAWAR

Abhay is a 2027 graduate of the University of Oregon, pursuing a double major in Advertisement and Media Studies. Being a second-generation immigrant, he was raised speaking English and Punjabi which started his love for languages and communication. His main drive for this project was the idea of delivering information from student to student. He took this as an opportunity to have a platform to show that sometimes, something being hard to learn isn't about what is being taught, but who it is coming from and how it is delivered. When he isn't working, he is out with his friends, conjuring up video ideas, playing golf, crate digging for music, at car shows, etc.



Abhay's primary role on the team was as a multimedia content creator. He envisioned and created original videos for Chapters 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8. and 9. He also designed or contributed to various H5P materials.

BIBI HALIMA

Halima was pursuing her Master's in Language Teaching Studies at the University of Oregon during the project period. As a language teacher, she is passionate about making education accessible through the inclusion of additive multilingualism. As an international student from Pakistan, she grew up speaking and learning four languages



including Punjabi, Urdu, Arabic, and English. In future, she seeks to create an impact in the field of language education by advocating for solutions to global challenges threatening multilingualism. She feels that the experience of working on Open Pedagogy Project has brought her “one step closer to a dream of making education more multilingual, accessible, and open for all”. Outside of her academic life, she loves connecting with family and friends and spending time in nature.

Halima's primary role on the team was threefold: 1) as project manager, holding meetings, managing Teams, and communicating and meeting with students throughout the project, 2) as lead author for sections of Chapter 1, *The Secrets of Language Learning*, Chapter 2, *Approaches to (Language) Learning*, and Chapter 3, *Access and Power in Language Learning* and 3) as a final editor of the project with Keli Yerian, editing writing content and creating and making decisions about final Pressbooks design elements.

KELI YERIAN

Dr. Keli Yerian is a Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of Oregon. She is passionate about language education and sharing this passion with students and other colleagues. She directs the Masters of Arts Program in Language Teaching Studies and the undergraduate certificate in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching. She speaks French and Spanish and has learned some German and Wolof in the past as well. Her hobbies include river paddle boarding, hiking, and traveling when she can, and also doing plenty of extensive reading and movie-watching in her second languages.



Keli's primary role on the team was twofold: 1) as project lead and mentor and 2) as a final editor of the project with Bibi Halima, particularly with regards to editing writing content and making decisions about the final Pressbooks design.

Our Adventure in Open Pedagogy

KELI YERIAN AND BIBI HALIMA

We were thinking big when our team began this project in January, 2024 at the University of Oregon. We met together for the first time around a table in a conference room, excited about the prospect of creating a student-led, online textbook for LING 144 *Learning How to Learn Languages*. We started the project with open minds, lots of energy, and a healthy dose of nervousness, not knowing exactly what would happen or what we would actually create.

And then... we did it.

Eight months later we are looking at ten completed chapters, each with multiple sections, fully illustrated and peppered with videos, interactive activities, and plenty of stories about what it can look like to learn a language.

We ended this month with a self-given score of 10/10, not because the product or process was perfect, but because we all navigated the journey with grit and grace and did not stop short of our best collective efforts. We are happy with the unique, ever-evolving aspects of this open-source text, just as we hope our readers will be happy about their own evolving journeys in language learning. As you will see in Chapter 1, we champion a focus on proficiency over trying to reach perfection.

AN OVERVIEW OF OUR JOURNEY

This project began in Spring 2023 when Keli Yerian, a faculty member in the Department of Linguistics and a language teacher educator, applied for grant support to launch this Open Pedagogy initiative. The LING 144 course she had taught twice did not yet have a central text, and she had just been introduced to the concept of Open Pedagogy through a workshop sponsored by Open Oregon.

With support from the UO Williams Foundation, Open Oregon, and the College of Arts and Sciences, Keli enlisted Bibi Halima, her former LING 144 graduate Teaching Assistant, to be a co-collaborator and project manager on the project. Keli then put out a call to former LING 144 students to apply to join the project. The grant funding provided pay for student part-time work, ensuring equity of access to those who applied.

With a diverse and talented team of five undergraduates in place (three of whom were first year students), we began the Winter 2024 term with workshops on leadership and project management provided by the UO Holden Leadership Center in order to build team cohesion and identify our strengths. We had meetings with UO OER Librarian Rayne Vieger, who created OER materials specifically to guide our team. We also enlisted an experienced Open Pedagogy mentor for the project, Liz Pearce, to offer us advice at key stages in the project.

Over the first several weeks, we discussed and mapped out our book plan using whiteboards and sticky notes, while also learning how to use our collaborative and publishing tools: Teams for communication and project organization, OneDrive for drafts and initial peer review, H5P for interactive elements, Pressbooks for our final materials, and Hypothesis for final review.

Although the five students initially divided up the chapters to author individually, by the end of Winter term it became clear that specializing into different roles would work better in order to capitalize on student strengths. Three students continued to primarily write, while one began illustrating the whole book and the other focused on multimedia.

The team kept our gears turning through Spring break and into Spring term as we began planning for the final five chapters. Our regular meetings and weekly progress became increasingly more intensive, even as the students juggled their full-time schedules and other extra-curriculars. As Summer arrived, one team member graduated and moved on to a new commitment. The other four continued to revise and fill in missing content through mid-August as Halima and Keli engaged in full-time review, editing, and accessibility remediation. We were fortunate that one of our writers was awarded additional Summer funding through a UO Center for Undergraduate Research and Engagement scholarship.



Image by [Crissi](#) from [Pixabay](#)

We wrapped up our last group meeting on August 14, 2024 with a palpable sense of pride and accomplishment. One student compared the project to a bonsai tree: one we had carefully trimmed and shaped over time but had taken its own beautiful, unique form in the end.

Yes, we had done it.

LESSONS AND REFLECTIONS

In the poem, *“Don’t Allow the Lucid Moment to Dissolve”* Zagajewski reminds us that “knowledge grows slowly like a wisdom tooth” (2003, p. 110). Similarly, our journey in this project revealed ‘lucid moments’ of insight over time. Before these moments dissolve or fade away, here we write them down and share them with you, hoping they light the way to a path in education that is open and brave.

From January to August, we gradually discovered the answer to *‘not knowing exactly what would happen’*. One question became prominent as we observed our process unfold:

How does Open Pedagogy transform student and educator roles and relationships?

One word that repeatedly came up in our discussions with all students in several meetings was *empowerment*. They took ownership of their learning and evolved beyond the feeling of imposter syndrome, beyond believing *‘I don’t know enough!’* Their empowerment by the end was evident in their confidence and positive self-image. In response to the question, *‘What specific skills and knowledge do you feel you gained through this experience?’*, one of the students said, *‘I want readers to know what I know, and it is worth sharing with them’*.

Their empowerment allowed them to recognize us as facilitators rather than ‘employers’ or ‘traditional teachers’. They could acknowledge our expertise and seek support when needed. They knew that their *‘I don’t know’s’* would be met with the response *‘Let me help you here’*. We together created a safe space between *‘We need to know everything’* and *‘We don’t know enough’*. This is a space we call open and brave! This is where both learners and educators come together and are willing to learn and share with openness.

As educators, we embraced our fluid roles. For example, Keli with all her expertise and extensive background in language education transcended her role as a teacher and led the team from a fresh perspective as a learner. Whereas Halima, as a young scholar, inhabited the liminal space between Keli's mentorship and mentoring the student team members while navigating her transnational identity and bridging two worlds as an international student.

Through the fluidity of our roles, we shifted from viewing our students as "followers" to acknowledging them as "contributors". It is true that Open Pedagogy requires educators to be "guide[s] by their side" rather than "sage[s] on the stage" or even "guide[s] on the side" (Werth & Williams, 2023, p. 309). This is the way to engage as learners together, side by side.

Learning How to Learn Languages was not just a matter of creating a textbook, but an experience of *becoming together* for our team. We all had our specific roles and responsibilities but every week we gathered around a table and trimmed and shaped our bonsai together. With our unique expertise and interests, we grew this project together. "Let me try sketching that out", "Here, let me share a resource with you", "Why don't I add a story here?", "I can get filming equipment for you", "Here's where we could add a touch of clarity", "Here, let me try to clean this H5P on Procreate", "Oh, leave that to me" were all our ways of supporting each other.

While the world is becoming increasingly commercialized, the OER movement and Open Pedagogy humanize education. Education is a basic human right to access freely and to participate in freely. It is our hope that through this kind of transformative human movement we will open up space for learners to emphasize democracy and agency in education.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=29#h5p-1>

Scroll to see the photos above.

References

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How to Use this Book

KELI YERIAN AND BIBI HALIMA

This page provides an overview of the structure of this Pressbooks OER as well as suggestions on how to use this resource.

ORGANIZATION OF THESE MATERIALS

Our Pressbook contains 10 chapters and is divided into two main parts: Chapters 1-5 and Chapters 6-9. It also includes an intermission section between these two parts and a final Chapter 10.

Chapters 1-5 provide a rich conceptual background for language learners.

- **Chapter 1** introduces readers to the dynamics of language learning and common language learning myths.
- **Chapter 2** provides an overview of several core concepts that influence language learning. These include explanations of a few influential learning theories; the impact of growth and fixed mindsets; how declarative & procedural learning and explicit & implicit learning work; the benefits of multimodal learning; and several key

language teaching approaches that continue to influence formal language education contexts as well as commercial language learning app materials.

- **Chapter 3** reveals how language learning is sensitive to questions of power and access. This topic is often absent from other books on how to learn languages. It explains what majoritized and minoritized languages are and the relative social power of different varieties of a language. It also explores the cases of heritage language learning, less-commonly-taught languages, and endangered language revitalization.
- **Chapter 4** is a deeper dive into the critical question of culture in language. It explores the concepts of culture shock, the cultural ‘iceberg’, and languaculture. It also explains the subtle aspects of culture and context in communication, also known as pragmatics.
- **Chapter 5** takes a step back to look at how the metacognitive cycle can help us reflect on and plan for our language learning efforts (and our efforts throughout our lives!). It also discusses how direct and indirect learning strategies can support our language learning.

After these five chapters we have a brief **‘intermission section’** titled “From Theory to Practice”, which emphasizes the integration and interdependence of language skills.

The second part of this book provides guidance and examples for applying the concepts from the first five chapters to actual language use. Note, however, that it is not obligatory to read the first half of the book in order to read any part of the second half. We link back to content from the first half when we feel it is helpful.

- **Chapters 6-9** each focus on one of the four “language skills” and are structured in the same way. These include

an introduction section, a section on guiding principles for that skill, a section on some of the research supporting those principles, a section that provides a range of example strategies and student stories to consider, and an 'Over to You' reflection section.

- **Chapter 6** focuses on Listening / Viewing (for signed languages)
- **Chapter 7** focuses on Speaking / Signing
- **Chapter 8** focuses on Reading
- **Chapter 9** focuses on Writing

Readers may question why there are not separate chapters on Grammar or Vocabulary. We decided to touch on these topics within the skills chapters, though we may also add one or more chapters on these areas in future editions.

Our final **Chapter 10** turns to the topics of language retention, language anxiety and motivation, the benefits of language learning, and some final inspirational stories and media created by past LING 144 students about their own language learning paths.

HOW THESE MATERIALS CAN BE USED

We see three primary ways in which these materials can be used:

1. As **an entire set of materials** to be used in a secondary or higher education course about learning languages. In our case at the University of Oregon, we will use these materials as a core text for LING 144 *Learning How to Learn Languages*.
2. As **modular parts to supplement language courses** in secondary or higher education contexts. For example, the

topics on metacognition, access and power, or specific language skills could be supplemental to any language class, among others. We would be thrilled if language educators used or remixed any of our chapters or pages in the spirit of OER.

3. As **educational and personal enrichment resources** for independent language learners. These materials do not require that the reader be enrolled in any formal language learning to benefit from them.

Accessibility Statement

ALLIA SERVICE

We're committed to creating free, open, and accessible educational resources. If you encounter any accessibility issues with this book, please [contact us](#).

ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES

The web version of this textbook includes the following accessibility features:

- All content can be navigated using a keyboard
- Links, headings, and tables are formatted to work with screen readers
- Non-decorative images include alt text. When alt text is insufficient there are links in image captions to long descriptions of images (in a collapsible section at the bottom of the page). At the end of every long description is a link that will return you to the image in text.
- Information is not conveyed by color alone.

H5P ACTIVITIES

H5P activities are HTML based interactive activities that are used throughout this book. All H5P activities are labeled with a heading formatted title and instructions outside the body of the activity. There are several different types of activities. Some don't require any reader engagement, these include presentation slides, and collapsible "accordion" text. These activities have built-in buttons to go to the next slide or read the next section. There are also interactive activities like flashcards and multiple-choice questions. Multiple choice questions have a "check" button after all of the choices, arrows to move to the next question, and a "retry" button if you answer incorrectly. There are two "image hotspot" activities; images are annotated with clickable buttons. When readers click on the buttons they can read more about that section of the image. These activities are fully usable with screen readers and include additional image description when necessary to describe information in the images.

Drag and Drop activities require more complex engagement. They ask the reader to match one or more draggable images or objects with one or more "drop zones" by placing the image into the zone. All objects and drop zones include descriptive labels. Screen readers will always read out the label on the draggable object, but some screen readers may not read out the name of the drop zone until after you place a draggable object into it. You can always select items that are already placed in one drop zone and move them to another zone before checking your answers.

Drag the Words activities are similar to Drag and Drop activities. The drop downs are 'blanks' in sentences, and the draggable objects are words that you can use to fill in the blanks. This activity type is compatible with VoiceOver on Chrome but may be less accessible with JAWS and NVDA in other browsers. Some readers

report needing to switch between browse mode and focus mode to correctly 'drop' words in the blanks.

In the [Language Endangerment and Revitalization section of Chapter 3](#), there is an interactive map that shows how the colonization of North America affected indigenous language groups. It allows readers to scroll through multiple slides and see how the map changes and read the author's commentary on those changes. This activity isn't fully accessible to readers who use screen readers because the map images are complex. A long description of the entire activity is linked in the description of the activity, under the title.

LIST OF KNOWN ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES:

While we strive to ensure that this resource is as accessible and usable as possible, we might not always get it right. Any issues we identify will be listed below.

- Summary elements:
 - This book uses drop down summary elements in several chapters, and at the ends of chapters to format accessible long descriptions of complex images. By default, these drop downs are collapsed. Readers can click on the drop downs to expand them and read the text. These summary elements work like buttons and are fully keyboard navigable. They are compatible with most screen readers in most browsers. However some screen readers and some browsers may use different terms to describe these elements, which could be unintuitive to readers using screen readers.

- Scott Ohara summarizes [how screen readers describe summary elements](#) on his blog:
 - “Disclosure Triangle” with Narrator, VoiceOver and TalkBack when paired with Edge/Chrome.
 - “Button” with NVDA when paired with Firefox, Edge or Chrome.
 - “Summary” with VoiceOver when paired with Firefox or Safari.
 - Bugged behavior or no role announced with TalkBack with Firefox or iOS VO with Safari, respectively.
- Drag the Words H5P activities. There are two drag the words activities in this book, that may not be accessible with every screen reader in every browser (see the H5P section of this accessibility statement to learn more.)

ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

The web version of this book was designed to meet [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1](#), level AA standards.

LET US KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS ACCESSING THIS BOOK

If you encounter any accessibility barriers while reading this book, please get in touch with the UO OER team by emailing us using [this contact form](#). Please include the location of the issue in the text, a description of the issue, and information about the software, browser and/or assistive technology you are using to read the

book. We will get back to you as soon as possible with an accommodation.

ATTRIBUTION

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CHAPTER 1 - THE SECRETS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

CHAPTER SECTIONS

1. **INTRODUCTION**

2. **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE, AND 'LANGUAGING'**

3. **LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND LANGUAGE LEARNING MYTHS**

4. **MINDSETS AND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

5. **SECRETS OF POLYGLOTS**

6. **WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVATION TO LEARN LANGUAGE(S)?**

7. **YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS HERE**

Introduction

BIBI HALIMA AND KELI YERIAN

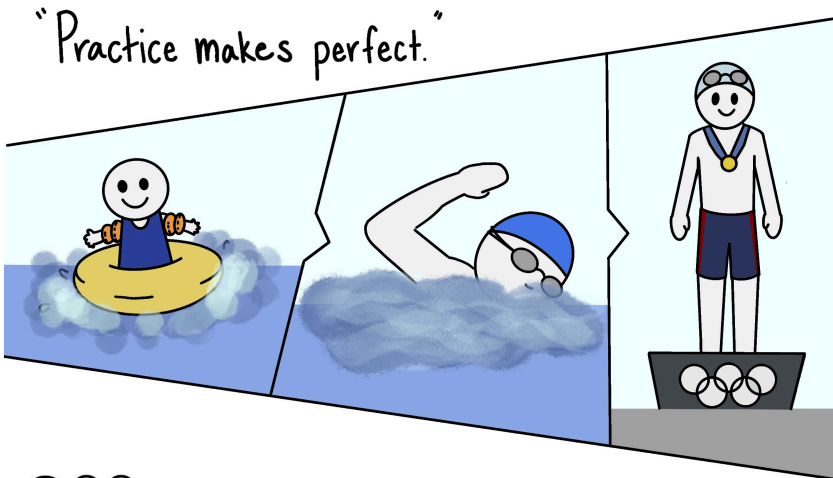


“Language learning is like an art that requires the perfect fusion of colors and exquisite control of the brush.”

-Nobody said that!

If language learning were a perfect art, we would all need... Help!

What if someone told you that you couldn't pick up a paintbrush unless you were already a great artist? What if someone said you could only swim in the pool if you were an Olympic-level swimmer? Or that you couldn't make pasta in the kitchen because you're not yet a 5-star chef? You would immediately know that such high standards are ridiculous. Then why do many of us have such fear of learning languages 'imperfectly'?



Similarly, language learning is not something you need to perfect in order to enjoy it or to be successful. In fact 'perfect' is not even a realistic concept when it comes to how languages work. Does this surprise you? You might have felt perfection was required when you were facing a test in your language class and you couldn't remember when to use Spanish *ser* vs. *estar*, or which word order to use in Japanese, or which tones you should apply to each word in Chinese. Many of us are used to measuring our success by how well we passed those tests.

But on the flip side, imagine going to Mexico and successfully asking where to find the bus stop and the shops, even though you used *ser* instead of *estar* almost all the time. Or picture yourself in Beijing roaming the street markets, negotiating with vendors in Chinese and successfully bringing fresh produce back home despite hearing some unfamiliar tones. Or see yourself in Alexandria going to a local café and successfully placing your order

in Arabic without perfecting the difference between the Arabic glottal stop *hamza* and the Arabic vowel *fathah*.

In these flip-side examples, how did it go? Yes, everything went fine! We could even say 'perfect' because you used language successfully to get something done. Instead of 'practice makes perfect', we could say 'practice makes proficient'.

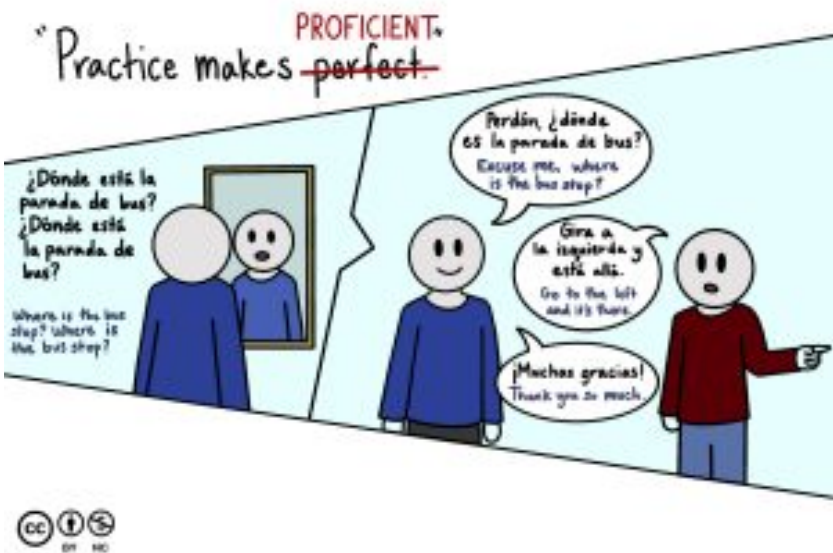


Figure 1. [Accessible long description.](#)

So now allow us to rephrase and say,

If language learning is an art, we are all creative artists. Human artists and human learners!

There is no secret code and no shortcut to language learning but there is a way to understand how humans learn languages. In this chapter, we will put these pieces together that will help you see your (nearly) limitless possibilities to learn and liberate yourself in the language(s) you are learning.

CHAPTER GOALS

At the end of this chapter, I will be able to:

- Compare language and communication
- Identify some common language learning myths
- Determine where I stand on the continuum of I-can and I-cannot mindset
- Discover what motivates me to keep going on my language learning journey
- Learn the secrets of polyglots

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Image Description

Figure 1: Practice Makes ~~deleted~~perfect ~~replaced with~~Proficient

Comic with text in Spanish, and translated to English:

Panel 1: a person in a blue shirt talks to themselves in the mirror.
“¿Dónde está la parada de bus? ¿Dónde está la parada de bus?”
“Where is the bus stop? Where is the bus stop?”

Panel 2: The same person talks to a person on the street, “Perdón, ¿dónde es la parada de bus? Excuse me, where is the bus stop?”
They respond, “Gira a la izquierda y está allá. Go to the left and it's there.”

“¡Muchas gracias! Thank you so much.”

[Return to Figure 3.](#)

Communication, Language, and 'Languaging'

BIBI HALIMA AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between language and communication?
2. What is languaging?
3. Do we need a language to communicate?

Aren't communication and language the same thing?

Let's imagine a scenario first to see why the answer to this question is "No".

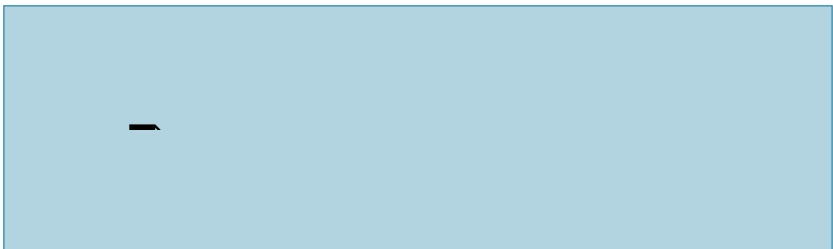
Imagine you ask your friend, "How are you?" and they say, "Fine"

but their tone is flat, arms limp, and they are not smiling. What would you do?

You would probably ask, "Are you sure?"



Similarly in the video below from the famous TV sitcom *Friends*, Ross also keeps saying "I'm fine!" to his friends, but they are not convinced. Herepeats the same words but has a forced smile, tense gestures, and a "loud and squeaky" voice. It is not easy to trick your friends, especially when they know you inside out!





One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=39#oembed-1](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=39#oembed-1)

In both scenarios, your friend and Ross use **language** – the words “I’m fine” – but indirectly **communicate** that they are not fine at all. What’s the difference here?

The difference is that communication is not limited to language. This is a key point when it comes to language learning. It means you already have many resources for communication even without knowing a language.

While language serves as one important means of expression, communication transcends words. In these scenarios, your friend and Ross rely on wordless communication such as gestures, facial expressions, movement, tone of voice, and volume to signal a message that contradicts their words. Humans do this all the time.

Defining communication is not as straightforward as you would think. Communication means different things to different people across diverse settings. However, one thing that is non-negotiable about human communication is that it is not limited to words, signs, or sounds. It is a human practice that we do constantly, with or without language. In the simplest words, Merriam Webster

(n.d.) defines communication as “a process by which information is exchanged through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior” (Definition 1).

VanPatten (2017) gives a similar but slightly different definition:

“Communication is the expression, interpretation, and sometimes negotiation of meaning in a given context. What is more, communication is also purposeful”

From this definition, we can conclude that the essence of communication lies in the fact that it is a mutual process of meaning-making between two or more people, one that is sometimes successful and other times unsuccessful. In other words, we can *fail* to communicate even when we *do* share a language, and we can *succeed* at communicating even when we *don't* share a language.

Why? Because communication is more than just language. It relies on context, body orientation, use of space, hand gestures, facial expressions, our relationship and history with those we are talking to, our cultural expectations, and more. When we are aware of these broader aspects of communication, we can rely on more than just language to express ourselves, just like in the examples above.

THEN WHAT EXACTLY IS LANGUAGE?

Language is everywhere and is used every day as part of human communication. You catch it when you overhear people talk, you read it on street signs, you hear it in a song while driving, you write it when you text someone in the morning. It is ubiquitous and constant, like the air we breathe each day.

Defining language can be tricky but **linguists** have made significant efforts to clarify its nature. Let's look at three perspectives below

in an image slider that will help us understand its fundamental properties and functions.

LANGUAGE DEFINITIONS



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LANGUAGE OR LANGUAGING?

Most of the viewpoints you read above describe language as a system that is connected to human cognition. Yes, a big part of this phenomenon has to do with our neural mechanisms but it is a communal practice too. Besides its cognitive aspect, language is a *social action*.

At this point, we invite you to view language as a

“verb” and not a “noun”.

Imagine your friend encourages you to come to their party, or your roommate asks if they can borrow your car for the weekend. In the first instance your friend is *inviting* and in the second case your roommate is *requesting*. These are acts we are doing through words. Consider another definition of language here by Bloome and Beauchemin (2016) that suggests language is “inseparable from and constitutive of the actions and reactions of people in response to each other (p. 152)”. Through language people can perform communicative and social acts.

The point here is that language is not just a thing like a tool we hold in our hand or a neural system that resides in our brain. Notice that the metaphors ‘tool’ and ‘system’ are both nouns. Language is also an action that we are *doing*. ‘Inviting’ and ‘requesting’ are verbs! When we use language, we are languaging! Language is what we do, create, share, and build together.

Languaging has a direct effect on our realities and identities. Languaging creates a legal reality when we speak up for our rights in precise language or decipher **jargon** in legal documents. It signals political identity when we voice our allegiance to a political party. It reinforces religious identity when we express our beliefs. It constructs social identity when we interact with friends in daily life. It shapes cultural and ethnic identity when we share our cultural

practices and values. And it builds personal identity when we express ourselves even in something as private as a journal.

When we *language*, we are creating social realities with others and constructing our own.

SO DO WE NEED A LANGUAGE TO COMMUNICATE?

Let's go back to a language learning scenario to answer this question.

Imagine a situation where two people do not completely share a language. One person is a student from the U.S. who is on a study abroad program in Lisbon, Portugal. This person has a beginner level of Portuguese. They are lost in the street, looking at their phone. The second person is a local from Lisbon walking on the same street. The student asks the local where Rossio Square is in English, but the local does not speak much English. Imagine their interaction goes like this:

Student: Desculpe me... um, I'm lost, can you tell me where Rossio Square is?

Local: Eu não entendo (gesturing with their palms up, their head tipped to the side, and their brow furrowed)

Student: (realizing that person did not understand, points towards Rossio Square on the phone map and gestures with palms up and a shrug)

Local: (nods in understanding and starts explaining in Portuguese, pointing in the direction of Rossio Square)

Student: (understands some key points of what was said, nods and smiles) Thank you... um, obrigado!

Local: (smiles in understanding and waves goodbye) *Tchau-tchau*

Student: (waving hand) *Bye-bye, tchau*

Local: *Bye*

See, nothing can stop us from communicating

Language can be an exquisite and precise means of expressing your thoughts, desires, and emotions in words, but as we have learned, it is not essential to all communication. When you are learning a language, you can still communicate, no matter your current level.

In the example above, both people struggled a little to convey their meaning, but they didn't let this stop them from trying. You will almost certainly have the same experience of needing to **negotiate meaning** when learning a new language, but this is a natural part of the process of learning languages, and can even be fun with a can-do approach. To answer the question "Do we *need* a language to communicate?" it is crucial to remember we have plenty of resources beyond words at our disposal for getting our point across, and nothing should stop us from trying!

RECALL AND REFLECT

Think of a time when you or someone you know communicated very well using little to no words. How did they do it?

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Language Ideologies and Language Learning Myths

BIBI HALIMA AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are language ideologies and why do they matter?
2. What are some common language learning myths?

Nod and smile if you've assumed any of the following to be true:

- Some languages are inherently more difficult than others.
- Some languages are inherently more logical and beautiful than others.
- Some languages sound funnier than others.
- There is always a proper way of articulating a word in a language.

- The best kind of language is produced by native speakers.
- The best way to learn a language is through immersion or study abroad.

Keep smiling and read on.

These assumptions are a few of the widely held beliefs about language learning. In the last section you learned that you don't need to share a language to communicate with someone, much less know it perfectly. But maybe you still think that you need at least a year or two in a language class before you begin trying to speak. Perhaps you think you'll never be able to speak like a native, so you are discouraged to try. These beliefs are the examples of **language ideologies**.

LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES

Michael Silverstein, one of the leading figures in linguistic anthropology, defined these ideologies as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein, 1979, p. 193). Interestingly, these ideologies are ubiquitous but they do not come from human reasoning. Instead, they show us how people feel about and perceive a particular language or languages in general.

DO LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES MATTER?

Imagine a scenario where a job applicant is judged negatively in an interview based on their **regional dialect**, despite being highly qualified. This implies that the interviewer holds a **standard-language ideology** and we can infer that the interviewee's dialect is considered less **prestigious** and professional.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=51#h5p-3](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=51#h5p-3)

To know more about the case of Pakistan, read an opinion by [Punjani and Khan \(2020\)](#).

It is important to note that language ideologies do not always have negative impacts. If they are constructive and progressive beliefs about language diversity, these ideologies can bring a massive change in making the world more tolerant and diverse for all. **Language ideologies** are game changers! To visualize and understand the power of a language ideology that believes in preserving **endangered** and **local languages**, look at the example of [UNESCO's project](#) in the Amazon region of South America, which focuses on safeguarding linguistic and cultural heritage.

You might realize at this point that we too (as authors) have a language ideology in this book. Our ideology promotes the message that every language matters. For example, that efforts should be made to preserve **endangered languages**. To answer the question 'does **language ideology** matter?' we should understand that these beliefs about language shape our identities and drive the course of social actions as well. Think about it – the

way we perceive and talk about languages influences everything, from how we make friends to how we judge others in job interviews. It also influences how we learn new languages.

LANGUAGE LEARNING MYTHS: QUESTIONING THE OBVIOUS

Language ideologies are everywhere and we want you to notice that they contribute to your own language learning process as well. For example, if you think Hebrew is too complex of a language to learn, you will probably not choose to learn it. And if you subscribe to the idea that language learning in general is difficult, you may not even start to learn at all. This [TedTalk by Mathew Youlden](#) explains that learning any language can be an easy task if one starts the journey with questioning their own myths.

Since this is the first chapter of this book, let's take the opportunity to debunk some obvious myths about language learning right from the beginning. For example, in the last section we saw that we can communicate even when we feel that we do not know a language well enough to do so. The idea that communication is limited to language is one of the common myths. Let's explore what some of the other ones are.

MYTH 1: YOU CAN ONLY LEARN LANGUAGES EASILY WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG. I'M TOO OLD NOW!

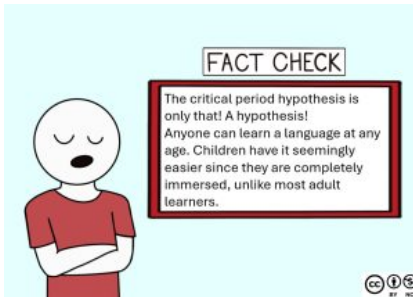
If someone says any of the following:

- Babies learn faster than adults.
- Learning a language is easier for children.
- The best time to learn a language is in one's initial years of life.

They are referring to the **critical period hypothesis**. There is a big discussion in the subfield of Linguistics called Second Language Acquisition (SLA) about how age plays an important role in learning languages. But what exactly the role is remains a debate among scholars. Penfield and Roberts (1959) first proposed the hypothesis that our ability to learn languages gets diminished after a biologically determined phase. The hypothesis promotes the notion that the sooner a child starts learning a language the better.



However, this remains only a hypothesis to this day!



Yes, it's true that children tend to learn seemingly effortlessly in their naturalistic and immersive environments, unlike adults who tend to put themselves in a conscious state of mind to learn a language. But many adults learn languages very well! It is

never too late to learn a language, even fluently. Claiming that it is 'easy' for children to learn a language is debatable. Even with constant immersion and simplified **motherese**, it takes babies many months to say their first word and children take several years to develop their first language completely. Let's say 4-6 years! And they continue to become more sophisticated across more topics and **domains** as they mature into adulthood.

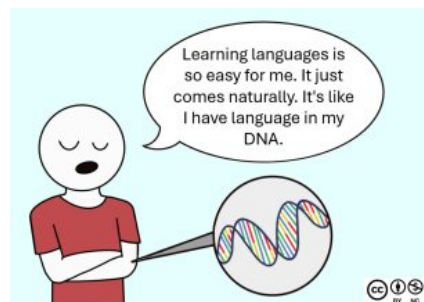
So can we say it's really that easy for children? It is not a one-night transformation for adults either. Language learning can take a lot of time and that's okay. Adults have the advantages of being able to consciously dedicate themselves to the task, to be more cognitively mature, and to already speak at least one language. In short, it is completely possible to learn a language at any age you wish to do so. If you want to know more about this topic, listen to Kaitlyn Tagarelli on [Am I too old to learn a new language?](#)

MYTH 2: YOU CAN LEARN A LANGUAGE, BUT ONLY IF YOU HAVE LANGUAGE IN YOUR DNA.

Maybe you have heard some people saying one or more of the following:

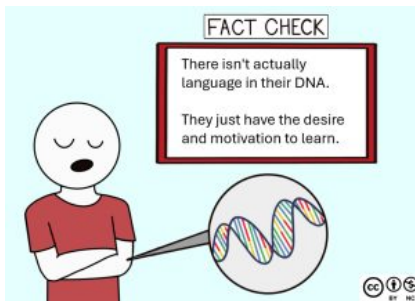
- Some people are better at languages than others.
- Languages come so naturally to that person.
- I have a gift for languages.

It is true that some people exhibit remarkable progress when learning language, but does it mean that some people have language in their DNA? No, it does not. Instead, it is about **language learning aptitude** and the **motivation** people have towards a



language. Language learning aptitude is a prediction of how well you can learn the different skills of a language. For example, some learners can differentiate subtle sound differences and reproduce them very well. This may be because of their previous language

learning experiences or simply their ability to distinguish sounds. This does not mean they have innate language learning abilities.



Someone who has the ability to differentiate sounds may be able to learn tonal languages like Chinese or Vietnamese more quickly than those who struggle to discern sounds. Language learning aptitude is usually predicted by a formal aptitude assessment like [The](#)

[Modern Language Aptitude Test \(MLAT\)](#). It is important to note that this aptitude is not fixed, innate or static for all languages. It can change for different languages and one can improve it during one's language learning journey (Singleton, 2017).

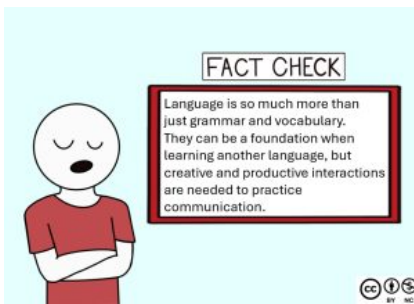
More than aptitude, motivation plays a key role. If you have a strong desire to learn, you'll learn faster than someone who simply has more aptitude, just like learning any other skill such as cycling, knitting, or baking. Imagine you are traveling to a different country in a month and you are motivated to learn some basic expressions in order to communicate with people. This upcoming trip will likely motivate you to make more consistent efforts to learn the language than if you were not traveling. Despite individual differences in aptitude, your motivation will make the most difference. If you want to know more about this topic, listen again to Kaitlyn Tagarelli on [Are some people just good at learning new languages?](#)

MYTH 3: ALL YOU NEED IS... GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY

[Loud beep sound please] This is a BIG myth!

It is true that both grammar and vocabulary are essential parts of language but they are far from being everything. Imagine you want to learn how to drive but you focus only on learning the different parts of the car. Would that be enough? Of course you need to know

what the engine and brakes are but what matters the most for drivers is whether you can hit the brake when the traffic light turns red. Similarly, while grammar and vocabulary are the ABCs of language, you still need creative, interactive practice to learn to communicate in it.



Unfortunately, most language learning settings stress the ABCs and this kind of explicit learning can support the ideology of **prescriptivism**, which tells us the 'correct' and 'incorrect' use of language and emphasizes strictly following standardized rules. This

'should-do' and 'must-do' ideology can demotivate learners and

prevent them from jumping into communication. Remember that language is a social activity; while it is fine to start with some 'should-dos' (some basics 'rules' of the language), it is equally important to discover some 'could-dos' (creative possibilities for using the language). And it is always important to remember the primary purpose of language learning is communication.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=51#h5p-4>

MYTH 4: CHOOSE ONE OR THE OTHER! LANGUAGES MUST BE PURE!

Imagine Maria is learning Spanish in the US. It is her first year of learning and she has developed remarkable conversational fluency. Her first language is English and when she talks to her friends who either know or are learning Spanish with her, her conversations look like this...

Maria: ¿Hola, que tal?

Anthony: Hey Maria, I'm alright, but life's been busy lately. ¿Y tu?

Maria: Vale, a veces work can be really stressful.

Anthony: For sure, and you know the deadline for the final project is coming up.

Maria: Oh, don't remind me. El trabajo nunca se acaba.

Notice how seamlessly Maria and Anthony mix the two languages in the example above. This process of mixing languages is called **translanguaging**. This is a theoretical lens that views languages as dynamic, flexible, and fluid systems for communication. Although we label languages as 'Spanish', 'English', 'Arabic', 'French', etc., research indicates that the bilingual or multilingual brain does not store languages as different systems. As Vogel and Garcia (2017) explain "... there are not two interdependent language systems that bilinguals shuttle between, but rather one semiotic system integrating various lexical, morphological, and grammatical linguistic features in addition to social practices and features..." (p. 5).



If you are hearing the idea that languages are not actually separate systems for the first time, you must be wondering, "Is that really true?" and your brain might trick you here with the ideology of **linguistic purism**. It's also possible you

feel pressured to keep your target language free from the influence of your first language. But rest assured that blending two or more languages is a normal human activity for multilinguals. In other words, you don't have to choose only one language to speak at a time... unless you choose to! If you want to know more about translanguaging as it can be used in language classrooms, listen to Eowyn Crisfield, [What is translanguaging, really?](#)

MYTH 5: I NEED TO SOUND LIKE A NATIVE SPEAKER

"Do you know what a foreign accent is? It's a sign of bravery!" – Amy Chua

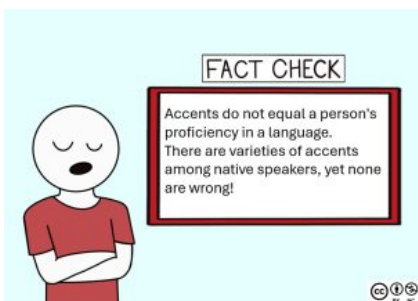
We have heard so many times fellow students in language classes say things like "I don't want to be disrespectful" or "I don't want to sound dumb" when it comes to pronouncing words in other languages. But think about it, we all have an



accent, even in our native languages. In the Pacific Northwest of the United States we have a different accent in English than people from the East coast, the South, or the Midwestern United States.

And it's certainly different from the accents of people from New Zealand, Scotland, or India. You probably wouldn't think to correct the way a Canadian says "about" or the way an Australian says "under" because you know it's just the way people from those places speak, it's just their normal accent. So why when a Spanish speaker speaks English with a "Spanish" accent does it suddenly become a problem? Why is the solution to this "problem" always to correct the accent? Oregonians don't correct Canadians or people from the East Coast, so why are certain types of accents okay and not others?

The idea of "proper" pronunciation comes from an ideology called **nativespeakerism**, another one of those things that exists due to power, i.e. the prestige of a native speaker over a non-native one. This term was coined by Holliday (2005) with regards to English language learning and English language teaching. However, it is not restricted to any one language. Many speakers of other languages also assume that native speakers are always better speakers than those who have learned languages later in life.



Now ask yourself, where did you learn how to pronounce things in your second language? Your language teacher? Social media? Your parents? Where do you think your parents or language teacher learned that pronunciation from? Probably

from their parents or language teachers. And the further back you go you realize that "proper" pronunciation is just whichever pronunciation was most used or accepted at a given time by the people who were called "native" speakers of a particular language.

This is a damaging belief. If you restrict yourself to this

discriminatory language ideology, be aware that you are limiting your chances for growth and the endless possibilities in language learning. Every accent is unique and beautiful; your efforts do not deserve biases and prejudice from yourself or from others. Your efforts instead are a sign that you are courageous and resilient enough to step out and embrace a bilingual journey.

Now that you have reached the end of this section, how would you respond to the following statements?

LANGUAGE MYTHS COMPREHENSION CHECK

Select the best answer for each question.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=51#h5p-5](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=51#h5p-5)

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Mindsets and Language Learning

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are growth and fixed mindsets?
2. How do they apply to language learning?

Maybe you've seen posters about mindsets in school or heard your teachers talk about them. What do you know about them? If you don't have previous knowledge about them, what can you guess?

GROWTH AND FIXED MINDSETS

A *growth mindset* is defined by Rasmussen (2021) as “a belief that intelligence can be strengthened and expanded through dedication and hard work” (Chapter 8, para. 2). Seems obvious, right? People can learn new things. That much is intuitive. But what if we

introduce a *fixed mindset* into the equation? Rasmussen defined a fixed mindset as “the idea that intelligence is on a linear scale, and people fall somewhere on that scale and cannot budge from it” (Chapter 8, para. 1).

So, what is the difference here?

First let’s look at the idea of intelligence itself. The Merriam-Webster dictionary ((n.d.).)defines intelligence as “the ability to learn or understand or to deal with new or trying situations” (Definition 1). If you are a college student, you are likely starting to figure out how to file taxes, how to sign leases, and how to write an email to your professors. You are being confronted with many difficult situations that you are learning how to deal with right now. These are new and trying situations, just as Merriam-Webster states.

The other key part of this definition of intelligence is the ability to learn in these situations. Have you ever said that you just aren’t good at math? Or whatever subject for that matter. That is an example of a fixed mindset because by stating that you aren’t good at something, you are stating that your ability to learn – your intelligence – is fixed and will never change. But that’s not true, right?

Learning is a constant journey, and we do it all the time. From the moment we were born, we started to learn about the world, about language, about life. We are all born with human intelligence (the ability to learn), but fixed mindsets essentially tell us that we can’t learn. How can our ability to learn just disappear? Newsflash, it doesn’t! It is not natural to stop learning.

Fixed mindsets can take over our learning when we become attached to a score or result such as a grade. If we don’t get our desired outcome, our attitudes may start to falter. We stop taking notes and start messing around. By giving in to our fixed mindset,

we are limiting ourselves and our ability to learn. What if, instead, we took that bad test score and asked the teacher for help, or searched for resources that worked better for us? This is what a growth mindset looks like. We are changing the narrative that our brains are not capable into something empowering – “I can do this”. In other words, we can either hold ourselves back or propel ourselves forward.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

After learning briefly about growth and fixed mindsets, where do you think you fall on the scale? It could vary from one aspect of your life to another, so if something pops into your head, think about that. This exercise is not to beat yourself up, but rather to dive into our brains and our thought processes so that hopefully we can change those habits to be more positive. You don't have to be a grade-A student in every class or even in any class, but hopefully, you can believe in your ability to learn.

GROWTH MINDSET AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Though this book is about languages, the concept of growth mindsets can be applied to every aspect of your life, from fixing your broken phone screen to solving a chemistry problem. But this is a book about how to learn languages, so let's see some growth mindset approaches to language learning.

WAYS TO APPLY GROWTH MINDSET TO LANGUAGE LEARNING

You can influence your mindset!

First, it is *your* mindset and you can make decisions about it. It is natural to feel motivated with your language lessons one day, go inconsistent on some days, and feel like quitting on other days. The good news is you can always readjust. You can shift or reverse your gears from a fixed or inconsistent mindset to a growth mindset, focusing on what you can change next instead of how you can never change. Instead of telling yourself it's impossible to grow, you can *choose* to grow by reflecting on your progress or goals, managing your time, or finding more ways to have fun with the process of learning itself.

Allow mistakes

Do you feel distressed and anxious when you make a 'mistake' in verb conjugation, mispronounce a word, or mess up with sentence structure? When we feel anxious, we are more likely to overthink and not let ourselves use the language freely. Krashen (1982) uses the metaphor of an "affective filter" to describe how our emotions can either hinder or support our learning. Negative emotions like stress and anxiety raise the affective filter and ultimately prevent us from learning. But a growth mindset allows us to see 'mistakes' as chances to learn and lowers the affective filter.

Redefine your view of success

One major factor that causes language learning anxiety is when we have a linear view of the process. When we see language as climbing a mountain and reaching a summit, we might feel that the benefits of language learning are only at the summit, rather than being an intrinsic part of the path itself. In fact, every step on the path is part of your success, and every step leads to a new discovery. A growth mindset focuses on the value of the journey as well as whatever end goal you may have. In this way, we can replace our mental model of the process. Instead of imagining a long climb ever-upwards, we can see the journey as one of exploration and side-adventures that takes us uphill and sometimes even downhill along the way. As Larsen-Freeman (2017) puts it, “learning is not climbing a developmental ladder; it is not unidirectional. It is nonlinear. [...] Language and its learning have no endpoints. Both are unbounded” (p. 27).

Reach out to people who can help you

It is natural to sometimes feel lonely and helpless in any learning venture! Just like if you were exploring a new city alone, feeling anxious, it's important to remember there are other people around you who can guide you. In your language learning journey you can similarly seek help from many people around you too. Surround yourself with supportive people (mentors or peers who are also learning) who are or have been in your place and acknowledge your path. If you need feedback, don't hesitate to reach out and seek advice from people in the profession. They want to see you grow! Having a growth mindset includes noticing these resources around you.

Speak your growth mindset out loud

Honor your efforts of learning a new language and speak positive words for yourself. Come up with your own affirmations and say them aloud. This will help you acknowledge your persistence and improvement. For example, *"I am making progress"*, *"I can do this"*, or *"Every step counts"*.

In sum, there might be common ideas out there that "kids just learn languages so much easier" or "the grammar is way too hard for me!" (some of the common misconceptions from earlier in this chapter). Even if we don't intend for these thoughts to impede our learning, they affect our attitude in a negative way. Anyone can learn a language. No matter how young or old. We are all humans. We are all capable of learning.

At the end of this section, assess your understanding.

MINDSETS AND LANGUAGE LEARNING COMPREHENSION CHECK



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=53#h5p-6>

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Secrets of Polyglots

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- Who are polyglots?
- What are some misconceptions about them?
- What are their secrets for language learning?

If you were born in the United States, chances are you only speak one language well: English. It makes sense, and it's not necessarily a bad thing. Practically the whole country speaks English as a first or additional language. Different regions have different varieties, but overall we share this common language.

English has, for better or for worse, become a global language. It is the language of commerce, the language of travel, the language of power. It seems there is little need for native English speakers to speak anything else because much of the world is conforming

to them. In turn, the idea of someone speaking a second language is often seen as incredibly rare, impressive, and even exotic in the US. Yet it is precisely because we have prioritized English so much, even though the US has no official language, that we have pushed out the necessity of learning other languages. We have become a **monolingual** and **monocultural** society.

Follow up question: Have you ever met a polyglot? Someone who speaks multiple languages? We may not often notice polyglots in the United States, however when going to other countries, suddenly we see more and more people speaking multiple languages. In fact, this is backed by numbers, as the United States sits at a **bilingual** population of around 20% compared to the 67% across Europe, 55% across Canada, and 25% across India (Byers-Heinlen et al., 2019, pp. 1-2) . It is clear why we are outliers in this equation, so how can we change this?

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Let's first confront common misconceptions about polyglots.

"POLYGLOTS ARE RARE"

False! Polyglots exist everywhere! Many people in Europe, Africa, and Asia speak many languages,

typically their native language + their national language + a majoritized language like English, Spanish, or French.

“POLYGLOTS ARE ALL RICH ACADEMICS”

False again. Many immigrants, refugees, or villagers are forced to become polyglots to survive in their daily lives. People confront issues with access to power and access to services, and are therefore forced to learn the language(s) of power.

“POLYGLOTS HAVE AN INNATE TALENT FOR LANGUAGES”

Need I say false again? Polyglots, just like every other language learner, have to put in the hours to acquire linguistic and cultural content, and to put their language into practice.

So what is true about polyglots? When talking about a group of people so broad and diverse, it's hard to come up with a common statement, but one thing remains true no matter the background of the polyglot: they (usually) love languages. Another word for polyglot is *linguaphile*, which literally means 'lover of languages'.

SO, WHAT DO POLYGLOTS DO?

In other words, you might ask what are the “secrets” of polyglots. The simple answer to this question is that they are not wizards or inherently gifted with a language DNA. They are like all of us who equally find language learning overwhelming and are willing to take this challenge. The key difference lies in their effective methods that they develop to learn and retain target languages. The good news is that what polyglots do – methods and strategies – is not limited to polyglots only but is accessible to anyone who is dedicated to learning a language.

Here are some of the “secrets” of polyglots that you can open

They learn mostly on their own time

While polyglots seek guidance from instructors and formal settings like all of us, they mostly learn by themselves outside of the class. Polyglots are the most successful examples of autonomous learners who do not let only classrooms and formal lessons entirely control their learning but take the learning process in their own hands. Instead of waiting for classes to experience a language, they make time in their daily schedule and practice it on their own. Outside of the class, for example, they may surround themselves with the language environment and engage with media in the target language such as movies, songs, podcasts, and online language exchange apps. From goal setting to selecting and crafting materials to tracking their progress, polyglots actively engage in their learning experience.

They select and create their own language learning materials

Polyglots are self-directed learners who do not rely on opportunities that others can provide, but they also create their own. They craft their personalized materials and develop unique ways to learn languages that best fit their goals and learning systems. For example, they may create their own flashcards and

language games. They may pair up with another learner or with generative AI to create a dialogue or story. Polyglots do not only create but also select their own materials. For example, instead of relying solely on one textbook, they might visit a local library or start browsing on the internet to find an interesting resource for themselves such as illustrated magazines, audiobooks, recipes, or podcasts.

They are not afraid to be uncomfortable

Self-directed and autonomous learning inevitably presents some challenges as well for polyglots. This can include discomfort at grappling new patterns on their own, uncertainty with self-assessment, or lack of feedback. However, polyglots are language enthusiasts who are driven by their intrinsic love for languages and have huge tolerance for their uncertainty. They are not afraid to use the language with their 'incorrect' grammatical patterns. They also do not hesitate to pick up an unfamiliar resource to just look at it even though they do not fully understand. Instead of letting fear stop their learning, polyglots embrace their discomfort. With their [growth mindset](#), they view their incomplete understanding of texts or incorrect use of grammar or vocabulary as an inevitable natural part of their learning process.

They learn consistently in small chunks

What do you think is better, 10 minutes every day or 1 hour after 10 days? 10 minutes every day, of course. Polyglots make it a consistent daily practice even if it's just for a few minutes. In this way, they learn it in small chunks. They set realistic and clear goals (we'll talk about SMART goals in Chapter 5) to squeeze learning into their daily schedule. If they decide to join language learning apps, they use it consistently and set clear goals. For example, completing one or two app lessons every day is better than cramming multiple lessons after weeks in a single session.

They learn in an enjoyable way

Fun is the key! Polyglots understand that learning a language is not a one-day event, and that the learning process will become an

integral part of their lives. So, it's important to love the process itself! Instead of only viewing the new language as a destination, they focus more on the path and make sure to enjoy it. But fun and enjoyment mean different things to different people. One person may be a food lover who combines their interest in great food with their language goals. They might find recipes or listen to cooking shows in the target language. Another person may love sports and decides to watch news clips about teams in other countries. This gives them insight into both international sports and the language needed to describe it. Each of these learners are making the process a fun and memorable experience!

Let's read Logan's story to see how, as a polyglot, they approached language learning with a growth mindset during their trips to countries where their target languages are spoken.



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[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
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Similar to Logan's story, we can see that being a polyglot is not as daunting as it seems. While it is easy to separate people into *me* and *them*, remember that polyglots are people just like you. Polyglots usually love to speak in their various languages, and they prioritize the ability to communicate over perfection. After all,

communication doesn't require perfection, just a good enough attempt to convey an idea. So next time you find yourself in awe of someone who says that they speak Arabic, Chinese, and English, just know that you have the potential to do so too.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A POLYGLOT

Here is a day in Logan's life that demonstrates how a polyglot can stay connected to their multiple languages.



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here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=55#oembed-1>

Now that you've reached the end of this section, how would you respond to the following statements in the comprehension check below?

SECRETS OF POLYGLOTS COMPREHENSION CHECK



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<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=55#h5p-8>

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What is your Motivation to Learn Language(s)?

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What are two main types of motivation?
- How does this apply to language learning?

Why am I doing this?

When you were a kid, you probably asked your parents this question at some point about things you were told to do, and you probably got answers varying from “Because I said so” to “Remember, if you finish up soon, you’ll have time to play”. These responses serve as motivation for you to do that thing; one is an order and the other is a promise. There are, however, more ways

to being motivated! Scholars often divide motivation into two main categories that function in separate ways.

EXTRINSIC AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

“Because I said so” and “Remember, if you finish up soon, you’ll have time to play” are examples of *extrinsic* motivation. Extrinsic motivation is defined as “behaviors ... performed in order to receive something from others” (Kanevsky, 2022, para. 1). Keep in mind that these external motivators don’t have to be negative. Many people might learn a new skill, for example, to get a pay raise at their job, to get credits at college, or even just to get admiration from friends.

On the other hand, we have *intrinsic motivation*, which is when “behaviors are performed because of the sense of personal satisfaction that they bring” (Kanevsky, 2022, para. 1). In the case of language learning, this could look like learning a language just because you want to, or because you like being able to speak to more people. Either way, there is no external reward or punishment attached to your decision.

WHY IS MOTIVATION IMPORTANT?

Well, “without such motivation, we will almost certainly not engage in some activities or [...] make the necessary effort to complete an action or to achieve a specific goal” (Thohir, 2017, p. 21). Motivation drives the world, so motivation is required to do anything, including learning a language. But is one type of motivation better than the other? As it turns out, learners on average experience better results when their motivation is intrinsic. This is not to say that extrinsic motivation is bad, or that the two don’t blend together sometimes. Harmer (2001) says that “even where the original reason for taking

up a language course, for example, is extrinsic, the chances of success will be significantly enhanced if the students come to love the learning process” (p. 98).

When a learner is extrinsically motivated, they will often only do what is required to achieve a reward or avoid a punishment, no more, no less. This is very different from a learner who is intrinsically motivated because an intrinsically motivated learner is much more likely to try harder in classes, study more, or continue taking classes longer than required. They truly love what they are doing! Neither type of motivation is bad; however, one usually yields better results for learning.

CAN WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LANGUAGE LEARNING JOURNEY?

Not everyone is going to be naturally motivated to learn languages, so let's create some strategies to turn our motivations intrinsic.

- *Learn a heritage language.* If your family is from somewhere that speaks another language, maybe learning that language will feel different and more personal than a language you have no prior connection to.

- *Find friends that speak your target language.* If you don't have friends in your non-digital life who speak that language, many apps exist now that connect users around the world who wish to learn each other's languages. Such apps include but are not limited to [Tandem](#), [ConversationExchange](#), [Speaky](#), and [HelloTalk](#).
- *Find an aspect of culture related to your target language that interests you.* This could be something like sports, music, art, food, or something completely different. Watching videos on these topics is great because it is something we love that involves auditory input in our target language.

While we are all motivated by outside factors at some point, finding some deeper connection to a language can help you learn it better. So, what steps can you take to make your language journey more intrinsically motivated? Even finding one thing that you enjoy, whether that's one song or one dish from that culture, will have a lasting effect on your journey. By being more connected to our learning, we become more connected to our future.

EXTRINSIC AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION DRAG AND DROP EXERCISE



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

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Your Journey Begins Here

BIBI HALIMA AND KELI YERIAN

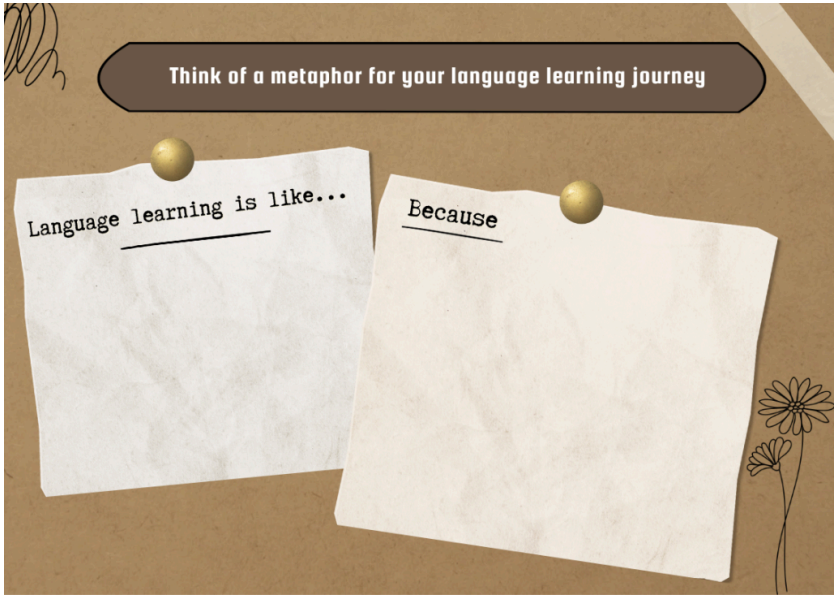
Before we end this chapter and you get ready for the next one, we invite you to take a moment to reflect and think of a metaphor for your language learning journey. Thinking of a metaphor will help you imagine your challenges and possibilities at the same time. Moreover, your personal metaphor can be a roadmap for you while you walk this path.

Below are some metaphors that people came up with during a [LinguaMania event with Dr. Linda Fisher \(2017\)](#) They finished the sentence: Language Learning is Like....

Metaphor	Because	Name
Painting a picture	because it starts off as something simple and pure but by the end it's complex and beautiful.	Stella
Having teeth implanted	because it hurts for ages but you are more attractive for it.	Unnamed
An oyster	because it might take a while for it to open, but when it does you find a pearl inside	Melina

Getting to know a city	because first you become familiar with the main areas, then you get to know other areas and eventually all the bits link up and you understand all of it.	Unnamed
Playing the violin	because the more you practice the easier it will become.	Calypso

Now pause for a moment and respond to the same prompt. "Language learning is like... because..." If you like, you can click, save, and print the image below to write down your insights. Think of a metaphor that profoundly connects with your own journey of language learning, write it down, post it somewhere and let the metaphor inspire you every day!



By questioning the myths, embracing messiness, and being in an “I-can” growth mindset, you can make language learning an enjoyable and memorable experience for yourself. There is no one way to master a language, although there are some “secrets” that successful language learners know.

See it as a journey of counting “learning steps” instead of labeling them as “errors”. For this, we encourage you to dive headfirst into positive language ideologies, hold fast to your motivations, and most of all believe in yourself.

Your journey begins here!

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CHAPTER 2 - APPROACHES TO (LANGUAGE) LEARNING

CHAPTER SECTIONS

1. **INTRODUCTION**
2. **LEARNING THEORIES**
3. **PROCEDURAL AND DECLARATIVE KNOWLEDGE**
4. **IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT LEARNING**
5. **MULTIMODAL WAYS OF LEARNING**
6. **TEACHING METHODOLOGIES**
7. **CONNECTING THE DOTS TO YOUR STORY**

Introduction

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

“He who loves practice without theory is like the sailor who boards ship without a rudder and compass and never knows where he may cast.”

-Leonardo da Vinci

In Morris Kline, *Mathematical Thought From Ancient to Modern Times* (1972)

Welcome to Approaches to Learning! Congratulations, you’ve made it to the second chapter.

Before we get started, we have a question for you. Have you ever questioned *how* you have been learning language? Have you paused and wondered if the ways you’ve been learning match your own preferences or goals? For example, you might ask whether memorizing flashcards for a written test about vegetables in your Mandarin class will help you to be conversationally fluent. Or you might wonder if studying dialogues in French class was a good approach to learning to recognize grammar patterns. Or you may question whether your decision to learn Spanish just by talking with your friends will work for you in the long run.

In fact, all of these can contribute to language learning in different ways. Many people believe that learning a language is a long,

tedious process. Well, it's true that it IS a long and sometimes tedious process, but you, the learner, can decide whether to make it also really fun and to make the effort worth it.

As a preview to this chapter, let's look at the example of Tim Doner. He's a polyglot who describes his learning process in detail without glamorizing the language learning process. Most of us are not teen polyglots like Tim, but there is plenty to learn from his story.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=62#oembed-1>

In the video, notice the many different ways of learning that Tim talks about. Most of his languages were learned on his own or 'in the wild' outside of a classroom, but he also has experience with French in a formal setting. He mentions different memory strategies for vocabulary learning as well as interacting with people to practice everyday phrases and gain cultural awareness.

This chapter will explain some of the learning theories and mechanisms behind how we learn, including successful learners like Tim. These include being aware of our own learning preferences and the differences between learning something

deliberately or more subconsciously. We also connect these theories to common ways of teaching language. In later chapters we focus on culture and questions of language power and access, which Tim also mentions at the end of his talk.

Let's dive in!

CHAPTER GOALS

At the end of this chapter, I will be able to:

- Compare different learning theories and their key characteristics
 - Explore examples of procedural and declarative knowledge
 - Identify my learning preferences and ways to help me learn
 - Give examples of implicit and explicit learning in various settings
 - Distinguish different teaching methods and identify them in practice
-

References

Kline, M. (1972). *Mathematical Thought From Ancient to Modern Times*. Oxford University Press.

Learning Theories

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What are some key theories about how we learn?
- How do they relate to ways of learning language?
- Which theories are most reflected in your own language learning so far?

There are many different learning theories, but let's talk about three very influential ones: behaviorism, cognitivism, and *constructivism*. You've likely been influenced by all of these during your years of education, but have not known how to identify them. "Why is it important to identify them?", you might ask. Since many people have different ways and preferences for learning, these theories can help us understand what we are actually doing when we learn. Different strategies are supported by different theories, and a strategy that builds long-term recollection of vocabulary for

one person might not work for another person. Diving into learning theories is imperative to optimize your knowledge of not only your **target language** but also how you learn in general.

BEHAVIORISM

Behaviorism explains learning by saying, “People need to be directed and [...] if the stimulus is something that the individual wants (a reward) or fears (a punishment), then the individual will respond accordingly and there will be a noticeable change in behaviour” (Bates, 2019, p. 23). This means that you are training your brain like a ringmaster trains a lion to do tricks in the circus. Much like the lion and the ringmaster in the image below, behaviorism relies on eliciting a specific response to a specific **stimulus** and the consequential reward to indicate correct behavioral patterns.



Language apps like Duolingo are a perfect example of behaviorist learning. Each time you get an answer right, you are rewarded with a *ding*. Whether you realize it or not, that ding (positive reinforcement/reward) makes your brain feel happy because it releases the hormone serotonin – the positive reinforcement for your correct response. At the end of the lesson, you are rewarded yet again with experience points, which in turn means the release of more serotonin. Your brain is being rewarded for regurgitating information it doesn't necessarily know how to use in context. This "**gamification**" of language learning is not bad. Still, learners may overestimate their skills because of that **serotonin release**, thinking that mastery can be achieved on an app.

Let's put this concept into context. Let's do a miniature language lesson, and since we've been harping on common language learning apps so much, we'll format this lesson like theirs. You will see flashcards in Punjabi that relate to activities later in this section, and it is your job to remember words by listening to them and seeing them with translation. You may spend as much time as you want studying the cards, but once you move on to the video in the next section, don't come back to the flashcards. We want you to notice what you learn. Maybe how much, or how little, you remember. How difficult was it? Maybe you know how to say certain phrases, but can you put them in context?

PUNJABI FLASHCARD EXERCISE



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=65#h5p-10](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=65#h5p-10)

Though you may have done well and perhaps even memorized all the vocabulary, remember that the validation you receive is not always indicative of your skill to actually use the language in real life.

COGNITIVISM

Cognitivism is a vastly different learning theory from behaviorism. It acknowledges that “information is actively processed inside the mind of the person and the behaviour modification takes place by searching for the relationships that exist between the various bits of information” (Bates, 2019, p. 39). Instead of the regurgitation of knowledge and skills that occurs in behaviorism, there is more active engagement of the learner’s brain than we see in behaviorist tasks. Cognitivist learning can include things like solving language

puzzles, analyzing scripted dialogues, or using clever memory strategies since these activities encourage our brains to search for relationships in the material.

Cognitivism involves the active engagement of the learner's mind and the creation of new ideas through drawing on **mental schemata**. Through analyzing written or spoken dialogues, for example, you might be able to guess at some phrases right away – things like 'Hello', and 'My name is' – based on your knowledge of body language or how greetings typically work. In a crossword in your second language, you may use your knowledge of your first language and word play to figure out a clue. Using your brain to form more long-term connections and pattern recognition leads to better retention and understanding of knowledge.

For the next activity that relates more to cognitivism, you'll be watching a conversation in Punjabi and analyzing what you think is happening based on your prior experiences. Abhay and Halima, two of the authors of this OER, happen to both speak Punjabi. There will be subtitles in Punjabi and **romanized** Punjabi, so feel free to follow along out loud. Throughout this activity, you might struggle to understand what Abhay and Halima are saying unless you speak Punjabi. If you don't speak Punjabi, see how you can use your brain to make some sense of what is happening. For example, use the Punjabi words you have already learned in the previous flashcard activity as well as your own powers of observation, reasoning, and inferences based on your own lived experiences.

PUNJABI DIALOGUE BETWEEN ABHAY AND HALIMA

Watch this video first



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1?p=65#oembed-1>

PUNJABI DIALOGUE EXERCISE

Choose the right answer for each question.





An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=65#h5p-11>

How do you feel after this activity? Confused? Overwhelmed? Interested? Maybe you are excited that you could recognize a few words, or pleased that you could infer that they were greeting each other without understanding everything (or hardly anything) they were saying. All of these are completely normal reactions. As mentioned above, cognitivism is a theory that says learners need to do this mental work, to “search for the relationships that exist between the various bits of information” (Bates, 2019, p. 39). We can’t just memorize information; we need to puzzle through it actively to really learn it well.

However, cognitivism is missing something that the third theory, constructivism, has: learning through social interaction. The next section shows what happens when we blend our own understanding of ideas with the ideas of other people, pulling from our communal lived experiences to create new thoughts and sentences.

CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivism is a theory that stresses how learners actively build their own understanding in their learning environments. It emphasizes the role of interaction with others and reflection in the learning process. It is important to note that constructivism, unlike cognitivism, does not separate learners' mental process from their learning experience. Instead, it highlights that "... the individuals' contributions to what is learned are not negligible and the culture and social environments in which individuals interact with others are also important in acquisition of skills and knowledge" (Baştürk, 2016, p. 904).

This essentially means that according to a constructivist approach, the social environment in which learning occurs is quintessential to forming a learner's knowledge. Learning does not only consist of the internal, individual learning seen in cognitivism. Whereas a teacher who is influenced mostly by cognitivist theories might be happy to just lecture in front of the classroom and give homework for students to practice individually, a teacher inspired by constructivist ideologies would emphasize student-led activities, questions, projects, and anything that helps the students learn together.

We can't fully demonstrate constructivism in this book since you are likely reading it on your own. Instead, in this last activity we'll offer some scenarios for you to imagine what constructivism could look like in practice.

EXTENDING PUNJABI DIALOGUE TO CONSTRUCTIVISM

Let's keep going with our Punjabi example and imagine each of the following examples of constructivism in real life

- Traveling to Pakistan or India where Punjabi is spoken and learning by practicing with local speakers
- Finding a South Asian culture club near you and finding people with whom to practice Punjabi
- Going on language learning social media apps and finding Punjabi speakers

Furthermore, outside of the Punjabi specific examples, constructivism can also look like...

- Exploring shopping sites in your target language with a study buddy
- Going to a restaurant of your target language's culture with friends and speaking in your target language the whole time
- Describing an image to your peer who cannot see it and have them guess it
- Creating an original dialogue with a peer in a language class

THINK BACK...

In what ways did Tim in the previous section use strategies that relate to behaviorism, cognitivism, or constructivism? Which learning theories do you think most influence him?

REFLECTING ON YOUR PAST LANGUAGE LEARNING

Now that we know about and have practiced and imagined learning a language with a focus on three main learning theories, sit down and ask yourself the questions that we started with. How have you been learning languages in the past? Has it been effective? What works and doesn't work for you?

Your ideal learning situation may be unique and different from everyone else's on the planet, so the beauty of independent language study, whether you are also taking a language class or not, is that you get to create your own environment and choose your own strategies. Learning is not a one-size-fits-all situation. Your ideal environment might incorporate varying degrees of behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. Notice that these three theories can all help describe different aspects of language learning, and they can even build on one another, as we saw in the activities above. Maybe you use Duolingo for 15 minutes a day to review and learn vocabulary, watch one episode of your favorite show in your target language, and speak with your more fluent friend for 20 minutes. It's best to not limit ourselves to one idea of

language learning as the 'best method'. Perhaps some combination of all of these is best. Ultimately, experiment and decide for yourself!

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Procedural and Declarative Knowledge

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is the difference between procedural and declarative knowledge?
- What are examples of procedural and declarative knowledge?
- How does this relate to language learning specifically?

An important part of language learning is gaining and processing *information* or in other words, *knowledge*! While there are many classifications of knowledge you can see in literature, two types of knowledge play a crucial role in language learning: *procedural* and *declarative*. This section not only differentiates between the

two with examples but also extends them to language learning to explain how they work together. As you navigate the discussion and activities on this page, be sure to notice that building both of them are essential for your effective language learning.

PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE

Do you have your driver's license? Maybe you ride your bike to work or to school. Or maybe you just walk. In any of these cases, if it is a routine, you probably do these actions without thinking about the specific procedures of how to get to your destination. For example, the daily ritual of how to start your car becomes automated. Similarly, if you bike, you most likely don't think about the mechanics of biking or even the speed you're going for the most part. It becomes what we call *procedural knowledge*, or "knowing how to do something" (Carpenter et al., 2000, p. 7). The focus here is on the 'how to do' part.

To extend this analogy to language learning, think about how you speak in your first language(s). You are able to use it effortlessly without thinking about its grammar patterns, for example. You can also build procedural knowledge in your second languages when you internalize its patterns. This is like driving a car without the need to think consciously about the parts of the car or how to operate them.

DECLARATIVE KNOWLEDGE

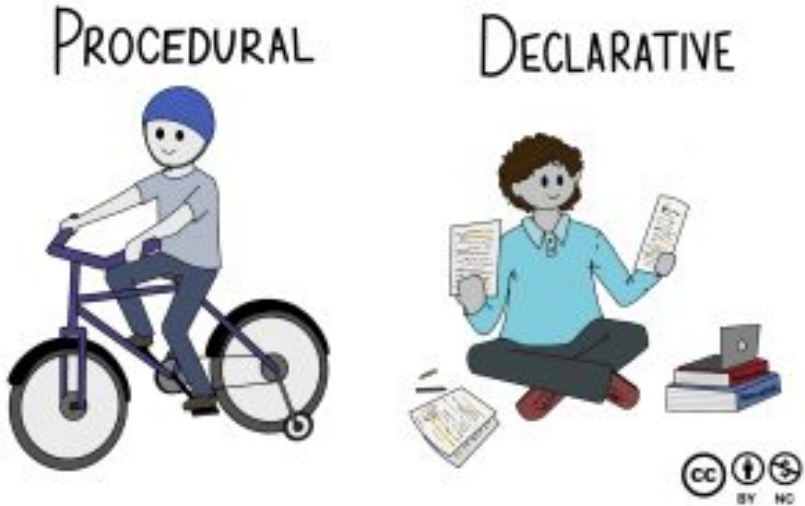
Declarative knowledge is another way of knowing. It is defined as, "knowing about something... the ability to discuss, explain, and analyze something" (Carpenter et al., 2000, p. 7). The focus here is on the 'about' part. Now we'll ask you the same question that we asked earlier. Do you have your driver's license? If yes, and

you live in the United States, you had to take a online test inside the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to demonstrate your conscious knowledge of traffic laws and parts of the car.

In the context of language learning, when we are able to consciously identify verb conjugations and figure out which pronoun to use for certain objects in gender-based languages, for example, it is like taking a test on the DMV computer to demonstrate what you know about the parts of the vehicle and their functions.

PUTTING THE TWO TOGETHER

To continue this driving test analogy, taking the road test to demonstrate your ability to actually drive is like conjugating past tense in a target language conversation without having to even think about it! It is second nature and comes naturally without thought. That's what the road test is testing for! The DMV wants to be reassured that these skills are automated for every driver on the road. Similarly, once we've learned to ride a bike, we no longer have to spend explicit mental energy to remember how to pedal or steer. As shown in the illustration below, procedural knowledge is knowledge demonstrated through action (that you may not know how to explain) whereas declarative knowledge is knowledge that you can easily explain.



When you are getting familiar with these two aspects of knowledge, do not jump to the conclusion that these are two separate “about” and “how to do” storage boxes in your brain that never interact with each other. There is some debate among second language research scholars about whether and how these two are related in our minds. Some scholars say that procedural knowledge must develop on its own subconsciously, parallel to declarative knowledge, while others say that declarative knowledge can become procedural knowledge through practice. Lightbown and Spada (2013) review this position as stating:

“most learning, including language learning, starts with declarative knowledge, that is, knowledge that we are aware of having, for example, a grammar rule. The hypothesis is that, through practice, declarative knowledge may become procedural knowledge, or the ability to use the knowledge. With continued practice, the procedural knowledge can become automatized and the learner may forget having learned it first as declarative knowledge” (p. 109).

This position claims that, especially for adult language learners,

much of what we know about a language is first declarative, and procedural ability develops with extensive practice and exposure. However, whether or not exposure and practice allows procedural knowledge to develop separately or whether it develops directly from declarative knowledge, it is clear that these two aspects of knowledge interact and support each other. The more we welcome opportunities to immerse ourselves in the L2 environment while also reflecting on our declarative knowledge about the L2, the more our brain refines pathways for fluency. We need both and they work together to facilitate our language learning process.

FROM CONCEPTS TO EXAMPLES

Now that we know what declarative and procedural knowledge are, let's explore these ideas with examples about language.

Question: Can you explain the typical order of **adjectives** in English? Many of you will probably say 'No'. Let's find out. We're going to show you four different examples of different adjective orders in English, and it's your job to click on the grammatically correct ones. If you grew up speaking English, you actually have a good chance of getting these right just by using your procedural knowledge, i.e. your subconscious, automated knowledge. If English is a language you learned in school, your answers might also rely on your declarative knowledge, i.e. knowledge you know consciously. The exercises will become progressively more difficult but don't worry. None of this is graded!

ADJECTIVE ORDER IN ENGLISH EXERCISE



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[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=68#h5p-12](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=68#h5p-12)

How did that exercise feel? Did you surprise yourself? Hopefully, you found out that you 'know' more than you expected about the order of adjectives in English. All English speakers use similar patterns of adjective order every day without even thinking about it. These patterns are not universal across languages or even dialects. Many languages would put these adjectives into different orders, and some dialects of English don't follow the Standard American English (SAE) adjective order either.

Before explaining more, let's move on to an example of using declarative knowledge. In this activity, you will need to select the correct homophone. Homophones are words that sound the same but mean different things and are often spelled differently, like 'night' and 'knight' in English. Just like the previous activity, it's your job to choose the correct word or part of a word to fill in the blanks.

Although some of these answers may seem obvious, some are commonly confused in standard written English and some you may need to look up!

ENGLISH HOMOPHONES EXERCISE



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=68#h5p-13>

While the first quiz focused on procedural knowledge, declarative knowledge was essential for the second quiz. There is no way of being able to correctly answer the questions without knowledge of the written English language and its rules which you had to learn explicitly at some point. Even native speakers of English have to learn these differences consciously.

At this point, reflect on your declarative and procedural knowledge in your second language, or any other skill such as art, music, or doing math. Be honest with yourself.

- How much of it is automatic to you? If it is more automatic, it is more likely procedural!
- Can you hold basic conversations about the weather without even thinking about it? If so, that knowledge is procedural!
- Do you have to translate the word for “rain” in your head before you can complain about it to another person? Thinking of translations is an indication of declarative knowledge!

These are just a few examples of declarative and procedural knowledge. Building both of these is important for language learning, and it’s ok if they are slow to develop, especially procedural knowledge, which simply takes practice. This is normal, and monitoring your progress can help you notice your current abilities in both areas.

When setting your goals, assess your current knowledge and consider whether it’s declarative or procedural. If you just learned about a grammar pattern in a language class or on an app, don’t expect this declarative knowledge to suddenly become procedural knowledge without practice. Just like when we’re learning a sport or a musical instrument, knowing what you *should* do and actually *doing* it without thinking are two different things! Setting realistic expectations with our current knowledge in mind helps us to learn more efficiently.

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Implicit and Explicit Learning

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is the difference between implicit and explicit learning?
- What are examples of implicit and explicit learning?
- How does this relate to language learning specifically?

After learning about procedural and declarative knowledge, we can ask, *What kinds of learning lead to these two types of knowledge?* Remember that potential **input** is all around us when we're immersed in or studying a second language. Sometimes, we notice rules and patterns consciously (like when we realize, "*Oh, this verb is in the past tense, not the present!*"), and other times we don't consciously them, but our brain subconsciously identifies them out of the input. We might notice what we've acquired subconsciously

sometime later (like, “*Oh, I recognize the difference between tenses!*”). These are examples of *explicit* and *implicit* learning, the two distinct types of learning processes that we are going to draw your attention to in this section.

IMPLICIT LEARNING

How did we learn our first language growing up? It certainly wasn't with our parents sitting down with a dictionary and explaining words to us. It was through natural interaction. Or have you ever traveled abroad and heard a new language around you? Imagine someone traveling in [Québec](#), for example. They might pick up a few words or phrases they didn't know before, such as *Bonjour* (French for *Hello*) or *Comment ça va?* (French for *How are you?*). They might not know what “*Comment ça va?*” means the first time they hear it, but they certainly would after the 10th time. Even with nobody translating it for them, nobody speaking in English, and nobody trying to explain it, the meaning would sink in, and they would learn implicitly. Ellis (2015) defines implicit learning as, “acquisition of knowledge... by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operations” (p. 2).

EXPLICIT LEARNING

By contrast, Ellis (2015) defines explicit learning as “a more conscious operation where the individual makes and tests hypotheses in a search for structure” (p. 2). In other words, in explicit learning, we are consciously thinking about the thing we are learning, with no ambiguity and little room for different interpretations on our own. This often occurs in classroom environments, when we are being taught something directly. For example, if you are in a Portuguese class and the teacher points to something red and says, “*vermelho*”, this is explicit instruction. But

it can also be independent of classroom lessons, such as when you are making a vocabulary list with definitions or asking your friend 'How do you say *"thank you"* in Portuguese?'.

PUTTING THEM TOGETHER

Let's see how these can work together when you're learning something new in a language.

Let's meet Faith. Faith is one of the authors of this book. She studies Japanese and is passionate about language learning. Faith will be our teacher today in a Japanese lesson on fruits. Try your best to pick up on patterns if you don't speak Japanese already. Which words are repeated in each sentence? Which words are different in each sentence? To make it easier, we will highlight some key words and provide visuals. As you watch the video, you can take notes if you want. There will be a quiz afterwards to assess yourself.

JAPANESE FRUITS LESSON BY FAITH

Watch this video first.





One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=70#oembed-1](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=70#oembed-1)

JAPANESE FRUITS DRAG AND DROP EXERCISE

The names for fruits are not in the right place. Drag them below the correct pictures. Feel free to watch the video again.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=70#h5p-14](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=70#h5p-14)

How did that quiz go for you? Was it easier with the visuals provided? Maybe it was easier because it was all given to you explicitly. Did you happen to pick up on any other repeated words, though? Maybe I lied – there won't be one quiz, but two!

JAPANESE FRUITS MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS EXERCISE

Check your implicit learning. What 'feels right' to you in these answers?



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[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=70#h5p-15](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=70#h5p-15)

As you can see, this second quiz dealt with vocabulary that Faith didn't talk about explicitly. If you picked up on any of these words (and don't speak Japanese already) these are words that you learned from Faith implicitly. Are you starting to understand? Learning occurs anytime we are exposed to something new, whether that be a language, science concept, math, etc. By being aware of different ways of learning, we realize how valuable all the input is that we take in. You might not know how to say "This is a strawberry" off the top of your head in Japanese now, but you are likely to more easily recognize that same sentence structure the next time you hear it. With repeated exposure to implicit content, learning takes place, and we can learn things that we are never explicitly taught. Once we start trusting this process, we can recognize that not all learning has to be explicit, effortful or difficult. We are learning more than we think!

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Multimodal Ways of Learning

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What does multimodality look like in language learning?
- How does a multimodal approach compare to the unimodal approach of Learning Styles?
- How can multimodality be useful for both comprehension and communication?

Now that it's clear that we learn both explicitly and implicitly through exposure to lots of **input**, we can see that the more input the better, and similarly, the more variety of input the better. In fact, with more multimodal input, we have more chances to be exposed to the material and more chances to learn and express ourselves in a variety of ways.

WHAT IS MULTIMODALITY?

Multimodality is “multiple forms of communication, such as images, words, and actions, all dependent on each other to create a holistic meaning” (Ting, 2013, p. 1). As humans, we have many means to communicate concepts that aren’t limited to language. When we want to communicate a concept, we have a plethora of modalities to choose from such as speech, manual signs, writing, imagery, symbols, physical enactment, and more. For example, think of the concept of a cat. You can communicate this concept to someone else in multiple, complementary ways. You could show a picture of a cat, make the meowing or purring sound of a cat, act like a cat, say or sign the word cat, write the word cat, gesture petting a cat, point to a real cat, and so on. Each manner of describing the cat is different and conveys different important information, and the cat cannot be described in its entirety without each different mode being used. So, if objects or ideas can be conveyed in these different ways, can we exploit this for educational purposes?

Multimodality in the language classroom can look like a teacher combining different modalities to ensure learning. For example, the teacher could ask you to play the game **Simon Says** in your **target language** to reinforce command phrases (physical enactment), then study flashcards with words on one side (written language) and pictures on the other side (imagery) for a total of three different modalities. Diversifying the way we process information, whether through watching it, hearing it, or enacting it is beneficial to learners.

LEARNING STYLES – FACT OR FICTION?

Distinct ways to approach learning was captured in the idea of *learning styles*, which was popularized in education in the 1970s

starting with the Dunn and Dunn model. The Dunn and Dunn model doesn't focus on modalities but rather the preferences of the individual as they pertain to five different categories; environmental, emotional, sociological, physiological, and psychological **stimuli**. This could include preferences related to the time of day, ambient temperature, or noise level. This concept of learning preferences eventually evolved into the more well-known VARK model in 1987 by Neil Fleming. He created the model to follow his perception of learners as falling into one of four categories; Visual, Auditory, Reading/writing, or Kinesthetic (VARK).

People with a preference for auditory learning according to VARK are considered better learners if the material is presented in the form of a lecture, podcast, song, or any other possible auditory **input**. A proposed optimal educational style for them could involve maximizing the auditory input in a **target language**, like listening to the teacher or listening to music. Auditory learners are considered to learn better with few visual embellishments. Visual learners, however, are deemed naturally drawn towards learning that incorporates, well, visual elements. The claim is that they learn better seeing information laid out instead of hearing it explained. They might prefer watching videos or seeing charts or graphs about a certain subject. To people who claim to be visual learners, having visual stimuli leads to efficient learning.

The third and fourth styles are generally grouped into a 'tactile' category where students are deemed better learners through active engagement with the material. The reading and writing style is exactly what it sounds like. If you fell into this category, you could be told you would learn better if you took notes while reading your textbook or wrote essays (ok probably not whole essays) to help with comprehension. Lastly, the kinesthetic preference emphasizes that some students learn best through tactile projects, physical learning materials, and active learner contribution. This could look like creating a physical posterboard, constructing an art project,

making food, or manipulating objects to learn and display knowledge.

While it can feel natural to categorize ourselves into learning styles, there is actually no research evidence that supports the claims that learning style are fixed traits (Kirschner, 2017). To be clear, students may have individual preferences in the forms of media they consume. Where one person might like reading better than watching movies, another person could prefer the opposite. While it is factual that people prefer different modes of media, “studies deny that students learn better through a self-reported learning style” (Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning, 2017, para. 2). Even the prominent learning styles author Rebecca Oxford acknowledged, “Learning styles are not dichotomous” (Oxford, 2003). Oxford further cites Ehrman (1996) to say, “Few if any people could be classified as having all or nothing in any of these categories”.

The learning styles framework encourages a sort of ‘specialization’ if you will. Learning styles categorize learners into one style or another to the point that it doesn’t support branching out to using different modalities of input and output. Not only do they restrict students to a specific style, but research has shown that when learning styles are matched to students’ stated learning style preferences, it does not help students learn better. The following video by Veritasium explains the learning styles myth in more detail.



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here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=72#oembed-1>

FROM UNIMODAL TO MULTIMODAL

Yet there is valuable information that educators and students alike can take from the learning styles framework. It helps us become aware that different ways of approaching information exist (visually, aurally, physically,...), and thus that these are all possibilities for learning. In other words, we have multiple options for learning, and we don't need to restrict ourselves to only one, even if we think we prefer it. In fact, research shows us that using multiple modalities in learning is far more effective than only using one.

As one example of such a study, Gould-Yakovleva (2023) followed two groups of people with ranging educational backgrounds, from high school graduates to people with postgraduate degrees, all of which were English language learners. An important note is that the students also had different ethnic backgrounds, with the primary groups being Latin American, Middle Eastern/Mediterranean, and East Asian. The researcher wanted to see if a multimodal approach to a lesson about Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* Act I Scene V would prove more effective than a unimodal approach. Students in group 1 (unimodal) only read the text, whereas students in group

2 (multimodal) read the text and also viewed a theatrical performance of the text. Even though group 1 had a higher self-reported English proficiency on average, group 2 scored an average of 79% compared to group 1's 74% on a post-lesson quiz. The students in group 2 said that the combination of modalities helped them interpret the text in a more profound way.

Comprehension methods were also monitored closely, and there were 11 self-reported strategies used to analyze the text in group 1 compared to 20 strategies in group 2. When more modalities were used, more strategies were possible. Multimodality opens up opportunities for a diversity of strategies, and not only that, but inherently *encourages* using a wider variety of strategies.

In fact, certain materials or activities actually require specific modalities and encourage distinct strategies. For example, when we are building a physical model of something, we are required to use tactile, kinesthetic strategies instead of only looking at or reading about the model. We have to use our hands or tools to interact with it. Similarly, if we are learning to speak a language, we need to develop our auditory skills and use strategies related to listening. If we are reading in a language, we need to be able to process written language and use strategies related to reading. In a nutshell, we should be comfortable in multiple modalities to have access to multiple kinds of materials and activities.

Multimodality is not just effective for understanding concepts and processing input in different ways. It is also helpful for when you are trying to communicate your own ideas. As we showed in Chapter 1, communication is not limited to language! We can use gestures, facial expressions, pointing to objects or images, tone of voice, touch, **proxemics**, or even use of time or silence to communicate beyond linguistic means such as speech or sign language. We can see multimodality in both comprehension and

production in this video by the Center for Applied Second Language Studies ([CASLS](#)).



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here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=72#oembed-2>

So, is multimodality an effective approach to learning languages?

Admittedly, we set you up for the answer. Yes, it is.

Multimodality opens our brain to access different trains of thought, different ideas, and different perspectives simply by presenting information in a different manner. So, when you are studying for your next test, don't just read your textbook, try watching videos about the material too! Don't just talk with your friends in your target language, write a journal too! Incorporating too many modalities at once has the possibility of leading to **cognitive overload**, but with proper preparation and spacing out, multimodal learning can help you understand material in many ways, not just one.

MULTIMODALITY COMPREHENSION CHECK

Review and assess your understanding



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<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=72#h5p-16>

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Teaching Methodologies

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What are the differences between Grammar-Translation, Audiolingual, and Communicative teaching approaches?
- What are the pros and cons of these three methods and approaches?

Similarly to the first section of this chapter, this section will focus on **classroom methodology**. However, this time it's more specific to actual language education and not just learning theories in general. I want you to think back to that high school language class. Put yourself in the room, see your teacher, and your classmates too. Now that we know about Behaviorism, Cognitivism, and Constructivism, I want you to put a label on the type of learning you experienced in that class. It might be difficult, and it's fine to say that it was mixed, because it most likely was. Most education is a

blend of many rich elements because there is no one way to teach a language.

Some language teaching methodologies existed before people were theorizing about learning, and others have been influenced by learning theories over time. Think back to your high school classroom again. Your teacher might have asked you to mostly do grammar exercises in a workbook. They might have held up plastic fruits or pointed to colors and prompted you to say the translated words back. You might have followed scripts and talked with your classmates, maybe like *"Hola, quiero comprar cien bananas por favor"* (Hi, I would like to buy a hundred bananas please), although admittedly the applicability of this situation is not high. Or you might have been asked to jump in and interact with your classmates mostly through immersion in the new language until you could communicate, similar to learning your first language.

GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION METHOD

One very traditional way of language teaching that was not influenced by any modern learning theory is called Grammar Translation. In Grammar Translation, "The aim is for students to be able to translate with ease between two languages, usually their first or native language (L1) and the target language (L2) being learned" (Prokopchuk, 2022, Grammar Translation Method, para. 2). This looks primarily like the study of individual grammatical structures, conjugations, or vocabulary for a language, and less of the conversational aspects or application of language. While this method has largely died out in popularity among language teachers, it still is found in many language classrooms around the world. When languages are no longer spoken, this method make good sense, for example in classical language classrooms like Latin or ancient Greek.

No matter what language class you were in, your teacher likely implemented some elements of Grammar Translation. Grammar Translation methods can be extremely helpful in the explicit teaching of grammar concepts, sentence structure, or vocabulary. They rely on our abilities to see and reproduce patterns, which relates to both [behaviorist](#) and [cognitivist](#) ways of learning. However, many people agree that where the Grammar Translation method falters is its lack of immediate applicability to real-life scenarios and the over-focus on declarative knowledge. That is, conversations on the street likely won't consist of 'Hey, how do you conjugate the verb *ser* in the *pluscuamperfecto*?' (the verb *to be* in the past perfect tense in Spanish). So, while the grammar-translation method does have many positive elements in the explicit teaching of linguistic concepts, other teaching methods focus more on real-life application and communication.

AUDIOLINGUAL METHOD

A very different approach to language teaching that was strongly influenced by [behaviorism](#) is the Audiolingual method. Popularized in the 1950s, the Audiolingual method focuses on "the notion that learning language can be simulated inside the classroom by using prescribed dialogues and texts which are comprehensible to the learners" (Prokopchuk, 2022, Audio-Lingual Method, para. 1). Some common practice exercises used machines in language learning labs, rather than using practice with other people. These machines would allow you to listen to a sentence as spoken by a native speaker, and then record yourself speaking the same sentence. You would then listen to both and do a side-by-side comparison of your **accents**. The focus largely was on scripted learning and the perfection of predetermined vocabulary and a 'native-like' accent.

Akin to behaviorism, learning takes place through habitual repetition and praise for correct answers. Unlike Grammar

Translation, this method does provide intensive listening and speaking practice to build procedural knowledge, but learners still don't have the opportunity to improvise in real-life interactions. The constant focus on accuracy can also make learners self-conscious and afraid to experiment with communication. And while the focus on accent can help with some people's goals, many of us would like to use language without questioning "Do I sound like that recording?"

THINK BACK...

Let's think back to [Chapter One, Myth 5](#) – 'I need to sound like a native speaker'. Does the Audiolingual method discredit or support this myth?

COMMUNICATIVE APPROACHES

Lastly, communicative approaches are the most popular among language teachers today, largely because of their focus on usability rather than perfection. Communicative approaches acknowledge that "students learn language more effectively *in the classroom* when communication is meaningful, purposeful, and applicable to their lives" (Prokopchuk, 2022, *The Communicative Approach*, para. 1).



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The focus on communication helps with **fluency** in a language, but sometimes sacrifices grammatical **accuracy** if there is no parallel focus on declarative knowledge, especially with older learners. We see that communicative approaches draw on both [cognitivist](#) and [constructivist](#) approaches, but they can also include aspects of behaviorist approaches. The key difference from other teaching methods is that communicative approaches are not limited to behaviorist or cognitivist approaches.

THOUGHT EXERCISE

Would you rather...

- Lose your grammatical knowledge
- Lose your vocabulary

Which impacts your ability to communicate more? Which one is most crucial?

Before we move on, watch this video about teaching methodologies. As a bonus, you can learn about different teaching approaches other than the three we have discussed so far.



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With your understanding of the three main teaching approaches we have described above, see if you can recognize these styles when presented with examples. These examples may look like exercises that subscribe to one method more than another, or maybe examples of things that might be said in these classrooms. Many of these exercises overlap and can be used in a variety of classroom contexts, so our answers aren't the *only* correct uses of these activities but rather the more common ones.

TEACHING METHODOLOGIES COMPREHENSION CHECK

Select the best answer for each question.



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We hope that it is apparent that these theories and methods are not one-size-fits-all, nor should they exist independently of one another. Where the audio-lingual or grammar-translation methods falter, communicative approaches can supplement, and vice-versa. The same can be said for all the theories and methods we talked about in this chapter. Diversity is best when learning a language; diversity in people, diversity in exercises and methods, and diversity in input. We all grew up learning our first language(s) through a variety of different methods of exposure, whether that be our parents talking to us, watching TV, listening to bedtime stories, and eventually studying grammar in school.

So, this begs the question: Why should we treat our second language any differently?

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Connecting the Dots to your Story

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

Language learning can be super intimidating! At times it can be Greek to you, or Chinese, or Swahili (get the joke?) and you can feel overwhelmed because you don't know how to approach it. In a personal story below, Logan reflects on their early Spanish language learning path and identifies some implicit and explicit learning approaches and methods used in their Spanish classes.



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<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=76#h5p-19>

Now we invite you to think about your approaches to language learning in the past. Let's revisit some of our topics and ask ourselves questions.

- What learning theories have I experienced in my language learning?
- Which aspects of my L2 abilities are procedural and which are declarative?
- Have I experienced multimodality in my language learning? How? Did it help?
- Was my language learning mostly implicit or explicit?
- What teaching methods did my teachers use in their classrooms? Was there one that worked better for me?

We hope that you take away ideas from this chapter and apply them to your language learning however you see fit and however works for you. Learning is not one-size-fits-all, and so to say that there is a better way to learn is simply not true. You have to find what best works for you. Try studying an L2 using some of these concepts brought up, like watching TV for implicit learning and then using a dictionary for explicit learning for vocabulary you didn't pick up through context. Hopefully you don't just learn about languages through the process, but also about yourself.

CHAPTER 3 - ACCESS AND POWER IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

CHAPTER SECTIONS

1. **INTRODUCTION**

2. **MAJORITIZED AND MINORITIZED LANGUAGES**

3. **LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION AND MINORITIZATION
IN EDUCATION**

4. **HERITAGE LANGUAGES**

5. **LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT LANGUAGES (LCTLs)**

6. **LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT AND REVITALIZATION**

7. **ADVOCATING FOR LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY**

Introduction

CAMERON KEATON; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

“Language is an intrinsic part of who we are and what has, for good or evil, happened to us.”

-Alice Walker
Living by the Word, 1988

You might wonder, what do access and power have to do with language learning?

Well, think about which languages you hear at school, at work, or in the media. Which ones do we see or hear the most, and have the most access to? Which ones are never or rarely heard in these spaces?

This is a matter of power and access!

The languages we use and have access to reveals what has happened to them over time and, therefore, what has happened to us and our ancestors. Some communities have lost or are losing access to their languages, which are being replaced by languages that have wider influence and power. Language and power are deeply intertwined. Think of it like this – power is the ability to influence or control others and language can be used to exercise

that power. When people have power, their language tends to be highly visible and influential in society, but if people from a different social, political, or economic group lack recognition or prestige in society, their language tends to be devalued or simply unnoticed.

Let's take as an example the many **indigenous languages of the Americas**. While Native people were the first human inhabitants of the Americas, their languages aren't represented well in U.S. education. For instance, the language spoken in the Eugene area of Oregon before Europeans arrived is Kalapuya. The Kalapuyan people first lived on this land and their descendants continue to live here. Despite this, you will not hear Kalapuya if you walk the streets of Eugene, and you will not see it listed in course language offerings. It is not spoken as a daily community language anymore. Why is this?

It is obvious that some languages are far more present in daily modern life in the modern Americas. In the United States, most people speak English, and many others speak Spanish. The historical colonial influence of Great Britain and Spain in the Americas has made these languages widespread and accessible in schools today. Their dominance is apparent not only in the United States but in many places around the world; English and Spanish are among the most taught second languages in schools globally. But there are many more languages that are spoken in the US, such as indigenous languages and the many different languages of immigrant communities. Not all these languages get the same public love and attention as English. Shifting to more dominant or powerful languages is a widespread phenomenon and has a direct impact on the languages that we can learn in our communities or in the classroom.

In this chapter, we will explore how power and access to languages play a critical role in the languages we are learning at home, at

school, or in our communities. We might ask, if there isn't a large group of speakers of a particular language anymore, how can it be kept alive or taught? And why should we learn languages that lack resources and seem less relevant than the more prevalent languages?

One simple answer is that a language holds power in more ways than one. When you know one or more additional languages, you are not only becoming bi/multilingual yourself but also making multilingualism more accessible to others. The next sections of this chapter show that when languages are no longer visible in communities, we lose much more than language. Not only are words forgotten, but entire aspects of cultural traditions such as **indigenous and ecological knowledge** can be lost. By becoming aware of and paying attention to all languages, including those less visible, we play a significant part in making the world more multilingual, diverse, and culturally sustainable.

In short, this chapter argues that by raising your awareness about issues of power and access in language learning, you will become a more informed multilingual citizen. If you are learning a language that is less visible or has less power, be assured that it is worth learning. And if you are learning a language that's more visible or has more power, you can recognize the privilege that comes with it.

Multilingualism is a superpower, not just for you, but for everyone.

CHAPTER GOALS

By the end of this chapter, I will be able to

- Identify how languages become majoritized or minoritized
- Recognize the role of education in gatekeeping some language varieties over others
- Differentiate the unique characteristics of heritage language learners from second language learners
- Find opportunities to learn less-commonly-taught-languages
- Identify the relevance of language endangerment and revitalization to all language learning

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Majoritized and Minoritized Languages

BIBI HALIMA AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is the difference between majoritized and minoritized languages?
- Are majoritized languages always spoken by the majority of people?
- Are minoritized languages always spoken by a minority of people?

In modern **linguistics**, it is widely accepted that all human languages are equally sophisticated systems of communication. However, in many people's subjective viewpoints [some languages are more equal than others](#). Social attitudes establish hierarchies

for languages and their speech communities that cannot be ignored when we are learning languages. For this reason, in the first section of this chapter we want to introduce some key terms that will help us discuss the role of power and access in language learning.

MAJORITY AND MINORITY LANGUAGES

Triggs (2021) defines a majority language as one used and spoken by most people in a population. For example, when you think of a language in the U.S., what do you think? It is probably English because it is widely used by the majority of people in the country.

On the other hand, the term minority language originally refers to language(s) used by relatively small populations. For example, American Sign Language (ASL) is used by **Deaf/deaf** and hard of hearing people in the United States. However, most scholars prefer the term *minoritized* for a minority language because it highlights the status of speakers. Lane et al. (2017) define speakers of minority languages as “linguistically marginalised social actors” who belong to non-dominant language communities (p. 8). For example, **indigenous languages in the U.S.** are the minoritized languages of minoritized communities.

MAJORITY IS MAJORI-TIZED AND MINORITY IS MINORI-TIZED!

This is the tricky part that is important to understand – majority and minority languages are not inherently more or less important. It is through social and historical processes that they are made to be majoritized and minoritized, gradually and often strategically. In the case of majority languages, they are often declared to be the standard or official language in a specific context.

“Who declares this?”, you might ask.

The answer is simple. Groups with economic and political power have the ability to majoritize and standardize one language variety over others. The power could be the power of colonizers who used language as a tool to implement their expansion and control of new lands and peoples. For example, the **hegemony** of English in today’s world is strongly linked to the days of British colonization when colonized people’s speech and cultures in places such as present-day Pakistan, India, Kenya, and South Africa were devalued and suppressed through the imposition of English.

Decolonising the Mind, by universally acclaimed Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, highlights these issues of language and power. wa Thiong’o (1986) explains two important steps colonizers took in the past to majoritize and minoritize languages: demolish an existing system of culture and intentionally replace local languages with new ones.

He says,

For colonialism this involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people’s culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature and literature, and conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser. The domination of a people’s language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised (p. 16).

Therefore, it is crucial to understand that minority languages are not necessarily just defined as the languages of a numerical minority but are rather languages subjected to the active process of minoritization (Tendero, 2017). Let’s dive into this point more deeply below to understand the nuances of this subject.

A MAJORITIZED LANGUAGE IS NOT NECESSARILY THE LANGUAGE OF THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE

Here is an important consequence of this power dynamic to understand: a majoritized language is not always the language of the majority. For example, English is often majoritized in former colonies where it is not the first language of the majority of people. It can also be an official language in countries where a very small percentage of the population speaks English yet it still dominates the language landscape.

For more information on where English is spoken around the world, look over [this Berlitz article](#) about the 67 countries that have English as an official language. Notice how much of the population actually speaks English in each country.

STOP AND REFLECT

After looking at the [Berlitz article](#) linked above, what are some surprising numbers to you about English as a majoritized language?

A MINORITIZED LANGUAGE CAN BE THE LANGUAGE OF THE MAJORITY OF A POPULATION

No doubt, this is a paradox but it remains a reality. Just as a majoritized language might be a language spoken by a minority of people, a language with the highest numerical representation in

a country might become minoritized if it has lower socio-political status.



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At the end of this section, assess your understanding.

MAJORITIZED/MINORITIZED LANGUAGES COMPREHENSION CHECK

Select the best answer for each question.





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Language Standardization and Minoritization in Education

BIBI HALIMA AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is standardized language in educational contexts?
- How do educational contexts play a role in promoting standardized varieties over other varieties?
- What are examples of minoritized varieties within a language?
- What is African American English, and how has it influenced other varieties of English?

As we discussed in the last section, languages are not inherently superior or inferior to one another. It is through social processes that their status as a majoritized or minoritized language is

determined. One setting where we see these fabricated linguistic hierarchies is in educational contexts, where some languages are routinely privileged over others.

In this section, we will discuss the role the classroom plays in **standardizing** and **subordinating** some varieties over others. The classroom can serve as a gatekeeper to linguistic hierarchies. Educational systems, in the guise of promoting social success, can privilege the language of elites while sidelining minoritized varieties, ultimately eroding the linguistic diversity of societies.

STANDARDIZED LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM

“I was looked down upon by the teachers because I could not speak their language.”

- [Zubair Torwali](#), 2021, a language activist from Pakistan

Imagine a new student who speaks a home language variety that is different than the one most familiar to the others in the classroom. Every time this student speaks, their way of talking is noticed by their peers and teacher. This new student observes that everyone uses a different way of speaking that is validated by the teacher as the correct and appropriate way to communicate. The student questions their own way of speaking and becomes anxious to learn how to talk “right”!

Most educational contexts adhere to a “correct and appropriate” way of using language, which is often called *standard* or *standardized* language ([Chapter 1](#)). Behrens and Sperling (2010) define standard language as “the most highly valued language form” in a community (p. 12). Those who use a variety closest to this standard at home are advantaged in and outside of the classroom

with academic, financial, social, and emotional rewards. However, “those who fall outside the norm are disenfranchised” (ibid., p. 12). Schools and teachers, in their role of gatekeepers to talking right, can intentionally or unintentionally dismiss the linguistic diversity of their students.

Here is the irony,

Educational contexts, which are intended to provide equal opportunities to all students, can end up introducing and reproducing the categories of *dominant* versus *marginal*, *center* versus *periphery*, and *standard-acceptable* versus *nonstandard-unacceptable*. As Lippi-Green (2012) says, “The educational system may not be the beginning, but it is the heart of the standardization process” (p. 68).

These processes of privileging majoritized over minoritized varieties in education can be seen in second language classrooms too. For example, the standardized variety of French from Paris is most often taught in French language classes in the U.S. but there are many other varieties of French in the world to choose from, including those spoken in other parts of France, in some countries in Africa, in Louisiana, or in Québec. Many of these varieties are not marginal in numbers, though they are marginalized in status. For example, French is spoken in the home by over 6.5 million people in Québec (Lăpușeanu, 2022). Similarly, the Castilian version of Spanish from Spain is often chosen in second language classrooms despite the fact that the vast majority of Spanish speakers worldwide are from countries in Latin America. Why? The Parisian and Castilian varieties have ongoing prestige due to their centrality in historical colonial education. However, they are not inherently better varieties of French or Spanish.

MINORITIZATION OF OTHER LANGUAGE

VARIETIES

We can see from these examples of French and Spanish that even within majoritized languages there are minority or minoritized varieties (often called **regional dialects** or **social dialects**). Sometimes these varieties are even considered “broken” or “improper” versions of the standardized variety of the language. Linguists, however, dispute this standard language ideology ([Chapter 1](#)) and consider all varieties of languages to be equal in value. They see standard language varieties as simply one of the many varieties within a language family (Tegegne, 2016). Therefore in this book, when we use the term *language variety* we are including both “languages” and “dialects”, without **subordinating** some varieties as “dialects” of standard “language”.

You might be surprised to know that English, arguably the world’s most dominant language at this time, also has many varieties, not all of which are equally valued. While there are standardized forms of English such as American English (AE) or British English (BrE), there are also many regional varieties of English that have been historically **stigmatized** and **marginalized**. For example, [Caribbean English](#), [Pakistani English](#), and [Singapore English](#) are varieties that developed following colonial contact. In the U.S., [Chicano English](#), [Hawaiian Pidgin](#), [African American English](#), and [Lumbee English](#) are among the many varieties of English that are often considered “nonstandard” and hence incorrect, especially in formal or educational contexts.

As noted above, when students who speak one of these subordinated varieties are in an educational context that values standardized varieties, they easily become marginalized. This devaluation process not only erases linguistic and cultural diversity but also harms people’s identities to the extent that they start questioning their own worth.

“If an individual cannot find any social acceptance for her language outside her own speech communities, she may come to denigrate her own language, even while she continues to use it” (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 68).

AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH (AAE)

One example of a widely-spoken minoritized variety within English is African American English (AAE). AAE is natively spoken by many African Americans and Black Canadians, particularly in urban communities. This variety of English has many similarities with Standardized English but also some important differences in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar (Sidnell, 2012). For example, *habitual be* is a way of talking about habitual behaviors in AAE that is not found in mainstream American English. An example of this is, *He be driving there*, which can be translated to *He drives there regularly*.

Even though AAE is simply a different way of speaking English, these features are often considered just “slang” and discouraged in school contexts. We can see this attitude from the controversy that erupted in California in 1996. At that time, the Oakland California School Board debated and passed a resolution to allow AAE to be used in their schools but this quickly gave rise to a national backlash against this decision. Under pressure from the public, the Board later reworded the [resolution](#) to stress proficiency in Standard English as a goal while de-emphasizing AAE. The controversy eventually faded from the consciousness of the public but the question of how to change the language ideologies that prevent us from acknowledging and valuing distinctive varieties of a language (and the diverse people who speak them) remains an ongoing debate (Behrens & Sperling, 2010).

Please watch this video to learn more about AAE. The guest

presenter is Dr. Rachel Weissler, professor of Linguistics at the University of Oregon.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=84#oembed-1>

After watching the video, complete the exercise below.

AAE DRAG AND DROP EXERCISE

Now test your AAE knowledge. Drag AAE example phrases on the left and drop them to their correct corresponding meanings on the right side.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=84#h5p-22>

RESPECTING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION

By now it should be clearer why some students in your school were considered to have the “right” language variety while others struggled to find a voice that was valued. In fact, all variations of a language are valid linguistically and should be understood as such. We believe educational institutions should respect all language forms and not encourage teachers to be the gatekeepers for one form alone. We also hope that the next time you hear someone with a way of speaking different than yours, you do not judge them against any standards you might have inherited from your classroom or society. Instead, we hope you recognize that they do not need to forget or change their speech for anyone; it is their identity!

“Language prejudice remains a ‘legitimate’ prejudice; that is, one can generally say the most appalling things about people’s speech without the fear of correction or contradiction.”

– O’Neil, 1998, p. 17

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Heritage Languages

CAMERON KEATON AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is a heritage language?
- How do people with a heritage language develop unique competencies?
- What are some of the feelings and experiences of people with heritage languages?
- What are some of the choices they have to connect to their heritage languages?

In the previous section, we discussed the status of minoritized varieties in education. One specific example of minoritized varieties in schools includes those experienced as home languages by students. In this section we dive into what these varieties are, how

they are used, and the challenges and benefits associated with them.

WHAT IS A HERITAGE LANGUAGE?

Languages that are majority languages in some places in the world can become minoritized in another. For example, when immigrant families come to the U.S., they bring their languages with them and usually continue to speak them at home. The next generations may start to lose these home languages as they integrate into the new majority society. This leads to the loss of what we call *heritage languages*.

Scontras et al. (2015) draws from the work of Valdés (2000, 2005) to provide a narrow definition of heritage speakers as “individuals who were raised in homes where a language other than the dominant community language was spoken, resulting in some degree of bilingualism in the heritage language and the dominant language” (p. 3). An example might be a family who immigrated from Vietnam to the United States that continues to use Vietnamese at home but English at work and school. The children or grandchildren of these families typically shift to using English in their homes as well. We can also expand this definition of heritage languages beyond focusing only on the languages of immigrant communities. They can also include the languages of indigenous peoples who are no longer using their ancestral languages as a dominant language in their lives due to settler colonialism. We will return to this point later in this chapter.

Spanish is another example of a heritage language for many speakers in the U.S. and is in fact one of the most spoken languages in the country besides English. There are about 57 million Spanish speakers in the U.S. and about 42 million speak it as their first language (Wood, 2023). For a large portion of these speakers,

Spanish is not their dominant language outside of the home, as English (the majoritized language in the U.S.) is more prevalently used in professional and educational contexts.

THE UNIQUE COMPETENCIES OF HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The way heritage speakers use their heritage languages can look different from the way **"native"** speakers of the language use it, and also different from the way **second language** learners of that language learn and use it. While "native" speakers typically use their native language(s) across multiple domains in and outside the home, heritage language speakers have acquired the language mainly through family interactions. They typically have more limited domains of use, such as family or community gatherings and "kitchen table talk". However, they may find it challenging to discuss school topics or politics in their heritage languages if these are not discussed at home. It is also very common for people in these contexts to develop listening skills in the heritage language more than speaking skills. In other words, they may understand their heritage language when they hear it, but may not actively speak it themselves.

Think of this as like learning to play a sport such as baseball and only learning some of the skills. You might learn to throw and catch a ball in the backyard with your family, but not practice how to hit the ball or run around the bases. In this situation, you would be strong in one area but would need practice to become comfortable in the other areas.

While these differing competencies across domains and skills could be perceived as incomplete acquisition of their heritage language, we can just as easily focus on the strengths that people with heritage languages have. As Nynasma (2022) puts it, "A heritage

language can help learners interact with relatives, travel, enjoy popular culture (such as movies and music in the heritage language), and pass down traditions like songs and recipes that might otherwise be lost to time” (Why should I learn a heritage language, para. 1). This means that heritage language learners are able to have a direct tie to the culture of the language, which is something that other second language learners in the classroom might not always have.

The classroom learning experience differs significantly from the home environment where most heritage language learners acquire their skills. The structured classroom setting tends to focus on more complex literacy and analysis skills, such as writing essays, explicit grammar instruction, and use of textbooks. These reading and especially writing skills in the heritage language are less likely to be practiced in the home setting compared to speaking and especially listening skills ([Institute of Language Education in Transcultural Context](#)). The unique learning paths of heritage language learners tend to differ in this way from those who are learning the language only in formal education settings.

EMPOWERING HERITAGE LANGUAGE NARRATIVES

Unfortunately, a lot of heritage speakers are ashamed that they don't know their heritage language well. When they are with community members who speak the language well, they may feel embarrassed that they can't participate as easily in conversations or activities. They may also feel regret that they can't connect with their parents or extended families as deeply as they wish they could, and they are losing the heritage language and culture. Children of immigrant families may even be teased by others. For example, [this article](#) by Kurtis Yan (2022) argues that 2nd-

generation immigrants should not be shamed when they cannot speak their heritage language.

On top of these feelings, political and socioeconomic issues also arise, which tie back to questions of power and access. Families with heritage languages very often feel pressured to prioritize the use of the dominant language over their own in order to succeed. Jingshu Helen Yao gives an example of this process in Canada. She notes that, “Over the past few decades Canada has fostered multiculturalism. However, since the official languages of the country are English and French, it is up to individuals from different ethnic backgrounds to decide whether and how to pass down their heritage language. Since languages connect closely with one’s culture and identity, the choice might be hard to make” (2020, para. 1).

When the dominant language of your country holds the most economic and social power, it can make people less likely to pass down their heritage language due to its perceived lack of utility. For instance, the fact that most business in the U.S. is done in English makes it the “language of business”, giving it added socioeconomic power that one’s heritage language may not have. These are some of the reasons why a lot of heritage language immigrant families are faced with a tough decision: to pass down their heritage language or to just have the next generations focus on the dominant language.

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

People with heritage languages have choices about whether or how to maintain or learn these languages. On the one hand, some people don’t actively use their heritage language but still feel connected to it. As Nynasma (2022) writes, “Heritage language learners are culturally connected to a language even when they do

not speak it” (What does it mean?, para. 4). For example, they might continue to know vocabulary attached to cultural practices such as making traditional food or wearing traditional attire. In this way they are still keeping their heritage language alive.

On the other hand, people with heritage languages may decide to actively preserve or develop their knowledge or skills in the language. Programs are now available in various universities, community colleges, schools, or community centers that focus specifically on the needs and interests of heritage learners. For instance, at the University of Oregon, the [Spanish Heritage Language \(SHL\) Program](#) is designed for people who want to be more connected to their heritage language and find a community of like-minded individuals. The video below features one of the authors of this book, Cameron Keaton, interviewing Loany, who participates in the SHL program. She shares her experiences as a heritage language speaker and how she could continue to pass Spanish down to future generations.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=86#oembed-1>

After watching the video, take a moment to pause and think about the reflection question below.

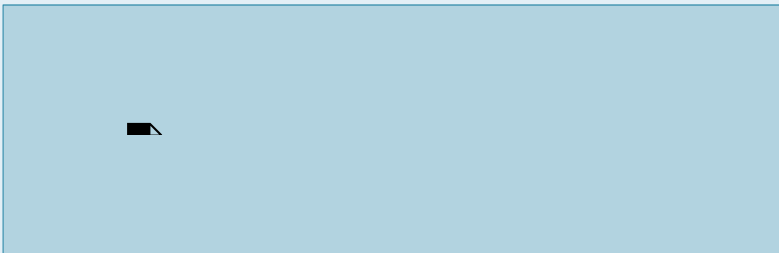
THOUGHT EXERCISE

If you are a heritage language learner yourself or know a friend who is learning a heritage language, do you have new appreciation or ideas about maintaining or reclaiming a home language rather than just learning languages taught in school?

Now that you've learned a little about heritage languages, check what you know:

HERITAGE LANGUAGES COMPREHENSION CHECK

Check all that apply.





An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1?p=86#h5p-23>

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Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs)

BIBI HALIMA AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What does it mean for a language to be ‘less commonly taught’?
- What implications does a lack of access have for linguistic diversity?
- What privileges come with learning a LCTL?
- What resources do you have to learn a LCTL?

As we transition from understanding heritage languages, we hope you have a better understanding that many languages in the world remain underrepresented in educational systems. Within this broader context of **minoritized** and **heritage languages**, we draw

your attention in this section to another way of grouping less visible languages, which can help us understand more about the role of power and access in language learning. Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs) are languages people learn as their heritage or **second language** in a context that has limited access to them, limited either in the form of educational opportunities or public attention.

WHAT MAKES A LANGUAGE “LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT”?

PennState College of the Liberal Arts (2024) defines less commonly taught languages as “Languages that are now taught only infrequently in a particular country”. From this definition, it is clear that the classification of languages as LCTLs is relative and depends on various factors such as place, time, and status of the language. For example, Persian, a majoritized language in countries like Iran, Afghanistan, or Tajikistan, becomes minoritized in Europe or Asia and hence it will be less commonly taught in, let’s say, Germany or China.

In the context of the U.S., The Modern Language Association, in their enrollment report for world languages (2023), considers “all languages not included in the top fifteen” to be less commonly taught languages. These top languages are the world’s most spoken languages in terms of their L1 speakers and include, Mandarin Chinese, English, Spanish, Hindi/Urdu, Arabic, Portuguese, Bengali, Russian, Japanese, German, French, Javanese, Korean, Italian, Panjabi, Marathi, Vietnamese, Telugu, Turkish, Tamil, Ukrainian, and Polish.

But in a broader context, The National Less Commonly Taught Languages Resource Center (n.d.) considers “all languages other than English and the commonly taught European languages of

German, French and Spanish” as less commonly taught languages worldwide.

LCTLs AND THE POWER-ACCESS EQUATION

You can ask how LCTLs intersect with the topics of power and access. The answer lies in the word, *less-commonly taught*; the less power a language has, the less access people have to learn or use it. Minoritized languages like LCTLs, in other words, do not get educational and public attention. Access to resources and public services in these languages also consequently remains limited. For example, over 7000 languages are spoken in the world but how many of them do you see represented online? In fact, 80% of online content is limited to only ten languages: English, Chinese, Spanish, Japanese, Arabic, Portuguese, German, French, Russian and Korean (Consumers International, 2018). Does this surprise you?

THOUGHT EXERCISE

Considering the fact that even online access to LCTLs is limited, how do think this could make the existing linguistic inequalities even worse for the speakers of these languages?

LCTLs HAVE THEIR OWN PRIVILEGES

Although we are aware that the LCTLs face challenges in terms of

resources, accessibility, and fewer formal learning opportunities, these languages also bring unique privileges and advantages to human societies. Murphy et al. (2009), in their review of the literature for reasons students take courses in less commonly taught languages, summarize and report two main motivations: *utilitarian* (academic or professional) and *humanistic* (personal). Drawing on these reasons, let's look at the privileges and opportunities LCTLs can bring to you:

If you become proficient in one of these languages, you are more likely to become a priority candidate in many professional settings. Many international organizations need people with multilingual skills to expand their global reach by extending partnerships with local communities in different regions. If you have your own business, it can grow economically with your ability to communicate in a LCTL by expanding your network in different regions and making your product global. If you are a scholar or researcher, proficiency in a LCTL is a bonus, with access to primary texts and people for collecting data. Whether your pursuit is international relations, business, or research, think about the unique experiences and diverse perspectives LCTLs can bring to you and your work.

On the other hand, diplomacy, business, and research are all noble pursuits but human endeavors can extend beyond diplomatic and scientific goals. If you are a heritage speaker of a LCTL, learning your language can be a way for your hybrid identity to become more grounded and your personal expression more fluid and uniquely translingual. Or, if you are a traveling geek with a curiosity to explore different cultures, think about the experience of exploring a culture *with its language!* You can participate in local events with a deep appreciation for their culture instead of attending events with only a surface understanding. Interacting with

local people in their language may also result in lifelong friendships! Most importantly, if you have the privilege of speaking a globally dominant language, adding a LCTL to your repertoire will give you a personal sense of contribution by giving some attention to less visible languages. Your contribution can make a difference in preserving these languages!

WHERE TO GO TO LEARN THESE LANGUAGES?

While English, Spanish, French, and German remain the most commonly taught languages in the world, there is a growing recognition for LCTLs as well in recent times, worldwide. More and more universities in the U.S. are also offering programs and courses in these languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Swahili, and more. One of the examples of such programs is the Self Study Language Program at the University of Oregon.

SELF-STUDY LANGUAGE PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

The [Yamada Language Center](#) at the University of Oregon hosts a Self Study Language Program for less commonly taught languages. This program offers a unique opportunity for students and community members in Eugene to learn a variety of languages such as Hindi/Urdu, Turkish, Nepali, Russian, Dutch, Persian, and other languages as requested. These languages are taught by teachers who speak these languages as their L1. For example, Halima taught Hindi/Urdu in this program as a Fulbright Scholar from Pakistan in 2022-23. Read her story below.



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[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
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THERE'S MORE!

[The National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages \(NCOLCTL\)](#) is a nonprofit organization in the U.S. that advocates and supports the expansion of LCTLs around the world. [The National LCTL Resource Center \(NLRC\)](#) at the Michigan State University is another federally funded center dedicated to resources development for LCTLs. [The Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning \(COERLL\) at the University of Texas at Austin](#) offers a selection of open online resources for 14 different languages. If you want to search where a specific LCTL in the U.S. is being taught, the Center of Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at University of Minnesota has a [searchable database](#) to find out those locations where the language is being taught. Some universities are also beginning to offer hybrid courses that allow learners from other regions to take their courses.

In addition to these language centers, online platforms also offer flexible learning options. There are many language learning apps

that provide varied proficiency level courses for different languages. These apps and platforms include [Babble](#) (14 languages), [Ling App](#) (60 languages), [Mango Languages](#) (70 languages), [Pimsleur](#) (51 languages), and [Duolingo](#) (38 languages). These platforms have their unique characteristics and they can be used for various purposes and needs to support your learning.

HERE'S THE BOTTOM LINE

Less commonly taught languages are unique languages! Whether you are motivated by a career opportunity or a connection to your heritage language, learning these languages is an extraordinarily rewarding experience. Even if you don't choose to learn a LCTL, you can notice and appreciate the people around you who do speak them or are learning them. For example, some of your neighbors, local shopkeepers, teachers, or fellow students in your classes all might have ties to these languages. With an increased awareness and appreciation for different cultures, you help to increase visibility and access to these languages, ultimately promoting linguistic diversity.

YOUR TURN

What individual efforts can YOU make to promote and appreciate LCTLs in your community?

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Language Endangerment and Revitalization

KELI YERIAN AND BIBI HALIMA

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is language endangerment?
- Why are many indigenous languages endangered?
- What is involved in language revitalization?
- Why are language endangerment and revitalization relevant to language learning?

7164 languages!

According to [Ethnologue](#), this is the number of living languages as of 2024 (Eberhard et al., 2024a). Does this number surprise you? It can be amazing to realize that there are over 7000 ways for humans

to talk to one another. This means 7000 grammatical systems, 7000 systems for combining sounds or signs, 7000 inventories of vocabulary, and 7000 ways to express one's culture and identity. And if we count languages from the past that are no longer spoken and the different varieties of languages that might be counted as the 'same' language, this number is even larger.

LANGUAGES AT RISK

We may count over 7000 languages today, but this number is decreasing every year. Although language loss is not a new phenomenon, the pace of loss has accelerated in recent times far beyond historical trends, similar to the increasing pace of biodiversity loss. [Ethnologue](#) states that 42% of languages are currently at risk of disappearing from everyday use, which is a much higher percentage than in the past (Eberhard et al., 2024b). In other words, over 3000 languages are endangered right now and the rate of language endangerment is showing no signs of slowing down. Over half of today's languages could be severely endangered by 2100 (Sallabank & Austin, 2023).

[UNESCO's](#) Atlas of World Languages in Danger categorizes endangered languages into six levels of risk, ranging from vulnerable to critically endangered or extinct (Moseley, 2010). Importantly, languages become endangered when they are highly minoritized. Through the processes of colonization and globalization, many minoritized communities have been forced or incentivized to adopt majority languages as their own.

Move the slider along the bottom of the image below to see this process in action in North America.

NORTH AMERICAN LANGUAGE GROUPS FROM PRE-COLONIZATION TO PRESENT

Move the slider to see change over time on the map below. [Accessible description](#) of the slider activity.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
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The disappearance of many indigenous languages in the Americas is a result of the suppression or active elimination of Native peoples and their voices. In the U.S. and Canada, children were forced to attend Boarding Schools that forbade them from speaking their own languages, which severed their linguistic and cultural ties to their original Tribes.

Before the arrival of European settlers in the 1600s, there were over 300 indigenous languages spoken in North America (Britannica, n.d.). Only around half of these have fluent speakers today, and it is estimated that without revitalization efforts, only around 20 spoken indigenous languages will remain in 2050

(Indigenous Language Institute, as cited by Cohen, 2010, in The New York Times). In the video below, Andrina Wekontash Smith, a Shinnecock educator, explains further about the history of indigenous language loss in the United States.



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here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=90#oembed-1>

ARE WE LOSING MORE THAN WORDS?

We may wonder, why does it matter to lose minoritized languages? We have the majority languages we can communicate in instead, right? Well, these questions are easiest to ask when your own language is not the one in danger. We may not always notice, but in each language lies the history of communities, the wisdom of collective minds and the incredible stories and ecological knowledge of human societies, in addition to a unique grammatical and sound system developed over thousands of years. It is in languages that we find diverse ways to express hope and dreams for our futures. People live through their languages!

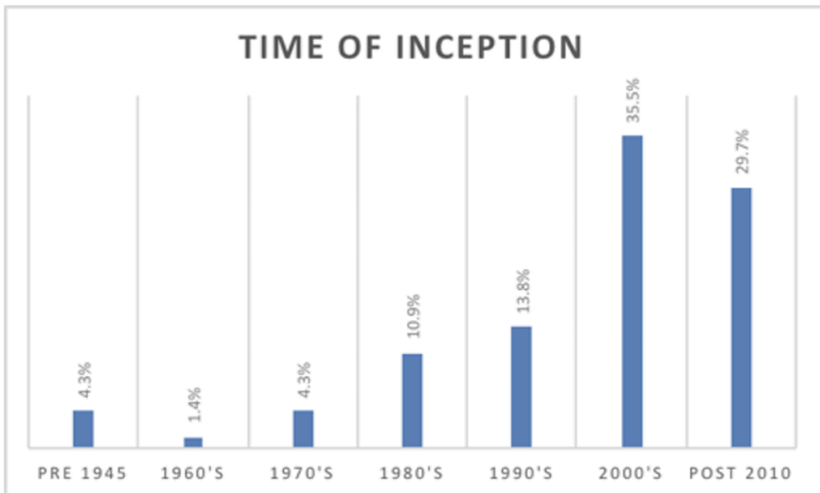
LOST WORDS, FOUND VOICES

At this point you might assume that once languages are lost, they are forever gone. But interestingly languages can come “back to life”. There are initiatives around the world led by community members, educators, linguists, and other scholars to document, reclaim and revitalize endangered languages. Some people are even reviving languages that have been considered “extinct” preferring to call them *dormant* or *sleeping*. These individuals and communities are putting tremendous effort into breathing life into ancestral stories and keeping traditional language in community daily life.

The process of revitalization involves “giving new life and vigor to a language that has been decreasing in use (or has ceased to be used altogether)” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2018, p. 13). But it is not an easy or straightforward process. Reviving or maintaining the use of an endangered language usually involves multiple painstaking stages that depend on the status of the language in the community, the extent of documentation of the language, the number of resources and finances to support materials, community interest, and leadership.

This work can be slow and often painful. Elliott (2022) notes that, “language revitalization efforts are typically started by dedicated individuals or groups of individuals who aim to support their heritage language. In assembling a team, if possible, they start with the expertise of remaining L1 speakers, typically elders. They may choose to include on their team academics or experts, who may be either ‘outsiders’ or tribal members” (pp. 438-439). Examples of current revitalization efforts globally include the Ainu language in northern Japan, Quechua varieties in countries of the South American Andes, the Manchu language in China, and the Gunggari language in Australia, among many others.

A worldwide survey shows that language revitalization efforts are a growing phenomenon globally. As shown in the graph below, more than half of these efforts began just within the last 25 years (Pérez-Báez et al., 2019). It is exciting to see that people of minoritized communities and their allies worldwide are raising their voices to sustain and empower their languages.



Revitalization efforts by year of inception, Pérez-Báez, 2019, p. 462.

REVITALIZATION EFFORTS IN OREGON

If we zoom in on the Northwest United States we see many efforts underway. Below is a image hotspots map of some of the indigenous language revitalization projects currently happening in what is now the state of Oregon.

IMAGE HOTSPOTS MAP OF OREGON REVITALIZATION EFFORTS

Click on the green markers below to read information that has been published about these efforts. [Accessible description](#) of the image hotspots activity.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=90#h5p-26>

Institutes that support revitalization efforts allow for coordinated efforts in multiple communities. For example, the Northwest Indian Language Institute (NILI) was founded in 1998 in response to requests from Native communities of Oregon. NILI is situated in an “old white wooden house on the east edge of campus” at the University of Oregon and provides assistance for revitalization efforts in multiple indigenous languages including Ichishkīn, Chinuk Wawa, Tolowa-Dee-ni, and Lushootseed, among others (Elliott, 2022, p. 441). Their work includes teacher training, curriculum development, language documentation, appropriate uses in technology, outreach services on issues of language endangerment and advocacy for language revitalization issues ([NILI](#)).

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH ME?

You may be asking yourself this question. Our answer is threefold.

First, as we said in the previous sections on Heritage languages and LCTLs, for some of you this may be a very personal topic. If you are Native or have Native heritage, your own heritage language may be the one that you most want to learn.

Second, for those without a personal tie to an indigenous language, you still can participate in helping these languages thrive and prosper. Often classes at the university are open to anyone, no matter their heritage. For example in Eugene, Oregon, Ichishkiin is offered at the University of Oregon, and Chinuk Wawa is offered at Lane Community College. Taking a class on an indigenous language can give you insight and sensitivity to Native culture, history, and of course the language itself. The grammar of Ichishkiin, for example, is remarkably complex and quite different from most other languages. But learning in the classroom is not the only way. You can also participate in cultural events hosted on campus or in the community that celebrate indigenous peoples and languages. This can be a purposeful experience for those who want to explore a language different from the few majoritized languages typically offered worldwide.

Perhaps most importantly, whether or not you take an indigenous language class, by learning about endangered languages you will be more aware of the power and politics of language learning. You can become a strong advocate for supporting endangered minoritized languages and develop deep appreciation for the people who are learning and using them.

PAUSE AND EXPLORE


Do you know languages in your own context that are endangered or at risk? [Native Land Digital](#) is one way you can find out the history of the land you are currently living on using this [interactive map](#). Find your own context and see which language(s) were originally spoken there. You will likely be surprised by the diversity of languages you'll find. There is a high likelihood that while searching for one singular endangered language, you may find many other languages that are either endangered or currently dormant.

At the end of this section, assess your understanding.

LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT AND REVITALIZATION COMPREHENSION CHECK

Select the best answer for each question.



 An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=90#h5p-27](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=90#h5p-27)

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Image & Activity Descriptions

Language Groups Map Slides

A map of North America showing language groups prior to colonization, slides show the impact of colonization on North American language groups as English starts to dominate. Each slide shows the same map, but English, French and Spanish language groups start to encroach and cover the indigenous language groups that are originally shown on the map.

Slide 1:

There are 61 language groups represented on the map pre-colonization. Please note that other languages and varieties exist and have existed in addition to the pictured language families. Languages by region of North America:

- Northern Canada, a few large language groups cover most of Canada:
 - Eskimo-Aleut (The most Northern coasts and islands in North America)

- Na-Dene (North Western Canada and Alaska)
- Algic (extends into southern Canada and the Northern US, especially on the east coast of the US)
- South Western Canada and North Western US:
 - Tsimshianic
 - Wakashan
 - Salishan
 - Chimakuan
 - Chinookan
 - Plateau Penutian
 - Cayuse
- A dense collection of smaller language groups along the West coast of the United States
 - Kalapuyan
 - Alsean
 - Coosan
 - Shastan
 - Palaihnihan
 - Wintuan
 - Yuki-Wappo
 - Pomoan
 - Maiduan
 - Utian
 - Chumashan
 - Yokutsan

- Salinan
- Esselen
- Washo
- Yana
- Chimariko
- Karuk
- Takelma
- Siuslaw
- Western and South Western US and North Western Mexico:
 - Uto-Aztecan
 - Yuman-Cochimi
 - Seri
 - Zuni
 - Keresan
 - Kiowa-Tanoan
 - Caddoan
- Central and Mid-Western US, large language groups cover most of the central US.
 - Siouan-Catawban
 - Algic
 - Kiowa-Tanoan
 - Caddoan
- Southern US, along the Gulf of Mexico, small language groups.
 - Tunica

- Natchez
- Chitmacha
- Adai
- Atakapa
- Karankawa
- Tonkawa
- Aranama
- Cotoname
- Coahuilteco
- Solano
- North Eastern US (inner New England and New York)
 - Iroquoian.
- Near modern day Alabama: Muskogean.
- The Eastern and South Eastern US are largely unclassified and unknown on this map.

Slide 2:

Map description: French encroaches along the Eastern Canadian coast, to the great lakes. English encroaches along the North Eastern US coast from current day Maine to Northern Florida, and extends to near the great lakes. English extends just along the coast of Hudson bay in Northern Canada. Spanish Encroaches across all of Mexico into the Southern US.

English, French, and Spanish are introduced to North America. English speakers move westward, displacing indigenous populations.

Slide 3:

Majoritized languages continue to spread across North America throughout the 19th century. English and French reach about halfway across North America toward the West coast.

Slide 4:

English is the most predominant language spoken in North America. It is the majoritized language specifically in the United States and Canada. In Mexico and Latin America, indigenous languages were similarly minoritized while Spanish was majoritized.

Map description: Indigenous language groups are entirely covered by English (dominant), Spanish, and French (focused in North Eastern Canada).

[Return to map slider activity.](#)

Indigenous Language Revitalization Efforts in Oregon

1. THE CHINOOK NATION

“The Chinook Indian Nation — whose ancestors lived along both shores of the lower Columbia River, as well as north and south along the Pacific Coast at the river’s mouth — continue to reside near traditional lands. Because of its nonrecognized status, the Chinook Indian Nation often faces challenges in its efforts to claim and control cultural heritage and its own history and to assert a right to place on the Columbia River. Chinook Resilience is a collaborative ethnography of how the Chinook Indian Nation, whose land and heritage are under assault, continues to move forward and remain culturally strong and resilient. Jon Daehnke focuses on Chinook participation in archaeological projects and sites of public history as well as the tribe’s role in the revitalization of canoe culture in the Pacific Northwest. This lived and embodied

enactment of heritage, one steeped in reciprocity and protocol rather than documentation and preservation of material objects, offers a tribally relevant, forward-looking, and decolonized approach for the cultural resilience and survival of the Chinook Indian Nation, even in the face of federal nonrecognition” (Daehnke, 2017).

Reference:

Daehnke, J. D. (2017). *Chinook resilience : Heritage and cultural revitalization on the lower Columbia River / Jon D. Daehnke ; foreword by Tony A. Johnson*. Smithsonian Institution. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from www.si.edu/object/siris_sil_1104580

2. CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF SILETZ INDIANS

The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians is broadening language awareness by making a dictionary of Siletz Dee-Ni that is accessible to anyone.

“We don’t know where it’s going to go,’ said Bud Lane, a tribe member who has been working on the online [Siletz Dee-ni Talking Dictionary](#) for nearly seven years, and recorded almost all of its 10,000-odd audio entries himself. In its first years the dictionary was password protected, intended for tribe members.

Since February, however, when organizers began to publicize its existence, Web hits have spiked from places where languages related to Siletz are spoken, a broad area of the West on through Canada and into Alaska. That is the heartland of the Athabaskan family of languages, which also includes Navajo. And there has been a flurry of interest from Web users in Italy, Switzerland and Poland, where the dark, rainy woods of the Pacific Northwest, at least in terms of language connections, might as well be the moon” (Johnson, 2012).

Reference:

Johnson, K. (2012, August 3). *Tribe Revives Language on Verge of Extinction*. The New York Times. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from www.nytimes.com/2012/08/04/us/siletz-language-with-few-voices-finds-modern-way-to-survive.html

3. COQUILLE INDIAN TRIBE

“Creating programs to revive traditional languages among modern-day people is a challenge for any Indian Tribe. The Coquille Tribe has begun the project, and traditional words are slowly infusing Tribal programs and events. If you attend a Coquille event, don’t be surprised to be welcomed with the Miluk ‘Dai s’la!’ or the Upper Coquille ‘Jala!’,” (Coquille Indian Tribe, 2024).

Reference:

Coquille Indian Tribe. (2024). *Living the Culture*. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from www.coquilletribe.org/our-heritage/our-living-culture/

4. CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF COOS, LOWER UMPQUA AND SIUSLAW INDIANS

Patty Whereat Phillips and Enna Helms are implementing a project that will help with revitalization efforts for miluk, hanis and sha’yuusht’á uʔ quuiich languages.

“Luckily, two Tribal linguists— Patty Whereat Phillips and Enna Helms— are paving the beginnings of language revitalization for three languages: miluk, hanis and sha’yuusht’á uʔ quuiich. Together they lead four language classes taught to both Tribal members and college students on Zoom. Both women are active participants in Tribal committees, and Mrs. Helms is a

Councilwoman on the Tribal Council. The Tribe needs are to build capacity in order to expand access to the language. We plan to supplement revitalization efforts with our proposed project of documentation, archival, and storytelling, capturing success and challenge stories.

This project effectively meets the Alumni TIES seminar theme shared ways of sharing underrepresented stories. By documenting experiences and creating a book, the Tribe's history is preserved. It can help spread awareness about the Tribe's history, values, and mythology and propel other stakeholders to join in on the cause. A book on traditional storytelling provides communities with diversity and representation, a desperately needed element for children's books" (Fong, 2023).

Reference:

Fong, J. (2023). *Documenting Language Revitalization & Storybook*. MIT SOLVE. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from solve.mit.edu/challenges/2023-indigenous-communities/solutions/76715

5. CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF GRAND RONDE

A language revitalization effort by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde began in 2000. It was a language immersion program that intergrated their language into the community to help with revitltization efforts.

"For the past dozen-or-so years, the Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde, just an hour north of Corvallis, have made intensive efforts to revitalize Chinook Jargon—or, as they call it, Chinuk Wawa—through childhood immersion programs and adult literacy classes" (Brodie, 2012).

Reference:

Brodie, N. (2012, December 13). *Chinuk Wawa: A Local Oregon Tribe's Efforts to Save a Dying Language*. The Corvallis Advocate. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from www.corvallisadvocate.com/2012/1213-chinuk-wawa/

6. COW CREEK BAND OF UMPQUA INDIANS

The Takelma language, once spoken by the Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribe of Indians and others, went extinct in Southwestern Oregon by 1940. Now, tribal members are in the process of reviving it.

“The ancient Takelma language had been spoken at least since Europeans first arrived, according to Dr. Stephen Beckham, retired Pamplin Professor of History at Lewis & Clark College. The language disappeared over time as tribal members were removed onto English-speaking-only reservations.

Now, tribal members are in the process of restoring it.

At 21 years old, tribal member Elizabeth Bryant is the most fluent speaker of the language. She’s the Lead Takelma Teacher Learner for the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians. And for the past three years, she and a few others have been working on creating a dictionary and teaching classes to tribal members. The goal is to revitalize important history.

“It really ties into that sense of my ancestors. And this is where I come from, these are my people who are no longer with us. And so it’s very much an emotional connection to what they could have been thinking,” she said.

In 2019, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians received a three-year grant from the federal Administration for Native

Americans to do this restoration work. They hired Curriculum Specialist and Applied Linguist Dave Prine to help” (Vaughan, 2022).

Reference:

Vaughan, J. (2022, November 25). *Cow Creek Tribe Works to Restore Once-Extinct Language*. OPB. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from www.opb.org/article/2022/11/25/cow-creek-tribe-southern-oregon-works-to-restore-once-extinct-language/

7. KLAMATH TRIBES

Early Childhood Klamath Language Immersion Program

“In an effort to preserve their native language, the Klamath Tribes has introduced an early childhood language immersion program teaching Klamath to children at the tribes’ Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) in Chiloquin. Revitalizing indigenous languages is an ongoing effort by tribes across the country, and for children to best succeed, lessons should begin at an early age.

The ultimate goal is to develop a generation of fluent Klamath speakers who can then teach their children the language. With only a handful of tribal members who are master speakers, the challenge is all the greater to teach a new generation of fluent Klamath speakers” (Smith, 2023).

Reference:

Smith, K. (2023, June 1). *Early Childhood Klamath Language Immersion Program Educates Next Generation of Speakers*. Herald and News. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from www.heraldandnews.com/news/early-childhood-klamath-language-immersion-program-educates-next-generation-of-speakers/article_9398e8c4-00b8-11ee-81da-0f2c4bcdf310.html

8. CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF WARM SPRINGS

“The Language Program offers several programs such as:

- Rise and Shine at Warm Springs K-8 Academy – all languages and College Success, Rites of Passage
- Immersion at Warm Springs K-8 Academy – Ichishkin language
- Ichishkin at Culture & Heritage by Suzie – MW nights
- Kiksht at COCC – Credit Classes at COCC Madras
- Autni Ichishkin Sapsikwat at Warm Springs Daycare – Ichishkiin Language”

Reference:

Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs. (2021). *Language Program*. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from warmsprings-nsn.gov/program/language-program/

9. CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE UMATILLA INDIAN RESERVATION

There has been a lot of collaboration between the Northwest Indian Language Institute at the University of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). Below is a description of one of the language revitalization efforts that has been a combined effort of NILI and the CTUIR.

“Over the years, NILI and CTUIR have collaborated on numerous projects. A recent example is the eBook project. NILI faculty collaborated with teachers and students at Nixyaawii Community School, their Tribal high school, to create multimedia materials in one of the indigenous languages that the small children in the immersion preschool could use. Over a period of two years,

multiple trips were made to CTUIR, a small library of eBooks were developed, and several Nixyaawii youth took part in NILI Summer Institute. The team, including several Nixyaawii students, traveled to national conferences, such as the National Indian Education Association conferences in Alaska and Portland, where they presented on the project," (Northwest Indian Language Institute, 2024).

Reference:

Northwest Indian Language Institute. (2024). *The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation*. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from nili.uoregon.edu/umatilla-2/

10. BURNS PAIUTE OF HARNEY COUNTY

A grant was offered to the Burns Paiute of Harney County was offered a grant of \$6,345 in the year 2024 for language revitalization efforts.

"The Burns Paiute Tribal Council has approved funds to be used for the Wadatika Neme Yaduan Nobi, a tribal language and traditional culture revitalization effort," (Oregon Cultural Trust, 2024).

Reference:

Oregon Cultural Trust. (2024). *Cultural Coalitions: Burns Paiute Tribe*. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from www.culturaltrust.org/about-us/coalitions/burns-paiute-tribe/

[Return to hotspot map activity.](#)

Media Attributions

- time-of-inception

Advocating for Linguistic Diversity

CAMERON KEATON; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN



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[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=92#h5p-28](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=92#h5p-28)

Similar to Cameron, many of you may have noticed these differing degrees of access to learning different languages across contexts. You may have seen that only one, two, or three languages at most were offered at your high school. In some parts of the world, only majoritized languages are offered or required to pass high school. We hope that after reading this chapter, you have started to understand why only a few languages get this kind of visibility.

Learning majoritized languages and their **standardized** varieties gives you more access to economic or social power in the world, this is true. This can be a valid motivation for speaking or learning these privileged **language varieties**. However, what is usually overlooked are the unique benefits of learning languages that are less visible. These benefits may include keeping cultural practices alive in your family, connecting with specific communities in their own places of origin, reviving an endangered language, exploring a very different **language family**, or advocating for the voices of minoritized communities, among others. No matter what language you learn, the power you hold is immense and should not be underrated. All languages deserve attention and love, and they should all be studied with passion.

CHAPTER 4 - CULTURE, INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE, AND PRAGMATICS

CHAPTER SECTIONS**1. INTRODUCTION**

2. WHAT IS CULTURE?

3. GOING ON A CULTURE EXPEDITION

4. LANGUAGE IS CULTURE IS LANGUAGE

5. BROADENING HORIZONS: A BIG, BIG WORLD

6. SO, WHAT NOW?

Introduction

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

“...if culture was a house, then language was the key
to the front door, to all the rooms inside.”

-Khaled Hosseini
And the Mountains Echoed, 2013

Imagine you don't understand a new phrase you heard in your second language, so you ask someone from a culture that speaks that language for a translation. They hesitate, then say, “It just doesn't directly translate”. Have you heard someone say this? Perhaps you've even had to say this to someone else when they didn't understand a word in your first language. This translation difficulty doesn't just reflect a lack of vocabulary or grammar knowledge. Often it is due to a lack of terms or expressions related to cultural differences, so it comes down to difficulty in capturing the cultural context, historical significance, and emotional depth that the original language holds.

In this chapter, we will explore these connections, especially how culture and language interact with and build off one another. We will also look at how when we learn about new languages and cultures, it can influence and diversify how we perceive the world.

INTERVIEWS WITH ROTARY YOUTH EXCHANGE PARTICIPANTS

Throughout the chapter there will be boxes like this labeled either “Author’s Perspective – Faith” or “ROTEX Perspective”. These perspectives are real-life experiences and take-aways from former U.S. high school students who had intercultural insights during the program. Faith, one of the authors of this book, also participated in ROTEX when she was in high school and is now a volunteer with the program. She interviewed three program alumni whose voices you will hear in this chapter. Let’s first meet the ROTEX participants:

Faith is a student of the University of Oregon, studying Japanese and Second Language Acquisition and Teaching. She studied abroad in Japan from 2019-2020. She believes that learning about international languages and cultures is the key to bringing us all together. When she’s not working, volunteering, or studying you’ll see her on the volleyball courts, learning a new language, or adventuring.

Eric is a student of the University of Portland, studying

social work. He studied abroad in Thailand from 2018-2019. Eric is an advocate for mental health and human rights, investing a lot of his time back into his own community. When he's not hard at work or volunteering, you can find him at concerts or exploring the Pacific Northwest.

Gabe is a graduate of Western Washington University, who studied history. He studied abroad in Turkey from 2018-2019 and 2024, as well as in France in 2022-2023. Gabe loves traveling internationally and makes it a priority to get out of the United States and experience new cultures as often as possible. In his free time, Gabe enjoys writing and is currently working on drafting a series of fantasy novels.

Olivia is a current student at Portland State University, studying Middle Eastern studies and political science. She studied abroad in Turkey from 2018-2019. Olivia is passionate about raising up the voices of those who don't often get heard. She's been fighting for human rights since before she can remember. You'll likely catch Olivia hiking or volunteering with her free time.

To learn more about District 5100's Youth Exchange program, get involved, or contact a committee

member, please visit the [Rotary Youth Exchange website](#).

CHAPTER GOALS

At the end of this chapter, I will be able to:

- Define culture, and describe what elements contribute to it
 - Explain how cultural and linguistic influences can shape a person's perspective over time
 - Adapt to new cultures and learn about those cultures respectfully, using problem-solving strategies when face-to-face with misunderstandings
 - Recognize the relationship between language and culture
 - Apply new approaches to learning language and culture
-

References

Hosseini, K. (2013). *And the mountains echoed*. Bloomsbury.

What is Culture?

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is the difference between culture and subculture?
- How do language and culture interact?

We can start to answer the question ‘What is culture?’ by thinking about identities. Let’s first hear from Faith.

AUTHOR’S PERSPECTIVE – FAITH

What is something you identify with?

Personally, I find a strong identity in being a volunteer. I have been volunteering consistently since I was young, and the activities I have done and people I have been surrounded by in volunteering have helped to shape part of who I am. I share similar values and desires with others who I volunteer with.

How have parts of your identity shaped you? Why is that?

If this thought exercise resonated with you, you might have a bit of a head-start on this section. You might wonder how an identity such as being a volunteer relates to culture. Let's now consider what *culture* and *subculture* mean.

There isn't just one definition of culture... because it is not an easy task to define culture.

Many have attempted, and each rendition holds its own value. Your personal view of culture may differ from the definition written here, and that is okay. One of the most beautiful things about culture is that it impacts and is viewed by everyone differently.

With that said, we can keep the following definition of culture in mind: "Culture is a word that *suggests social patterns of shared meaning*. In essence, it is a collective understanding of the way the world works, shared by members of a group and passed down from one generation to the next" (Biswas-Diener & Thin, 2024, Defining Culture, para. 1).

But surely it's impossible to cover an entire group's understanding of the world under one umbrella, right? This is where *sub-cultures* come in.

Culture is not something that people are born with, but rather born

into and develop a sense of over time. Its practices and the people within it cannot be confined to a box. In this way, because culture is so dynamic, sub-cultures may emerge. Weil (2018) notes that, “In contrast to the dominant culture of a society [...] are the various subcultures, conceived as groups that are part of the dominant culture but that differ from it in important ways” (Cultures and Subcultures, para. 2).

Sub-cultures enable members to find communities of people with similar thinking patterns, values and desires, which may deviate from those of their broader culture, and share in camaraderie.

HOW DOES CULTURE RELATE TO IDENTITY?

Good question.

Now that we have differentiated *culture* and *sub-culture*, let's go back to the thought exercise about identity at the start of this section once more. Could the part of your identity that you selected also have a culture, or sub-culture?

Let's hear from Faith again.

AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE – FAITH

To me, the culture of volunteering involves selflessness and commitment to learning and growing. Because much of my volunteering consists of working with exchange students, my identity is in a sub-culture that highlights characteristics of that specific area of my volunteer work.

I've found that many volunteers who work with international students place a lot of value on being a responsible global citizen and strengthening international understanding. When I am volunteering, these values are always at the forefront of my mind.

There are other aspects of this type of volunteering that I might identify less with, such as the negative conception that volunteers who work with exchange students like to brag about how well-traveled and knowledgeable they are. Though many of the volunteers that I work with love to talk about exchange, they are quite humble about their experience. They are aware that they still have so much to learn and will be learners for the rest of their lives. Even if we don't identify with this negative stereotype, it still can affect how we are perceived by many people.

While these characteristics aren't exclusive to volunteers who work with exchange students, the defining features of this sub-culture likely differ from that of volunteers at animal shelters, for example, even though we may share a lot of the same overarching values of volunteer culture. For example, they may value animal welfare more in their volunteer work than I do. This doesn't mean that I don't value animal welfare, but simply that it's not part of the values I project when volunteering with exchange students.

LANGUACULTURE: LIVING, SHIFTING LANGUAGE

As culture is dynamic and ever-changing, so too is language. Adaptations in language over time are often attributed to changes in cultural attitudes and ideals. The term *languaculture* originally coined by Michael Agar in 1994, can be used to describe this “essential tie between language and culture,” (Norris &

Tsedendamba, 2014, p. 205). Linguaculture represents the idea that a language is made up not only of its grammatical and vocabulary elements, but also past knowledge, inventions, cultural information, and behaviors that contribute to language change over time. Culture borrows from language, and language from culture; they are deeply intertwined, making it challenging, if not impossible, to separate them entirely.

Over time, culture shifts because of the people who belong to it, as they are also the people who form it. New language forms as a result of the needs of its cultures' speakers. Something like slang or inside jokes are just one way in which the speakers of a language create something new that evolves that culture.

ROTEX PERSPECTIVE: EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

One common theme that we as ROTEX participants noted was the big difference between expressions of love in various languages and cultures. In some languages there are many words to express love and all are used in different ways, such as in Spanish or Turkish. There are other languages, however, in which there is an abundance of words for "love", yet they aren't often used, such as in Japanese. In such languages, the use of the word "love" is replaced by

actions, such as gift giving or spending quality time. Although the word “love” could be directly translated from language to language, individual cultures’ expressions of love vary widely.

Please enjoy this video where Amirpooya Dardashti discusses some of the ways that culture and language play into one another that exemplify their “essential tie”. Using a few of his own experiences as examples, he shows us how culture can impact even our everyday life.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=98#h5p-29>

In his Ted Talk, Dardashti shares how he noticed cultural differences more frequently when he began teaching English in Iran. He saw many large differences (both verbal and nonverbal) in how people communicated language. He also noted that, in some cases, certain cultural notions aren't even existent in another environment, and that it can be difficult for people who aren't familiar with the context to pick up on cultural cues.

Some differences in how communication takes place can be more surface level. For example, when it comes to greeting others, bowing is common in much of East Asia, but shaking hands is more common in many western countries. Another way of greeting someone might be saying "Namaste," and pressing one's hands together as is common, for example, in Hindu and other communities.

Other notions, as also noted by Dardashti, are more complex and might not exist in another **languaculture**, which can make it challenging for those who aren't familiar with the context. He discusses the Persian culture of *Tarof* which reflects the Persian concept of hospitality. He gives the example of going to a meal with American friends and splitting the bill by person, but always fighting with Persian friends about who would want to pay for the entire meal to show appreciation for everyone. However, these cultural differences aren't impossible to overcome.

At the end of this section, assess your understanding.

WHAT IS CULTURE COMPREHENSION CHECK

Drag the keywords on the right side and drop them to match the statements on the right.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=98#h5p-30](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=98#h5p-30)

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Going on a Culture Expedition

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- How can we conceptualize the complexity of culture?
- What are some models for understanding the experience of culture shock?

What are some of the language features that come to mind when you think of a language classroom? Grammar? Vocabulary? Have you ever considered that learning about culture could be just as important as these other components of language? Cultures (and sub-cultures) can shape how people speak to and interact with one another. In this section, we will take a look at a few ways to conceptualize culture.

CULTURE AS AN ICEBERG

You might be familiar with how we perceive icebergs. Though we can see the surface, this only captures about 10% of what is there. Similarly, culture can be seen as an iceberg. There are parts of cultures that are easy to see and are talked about often such as language, art, food, or fashion. However, these topics are only the visible surfaces of culture, as we can see in the illustration below.

There are also subjects that are talked about less frequently, such as how to behave in business settings, or the symbolism of certain gestures. These patterns are just part of everyday life, and usually remain just below the surface.

Then, there are subjects and behaviors discussed even less frequently. These are so deeply embedded in those who grew up in the culture that they occur as thoughtlessly as breathing. This might include norms between genders or ages, how the culture values personal space, or even what is seen as “good” or “bad.” These aspects remain deeply hidden unless we are willing to acknowledge and discuss them.



Figure 1. Culture as an Iceberg. [Accessible image description](#)

Being aware that a culture we are interacting with may have some norms that are below the surface reminds us to keep our eyes, ears, and minds open. It allows us to dive deeper into an unfamiliar culture and get to know the people behind it in a respectful manner as well.

ROTEX PERSPECTIVE: COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Another shared experience we all had studying abroad was how much we were stereotyped by others. We were always happy that people felt comfortable enough to ask about culture in the United States, but it would almost always be about the stuff you see in the movies. “Do you guys really party all the time?” or “Do people really get shoved in lockers?” were a few examples. They might seem silly to us – but those are the sort of things that sit right at the surface of culture, so of course people who aren't familiar with culture in the United States are going to ask about them.

Eric brought up how sometimes people think that they have a strong knowledge of a culture (or are more knowledgeable than others in their circle) even if they've only had minimal exposure, but in reality, it's really difficult to know and understand a culture if you're not actively involving yourself in it. He said that “Culture is not visible if you are not immersing yourself in that culture.”

DON'T LET CULTURE SHOCK SURPRISE YOU!

When we begin to explore a new culture or sub-culture, and especially as we start to get lower in the iceberg, we can experience something called *culture shock*. This experience isn't a linear process and can feel a bit like a roller coaster, as represented in the illustration below. We often experience excitement and joy early in our journey, but then can become irritated and frustrated at the differences that start becoming visible to us. Over time we might adjust to the surface differences, but still encounter deeper cultural and personal challenges before eventually assimilating and adapting. Many people may never fully adapt, depending on their personal values and choices.

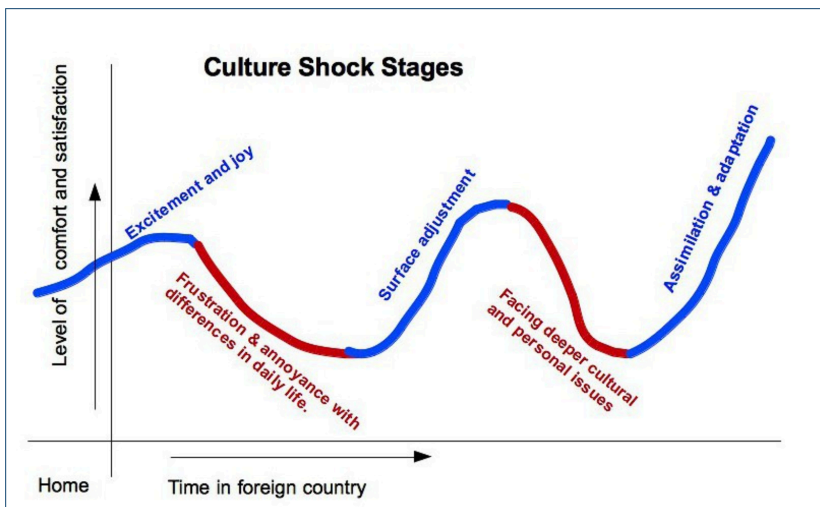


Figure 2. Culture Shock Stages.

Culture shock can be big or small. Sometimes you'll learn something new about a culture that changes your entire perspective, and sometimes you'll learn something new that might

be just a bit of an inconvenience to get used to. You can even experience culture shock across **sub-cultures**. There will be times when you like what you learn, and there will be times when you don't like what you learn. All of these are normal and valid feelings when encountering a new culture, so feel free to embrace those feelings as they come and go.

ROTEX PERSPECTIVE: EDUCATION

One thing that we found in common among Japanese, Thai, and Turkish cultures was the value placed on formal education. In all three countries, students would have to apply and test into their high schools. Many students wouldn't engage in much social activity outside of class because they felt that they needed to prioritize studying over their social life. Eric mentioned that he often wondered about what kind of impact the Thai education system had on students beyond just the surface. Formal education being prioritized at the level it was in our respective host countries was an experience of culture shock.

If you'd like to read more about culture shock, [this OER by Grothe \(2021\)](#) can be a useful place to start.

Like the **culture shock** stages shown above, the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) is another model that visualizes the developmental stages we may go through when deeply learning another culture. The IDC model describes five orientations towards cultural differences that include *denial*, *polarization*, *minimization*, *acceptance* and *adaptation* that we may experience as part of culture shock. Please follow [this link](#) to learn about and interact with the IDC. In the interactive visual below, Faith explains how she applies the IDC model to her own experience with cultural expectations about cell phone use in schools in Japan. Follow along with Faith's evolution through the various stages of the continuum.

AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE - FAITH

When I studied abroad in Japan, one example of culture shock I had was how strictly rules were enforced and adhered to. In most schools across Japan, you are generally not allowed to use phones on campus, even when classes are not in session.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=101#h5p-31>

As you read Faith's story, try to think if you have a similar experience in another cultural or sub-cultural context. Can you identify which IDC orientations you had in that situation? Did your orientations change?

As we reach the end of this section, do you remember the "culture as an iceberg" we took a look at above? Try to place some of these cultural values and behaviors on the iceberg in terms of how "close to the surface" they are.

CULTURE AS AN ICEBERG COMPREHENSION CHECK

Drag the key terms from either side and drop them onto the iceberg at their correct positions, either above the surface or below the surface.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=101#h5p-32>

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Media Attributions

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[Culture Shock stages](#) © Vera Loen is licensed under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) (Attribution NonCommercial ShareAlike) license.

IMAGE DESCRIPTION

Figure 1

An Iceberg with visible parts of culture above the surface of the water:

- Language
- Literature
- Art
- Dress

- Religion
- Food

Hidden aspects of culture are below the surface:

- Beliefs and values
- Marriage
- Personal space
- Gender roles
- Non-verbal communication
- Eye contact
- Body language
- Power dynamic
- Modesty
- Attitude to elderly
- Tone of voice
- Obscenities
- Sense of "self"

[Return to Figure 1.](#)

Media Attributions

- culture-shock-stages

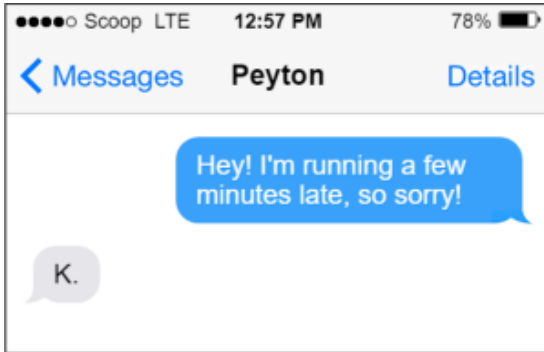
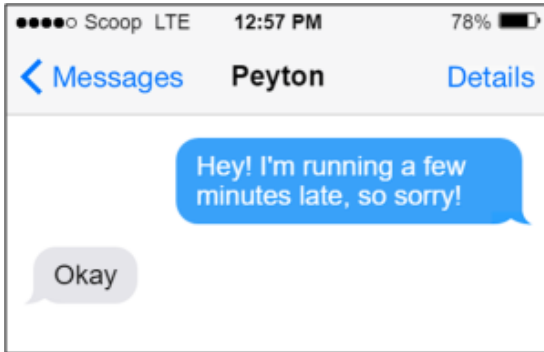
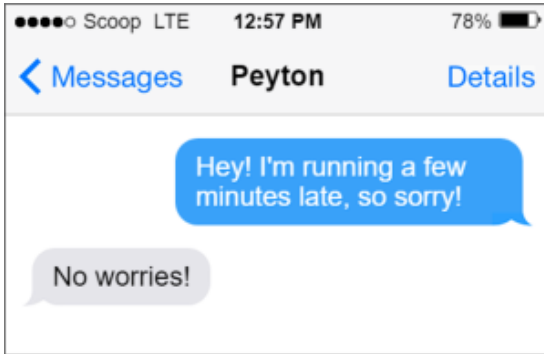
Language is Culture is Language

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- How do high and low-context cultures affect language use?
- Why is learning pragmatics important?

In our day-to-day lives, we don't likely give much thought to why we speak the way we do. Sometimes, we'll say something in a different tone or with slightly different wording to get across a message that goes beyond the content of what we are saying. For example, have you ever received a text from a friend and thought, "They're definitely mad at me," even if they did not say it? What is your impression when you read each of the following text messages?



Do they each give a different impression? How do they make you feel? Do any of them make you wonder if the person responding is upset? Perhaps you don't feel anything different between these

examples, and that's alright too. However, if these differences feel familiar to you, you already have a head start on our next topic.

HIGH-CONTEXT AND LOW-CONTEXT CULTURE

High-context culture (also frequently referred to as more indirect culture) typically values implicit communication where those receiving a message are expected to interpret the message based on a variety of factors, such as environment, relationship, and tone of voice.

On the other end of the scale, cultures using *low-context* communication (also frequently referred to as more direct culture) tend to favor more explicit communication that doesn't require as much interpretation on the part of the receiver (Afrouzi, 2021).

By being aware of the differences between high-context communication and low-context communication, we can communicate more effectively, both verbally and non-verbally, in the target language. Moreover, the way these differences in culture play out in different communicative contexts is the subject of our next section. Let's first take a look at Faith's perspective.

AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE – FAITH

When I was studying abroad in Japan, I used to walk around the house barefoot. This was exactly what I would do at home in the U.S. as well. A few times, my host mom would ask me things like: "Aren't your feet cold?" or "Doesn't the floor feel strange on your feet?"

After her asking questions like this frequently over a few weeks, I felt

like something might be off, so I tried looking up if Japanese people walked around their house barefoot. The result? It wasn't so positive. I had never studied this part of the culture. I learned that sometimes it can be considered rude or unclean to walk around with bare feet. It could also be that by not using the slippers my host family had given me, they may have felt that I was rejecting part of them.

Because Japan is a high-context culture, without even saying what we were thinking, my host family and I were having a conversation of sorts. Because I was unfamiliar with the culture, much like how [Dardashti](#) shared in his video at the beginning of the chapter, I didn't pick up on the cultural cues. This caused miscommunication between my host mom and I that may have led to some tension if I had not taken the time to investigate the potential cultural background differences that led to our miscommunication.

PRAGMATICS

Have you ever had an inside joke with a good friend? Or is there a movie you quote often with your family? Or perhaps you've tried to tell a funny story, but you did not know quite how to explain it and ended up saying, "You just had to be there."

When this happened, you were part of an **"in-group,"** where your shared past experiences with certain members of that group contributed to the things you were talking about, and affected how you interacted with those around you both verbally and non-verbally. This doesn't only occur on a small scale. This can be seen within cultures of a community, country, and everything in-between.

How communities share norms around language use is the focus of *pragmatics*, or “the study of how context affects meaning” (Anderson et al., 2022, Chapter 8, para. 1). Pragmatics shows us that culture speaks. It is not voiceless, and it can influence language. High-context communication and low-context communication is one example. This is just one of the many areas that pragmatics includes.

Watch this video from the Center for Applied Second Language Studies ([CASLS](#)) to understand more about how the pragmatics of simple expressions can have a large impact on the success of our interactions with others.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=106#oembed-1>

With what you learned from the video, consider again the text message examples you read at the beginning of this page. Depending on our cultural and individual experience, the replies could all give vastly different impressions. For many L1 English speakers, the replies across the three example text messages will not feel the same. One may come across as more understanding,

while another might let us know that the person we are texting with is frustrated.

Though for many the difference may feel clear, those who are just learning U.S. English may not understand the subtle differences in each of these texts. It takes a strong pragmatic knowledge of both the English language, and the culture of the community, to take command of these linguistic tools.

ROTEX PERSPECTIVE: ADDRESSING ELDERS

One thing Olivia struggled with was what to call certain people, especially her teachers. In Turkish, there's a lot of ways to address different people, all at different formality levels. Related to the high value on education in Turkey, it was expected that you would address teachers incredibly formally, but she didn't understand that going in. When she was adjusting and would accidentally address teachers incorrectly, she said that she would get a really negative response and it was a bit jarring.

REFLECT AND CONNECT

Is there a time you've experienced misunderstanding someone because of differences in pragmatic understanding? Misunderstandings like this can come from a variety of factors: social groups, age, life experiences, and more can impact how we interpret implied cues. Looking back, have you run into this before?

WHY LEARN PRAGMATICS?

Being aware of **pragmatic** principles in any given **languaculture** can give the learner a stronger command of the language and the ability to communicate more effectively with members of its culture. The implication behind one's actions and word choices communicates pragmatic meaning, whether the speaker intends it to or not.

Therefore, without understanding pragmatic implications it is easy to miscommunicate intention in a second language where one is unaware of pragmatic norms, such as how in the text messaging example above, saying "No worries" may indicate a different pragmatic meaning than "K." If you weren't familiar with this pragmatic difference, you could create a lot of distance between yourself and your friend unintentionally.

However, when we are aware, it can give us more confidence to interact with members of the language's culture and ask questions respectfully. In Faith's example of being barefoot in her Japanese host family's house, if she had been considering her host mom's inquiries from a high-context perspective sooner, she might have

felt more confident to ask her host mother about it earlier. She may have been able to save both of them from some awkward tension created by approaching the situation with the **low-context** perspective that she was used to. The importance of considering pragmatics and seeing things from a more **high-context** perspective was one of the (many) things she learned from that misunderstanding.

ROTEX PERSPECTIVE: SARCASM

One thing we all noticed was how poorly sarcasm translated. This is a feature that seems to be somewhat unique and not utilized across many languages in the same ways. We all noted that even in the peak of our language usage, none of us could successfully employ sarcasm in our second languages. It almost never came across right, and even seemed offensive in some cases. It's also something that we frequently notice is difficult for English language learners to begin employing. This is because sarcasm needs a lot of pragmatic nuance in order to successfully deliver the message the sender wants to give. Navigating **pragmatics** requires mutual understanding of how languages may be used differently across cultures.

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Broadening Horizons: A Big, Big World

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- How can cultural intelligence shape our understanding of the world?
- How can cultural intelligence solve the paradox of intercultural communication?

As we learn about a new language and/or culture and adopt features of it, our worldview can begin to change rapidly. Our eyes are opened to new perspectives we may not have been aware of before, and the world may not look the same as what we are used to.

This can feel overwhelming, especially when we come into parts of

a new culture that are not exactly what we expected. However, this is an excellent time to practice *cultural intelligence*.

WHAT IS CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE?

Cultural intelligence is described as “the ability to understand why members of other cultures act in the ways they do. Rather than dismissing foreign behaviors as weird, inferior, or immoral, people high in cultural intelligence can appreciate differences even if they do not necessarily share another culture’s views or adopt its way of doing things” (Biswas-Diener & Thin, 2024, Defining Culture, para. 6).

AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

When a language learner is exploring the culture of the language they are studying, if they approach members of that culture with cultural intelligence, those “insiders” are much more likely to be open to the learner. By lending your awareness to a culture that is new to you, you show respect for the people who are a part of it. Putting intentionality into this step can give you insights as to why many members of the culture behave in certain ways and take pressure off your interactions with them.

Let’s put this concept into context by returning to our Rotary study abroad alumni and their own experiences with intercultural communication.

ROTEX PERSPECTIVE: CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND “WIGGLE ROOM”

A common theme in our discussion was recognizing that as a study abroad student, you are going into a culture to observe it rather than judge it. It's important to educate people about your culture as well, especially if they ask, but you shouldn't necessarily make any assumptions or draw any conclusions about their culture. You don't have to accept all of it, either, but you can't ignore it, and you shouldn't judge it.

An important part of the process of exchange and entering new cultures is deciding on what you are or aren't willing to compromise on. If you have core values that you are not willing to give up, then you don't have to change those things about yourself when you enter into a new culture. However, you shouldn't apply your own morals to another group that you're entering into and expect them to follow the same rules. It may also be worth considering softening the morals you have that are “hard-set”.

Olivia gave an example of a student who she worked with that studied abroad in Argentina who was vegetarian when she left the United States. She valued vegetarianism highly and didn't think she wanted to give it up. However, events like barbecues are a huge

part of Argentinian culture and she ended up deciding to give up vegetarianism just for the year so that she could experience that part of the culture, which really helped her to bond with her host family and community. Upon coming home, she returned to vegetarianism, but was glad that she had softened her “hard values” even if only for a year to more deeply experience a new culture and check her own way of thinking.

If anything, experiences like this can help us to solidify our values because it puts them to the test. When entering a new culture, you may experience ways of life that you never would have conceived of on your own. You’ll see new celebrations, foods, rituals, and more, and something may appeal to you that you didn’t even know existed. It’s really a wonderful opportunity, so it should be taken full advantage of.

In the following video, Helena Merschdorf explains more about why understanding culture is crucial for communication and how cultural intelligence can solve the paradox of intercultural communication. She touches on many of the subjects we’ve covered in this chapter, so feel free to refer to previous sections to check your comprehension as she speaks.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=108#oembed-1>

As you can see, even actions seemingly as small as hand gestures or seating arrangements can cause some large miscommunications. As Helena explains, our own world view is likely anything but “normal”. Instead, it is a combination of our unique accumulated experiences throughout life influenced by a myriad of factors. As responsible global citizens, it’s crucial for us to acknowledge how those influences may affect our perception of the world and how we communicate.

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So, What Now?

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

In this chapter, we've learned about the important ties between language and **culture**. It is our hope that you now feel better equipped to explore new cultures with a deeper understanding of how that connection may influence our perception of the world around us.

So, what are some of the resources that can help you explore culture as well as language?

FINDING RESOURCES

For the present-day language learner, access to culturally rich resources is easier than ever before. For many of us the world is at our fingertips instantly in the form of phones, computers, and other technology. This allows learners to experience language and culture together through media that can largely be found on the internet and, in many cases, for free.

Media such as movies, memes, theater performances, video game commentary, cooking videos, exercise instruction, and much more can be found with a simple online search. There is a wide variety of

materials available made for speakers of all levels, from speakers of all levels.

For more common languages, there is even content covering these subjects with the beginning language learner in mind. There is an ocean of information and learning materials out there. You will likely never reach the bottom of that reserve. For [less commonly taught languages](#), you may need to dig a little deeper to find something relevant to your interests or needs, but over time these materials are also growing.

Another wonderful place to learn about language and culture is a library near you. At the University of Oregon we have the Knight Library, filled with books, magazines, films, and other media related to languages, world cultures, and more, as well as literature in a wide variety of languages. For readers that may not be attending the University of Oregon, your school's library or a public library near you may also carry some helpful books, magazines, and other media, for your cultural and language learning journey.

Also, at the University of Oregon, there are [language circles](#) at the Mills International Center and [cultural events at Yamada Language Center](#) throughout the term where you can talk with speakers with cultural insights into the languages you are learning and can ask questions about the language and culture. These places also have many materials for multiple languages. If you are not at UO, you might have similar communities or clubs that you can join in your vicinity.

LET'S REFLECT

- How has culture (**L1** or **L2**) influenced your identity? The way you dress? Talk?
 - What are some learning strategies you can implement to become more knowledgeable about your L2's culture?
 - How do you think learning about culture influences **motivation** in learning an L2?
 - How would you define culture in your own words?
 - What resources do you want to take advantage of to grow your cultural knowledge?
 - What would you tell a friend who didn't think learning about culture was important in learning an L2?
 - What can you apply what you've learned from the other chapters so far in combination with this chapter to strengthen your learning?
-

CHAPTER 5 - METACOGNITION AND METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES

CHAPTER SECTIONS

1. **INTRODUCTION**

2. **PHASES OF THE METACOGNITIVE CYCLE**

3. **FOUR LEVELS OF METACOGNITIVE LEARNING**

4. **SMART GOALS**

5. **LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES**

6. **REVISITING THE METACOGNITIVE CYCLE**

Introduction

FAITH ADLER; CAMERON KEATON; ADDY ORSI; BIBI HALIMA;
AND KELI YERIAN

“Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the thinks you can think up if only you try!”

-Dr. Seuss

Oh, the Thinks You Can Think!, 1975

Have you ever spent hours upon hours studying for a test, only to get a grade that was lower than you were hoping for? You may have no idea what went wrong. Sometimes, learning can feel like a total mystery. Some things come easy to us; others are a bit harder to grasp, even if you are trying hard. Have you ever considered that you might be able to “learn about learning”? There is a plethora of ways that we can refine our own learning process and become more aware of possible strategies for learning more efficiently, thoroughly, or intentionally. One of those is *metacognition*.

WHAT IS METACOGNITION?

Metacognition is often referred to as *thinking about thinking*. Defined by Scharff (2023), “Metacognition is the use of reflective

awareness to make timely adjustments (self-regulation) to behaviors that support a goal-directed process” (para. 1). In other words, it is the act of understanding one’s own thought processes, and users of metacognition can analyze these processes and adjust their strategies to set themselves up for success. It allows learners in situations across the board to become more active participants in their own learning. In short, using metacognitive approaches can help us to unlock more of our learning potential.

WHY IS METACOGNITION USEFUL?

Traditionally in many classrooms, including language classrooms, students are given little guidance on using metacognition. They might not be taught strategies that help them to *make learning their own* through self-regulation and reflection. This can lead to frustration as the student grows in their academic career and notices a discrepancy between their expectations for, and the reality of, their ability to take in new information, learn it, and reflect on that learning.

This discrepancy can be addressed by explicitly talking about learning. Generally, educators want their students to succeed, and likewise students want to succeed in learning as well. Talking about and practicing metacognitive strategies together may encourage students to feel that they are in charge of their learning and able to participate more actively in their experience with education.

In this chapter, we’ll look at various metacognitive strategies that may help you not only in your language learning journey, but in all aspects of lifelong learning. We will learn how to apply metacognition across a variety of subjects. We will also provide examples of how others have applied metacognition to enhance their learning outcomes to give you ideas on how to get started on your own journey. The first step is to begin with an open mind.

CHAPTER GOALS

By the end of this chapter, I will be able to

- List the five stages of the metacognitive cycle
- Recognize the benefits of using metacognitive strategies
- Apply metacognitive strategies in my learning
- Critically analyze and reflect on my own learning patterns
- Create learning plans based on analysis and reflection

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Phases of the Metacognitive Cycle

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is the metacognitive cycle?
- What are the five phases of this cycle?

Metacognition is not a linear process; It is a cycle that repeats itself. There isn't a ceiling that qualifies the "absolute best" study habits or metacognitive abilities. Metacognition gives us the opportunity to constantly improve. With each repetition, not only will you optimize your studying process, but you will also get better at using metacognition strategies overall.

WHAT ARE FIVE PHASES OF METACOGNITION?

This short video below by John Spencer (2018) explains the five phases of the metacognitive cycle.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1?p=116#oembed-1>

Let's look at these five phases of the metacognitive cycle with Faith's example below. You may not know, but Faith is a baker as well an author and language learner!

1. ASSESS THE TASK

The first step of the cycle is to establish what we would like to accomplish.

Today, I want to bake a cake.

2. EVALUATE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Every person has their own experiences and perspectives

that affect how they complete tasks. It is important to identify our individual strengths, be aware of our weaknesses, and use this information to guide which strategies we try.

Strengths: I have baked a variety of desserts before, including cookies, brownies, and cupcakes.

Weaknesses: I haven't baked a cake before, and the steps look a little different than the baked goods I have made in the past. I also haven't worked with cake flour before.

3. PLAN THE APPROACH

Now we need to determine HOW we want to accomplish this task. After thinking about our strengths and weaknesses, it is easier to approach the task in an effective way. Not all strategies work for everyone equally. Some strategies might work better for you than others, so it is important to think about what works best for you.

Since cake flour is the only ingredient in the recipe I haven't used before, I will look up how it's different from all-purpose flour. Then, I will measure and prepare all my ingredients before I begin so I do not have to switch between tasks in the middle of my recipe.

4. APPLY THE STRATEGIES

Let's put our plan into action! In this stage, we will apply the strategies while considering our strengths and weaknesses, as well as monitor our progress. What is going well? What isn't going so well? It's okay if our initial plan doesn't work at first. This is part of the process. Keep the thought in mind but continue to try your best to complete the task.

I notice that even though I haven't baked a cake before, it seems that it's using a lot of familiar methods to combine ingredients. I'm not really doing steps I haven't done before, they are just in a different combination than I have used before. I didn't read all of the steps before I began the recipe, though, so I ended up doing some things out of order. I'm interested to see how this affects my final outcome.

5. REFLECT

After applying the strategies and using your plan, look back and think about the process. Ask yourself again: what worked well and what didn't? Why? How can we adjust this plan to be more effective?

My cake turned out less fluffy than I expected. I think this is because I accidentally followed the direction out of order. Next time I want to bake a cake, I will read the entire recipe before I begin so I don't make the same mistake next time.

Many of us may have unconsciously taken advantage of various steps in the metacognitive cycle throughout our lives. However, it is awareness of the metacognitive cycle in its entirety that allows us to take more control of our own learning more deeply. Faith explains,

In the example I gave above of baking a cake, you can see how I went through the steps of metacognition as I was baking, taking mental notes at each stage so that I could reflect on them later and make changes for next time. This will help me to bake a cake in the future that is closer to my expectations. I can continue to repeat this process in order to get closer and closer to the cake I want to make. I may even be able to surpass my initial expectations through innovation and trying new things!

REFLECT AND CONNECT

Take a moment to consider these steps. Even if you haven't heard of metacognition before, do any of them seem familiar? Do they sound like other learning strategies you've learned about in the past?

References

Spencer, J. (2018, August 13). *Five ways to boost metacognition in the classroom*. John Spencer. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from <https://spencerauthor.com/metacognition/>

Four Levels of Metacognitive Learning

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What are the four levels of metacognitive learning?
- How do these levels reflect varying degrees of awareness?

There are four levels of metacognitive learning, all representing different degrees of how aware we are of our own learning and utilization of learning strategies as Perkins (1992) first introduced them. As we spend more time thinking about how we think, we can see ourselves moving through each of these stages. Even when we use metacognition effectively, there will be times when we transition in and out of some of the “levels”, and this is a completely natural part of metacognition. As you read these descriptions, reflect on where you currently stand, and where you hope to be.



Tacit

Tacit learning is when we are unfamiliar with the metacognitive process and do not think about our thinking or reflect on our learning. We are unaware of our strengths and weaknesses and which strategies are most beneficial for us.

Aware

Aware learning is when we have some familiarity and are aware of our thinking. However, we are not always intentional with our thinking and utilizing the metacognitive process. We may be aware of our strengths and weaknesses but do not know how to implement strategies that work best for us.

Strategic

Strategic learning is when we are familiar with metacognition and our own thinking. We are mostly able to use the metacognitive process to better complete tasks and goals. We implement strategies that take into account our strengths and weaknesses.

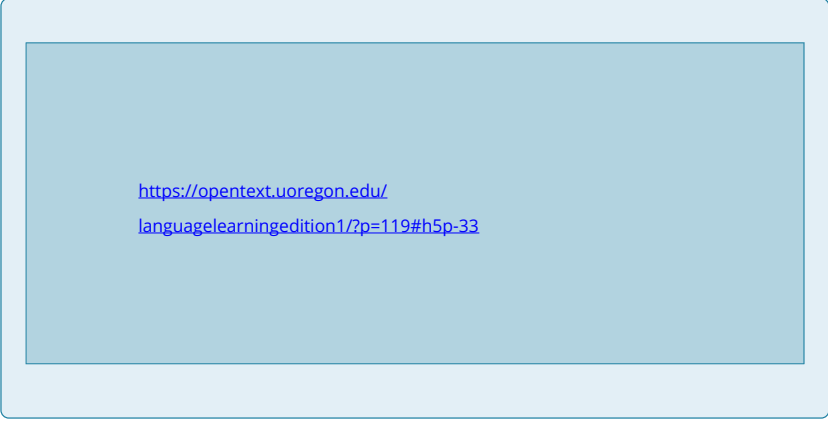
Reflective

Reflective learning is when we are very familiar with the metacognitive process and are conscious and intentional with our thinking and learning. We not only implement strategies that are most effective for us, but we also monitor our learning and reflect throughout our task in order to readjust when something is ineffective.

METACOGNITIVE LEARNING LEVELS DRAG AND DROP EXERCISE



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:



[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=119#h5p-33](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=119#h5p-33)

One very effective metacognitive strategy is being able to identify realistic, doable goals for yourself, whether it's for language learning or anything else. Let's turn to the next section to see what these can look like.

References

Perkins, D. (1992). *Smart schools: Better thinking and learning for every child*. Free Press.

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SMART Goals

ADDY ORSI; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is a SMART goal?
- What is the difference between indirect and direct learning strategies?

From setting New Year's resolutions to hoping for an A in a class, we make goals for ourselves with little planning all the time. In the beginning, we may feel motivated to achieve it but overwhelmed with where to start. As time passes, our spontaneity leaves us unsure of what comes next and how to proceed. Does this sound familiar?

WHAT ARE SMART GOALS?

A metacognitive strategy that can help us focus on the process and make our goals work for us is turning them into SMART goals. 'SMART' stands for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-Bound ([University of California SMART goals: A How to Guide \[PDF\]](#)). SMART goals have us consider what exactly we want to achieve in the end and how we will achieve it. Even after we set the goal, we continue to reflect on our final result and the measures we are taking. It is perfectly normal for some part of our goal to not go according to plan. In that situation, we adjust to what would work better.

Does this remind of anything? Remember the previous section. What level of metacognitive learning is this? If you said 'Reflective', that's right! SMART goals help us to reach a reflective level of learning. Let's follow along with Addy in the video as they show their process of making SMART goal for their own language learning. Notice the five characteristics that makes a goal SMART.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=121#oembed-1>

Addy debriefs these 5 characteristics more below.

SPECIFIC

Keeping our task specific keeps our end result of the goal clear and focused.

In the example video, rather than generally saying “I want to improve my Spanish,” the goal was made specific by expressing what aspects I wanted to improve like listening skills, following the storyline, and identifying keywords. Without the clarification, the goal is too broad and vague.

MEASURABLE

We are able to track our progress when the goal is measurable. This makes it much easier to know what we have to complete and when it will be completed.

If I simply put that I will watch a kid's show, it is unclear how long I expect to watch it. Will I watch five minutes of one episode? Will I watch 15 episodes in full? By stating I will watch two 20-minute long episodes, I have a clear understanding how how much I will be watching. Additionally, once I have finished watching two episodes, I will know that I have completed this task.

ACHIEVABLE

What is achievable varies from person to person. What is achievable for you?

One person may only be able to watch one episode each day, some may be able to watch three. The complexity of the speech could be simple to

one person based on their previous experience, but it could be too far above another person's understanding. In my case, two episodes seems realistic in my life as a busy student. Also, Pocoyo is a show that has an accessible level of language for my current listening proficiency, so this choice will be achievable for me.

RELEVANT

We need to be sure our plan is relevant to our end goal and our own interests.

Watching and listening to something in Spanish at our level will help us practice and improve our listening skills. It would not make sense to watch it in English with Spanish subtitles since we are not listening to anything in Spanish in that case. Also, I love the show Pocoyo, which makes it relevant to my own interests.

TIME-BOUND

For time-bound, we make it even more specific and give it a time frame. We want to think about how long we will need to do this task to achieve our goal. It also allows a timeline for ourselves.

For example, "I will watch two episodes every day for two weeks." If I did a shorter amount of time, I may not see any improvements, and if I did longer, it may feel too repetitive and ineffective. If I didn't specify, I could be watching a kid's show for much longer than necessary or not long enough.

MORE SMART GOAL EXAMPLES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Here are some other SMART goals students in our LING 144 class

have used to support their own language learning. Notice that they are very diverse and individualized, but still include the five characteristics listed above.

EXAMPLE SMART GOALS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

- I will hold a conversation with a French speaker through [Conversifi](#) by Sunday night. Before that, I will talk to myself out loud about the topic to get more comfortable with speaking, without the interference of speaking anxiety.
- I will talk with my mom in Spanish (who speaks Spanish) once every two days this week to re-familiarize myself with the language, and check in with her to see where I am improving. I will ask clarifying questions in Spanish when I need to.
- I will teach my roommate 3-4 everyday ASL signs each day this week and repeat them back anytime the subject or topic is brought up in conversation.
- Each day this week I will look up the food items I eat in Arabic, so by the end of the week I will have learned at least 15 new food words in Arabic. I will repeat these words when I eat those items.
- I will record 5-minute video diaries every week this term in order to track my progress with presentational Japanese. I will review my diaries at the end of the term.
- By Saturday, I will write a fictional blog post in Swahili that is a paragraph in length, as if I was recounting when I went to

a restaurant with my friend. I will first write the post using the words that I know, then look up any words I need after I'm finished.

- I will read two novice-level Spanish short stories generated by AI by Sunday night. If I don't understand at least 90% of the words, I will ask AI to revise the level down. I will highlight the words I don't know as I read and try to guess them from context. Only after I read will I look up any words that seem critical for me to know, then I will read again.
- I will read an article from a news site in French that is on a topic that I know about and interests me (the elections) and is above my intermediate-high level in order to practice learning new words in context.
- I will read a recipe in Spanish for a Mexican dish and attempt to make it this week with some help from the internet to make sure I understand correctly.
- I will send an email to my Spanish teacher tomorrow requesting an office hours appointment, using Spanish. Before I send it, I will ask my friend who is a more advanced learner to double-check that I am using polite greetings and pragmatic language.

YOUR TURN!

After looking at these examples, take a moment to think about what next steps you would like to take in your language learning journey. Maybe you want to speak up more often in class. Maybe you want to understand more of a famous movie. Maybe you want

to be able to learn some new vocabulary words in context. How can you make these steps more focused and realistic? In other words, how can you make them specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound?

RECALL AND REFLECT

Now think of a time you tried to achieve a language learning goal in the past. How did it go? If it went well, was it because some or all of the goal was SMART? If it didn't go well, was it because it was missing any of these characteristics?

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Language Learning Strategies

ADDY ORSI; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What are learning strategies, and why are they useful?
- What is the difference between direct and indirect strategies?

Making your goals SMART is one highly recommended strategy for making them successful. But your goals can be further supported by many other learning strategies, according to your needs and interests. Let's explore some possibilities.

WHAT ARE LEARNING STRATEGIES?

Learning strategies can be used in all areas of our lives, not just in a school context. Learning strategies are any procedures that learners employ in order to learn something (Wong & Nunan,

2011). Strategies used to learn languages specifically can be defined as, “Thoughts and actions, consciously chosen and operationalized by language learners, to assist them in carrying out a multiplicity of tasks from the very onset of learning to the most advanced levels of target-language performance” (Cohen, 2011, p. 7). Why do we need these strategies? Wong & Nunan (2011) write that, “Learning strategies enable students to take more responsibility for their own language learning and personal development” (p. 145). In other words, strategies are your own personal support system that you can manage yourself.

INDIRECT AND DIRECT LEARNING STRATEGIES

Learning strategies can be divided into strategies that *directly* help you learn something and strategies that more *indirectly* support your learning process. Oxford (1990) classifies these as *direct* vs. *indirect* strategies.

- **Direct strategies**, for example, include memorizing, analyzing, reasoning, and guessing intelligently. These are procedures that learners can apply to the specific things they are learning.
- **Indirect strategies**, on the other hand, include examples such as evaluating one’s learning, managing emotions, and cooperating with others. These are strategies that are not directly related to the thing you are learning, but can make your environment and process more conducive to learning.

The tables below show the three categories of direct learning strategies and the three categories of indirect strategies proposed by Oxford (1990). We have added examples for each type that are specific to language learning.

DIRECT STRATEGIES

Category

Methods

Example Language Learning Strategies

Memory Strategies

- Mental links
- Using imagery or mnemonics
- Drawing pictures to connect to concepts
- Reviewing flashcards with spaced retrieval
- Associating new words with other words with similar sounds
- Chunking, grouping, or associating items with storylines or places

Cognitive Strategies

- Practicing
- Analyzing and reasoning
- Considering input and output
- Reading or listening with a purpose or goal
- Using your background knowledge and experience to interpret what you are hearing, seeing or reading
- Finding patterns in grammar, pronunciation, or the ways languages are used pragmatically
- Summarizing information

Compensation Strategies

- Making educated guesses
 - Overcoming challenges and gaps in knowledge
 - Using context clues while reading or listening
 - Circumlocution in speaking
 - Using gestures or translanguaging in communication
 - Saying words based on best guesses
-

Table 1: Direct Language Learning Strategies, based on Oxford (1990) categorization of strategies

INDIRECT STRATEGIES

Category

Methods

Example Language Learning Strategies

Metacognitive Strategies

- Centering, planning, evaluating, & monitoring learning
- Using SMART Goals
- Color coding or diagramming
- Journaling or keeping a log of progress
- Monitoring your own proficiency level and the level of the materials you are using

Affective Strategies

- Reducing anxiety
- Self-encouragement
- Considering emotional state
- Listening to music to reduce stress
- Rewarding yourself after chunks of time
- Accepting that there are good days and bad days
- Staying in a growth mindset
- Choosing materials and activities that are motivating for you

Social Strategies

- Asking questions
 - Cooperating, collaborating with others
 - Empathizing
 - Collective problem-solving
 - Studying or practicing with a friend
 - Learning or teaching concepts to another person
 - Brainstorming and appreciating other people's ideas and contributions
 - Using strategies to keep conversations going
 - Having fun with others while learning
-

Table 2: Indirect Language Learning Strategies, based on Oxford (1990) categorization of strategies

Now check your understanding by identifying whether the strategies in the image below are direct or indirect.

DIRECT VS. INDIRECT STRATEGIES COMPREHENSION CHECK

Can you tell which of these items represent direct vs. indirect strategies? Make your guesses first then click the + hotspots to check your answers.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=123#h5p-34](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=123#h5p-34)

YOU CAN TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR LEARNING

Learning strategies can be used deliberately as part of the metacognitive process, and as we saw in [Chapter 1](#) about The Secrets of Polyglots, language learners who are successful are usually intentional and autonomous with how they approach learning. In other words, they choose their own strategies, whether they are in a language classroom or not, and don't limit themselves to what a teacher assigns them.

Wong and Nunan (2011) found this to be true in their study of 110 university level English language learners in Hong Kong. When they compared the strategies and behaviors reported by these learners in a survey to the learners' English test scores, they found that the more successful learners used strategies more independently and outside of class. They practiced on their own and enjoyed the process more. The less effective learners, on the other hand, were more passive and "authority-oriented", preferring that their teachers direct their learning for them. The authors conclude that, "While more effective learners seem to be able to develop active learning strategies for themselves, less effective learners need help [...] we see the addition of a learning-how-to-learn dimension to the curriculum as the key" (p. 157).

The outcome of this study implies that although choosing strategies is ultimately up to us as learners, we can benefit from the structure and guidance of classes and teachers who can help us see how to take the next step when we are having trouble getting started or keeping up with language learning.

Remember the list of example SMART goals from the previous section of this chapter? The list is repeated below, this time with explanations about the direct and indirect strategies they include. Simply having a SMART goal is in itself a metacognitive, planning

strategy, but other strategies are important to include as well. Note that it is not critical to be able to name exactly which category each strategy falls into as long as you are recognizing the general patterns of direct and indirect strategies and how they are helpful for learning!

EXAMPLE SMART GOALS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING WITH STRATEGIES EXPLAINED

- I will hold a conversation with a French speaker through Conversifi by Sunday night. Before that, I will talk to myself out loud about the topic to get more comfortable with speaking, without the interference of speaking anxiety. *Strategy: Talking out loud to oneself is a direct cognitive strategy and an indirect affective strategy in this case. It helps both with fluency and with anxiety.*
- I will talk with my mom in Spanish (who speaks Spanish) once every two days this week to re-familiarize myself with the language, and check in with her to see where I am improving. I will ask clarifying questions in Spanish when I need to. *Strategies: Using clarifying questions is a indirect, social strategy, and checking in with someone about areas of improvement is an indirect, metacognitive strategy that helps with reflection and evaluation.*
- I will teach my roommate 3-4 everyday ASL signs each day this week and repeat them back anytime the subject or topic is brought up in conversation. *Strategy: Repeating the signs back is a direct, memory strategy to help “feel” the signs.*

- Each day this week I will look up the food items I eat in Arabic, so by the end of the week I will have learned at least 15 new food words in Arabic. I will repeat these words when I eat those items. *Strategy: Repeating the words when looking at and eating the foods is a direct, memory strategy for associating the words with contexts and real actions.*
- I will record 5-minute video diaries every week this term in order to track my progress with presentational Japanese. I will review my diaries at the end of the term. *Strategy: Reviewing one's work and progress is an indirect, metacognitive strategy.*
- By Saturday, I will write a fictional blog post in Swahili that is a paragraph in length, as if I was recounting when I went to a restaurant with my friend. I will first write the post using the words that I know, then look up any words I need after I'm finished. *Strategy: Writing without looking up every word is a direct, cognitive strategy that allows the writer to focus on their overall ideas without stopping. Using circumlocution where possible is a direct, compensation strategy.*
- I will read two novice-level Spanish short stories generated by AI by Sunday night. If I don't understand at least 90% of the words, I will ask AI to revise the level down. I will highlight the words I don't know as I read and try to guess them from context. Only after I read will I look up any words that seem critical for me to know, then I will read again. *Strategies: Choosing a reading at the right level is an indirect, metacognitive strategy because the reader is monitoring their own reading level, and also an affective strategy that will help the reader be comfortable. Reading without stopping is a direct, cognitive strategy to grasp the gist of the text. Highlighting words is an indirect, metacognitive strategy that helps to*

monitor learning. Looking up key words is a direct, cognitive strategy. Reading more than once is a direct, cognitive strategy for understanding the text more deeply. This one is full of strategies!

- I will read an article from a news site in French that is on a topic that I know about and interests me (the elections) and is above my intermediate-high level in order to practice learning new words in context. *Strategy: Finding content that is interesting and familiar is a direct, compensation strategy for the challenge of reading at a higher level.*
- I will read a recipe in Spanish for a Mexican dish and attempt to make it this week with some help from the internet to make sure I understand correctly. *Strategies: Actually making the recipe is a direct, memory strategy for learning the ingredients and steps. Using the internet for help (videos, for example) is also a direct, compensation strategy that might provide additional multimodal input. Eating the dish will be the final proof!*
- I will send an email to my Spanish teacher tomorrow requesting an office hours appointment, using Spanish. After I write it, I will ask my friend who is a more advanced learner to double-check that I am using polite greetings and pragmatic language. *Strategy: Asking a friend to check your writing for specific elements to improve is an indirect, social strategy.*

YOUR TURN!

STOP AND REFLECT

Which kinds of learning strategies do you already use, either for language learning or for learning more generally? Which ones have you not thought of before that might help you with certain goals?

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Revisiting the Metacognitive Cycle

ADDY ORSI; FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

You made it to the final section of the chapter. Congratulations! Do you feel like you were able to soak it all in? Perhaps you'll need to reflect on what you've read a bit. After all, as you've learned, reflecting is a crucial part of the learning process.

While this chapter offers various skills you can build to refine your own learning process, they need to be put into practice for you to actually become proficient in them. It will likely take some trial and error to find what methods work best for you and how you can best use them. This is a natural part of the process.

PUTTING YOUR GOALS AND STRATEGIES INTO ACTION

Do you remember the phases of metacognition that we discussed earlier? Let's think through how to incorporate SMART goals and other language learning strategies into the metacognitive cycle.

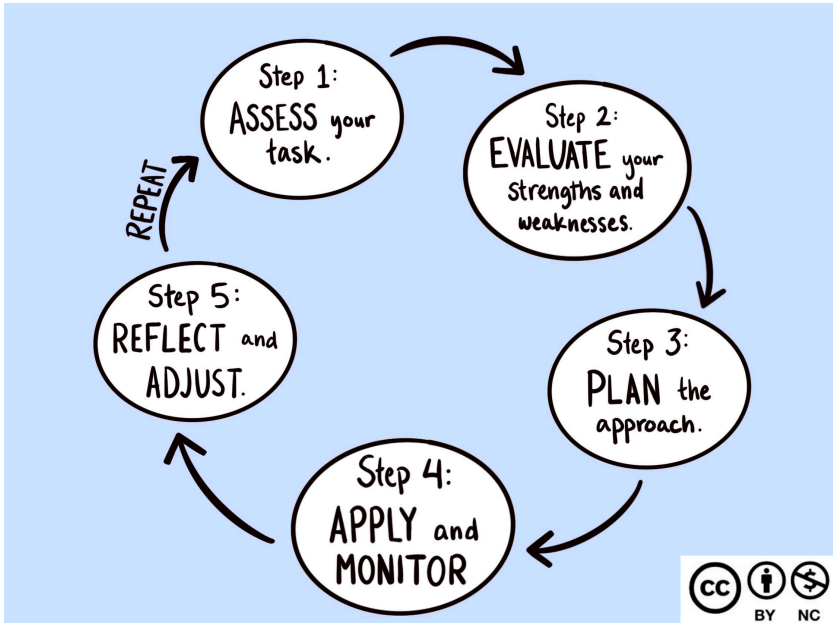


Figure 1: Metacognitive cycle. Adapted from: Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching* (1st ed., p. 193). Jossey-Bass.

Your choice of learning strategies will depend on your task or goal. You will probably not choose flashcards as a strategy if your goal is to enjoy listening to songs in your target language. You will also probably not choose practicing with a friend if your goal is to notice familiar grammar patterns in a reading passage.

So, first *choose your task*, then consider your what *strengths and weaknesses* you might have related to that task. Doing this will help you *plan your approach*, which can include making your goal SMART and choosing strategies that can take advantage of your strengths and/or challenge you to improve your weaknesses. For example, maybe you want to improve your fluency in speaking but you are still very nervous about talking to a real person. You could use the strategy of talking to an AI chatbot to build your fluency

and confidence on a topic before practicing with another person. Then, all that is left is to *try it out, see how it goes, and repeat* the cycle! These metacognitive steps might be very intentional at first as you get used to monitoring your own learning, but over time they can become more automatic, just like the procedural skills we discussed in [Chapter 2](#).

Let's take a look at the case of a past student of LING 144 at the University of Oregon to see how she uses the metacognitive cycle to support her Spanish learning.

CASE STUDY - MEET JORDYNN

Jordynn takes Spanish courses at the University of Oregon and studies in her own time. She is also planning to study abroad in Spain during the summer.

Jordynn uses the metacognitive process to minimize the amount of time she spends on a task while maximizing the result. She uses direct strategies such as reading with purpose. The first time she reads something, she reads for the main idea. Then she reads it again to develop a fuller understanding. She also uses indirect strategies like planning out her tasks and giving herself breaks. Additionally, Jordynn is aware of her strengths and weaknesses. She knows she can read Spanish quickly. However, she has more difficulty with writing in Spanish, so it takes her more time. By knowing strengths and weaknesses like these, she is able to plan appropriately and use the most effective strategies.

She says, "I am more confident in my approach to learning when I think about my own process. Because I am able to retroactively evaluate and

decide which approaches work best for which tasks, I can comfortably use that approach for the same or similar topics and more easily recall certain strategies when I am learning something new.”

Jordynn is a clear example of a reflective learner. She demonstrates “language awareness”, which is defined as “reflections on one’s knowledge, experiences, emotions and learning” (Haukås, 2018, p. 13).

MAKING YOUR JOURNEY VISIBLE

One way to make the important reflective piece more visible to yourself is to keep a record of your long- and short-term goals, your current strategies, and what’s working and what’s not. However you stay organized, this awareness makes it easy to measure whether we are obtaining both short-term and long-term goals. If we’re not, we may be able to identify patterns or specific areas of struggle to inform us on what to work on.

The goal of this chapter isn’t to force you into using any of these strategies, but rather to open your eyes to some of the methods that many people have found helpful in their own journeys. There is an endless list of strategies you could use to refine your learning process, all of which hold their own value, and some of which we will be sharing with you in the following four chapters. We hope that you can take what you’ve learned here and apply it throughout your lifelong learning journey!

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FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Now, what you've all been waiting for... let's get into the nitty-gritty. In the next four chapters, we will take a look at each of the four "skill" areas of language learning (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

In addition to having introductions and conclusions, each of the chapters includes three core sections:

1. The first section for each chapter proposes a set of guiding principles for language learners to create and adopt ways to learn and use that skill.
2. The second section provides a brief overview of some of the theory and research that support the principles in the first section.
3. The third section offers examples of practical strategies for learning the skill (either listening, speaking, reading or writing) to give you inspiration and ideas for your own learning. These are not an exhaustive list of strategies! We hope you will come up with some of your own strategies, and in future editions of this book we will continue adding strategies from new cohorts of students.

Keep an eye out! Some of the example strategies are accompanied by personal stories in the forms of videos, poems, art, and other creative forms contributed by students from the LING 144 class. These students show how they experienced change in their language learning approaches as they implemented the principles and strategies in their own lives.

But first, let's pause to remind ourselves in the next section how these four skills are actually interdependent and integrated most of the time in real-life practice.

Integrating Skills

FAITH ADLER AND KELI YERIAN

Although we are separating the four skills across the next four chapters, this isn't necessarily how these skills exist in the real world. Two or more of the four skills are often naturally intertwined. The American Council for Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) very intentionally proposed a different way of grouping the skills in order to avoid this separation.

THE THREE MODES OF COMMUNICATION

The concept of the three modes of communication was developed by ACTFL (2024) in order to categorize the four skills by communicative purpose. In other words, they're organized by how the skills function together in many settings. The three categories are: *interpersonal*, *interpretive*, and *presentational*.

Interpersonal communication skills encompass our ability to **negotiate meaning** with others both verbally and non-verbally and make adjustments based on in-the-moment, usually spontaneous, back-and-forth communication. The main language skills in play in this case are speaking and listening in the case of verbal conversations, signing and viewing in the case of signed conversations, or reading and writing for quick online exchanges

such as texts or emails. The main focus here is on the ability of participants to react and adjust to one another spontaneously.

Interpretive communication skills encompass our ability to interpret meaning as an audience member receiving one-way communication. This mode comes into play when we are the receivers of a message such as a written news article, a story on the radio, or a pre-recorded video where communication with the sender is not possible, at least not immediately. There is no room for spontaneous **negotiation of meaning** such as asking clarifying questions, so the interpretive mode depends strongly on our interpretive skills. The main language skills in play in this case are reading texts such as blogs, books, or social media posts, or listening to something like a speech, audiobook, or a song.

Presentational communication skills encompass our ability to communicate meaning as a presenter giving one-way communication. Once again, there isn't any room for negotiation or clarification with your audience, so things like the audience's prior knowledge or cultural background should be carefully considered when deciding how to communicate your information. This mode is the inverse of interpretive skills since the main language skills being used in this mode are writing (for things such as reports or essays) and speaking or signing (for things like telling a story or doing a class presentation).

These modes can occur in a sequence, such as when someone gives a presentation (presentational mode) followed by a question-and-answer session (interpersonal mode). Or when students read something for class (interpretive), then discuss it in groups (interpersonal), and write an essay response (presentational).

CONTEXT LEADS THE WAY

It's rare for learners to focus equally on all four skills or all three

modes. Often learners have more access to, need for, or interest in some skills or modes more than others, depending on their contexts and goals. As mentioned throughout this book, language learning goals look different for each individual learner.

For example, if you are learning a language to make traveling easier and to communicate with locals, it may not be important for you to build presentational skills or even interpretive skills. Instead you might just want to build your interpersonal skills (interactive speaking and listening in this case). Similarly, if you are in an **indigenous language revitalization** context or a **heritage language** context in which people are mostly speaking or texting to one another in the home or community, interpersonal speaking and listening may be more important to you than extended interpretive or presentational reading and writing.

On the other hand, if you wanted to obtain an academic degree in your **second language**, then the interpretive mode (reading articles and listening to lectures) and presentational mode (writing papers and giving class presentations) might become equally or more important for you to focus your energy on.

A STORY OF INTEGRATING SKILLS

As an example of how the skills should not be seen as separate in practice, let's hear from Faith to see how she leaned on one language skill to support another in her journey of learning Japanese.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=129#h5p-35>

STOP AND REFLECT

Think about your own context for learning your second language. Now that you've seen how the skills work together, think of which skills or modes are going to serve your own long-term goals, and set your short-term goals and study methods based on that.

INPUT AND OUTPUT

Another way in which language skills can be grouped is in terms of *input* (listening/viewing and reading, the **receptive** skills) and *output* (speaking/signing and writing, the **productive** skills). You'll see us use these terms at points in the book, and when we do, the focus is more on the individual mind than on communication.

Unlike ACTFL's three modes of communication, dividing language skills in terms of **input** and **output** is not a specific model. It simply is a way to divide the four skills into two distinct groups of receptive and productive skills.

THE STORY OF A HERITAGE LEARNER

Do you recall the term *heritage learner* from [Chapter 3](#)? Let's look at a case where the categorization of input and output can help us more easily understand how a specific language learner might want to focus their attention.

Minh's parents moved from Vietnam to the United States when he was four years old. They often spoke to him in Vietnamese growing up, though he would almost always respond in English as that's what he spoke the rest of his day outside the home. His parents loved the life they had in Vietnam, and raised Minh similarly to how they were raised, working to incorporate Vietnamese culture into their son's life plentifully. As a result of these factors, Minh has a strong understanding of his cultural background and can understand spoken Vietnamese almost effortlessly. He can read a few things in Vietnamese, too. On the other hand, he is less comfortable speaking and can't write very much at all.

In this case, Minh has already had extensive exposure

to input in Vietnamese throughout his childhood. His receptive skills in listening and reading are most developed, and his understanding of the day-to-day cultural elements embedded in this input are also strong. However, his output has been minimal so far. If Minh were to decide to invest some time into learning more Vietnamese, he could expand his strengths in receptive skills across different domains beyond his family life, while also using these receptive skills as a springboard to develop his productive skills in speaking (and possibly writing) as well.

Without further ado, let's jump into the first skills chapter: Listening (or Viewing in the case of Sign Languages).

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CHAPTER 6 - LISTENING OR VIEWING SKILLS

CHAPTER SECTIONS

1. **INTRODUCTION**
2. **LISTENING AND VIEWING PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY**
3. **HOW DO WE KNOW? SUPPORT FOR THE PRINCIPLES**
4. **LISTENING STRATEGIES & STORIES**
5. **YOUR TURN**

Introduction

LOGAN FISHER; ABHAY PAWAR; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

Listening (or viewing for signed languages) is one of the first steps of learning any language. After all, it's going to be hard to replicate any word, sound, or sign if you don't know what it sounds or looks like. Most people listen, see or overhear language far more than they speak, sign or read or write. Focusing on listening/viewing skills is a crucial step that shouldn't be ignored in the language learning process, so how can we maximize its effectiveness at different stages of our target language learning?

Before we answer that question in this chapter, let's watch a video of Abhay, one of our authors, navigating some **L2** listening skills and reflecting on it. He takes us into a scene in his life where he's listening to a song in Arabic to familiarize himself with the sounds of the language before taking an Arabic class. This is an example of *interpretive* listening (one-way listening). He also shows a clip of himself ordering from a taco truck in Spanish and shows how he successfully manages this *interpersonal* mode (listening in interaction).



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=132#oembed-1>

Now that we've watched the video, take a moment to reflect on what Abhay's example shows us:

- Abhay's goal was to familiarize himself with the sounds of a new language.
- His method was to listen to a song and catch some of the bits and pieces he heard, even though he does not understand the meaning of the song yet.
- By repeating some of the chunks of sounds and words he heard, he is highlighting for himself and for us what he is hearing as he gets familiar with the language.
- Abhay also explains his explicit strategies for listening in interpersonal mode, such as how to use context clues and follow-up questions to catch the overall **gist** of the meaning.

Abhay is showing us some strategies that he enjoys and feels are working for him. You might decide to adopt one or more of these same strategies, or you might choose other strategies instead.

This chapter will dive deeper into some general approaches to improving your listening skills that we are suggesting you keep in mind as you learn a language. It also reviews some of the research behind these principles, and provides a range of many additional example strategies for how to implement listening into your day-to-day life. Some of these strategies are accompanied with stories from past LING 144 students to provide some additional inspiration! We are hoping to add additional stories to this chapter with future LING 144 cohorts.

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Listening and Viewing Principles to Live By

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

Taking in information and processing it can be daunting when learning a language! This is the case in interpretive mode when we are just listening to a video or a teacher in the class, as well as in interpersonal mode, when we are interacting with someone in real time. Often, we'll only catch bits and pieces of what is being communicated (or nothing at all) and sometimes we struggle to follow the meaning. Although it can be frustrating, this is a normal part of the language learning process, but having the huge "aha" moment when things start to make sense makes it all worth it! So, what are some principles for listening (or viewing, if you are a signer) that can help us get there?

FIND YOUR COMFORT ZONE... THEN PUSH A LITTLE BEYOND

When listening or watching media on your own (such as watching TV or YouTube or listening to music), one of the most important principles is to choose content that's at your level or a little beyond

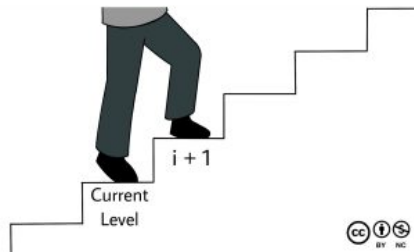
your level. There are more and more YouTube channels and podcasts to choose from that are designed to give real-life content to people who are learning languages. Pushing yourself to understand content slightly beyond what you already know will reinforce your current vocabulary and naturally teach you new material through inferences and context clues. Spend time in that “slightly beyond” zone until you realize you feel fully comfortable with the **input** you are getting. Then, it’s time to level up and be a little uncomfortable again.

Research Note

Krashen (1982) labels the situation of choosing content slightly beyond our current level as $i+1$. To break this down, i is defined as our current level of proficiency, and $+1$ means including some content a little above that level.

Krashen posits that language acquisition happens best when learners process messages at their $i+1$ in their target language because they are able to process the meaning of the input relatively easily while getting exposure to a few new vocabulary, expressions, **collocations**, and structures in a meaningful context.

Choose content slightly beyond your level



BE YOURSELF AND ENJOY WHAT YOU LIKE

Choosing content that you enjoy for **second language input** can be really helpful in improving your **receptive** skills. If you like watching soccer, for example, try finding videos about it in the language you’re learning. If you have a favorite celebrity, try finding out what people in other countries are saying about them. Making language learning more enjoyable means that you’ll (likely)

invest more into the process. You're likely to want to keep learning since your motivation will be more intrinsic as we discussed in [Chapter 1](#). When you like what you're listening to or viewing, you are much more likely to get into a flow and enjoy it without getting frustrated. Who cares whether you're learning language in a classroom or by watching trashy reality TV? The point is, you're learning.

Research Note

According to Spratt et al. (2002), students who had more autonomy over their learning practices (in other words who chose their own content outside of class) showed more motivation and performed better *in* class. What content they chose to study, listen to or

watch didn't matter for their progress, just as long as they were interacting with the language! This shows that even if you are taking a language class with required content, you can still take responsibility for choosing your own content outside of class as well to keep your motivation high.

Choose content that you enjoy



YOU DON'T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING

Just as we talk about not worrying about speaking perfectly and focusing on communication instead of perfection, the same applies to your listening or viewing strategies. Typically when starting to learn a new language, we tend to focus carefully on each new element whether they are sounds, words, signs, or grammar (especially for languages far removed from the ones we know). When we start understanding at the level of phrases,

sentences, and exchanges of language, we can start listening for the overall '**gist**' of what we are hearing even if we don't catch every word. If we don't understand something, it's best not to panic but to just keep listening since interpretation is never a precise science anyway. It's all a part of the normal **negotiation of meaning** that we do even in our L1. Who knows, with this principle you could even learn language implicitly like you did in [Chapter 2](#) with Faith teaching fruit words in Japanese.

Research Note

Students in an English class in Türkiye reported that after they started doing more **extensive** listening practice (listening at their level without stopping to look up words), they enjoyed listening more and even started dreaming in English, even if they didn't understand all the vocabulary (note: these students were also choosing their own content to listen to!). Test scores also showed an increase in listening proficiency for most of the Turkish students (Turan Öztürk & Tekin, 2020).



THE MORE THE MERRIER

Engaging with diverse content by people of different backgrounds is another amazing way to develop not only your target language, but to understand the cultures behind the language as well. If you live in the United States surrounded by speakers from Latin America but you only learn the Spanish spoken in Spain, you will miss so much about the language and culture around you. On the other hand, if you never listen to someone from Spain before going there, you would likely have a much harder time

understanding the locals. The same can be said for cultural exposure. The Arabic language and culture of someone from Egypt will be very different than those of someone from Saudi Arabia or Algeria. By widening your lens to listen to more than one community who shares a language, you are gaining a wider perspective of your **target language** and its culture(s).

Research Note

A study by Adams (2020) that illustrates this principle focuses on the listening abilities of missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints who recently returned from Spanish speaking countries. The participants



were tested on their listening proficiency in different accents and were asked how many accents they had daily exposure to on their missions. The ones who had exposure to more diverse accents performed far better on the tests than those who had less.

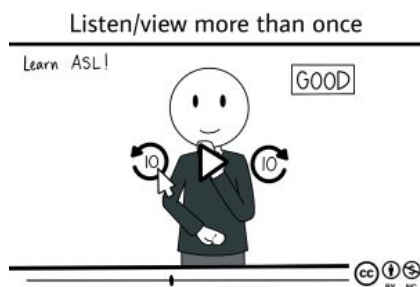
USE THE TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS AVAILABLE TO YOU

If you are interacting with content that isn't in real time, such as videos, songs, or podcasts, you can rewind! The wonderful thing about technology is our ability to manipulate it to our liking, so if you didn't catch something the first time, go back and try again. You can also slow down videos, as most programs now offer slower speeds. Granted, even when talking to someone in real time you can ask a person to repeat what they just said, but if you're practicing on your own, you can go back as many times as you want. You can use this to aim for different goals. If you want to hear the language at its natural speed, then listen at normal

speed, but if you are listening for details, slow down or rewind! You can do one of these choices first, and then the other, as a way to combine the two strategies. The more exposure, the better.

Research Note

Chang et al. (2019) tested three groups on **input** comprehension. The groups were 1) listening only, 2) reading only, and 3) reading and listening plus a second listen. The post test showed that the third group improved the most and showed the best scores, averaging 84% compared to the 69% for the one-time listeners and 33% for the readers-only. This shows that not only is listening more than once very helpful, but also using multimodal input ([Chapter 2](#)).



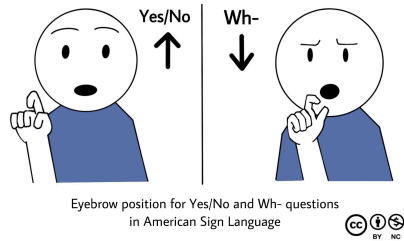
FIND MEANING BEYOND WORDS

Lastly, using context, multimodality like gesture and facial expressions, and any other forms of knowledge or props you can pull from is not a weakness, nor does it necessarily show a lack of ability or fluency in a language. It's how we function as humans and how we learn! Think back to [Chapter 2](#) when we talked about learning theories. Most things in life we learn by connecting patterns in our brains or by building knowledge with other people (Cognitivism and Constructivism). This can also happen with the use of **translanguaging**, especially if your conversation partner speaks two or more languages that you also speak. Think of listening to a conversation as a puzzle. You can use different knowledge and contexts to find the surrounding pieces of the puzzle and make that last piece fit in just right.

Research Note

In Sign languages, seeing the context of the whole body is important for interpreting the signs themselves. Slimane and Bouguessa (2021) created a computer model that is able to interpret Sign languages better than other models because it does more than perceive information from the hand, such as hand shape or movement. It also detects and analyzes information from the head and upper body.

Consider gestures, facial expressions, and context



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How Do We Know? Support for the Principles

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

In this section, let's dive deeper into the theory and research on second language listening (or viewing for signed languages), and think about how these apply to the principles we just covered. This section is not a comprehensive overview of all theories, research, or approaches regarding L2 listening/viewing. However, these helped inspire our principles, and they might help you come up with other listening strategies of your own. The goal of this section is to highlight some of the research that supports our principles and to provide ways for you, the reader, to discover more.

First, let's talk about **choosing content slightly beyond our current level** in order to challenge ourselves but still be able to understand what we are listening to. This idea became popularized by Stephen Krashen in 1982 in his book *Principles and Practices of Second Language Acquisition*. He observed that children are not explicitly taught the rules of their first language(s). Rather acquire learn language systems implicitly through extensive exposure to language in context, and they only acquire language when it is meaningful to them in that context. Krashen proposed that adults can acquire language this way as well, saying "We acquire [...] only

when we understand language that contains structure that is ‘a little beyond’ where we are now” (p. 21).

Krashen’s work had an enormous influence on the field of language learning, and research since then supports the idea that meaningful language input (*comprehensible input* in Krashen’s terms) is key to successful second language learning. Vygotsky’s Sociocultural theory (see [Chapter 7](#) on Speaking/Signing) also states that learners will only learn when they are in the *zone of proximal development*, or ZPD. Being in the ZPD means that you are learning with the help of someone (a teacher, mentor or peer) or from learning materials, that push you beyond what you can do on your own. Companies that make language learning apps and publishers of modern language textbooks follow this idea of *scaffolding* very carefully. They control the new language items that learners see and hear so that the learning process is never too overwhelming at once.

You can think of this process as like planting a garden. The seeds of language take root when the conditions are right, and with water and sun (comprehensible input and the ZPD) the garden can grow at its own pace and become a beautiful, diverse ecosystem over time. When you are exposed to language input far beyond your level, however, it might feel like being thrown into an unfamiliar jungle! You have no clue what the names of any of the plants or animals are, and might not feel comfortable or safe. These feelings can block you from exploring and understanding the language more. This reaction was described by Krashen as the *affective filter*. This term, originally conceived by Dulay and Burt in 1977, refers to how our learning is filtered through our emotions (our “affect”) and that the success of our learning is directly tied to factors like anxiety, motivation, and more.

To keep our **affective filter** from slowing us down, *socio-affective*

strategies can help us to worry less and get more out of our language learning. A lot of our principles reflect socio-affective strategies, such as **choosing content you like** and **staying calm when you don't understand**. As Syfari writes, "socio-affective strategies strongly consider the students' relation to society promoted by the affective factors" (2016, p. 1). This means that learners' feelings are now brought to the forefront and there is more recognition of how feelings, not just instruction, affect learning. Syfari elaborates on this, saying, "Affective factors, such as attitudes, motivation, anxiety, and self-esteem, have [a] great influence on the success of [language] learning" (2016, p. 3). These affective strategies also go hand in hand with social strategies such as asking questions, cooperation, and empathy, which is why they are called "socio-affective" (Oxford, 1990, p. 17). Altogether, socio-affective strategies can allow you to relax, lean into the process of language learning and have more *tolerance for ambiguity*.

Another way to increase your tolerance for ambiguity is to **get used to content from diverse speakers**. This can help train your ear (or eye for signed languages) to understand what is being said even when it is said in a different accent or with a different turn of phrase. Studies like Kartushina et al. (2022) and Levy et al. (2019) show that children who are exposed to more dialects at home can recognize words better in differently accented speech and learn better across different accents than mono-dialectal children, even when a dialect is new to them. Moreover, a large survey by Dewaele and McCloskey (2013) of over 2000 adults in England indicated that more exposure to different accents and multicultural environments resulted in more positive attitudes towards their own and others' second language accents. Studies like these indicate that experience with diverse language **input** can help you become a more flexible and open-minded listener.

Using the **technological tools available to you** can be a way to

practice many of our recommended strategies. Hubbard (2017) notes that one important function of computers “is to provide enhanced input through increasing salience, input modification, or input simplification or elaboration” (p. 97). For example, slowing down the speed of a video, using subtitles, or listening/viewing more than once allows you to have some control over the input you are getting, and make it more comprehensible even if it is a little beyond your level the first time you listen or watch. Ruhm et al.’s (2016) large scale research on 1266 novice and intermediate English learners in Austria, for example, showed that listening to something twice almost always increased the students’ ability to understand it. Moreover, Field’s (2015) interviews with 36 English learners from a wide range of L1 backgrounds shows that students who were able to listen twice during listening tests were able to understand the broader context of what they heard and experienced less listening anxiety.

Using context, multimodality, and *prior mental schemata* are ways to **find meaning beyond the words** while listening. In other words, we learn something new more easily when we are getting clues from context and recognizing ways that the new information fits into what we already know or are familiar with. Research by Farangi and Kheradmand Saadi (2017) shows that when learners tapped into **prior schemata**, this strategy correlated with stronger listening test scores. The authors followed two groups of native Persian/Farsi speakers who had nearly identical levels of English proficiency through classes that used different learning strategies. One group used vocabulary mapping and related phrases that helped them study English using **prior schemata**. Both groups showed growth, but the schemata group improved more. They could learn more independently by relying on their prior knowledge and working together, embodying Constructivism (see [Chapter 2](#)).

For multimodality specifically, research has also given us plenty of evidence that listeners can benefit, since different modalities provide additional contextual information to what we hear or see. For example, Dahl and Ludvigsen (2013) show that language learners could understand a story in their second language much better when they could see the speaker's gestures. Similarly, research on 8-9 year old children learning unfamiliar words in their first language showed that they learned these words more easily when they could listen to a story and read it at the same time, compared to children who only read or listened to the story separately (Valentini et al., 2024). Remember that we discussed the usefulness of multimodal learning in [Chapter 2](#). So, don't hesitate to use your prior knowledge, context, and any clues you have at your disposal! It will make you progress much quicker.

Check out this video from the Center for Applied Second Language Studies ([CASLS](#)) to see more about the usefulness of multimodality in both interpretive and interpersonal modes.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=142#oembed-1>

In sum, staying in touch with current research and theory can be

very helpful in how we approach our language learning, in this case related to listening or viewing. We can apply these concepts to our individual practice, creating more effective and sustainable strategies. We encourage you to reflect on your own listening practices and think about how any or all of these principles could tie in to your existing habits.

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Listening/Viewing Strategies & Stories

KELI YERIAN; LOGAN FISHER; AND BIBI HALIMA

Let's take a closer look at some specific strategies to improve your listening/viewing skills. These are some actionable steps based on the research and broader principles we've already discussed that you can incorporate into your regular language learning routine. Some of them were crowd-sourced from students in our LING 144 *Learning How to Learn Languages* class when they reflected on their own language learning journeys and shared some of their favorite and preferred methods. We expect to gather more example strategies from future cohorts of students.

Make sure to click on the strategies below to see more about each one. Some of them are illustrated by personal stories and media created by students.

METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES FOR LISTENING/VIEWING

Make a goal to recognize 5-10 new words per week

Of course you can choose to learn more than 5-10, but we are modeling how to set realistic goals! The goal of "recognizing" means that when you are listening, you will know what a word (or phrase

or grammatical element) means without guessing at the meaning or needing to look it up. This is different from (and much easier than) being able to recall the word on your own when speaking/signing or writing. We all have a much larger *receptive* vocabulary than *productive* vocabulary, including in our first language(s).

To build your receptive vocabulary, prioritize noticing words that you hear or see repeatedly across different contexts, and add these new words to your vocabulary list. If you are hearing or seeing them often, they are probably either high-frequency words or are key words for the specific topic. If they are words that you think you will need to use in your own speaking or signing, you can consciously start using them yourself as productive vocabulary.

Think about context and genre

You will mentally process spoken or signed text much more easily if you are aware of the context in which it was produced, as well as what **genre** the text is. For example, if you know you're listening to a weather report on a TV weather channel, you will know what to listen for, such as the names of places local to you before listening more closely to details, assuming that the local weather is most relevant to you. You'll also know that you need to look at the screen in order to understand "a storm over here" and "heat wave coming in this way" through the speaker's gestures. You might also be less concerned with understanding all the technical weather vocabulary as long as you can get the gist of the report.

As another example, if you know that you are listening to someone's personal podcast instead of a formal news show, you might value the opinions of the speakers differently. The opinions of someone invited to speak on a news show might be more credible than the opinions of someone publishing their own work in a podcast.

Think about your purpose for listening/viewing

Your own purpose for listening or viewing should also guide which strategies you use while listening. Do you just need to understand

the gist, such as when listening to a podcast for pleasure? Or do you need to understand the exact details, such as when following a recipe while cooking? Do you need to be able to pull out the main points, such as when listening to a lecture, or do you need to be able to follow a timeline, including flashbacks, such as when listening to a story? Listening for key transition words in the language such as *therefore*, *the most important*, *before that*, *then*, and *later on* can be a good strategy for following a longer text, even when you don't understand every word.

Activate your prior mental schemata

Once you identify the context and genre, and know what you need to listen for, you can think about what you already know about that context and genre. This can help fill in the gaps for what you don't understand in the language. For example, if you know you are listening to a story in a fantasy genre, you won't be surprised to hear about large animals that fly and spit fire, and you might guess that these are dragons.

Of course, sometimes our **prior schemata** can be wrong, especially across cultures and historical periods. In this case we might fill in details that are not accurate, which is why we should keep listening and looking for clues that help us confirm or disconfirm our guesses. For example, in another cultural tradition there might be a different creature than a dragon that also flies and spits fire. Guessing, however, is still worth doing in order to activate your prior knowledge even if your guess turns out to be wrong.

Stay open to non-literal or metaphorical meanings

When we listen to a less-familiar language, we tend to interpret what we hear very **literally**. For example, if we hear *It's raining cats and dogs* in English and we don't know this is an **idiom**, we might be very surprised and confused to imagine animals falling from the sky! All languages have idioms and **metaphorical** uses of language that make communication rich and creative. If something sounds strange to you in its literal meaning, stay open to the possibility that

it has a non-literal meaning, and turn to a dictionary or another speaker of the language for help. For example, the sentence *La route était pleine de nids-de-poule* in French literally translates in English to *The road was full of chicken nests*. But *nids-de-poule* as a phrase in this context actually means *potholes*, which makes much more sense!

Retain essential knowledge

Unless you are only relying on lots of **extensive** listening to learn new words [implicitly](#), it's recommended to find a way to [explicitly](#) notice, identify, and take note of important new elements of the language as you are exposed to it. Keeping a language journal or notebook (including spoken or written notes on your phone) is a great way to jot down aspects of the language you are hearing frequently. Writing things down will help you retain them.

SOCIO-AFFECTIVE & INTERPERSONAL STRATEGIES FOR LISTENING/VIEWING

Many of the strategies for interpersonal listening or viewing are the same actions you could take for **socio-affective strategies**, since both involve using the help of other people to practice and improve your listening.

Find content you like

There is plenty to find on the internet (movies, social media, blogs...), and in many different languages, so choose what you like from all that is available. Keep in mind you may have a harder time finding diverse materials for very minoritized languages.

A past LING 144 student, Eli (Wes) Cox, created this YouTube video to highlight two key language learning strategies. The first one is about choosing content that he enjoys (his example is food!). The other strategy is to get out and speak to people in the community

(in his example, he is talking to someone in a Japanese restaurant in his hometown).



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=144#oembed-1>

Understand that attrition is normal

Attrition refers to the loss of proficiency in a second language that you used to understand or speak more fluently in the past. This is a common phenomenon for heritage communities or people who took language in school but did not continue to use it. Attrition is a normal process, but luckily it's typically easier to regain a lost language than to learn one for the first time. Be patient with yourself if you feel very rusty in a language or feel that you have lost it altogether. With more exposure and practice it will come back.

Not Fluent Enough by Piper Bringman

The following poem by Piper Bringman, a former LING 144 student, describes her feelings of loss for the language she was first exposed to as a child: American Sign Language (ASL).

Not Fluent Enough

Sometimes when I hear a song
I see my mother signing along

It's like I can barely perceive it
The shadows of what I once knew
Dance along the edges of my memory
Black on black
Flickering.
Echoing.

There's a candle in my mind
As the orange flame is slowly burning down
I recall the way her hands moved as she spoke
Explicitly intertwined
English and ASL were not two different things
They were one

I had 40 signs to every word
Then I began to speak English fluently and slowly
unraveled
Until I had lost half of them.

I could not sign you a lullaby
Sing it for you? That I could do
But $1 + 1$ does not equal too
I cannot recall one without the other
It sparks it but barely – just out of reach
I can't grasp it

There's a body double to every word I speak
There should be movement
There should be more than just lips

That is what I've learned to focus on

I miss what I once knew
Back when 1+1 was in fact two

My mother signs and I understand her
But do I really?
If she did not mouth the words, would I truly know
what she had said?
What about everyone
I cannot understand them like I understand her
She was the entire basis of my knowledge
She was all of my awareness of American Sign
Language
It all came from her
She was the one who taught
She was the creator in my eyes
She was the one who knew how to say everything I
couldn't
She communicated with me before I knew how to
respond
And I unlearned how to respond back

She is someone who can help me save
What little knowledge I have left

This is about bringing it back
Restoring it like a piece of antique art
Faded from the light seeping into the attic

I have to stop behaving like that is not enough
I am enough
What I know is enough
I will never be not fluent enough

Explanation

Not Fluent Enough centers around my mother teaching me American Sign Language when I was an infant, which allowed me to know 100 signs by my first birthday, and to be able to speak in clear full sentences before the age of two. I began responding to signs as early as four-months old, and it allowed her to communicate with me about my needs much earlier than many other children.

The poem starts off with me talking about how I can barely remember it. Like I can see shadows moving in

my mind if I close my eyes, and I try to bring in the feeling of reaching for that knowledge and not being able to find it. I also represent the loss that I feel when I look back to what I used to be able to understand and say, versus what capabilities I have now.

Towards the middle of my poem I talk about how “There should be more than just lips” and how “That is what I have learned to focus on.” I have a double meaning in the second line because I recently became aware that I focus on lip-reading my mother when she signs to me, but I also am portraying that I have learned to focus on what I don’t have, what don’t know, or what don’t do when it comes to my language learning journey. I felt for years and years like I couldn’t count a language as my own unless I knew it at a master level, and Linguistics 144 really gave me new perspectives on that. I’d say it was my biggest takeaway from the entire course. It was an epiphany for me to understand that I didn’t need perfection and total understanding to be good enough.

Another double meaning I am proud of in *Not Fluent Enough* is the little intentional typo as I call it in my line “but 1+1 does not equal too.” I am known for being a bit of a grammar person sometimes, especially when it comes to two, to and too, and so it was a bit painful to write at first. But it also brought me joy because I

knew that not everyone would get the joke right away, and that some people wouldn't catch it at all. Plus the fact that it's only visual made my little language brain happy. By one plus one not equalling too, I am portraying the concept of "also." Like "just because I know English does not mean I also get to know ASL, and just because I knew ASL once does not mean that I know it as intimately anymore". I do correct my 'too' in a later line with the spelling when I say "Back when 1+1 was in fact two." I wrote that line because I was taught ASL and English simultaneously when I was young, and so I did not separate out the two languages. I thought that English had a movement counterpart, and that's something I never fully let go. It's why I often use my hands when I am describing something. It also ties into my line about every word having a body double, and English being too still. I still catch myself fingerspelling when I cannot remember the letters in a word.

The end of my poem is what is most important to the learning I have done in Linguistics. It's when I realize that what I do know is enough, that I am enough, and that I should focus on restoring the beautiful languages that I have retained. To build my knowledge back up and continue from there. It is so important to me that I move forward in a kindly manner with myself, so that I someday feel that I

can claim the title of polyglot. Languages have always been such a passion and joy of mine and this poem is a reminder to remember and honor the work I have done as well as the language learning journeys that are yet to come.

Find online or in-person groups who want to practice the language

It's not too hard to find groups based on interest these days. For example, [Meetup](#) is an app that allows you to find groups in-person near you who share a common interest such as language practice. Other social media apps have group options as well.

Interact with friends or family

If one of your friends or family members speaks your **target language**, ask if they can help you practice. Set up a time to meet or call them and ask them to stay in the target language for certain parts of the interaction, such as during greetings and small talk at least. You can also ask them to tell you how their day went, or tell you stories from the past, or tell you their plans for next week, while you listen and note down any words you don't understand. You can follow up with a discussion about anything you want to learn about more.

Interact with language exchange partners

If you don't have a friend, family member or group who speaks your target language, find a language partner on an app like [HelloTalk](#) or [Tandem](#). You can make an exchange like this less intimidating if you both sometimes agree to listen in your L2 but speak in your L1.

This can give the other person listening practice even if they are not feeling ready to speak as much yet.

Play online multiplayer games in your L2

If you already enjoy playing games online, try those games in your target language with others who are using that language. You can choose to mostly just listen!

Take advantage of your language class

If you have an opportunity to take a language class, take advantage of the many listening opportunities it provides! In a language class, you have many chances to listen to your teacher, to recordings that they play or to guest speakers, and to your classmates.

Use phrases to get help from the speaker

Memorize several phrases that allow you to ask for help from the speaker. How to ask these questions politely or appropriately in your target language will vary according to the language and culture. Some examples in English are:

- I'm sorry, did you say...?
- Could you say that again more slowly?
- I'm sorry, I didn't understand that.

Notice and benefit from redundancy

Brown and Lee (2015) give us this tip about benefiting from the **redundancy** of spontaneous language use: "Spoken language, unlike most written language, has a good deal of redundancy. The next time you're in a conversation, notice the rephrasings, repetitions, elaborations, and little insertions of "I mean" and "you know." Such redundancy helps the hearer to process meaning by offering more time and extra information. Learners can train themselves to profit from such redundancy by first becoming aware that not every new sentence or phrase will necessarily contain new information and by looking for the signals of redundancy" (p. 323).

Pay attention to non-verbal communication

The language someone is speaking or signing is just one part of a communicative effort, as we know from [Chapter 1](#), [Chapter 5](#), and other places in this book. We communicate quite a bit through our facial expressions, gestures, body orientation, and eye contact, for example. Pay attention to the whole package of communication, as this can help you interpret communicative intent, such as whether someone is asking a question vs. telling you something. Be careful, however, as non-verbal communication can mean different things across different communities and contexts. It's always a good idea to observe these behaviors over time, such as whether people typically smile a lot or not so much, or whether extended eye contact seems to be expected or not, and ask a trusted community member what specific non-verbal behaviors mean.

Pay attention to cohesive devices

Prioritize learning and listening for the words and phrases that help listeners follow a speaker's train of thought. These include words and phrases such as *and, but, so, then, however, yet, in other words, you know, I mean, okay, in fact, for example, and well* in English, among others. Examples in Spanish include *pues, bueno, y, así bien, aunque, es decir, o sea*. Speakers of every language use these kinds of cohesive devices. These can help you, as the listener, follow the logical flow of what someone is saying. For practice hearing these in spoken discourse, you can use Youglish to search for them in videos on the internet (see below).

Listen for cognates

Most languages have shared linguistic histories with other languages, which means that they share words that look similar and have similar meanings. These are called **cognates**. An example of cognates that are descended from the same Indo-European ancestor are *night* in English, *nuit* in French, *noche* in Spanish, and *nacht* in German. When new words in your L2 are cognates with other languages you know, it makes it much easier to guess at and remember their meanings. Sometimes, however, words may look

alike but have distinct meanings, such as the famous example of *embarrassed* in English vs. *embarazada* (pregnant) in Spanish.

Listen for prosodic cues (volume, pitch, length, voice quality)

Other important clues to meaning in communication can be signaled through **prosody**, which refers to the **suprasegmental** level of sound in a language. In other words, how high or low your pitch is, how loudly or quietly you are speaking, how long you pronounce certain sounds, whether you are speaking in a breathy or creaky voice, and so on.

Some languages, like Mandarin and Thai, rely very strongly on pitch changes to convey the meaning of a word. For example, *ma* with an even tone means ‘mother’, while *ma* with a falling-then-rising tone means ‘horse’. Many languages rely on prosodic cues to show emphasis on certain words. For example, in English the difference between “I cut the *pizza*” and “I *cut* the pizza” (with a change in pitch, volume, and length on *pizza* vs. *cut*) changes the focus of the utterance. “I cut the *pizza*” highlights *what* the speaker cut, whereas “I *cut* the pizza” highlights what the speaker *did* to the pizza (*cut* vs. *ate*, for example). Noticing the prosodic patterns of the language you are learning can help you interpret the communicative intent of the speaker.

STRATEGIES SPECIFIC TO VIEWING SIGNED LANGUAGES

Practice viewing fingerspelling

On websites like asl.ms, you can practice reading finger spelling as it happens in real time with no repetition. As a novice learner, you can set the speed and quantity of letters low and increase both as you improve. The website gives you immediate feedback and tells you if the word you typed matches the word signed. A lot of ASL uses fingerspelling, so it can be important to know how to interpret fingerspelling quickly and accurately!

Watch the interpreter on the news

If you have access to live news, chances are that there is an interpreter available on the screen! To practice viewing ASL, you can opt to only watch the interpreter while listening to the news to learn vocabulary, or you can turn off the volume and rely on the interpreter to get all your news for the day! You can combine this with some of our other principles, such as focusing on key concepts while sacrificing small details to get the main point.

Try to look at a signer's face, not their hands

Proficient signers will look at the faces of other signers and maintain eye contact with them, rather than looking at the hands of the signer. Facial expressions such as widening or narrowing the eyes, raising or lowering the eyebrows, frowning or smiling, and even blinking can communicate important linguistic information in addition to emphasis or emotion. As much as possible, practice seeing signs while looking directly at the signer's face.

INTERPRETIVE LISTENING STRATEGIES FOR ONLINE MEDIA

Listen to music and see what you can understand

Listening to music is enjoyable for many of us, but it's important to remember that lyrics in songs are typically harder to understand than regular speech. You can look at written lyrics to better understand the song, or you can just focus on listening without needing to understand it all (in our first languages we often can't understand all the lyrics either!). To match your level, you can start with slower music and just a few clear and repeated lyrics and then progressively listen to more difficult songs as you become more comfortable with the language. You can also listen to songs you already know that have been [translated and re-recorded](#) into your target language.

Listen to podcasts, videos, etc. made for language learners

Many streaming platforms including but not limited to Spotify and

YouTube have channels dedicated to language learning materials. For example, Logan practices listening to Portuguese with SlowPortuguese on Spotify. Many of these materials also cover cultural themes or pragmatic elements that are useful to learners of any language, such as customs when ordering in a restaurant. This can be a chance to also practice your reading if you're watching a video instead of listening to a podcast since many videos also have subtitles in your target language.

Also watch media in your target language that was NOT made for language learners

Don't rely ONLY on **graded** materials. Find **authentic materials** at your level and in a domain or subject you know. You can find authentic materials more easily by searching for the topics in your target language, for example in Spanish you can search the word *deportes* instead of *sports*.

Change your language settings in streaming services

Did you know that you can change the language setting in many streaming services so that you can watch some movies in another language? If you recall back to the secrets of a polyglot section in [Chapter 1](#), Logan was watching their favorite American TV show in Spanish to maintain their listening skills. There are many ways to incorporate this practice into your language learning. First, you can familiarize yourself with a show in your L1, then switch the audio to your target language while keeping the subtitles the same. Next, you can switch the subtitles to your target language, and then once you become very comfortable, you can take away the subtitles altogether. This is just one way to increase the difficulty step by step.

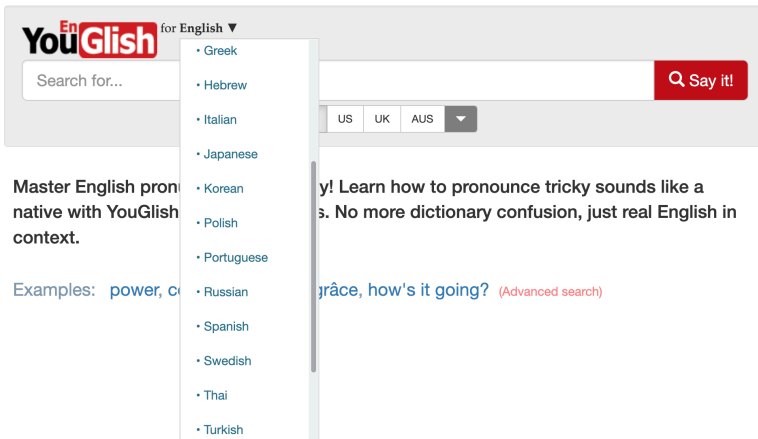
Use the control tools on media

You can use different control features and apply the level of control on your selected media to make your learning experience more personalized. For example, you can pause after you have heard something you did not understand. If you need to adjust the playback speed, you can slow down to make sure that you get the

most out of the content. You can always repeat or replay and go back to catch details that you think you have missed. In short, these features and tools make the content more accessible to you and help improve your comprehension.

Use tools like YouGlish to listen to words in context

If you want to hear how a specific word is used in context, either for its pronunciation or its usage in a sentence, [YouGlish](#) is a great tool. Choose your target language, search for the word, and you'll see a multitude of videos from YouTube that contains that word.



'LIVE' INTERPRETIVE LISTENING

Take notes in class

Try to write down key words you hear in class. This will help you grasp the main ideas and remember them later. It also can be a way to test yourself to see if you can catch the main ideas. If you just listen without taking notes you may not realize whether something is going over your head.

Ask questions of the teacher or your peers

Most teachers welcome questions from students while they are

explaining something. Don't hesitate to raise your hand to clarify what you heard. If you're sitting with a classmate and it's not disruptive to talk, you can check with them also.

Use predicting strategies

As you're listening, try to make guesses about what is coming next, based on the context, your own past experience or knowledge, visuals, and what you have understood so far. What will come next in the story you're listening to? What is an example of the point that the speaker is making? Even if your predictions are wrong, you will remember the content better if you have tried to predict it first.

Can you think of any other listening/viewing strategies that we could add to any of the lists above?

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Your Turn

BIBI HALIMA AND KELI YERIAN

Now that you've hopefully been inspired by the strategies and stories in the previous section, we invite you to join us by reflecting on your own language learning paths. We encourage you to first recall your past experiences and then imagine your next steps.

LOOKING BACK

- Can you recall a time when you were discouraged while listening/viewing in your L2? What do you think were the reasons? Looking back, do you think it was because your expectations were too high for your level?
- How have digital tools and resources been useful to you so far to support your listening/viewing? If you were to recommend any of them to someone, which ones would you choose and why?
- Was there a time when you did not understand everything someone was saying? How was your **tolerance for ambiguity**? Did you give up, or adopt any strategies to capture what you didn't get?

LOOKING AHEAD

- Do you think you will engage differently with listening content given the emergence of technological advancements such as AI?
 - How do you feel about listening to language varieties that are different from **standardized** varieties? Do you think you will seek out more diverse listening materials in the future? Why or why not?
 - Based on our discussion of the benefits of **multimodal** learning, do you feel you've taken full advantage of other modalities in the past while listening? How do you think you will incorporate multimodality to support your listening more than before?
-

CHAPTER 7 - SPEAKING OR SIGNING SKILLS

CHAPTER SECTIONS

1. **INTRODUCTION**
2. **SPEAKING AND SIGNING PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY**
3. **HOW DO WE KNOW? SUPPORT FOR THE PRINCIPLES**
4. **SPEAKING STRATEGIES AND STORIES**
5. **YOUR TURN**

Introduction

LOGAN FISHER; ABHAY PAWAR; KELI YERIAN; AND BIBI HALIMA

Speaking is one of the first things that comes to mind when we think of learning a language. Trying to speak in an **L2** (or trying to produce signs for Sign languages) can be daunting, especially since we are simultaneously juggling both **receptive** and **productive** skills in interpersonal mode. Before we tell you it will all be fine and give you our tips in the rest of this chapter, let's go to Abhay again as he shows us how he navigates a specific scenario ordering food at a local taco truck in Spanish. Note that before recording this, Abhay explained to the person in the truck what he was doing and asked for permission to record.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=149#oembed-1>

Now that you have watched the video, think about the major takeaways. Here are a few we decided to highlight.

- Abhay prepped for the conversation by reviewing relevant phrases and checking with a friend who speaks Spanish well, but since this interaction unfolds in real life, it was not fully predictable, and he embraces this spontaneous aspect of interaction.
- He doesn't hesitate to show when he doesn't know what the other person means, and asks for him to clarify by using the question *¿qué?* (what?).
- They understood each other, hiccups and all, and Abhay's goal of ordering tacos in Spanish is accomplished. Practicing this way will make the next interaction even easier!

Effective communication doesn't need to be "pure". Rather it just has to get meaning across. So how do we do that? We saw a couple of examples in the video, such as the strategy of using **circumlocution**, but in this chapter let's dive into more ways to practice speaking or signing, why they work, and how we can use them.

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Speaking and Signing Principles to Live By

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

This chapter is about speaking and signing, so we will be discussing the presentational mode (**productive** skills) instead of the interpretive mode (**receptive** skills), but we will continue to talk about the interpersonal mode (interactive use of both productive and receptive skills). The principles in this chapter will help you do things like give speeches or tell stories in the case of presentational skills, and also how to maintain the flow of interaction in real-life conversations in the case of interpersonal skills.

JUMP INTO IT!

The first suggestion we have for you is to jump into using your language and embrace your mistakes. By pushing yourself to converse, even when you might not feel ready, your language skills will improve dramatically. As we talked about in [Chapter 1](#), having perfect grammar or always remembering the right word for something is actually not required for communication. In fact, it's the opposite! Communication itself is required to develop your grammar and build your vocabulary (not to mention culture and pragmatics). How do you do this? Well, if you're trying to talk about

something that happened yesterday but don't remember the past tense, use the basic form of the verb that you do know and throw in 'yesterday' to compensate. If you're learning a Sign language and don't know a sign for a specific word, don't be afraid to finger-spell it out! You will improve by pushing through the discomfort, and you will eventually get to the point where you can remember the past tense of the verb or the specific sign. Remember, practice is the key to proficiency.

Research Note

In a study by Suryani and Argawati (2018), students in a language learning classroom completed questionnaires about their levels of risk-taking in language learning and also took a holistic speaking test about a general topic. The

results showed that there was a strong 0.685 correlation between their risk-taking tendencies and their speaking abilities, revealing that the students who took more risks also had stronger speaking skills.



SEEK OUT OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE

One of the benefits of living in the age of technology is that you don't even have to leave your house to practice. There are many ways to practice with technology nowadays such as having short conversations about the weather with smart devices like Siri or Alexa. Or you can have longer interactions with generative AI technology. Beyond the comfort zone of smart technology you can branch out to chat with real people by using online apps, joining a local language circle, or finding friends that speak your

target language. If you can find people, push yourself to have conversations with them in your target language! It might feel really awkward sometimes, but again, no matter if you're talking to fellow learners or native speakers, embrace your mistakes! If that tip sounds familiar, it's because these principles are so tightly related. Having a **growth mindset** means understanding the benefit of seeking out opportunities to push yourself out of your comfort zone.

Research note

Jin (2023) followed two groups of Korean students studying English as a foreign language. The control group received normal instruction while the test group participated in vlogging as a form of language practice. Data collected via questionnaires both before and after showed that vlogging decreased speaking anxiety and increased **willingness to communicate**, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and task-proficiency at a higher rate when compared to their control group counterparts.

Create opportunities



KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Once you've decided to find opportunities and just jump in, keeping the conversation going can be the next related challenge. It can be easy to give up and fall back to your first language if you get stuck, but there are plenty of ways to avoid this. Here are some ideas below for how to keep a conversation alive, both with smart technology and with real people. Many of these ideas will also show up in some form in the Strategies & Stories section of this chapter later on.

Here are some ideas



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=159#h5p-36>

Keeping a conversation going can feel hard, but at the end of the day, it generates more practice in your target language, so go the extra mile to struggle through it! The practice will pay off.

Research note

Scholars from both [cognitivist](#) and [constructivist](#) perspectives believe that interaction is crucial for language learning. They believe that much of what is learned in a second language is learned through **negotiation of**

meaning. In other words, learning is not limited to a one-way activity where students are passive recipients of knowledge from



media or teachers. Instead, learners must also participate in the co-creation of meaning in interaction in order to more deeply acquire the language.

COMMUNICATION CAN BE MESSY


Use context, **multimodality**, and strategies such as **circumlocution** and **translanguaging** as much as you need to. Instead of being afraid that this is cheating, use these tools to your advantage! For example, if you don't know the name of a color, point to it in the environment if you can. In this way you are using gesture (a form of multimodal communication) and your context to your advantage. You can also use little bits of another language you know to communicate an idea if the person you're interacting with also knows that language. Translanguaging is a very natural way of communicating among multilingual people, so why not act like a multilingual person? That person might then be able to help you to learn that word in your target language.

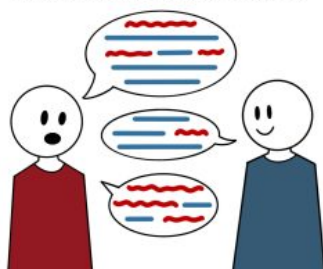
If, however, you're trying to maximize your practice using the **target language**, and find yourself falling back on your first language too much, you can try to use context and multimodality the most, as well as circumlocution. Circumlocution is another strategy that keeps you in your target language while you're trying to express an idea you aren't sure about. It consists of expressing a word in a roundabout way to compensate for not knowing or remembering specific vocabulary. For instance, if you don't remember how to say yellow, you could say "banana color". Or if you don't know the word for motorcycle you can use "car with two wheels" (and mimic putting your hands on handlebars). Not only can this be helpful in your target language, you likely use circumlocution in your first language as well! In this case it is more

likely to be for uncommon words, but the point stands that circumlocution is not exclusive to your target language.

Research note

A study on translinguaging by Ha et al. (2021) showed that using translinguaging wisely can increase learners' confidence and fluency. This observational study was conducted with 70 students in a university English language class in the south of Vietnam. It shows that a translinguaging approach done with a trained instructor supported their learning and "contributed to a positive change in behavior, engagement, and motivation" (p. 338).

Communication can be messy 



EMBRACE YOUR ACCENT

As you have heard us say so many times, focusing on perfection, whether grammatical or accent, can hinder effective communication. Moreover, when it comes to accent, variety exists in all languages, and as we discussed in [Chapter 1](#) and [Chapter 3](#), privileging **native** accents and other **standard language ideologies** often only functions to oppress people who speak differently. It is a fact that all languages have various native accents and there is no one correct accent in a language. Moreover, everyone has their own unique accent and **idiolect** anyway. If you have an accent that shows that you come from a particular place or that you have a specific first language, so what? You can be proud of where you come from and your accent can signal that you are a multilingual person. Of course, a certain level of accuracy in pronunciation is important so you're not always

being asked to repeat yourself. And you may have a personal goal of mastering the specific sounds of a language – this can be a very cool part of learning another language! The point here is to let your own interests drive your learning goals, not fear or shame about sounding different from people who grew up speaking the language.

Research Note

The traditional goal of pushing learners to sound like “**native speakers**” has been recently widely criticized as being biased and unproductive for language learners and for social justice efforts in general.

Holliday’s (2005) work, for

example, traces how native-speakerism is an ideology that privileges standardized communities as true representatives of the language, when in fact a wide variety of speakers use the language in a multitude of different and valid ways.

1. communicate ✓
2. native accent ?



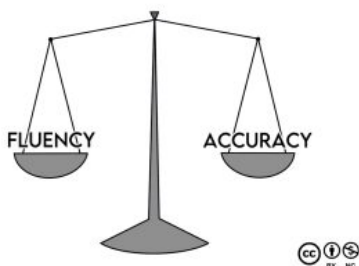
TAKE TIME TO NOTICE WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

Although hopefully we have convinced you that perfection is not a realistic goal in actual language learning, you can definitely keep developing and improving your language skills! To do this, you need to keep noticing the patterns of the language, as well as the differences between how you are using the language and the way that more proficient speakers are using it. Noticing is a key ingredient for improving. At first you will only have the mental capacity to notice the basics of the language, but as you improve you will notice increasingly subtle things, including about **linguaculture**. Little by little, you can keep adjusting your own

version of **learner language** to approximate the versions of more proficient language users – that is, if you want to! Again, it's all about awareness and choice regarding your own goals.

Research note

A study by Swain (1985) of French immersion programs in Canada showed that learners developed high levels of fluency but their grammatical accuracy was often compromised. This was attributed to the lack of focused instruction on accuracy within the immersion programs. The immersion environment provided many opportunities for fluency development, but without explicit correction and noticing forms such as grammatical elements or spelling, certain linguistic errors remained.



LEARN RELEVANT VOCABULARY

Another principle for making good progress in your language learning is to focus on vocabulary that is relevant to your life and interests. In other words, vocabulary that you will really use! Will you really need to ask things like *¿Dónde está la biblioteca?* ("Where is the library?")? (If you took high school Spanish you know what we mean). Instead, if you can, try to focus on topics and situations that are important to you. For example, if you want to learn how to order at a restaurant, learn the names of specific dishes from your target language's culture and how to say things like *could I please*, *I would like*, and *do you have...?* If you want to chat online about your passion for history on the other hand (or gaming or sports or fashion), your initial vocabulary might look drastically different! And remember, vocabulary includes verbs, the words that describe what you DO every day. Phrases like *I want*, *I'm going to*, *I like*, are

all common things people say in languages worldwide. Focusing on common vocabulary, and on vocabulary that is important to you personally, can keep language learning relevant in your life and keep you excited to use your target language.

Research note

Scholars such as Nation (2022) and Vilkaitė-Lozdienė and Schmitt (2019) agree that learning high-frequency words, specifically the top 3000 most frequent word families, will facilitate spoken communication. These authors

emphasize the importance of high-frequency words in achieving fluency and the ability to handle everyday conversations.



BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF

Lastly, keep realistic expectations for yourself. Remember that language learning takes time, and the path to proficiency is not a steady progression that simply goes up and up. In fact, as we discussed in [Chapter 1](#) most language learning is more like a meandering, spiraling path that goes up and down, with some breathtaking peaks, long valleys, flat plateaus, and slopes back downhill that make you feel like you are back where you started. But stay patient! The long valleys and plateaus are a natural and necessary stage of mentally solidifying what you have been learning (this inevitably hits you at the intermediate stage). The dips are a completely normal part of being tired, unfocused, or needing to take breaks in your learning when other things are going on.

And, importantly, the peaks are amazing moments that can keep you inspired and help you see that you are indeed progressing. Being patient with yourself means letting go of the illusion of having complete control over your language learning progression. You have to just keep going and enjoy the ride.

Keep a growth mindset

Mistakes are part of learning. I can learn from them.

I can do it!

I continue to grow and learn.



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How Do We Know? Support for the Principles

LOGAN FISHER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

Like we did in the chapter about listening/viewing, this section will give you some of the theoretical and research background that supports the principles you just explored for speaking/signing.

There is plenty of research that demonstrates the importance of **just jumping in** and **finding opportunities to practice**. It may seem really obvious that you have to practice speaking or signing in order to speak or sign a language, but in fact this was questioned by Krashen in the mid-1980s when he claimed that **comprehensible input** alone was sufficient for language acquisition (see [Chapter 6](#) on Listening and [Chapter 8](#) on Reading). We now know this is not true! Researchers like Swain (1985; 1995) and Long (1996) showed that although **input** was essential, **output** is also critically important for continuing to make progress in learning a language. Without enough attention to output, learners such as those in the French immersion schools in Québec in the 1970s would plateau and stop progressing. Their use of language was fluid but not complex and many grammatical details were not acquired. This indicates that when learners are challenged to choose their words and **negotiate meaning** with others, they are

much more likely to notice what they don't know. They are more likely to ask questions, talk about the language, and incorporate what they have learned into what they say later. Also, if they notice forms and linguistic problems, it can push them to modify their output, leading to more syntactic understanding and mental processing that contribute to their second language learning. (Swain & Lapkin, 1995).

Here, we can also introduce *Sociocultural theory*, which has its roots in the work of Vygotsky, a very influential Russian psychologist. Sociocultural theory argues that “the mechanisms underlying development are not situated in the head but in the social environment” (Lantolf & Xi, 2023, p. 1). Vygotsky theorized in the 1930s that learning happens through the careful interactive support of a more knowledgeable person in a supportive environment. Lantolf and other researchers have applied this theory to second language learning, arguing that social interaction with others is essential to making key mental and cultural connections about the new language.

Remember that the importance of social interaction in learning both language and culture was discussed in [Chapter 4](#). Human interaction is a multifaceted process and learning to communicate is a social phenomenon that cannot be reduced to memorizing vocabulary lists, grammatical forms and pronunciation points as often presented in textbooks. Take for example the common question, *what?*. This one word can have many different meanings depending on context. It can feel aggressive, inquisitive, rhetorical, sarcastic, or caring, depending on tone of voice, eye contact, and gesture, not to mention the relationship and history of the speakers. Many of these nuances of pragmatics (see [Chapter 4](#)) take time to acquire across many contexts, both in a first and second language. Some kids have a hard time understanding sarcasm sometimes because certain social cues may take longer to learn. Therefore, language is not only an exchange of words, but a

full-fledged social interaction involving "... the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's actions..." (Goffman, 1959, p. 8). It is no surprise that many researchers who focus on **languaculture**, **intercultural competence**, and **pragmatics** in language learning are influenced by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

Take a moment here to think back to [Chapter 2](#) on Learning Theories. Which learning theory is Vygotsky most aligned with: Behaviorism, Cognitivism, or Constructivism?

If you chose Constructivism, you're right! While the research discussed at the beginning of this section about input and output is mostly from a Cognitivist perspective, Constructivism focuses on the process itself of constructing communal knowledge. It shows how people work together to create a deeper, more profound mutual understanding of what they are learning.

So if interaction is so important, how can we actually do it when our language skills are still at a novice or intermediate level? The research on various *communication strategies* that people use can give us a clue. Communication strategies are "the ways in which an individual speaker manages to compensate for this gap between what she wishes to communicate and her immediately available linguistic resources," (Faucette, 2001, p. 1). These strategies can **keep the conversation going**, upholding the interactional element that is so important to communication and learning. Rabab'ah

(2016), for example, demonstrated in his quantitative research on English language learners in Jordan that when language students learned and practiced a range of communication strategies to keep talking (such as asking for clarification, guessing, and correcting themselves), they far outperformed a control group (a group that did not have this strategy training) on a major standardized test.

Using strategies to maintain interaction can make communication **feel messy** and less precise, and that's okay! Remember **circumlocution**? This literally means "to talk around" and has been described as "getting around your problem with the knowledge you have" (Corder, 1967, p. 105). Research confirms that circumlocution is an excellent strategy for keeping the conversation going, and can even give you more speaking practice since you are practicing using the words you know! Liskin-Gasparro (1996) found that both intermediate and advanced learners of Spanish successfully used circumlocution as one of their strategies to pass oral exams (a situation in which it is clearly very important to keep talking!). In another study, Salazar Campillo (2006) similarly shows how a group of English learners who did not know specific terms in English "were nonetheless able to compensate for this lack by means of circumlocutions" (p. 13). These circumlocutions included describing the word ("it's something you put on the floor"), using a superordinate ("it's a kind of chair") or, most frequently, describing the item's function ("it's a kind of pen you can write with. You can write very thick letters with it"). Notice that the language needed to circumlocute is simple and connected to your own experience, so the more time you put into **learning frequent and relevant vocabulary**, the easier it is to keep talking, even when your vocabulary range is still small.

Another strategy we mentioned before is **translanguaging**, or the "multiple discursive practices' of bilingual speakers" (García, 2009, p. 45). Using one's first language as a **communication strategy** is not recommended if you are using it to avoid the second language;

however, if you are using it to smooth over a moment of difficulty or capture a specific meaning in another language you know, it can be a very positive and effective part of communication. In this case translanguaging is the ability to draw on two or more linguistic systems, weaving between grammatical and cultural patterns as they intertwine with one another. In a close analysis of interaction by Al Masaeed (2020), we see how two learners of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) navigate a complex conversation about one of their housemates who, like them, is an international student in Morocco. Throughout the conversation, three languages are used; MSA (the target language in this case), Moroccan Arabic, and English. All three languages are used appropriately, but NOT interchangeably. The students used either Moroccan Arabic or English in this case to deepen the other's understanding of the emotion they were trying to convey. This is certainly not a case of avoidance or laziness; it is an excellent multilingual skill. Heritage speakers of a language are often very experienced at translanguaging.

Finally, keeping a positive attitude towards your own learning can directly impact your success. A large scale study of 1208 high school students in Saudi Arabia studying English concludes that “learning attitude significantly influences language learning and has a notable impact on students’ foreign language proficiency” (Li et al., 2024, p. 1). Moreover, in this study the use of language learning strategies played a pivotal role in linking students’ attitudes and proficiency. Our suggestions to **embrace your accent** and **be patient with yourself** are grounded in evidence that successful language learners tend not to be only focused on an end goal so much as enjoying the process of learning itself. In other words, the path itself is worth traveling.

Watch this video from the Center for Applied Second Language Studies ([CASLS](#)) to see how you can use interactive strategies to

explore the pronunciation of your target language with a positive attitude.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=161#oembed-1>

These theories and research are just a small slice of the evidence for the principles we have shared with you. There is much more to read and explore if you are interested in the reasons “why” behind our suggestions for how to keep speaking in a second language. To get a better idea of the actual strategies themselves, move on to the next section!

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Speaking/Signing Strategies & Stories

KELI YERIAN; LOGAN FISHER; AND BIBI HALIMA

Now that we've read about some overall principles for speaking or signing and looked at some research evidence for the principles, let's dive into specific strategies that you can use every day or anytime you like! Many of them were crowd-sourced by students in our LING 144 *Learning How to Learn Languages* class after they reflected on their own successful language learning experiences.

Click on the strategies below to see more about each one. Some of them are illustrated by personal stories and media created by students.

METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKING/SIGNING

Make a plan to practice speaking/signing

Compared to other skills like listening or reading, making a plan for practicing speaking or signing can really help. Otherwise, it can be easy to let it fall by the wayside. Do you have a friend, roommate, or family member who can interact with you regularly? Can you take some time to use AI technology as a chat partner, or simply talk to yourself as you're walking somewhere? Even [shadowing](#) someone

you're listening to online or repeating words on a language app can keep you connected with the sounds of the language. Every small bit counts! Thinking ahead for when you can have space and time to focus on speaking will help to make it a reality.

Reflect on your speaking/signing afterwards

Have you ever thought of the perfect thing to say after the opportunity to say it has already passed? This can happen in any language of course. Reflecting back on what you said or signed after communicating in your L2 can help you pinpoint what you were able to do and where you struggled, and you can prepare to improve in specific areas the next time. You can take a moment to write these points down in a journal or notes, or simply think about them.

Keep track of your learning in general

This metacognitive strategy of self-evaluation and monitoring is helpful for tracking all your language improvements. If you have the chance to record yourself speaking or signing every week or month you can keep track of your progress in your ability to communicate more fluently and accurately over time.

Get ready before you speak or sign

Once you have a plan in place for when you will practice speaking/signing, you can get ready for it ahead of time. For example, if you know what topics you will be discussing in your next language class, review the vocabulary beforehand, and try out some of the exercises from the textbook ahead of time. If you know you will be interacting with a family member or friend soon, think about a topic you want to discuss, try talking about it out loud to yourself, then look up some of the words you realize you don't know yet on that topic. You don't need to master any of this content before you speak/sign; just activating it in your mind will make it easier to use it later on.

Make a goal to learn and use 3-5 new words per week

You might say "Only 3-5!?" if you are used to studying 10-20 each week for a language class. The key here is *learn* and *use*. If you focus

on 3-5 of the most frequent words you are hearing/seeing, and you attend actively to them, noticing when and in which contexts they are used, you can start to use them yourself in similar contexts. This will allow you to actually learn them and store them in long-term memory rather than just short-term for a test. You can keep track of these words in a vocabulary journal.

SOCIO-AFFECTIVE & INTERPERSONAL STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKING/SIGNING

Many of the strategies for interpersonal speaking or signing are the same actions you could take for **socio-affective strategies**, since both involve using the help of other people to practice and improve your speaking. Many of these overlap with the strategies in the listening/viewing chapter as well. See [here](#) for a refresher on the difference between interpersonal and presentational speaking/signing.

Talk or sign with friends or family

If one of your friends or family members speaks your **target language**, set up a time to call or see each other regularly, even if it's just for a few minutes to practice greetings or to catch up on what you did or will do that day. If you are feeling anxious about this, let them know, and tell them how they can help. For example, you can ask them to be patient as you think of what to say, or to help you find the right words. You can ask them to help you switch back again to the target language if you find yourself over-relying on your **L1**.

Talk or sign with language exchange partners

If you don't have a friend who speaks your **target language**, find one on an app like [HelloTalk](#), [Tandem](#), or find an app that works for you.

Talk or sign with your teachers or professors

If you're taking a class in your **target language**, go to your

professor's office hours, or if you're not at a university, go to your class before or after class to practice talking with them.

Play online multiplayer games

If you already enjoy playing games online, try those games in your **target language** with others who are using that language. Although you might mostly be listening to others, you can bravely find moments to make your own comments as well. Often many of the players are also learners of the language.

Take advantage of your language class

If you are taking a language class, take full advantage of it! Good language classes will give you the chance to practice speaking/signing in pairs or groups, or at least the chance to answer the teacher's questions. Don't hesitate to sit with other people in class who want to practice as much as you do and who also have a [growth mindset](#) about embracing their mistakes as a chance to learn. People who are studying independently often don't have such easy access to structured, focused speaking/signing practice that classes provide, and the opportunity they give for peer and teacher feedback too.

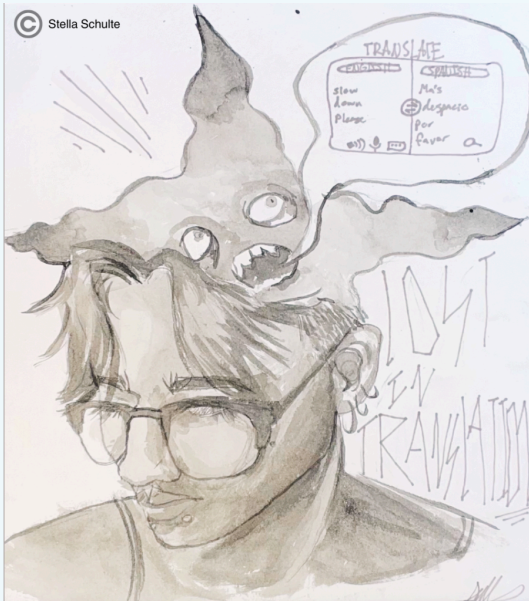
Use phrases to keep the conversation going

As we discussed in the listening chapter, you can learn specific phrases and questions that help you avoid communication breakdown either as a listener or a speaker. Here are examples in English. Avoid just translating these examples directly into your **L2**, as each language has their own ways to appropriately communicate these ideas.

- Did you say...?
- Could you say that more slowly?
- I'm sorry, I don't understand.
- What's the word for.... (description of the word)?
- Is that the right word?
- Does that make sense?

Stella Schulte is a past student of LING 144 who expressed through a drawing her feelings of anxiety when speaking her **target language**. To help with anxiety, she tries to remember how to say “Slow down please”.

Slow Down Please Illustration by Stella Schulte



Explanation

“This illustration is a depiction of my struggle with translation between English and Spanish. A major part of language learning is bridging the gap between explicitly learning new vocabulary and grammar and procedurally having conversations out loud. In my own experience, I have mostly been taught only writing and reading skills in Spanish, so I struggle with conversation in my L2. I used this painting to convey my frustration with my own shortcomings: I often get “lost in translation” and lose the momentum of speaking in my L2. The star popping out of my head is an abstracted depiction of the anxiety that hinders my ability to translate. Its speech bubble is filled with a Google translation box from English to Spanish with a translation of the phrase, “please slow down” in my own handwriting to show my inner voice. It is a phrase I paradoxically always need and always forget, so I must look it up frequently. I made this illustration with pen, ink, and some watercolors. I used a reference image of my own face while studying and the Google translate website.”

Learn and use filler words and sounds to buy time

Filler words and sounds are helpful for all speakers, as they fill the silence and show that you are thinking about something or searching for a word. In English, these are typically ‘uhhh’ and ‘um’. These fillers can sound different in different languages. For example in French it is an ‘euh’ sound. You can pay attention to how

native and proficient speakers use fillers and then you can try to copy these patterns, or simply continue to use your **L1** fillers. Your listeners will understand!

Use gestures and context around you to support your meaning

If you don't know the word or remember the grammar needed to describe something, use gesture! Gestures are amazing resources for communication. They can show the size or shape of an object, how something is moving and in which direction, and where objects are located in space relative to one another. Gestures are also excellent for pointing to things in your environment. If you can't remember the word for *shoe*, point to a shoe!

Use translanguaging (wisely)

Although struggling productively in your **target language** is important for learning it, you can also use other languages to communicate your meaning when you need to. In the case of signing, you can fingerspell words from a spoken language.

A past LING 144 student, Jack Ford, wrote and performed the following song about a heritage French speaker who re-ignites his French skills after meeting a French visitor in New York City. We chose to put this project under **translanguaging** because it 1) *refers* to translanguaging and 2) it also *demonstrates* translanguaging, with the song alternating between English and French: ("Poems on the subway, *ses poems chantent en deux langues* [**her poems sing in two languages**]").

Notice how the use of both languages contributes to the meaning of this song. The song is a reflection of how a bilingual individual can move between languages to express their message.

«Quelle est la langue?», a song by Jack Ford



One or more interactive elements
has been excluded from this version
of the text. You can view them online here:

[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=165#oembed-1](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=165#oembed-1)

Transcript of the song

Title: «*Quelle est la langue?*»

Author: Jack Ford

Hello, *allo, tout le monde*, all the world is waiting
Sophie sits, *son stylo à la main*, creating

Poems on the subway, *ses poems chantent en deux langues*

But now Paris is just a memory, and Manhattan's accent screams
Se demande-t-elle, «quelle est la langue of my dreams?»

Hello, *allo*, Central Park, Ben has lost his car keys
 Punches ticket, headphones in, Piaf sings *«mon coeur qui bat»*
 And not to mention *tous les mots que sa mère a dit*

But now Paris is just a memory, *un rêve qu'il a perdu*
 He asks himself, *«quelle est la langue I once knew? »*

Hello, *allo*, Sophie, Ben, *«ravi de vous rencontrer»*
 Sophie smiles, Ben replies, *«je ne peux pas parler français*
 Anymore, I lost it all, could you teach me a thing or two? »

And now Paris is just a memory in a café down the block
«Quelle heure est-il?», *«Quelle est la langue?»* as they talk

Hello, *allo*, *tout le monde*, welcome in the New Year
Le temps a passé, yes, say yes, *«pour le meilleur ou pour le pire»*
 The city sounds so sweet *avec les bons mots à l'oreille*

And now Paris is on the calendar, and New York, *c'est
magnifique*
L'amour, l'amour, ça c'est la langue we all speak

Translation by Keli Yerian

Title: «*Quelle est la langue?*» [**“What is language”**]
Author: Jack Ford

Hello, *allo* [**hello**], *tout le monde* [**everyone**], all the
world is waiting

Sophie sits, *son stylo à la main* [**her pen in her hand**],
creating

Poems on the subway, *ses poems chantent en deux
langues* [**her poems sing in two languages**]

But now Paris is just a memory, and Manhattan's
accent screams

Se demande-t-elle [**she asks herself**], «*quelle est la
langue* [**what is the language**] of my dreams?»

Hello, *allo* [**hello**], Central Park, Ben has lost his car

keys

Punches ticket, headphones in, Piaf sings «*mon coeur qui bat*» [**my beating heart**]

And not to mention *tous les mots que sa mère a dit* [**all the words his mother said**]

But now Paris is just a memory, *un rêve qu'il a perdu* [**a dream he lost**]

He asks himself, «*quelle est la langue* [**what is the language**] I once knew?»

Hello, *allo* [**hello**], Sophie, Ben, «*ravi de vous rencontrer*» [**very nice to meet you**]

Sophie smiles, Ben replies, «*je ne peux pas parler français* [**I can't speak French**]

Anymore, I lost it all, could you teach me a thing or two?»

And now Paris is just a memory in a café down the block

«*Quelle heure est-il?*» [**What time is it?**], «*Quelle est la langue?*» [**What is language?**] as they talk

Hello, *allo* [**hello**], *tout le monde* [**everyone**], welcome in the New Year

Le temps a passé [**time has passed**], yes, say yes, «*pour le meilleur ou pour le pire*» [**for better or for worse**]

The city sounds so sweet *avec les bons mots à l'oreille* [**with the right words in my ears**]

And now Paris is on the calendar, and New York, *c'est magnifique* [**it's wonderful**]
L'amour, l'amour, ça c'est la langue [**love, love, it's the language**] we all speak

Use circumlocution

If you don't know the word for something, take the opportunity to describe the concept or **referent** with words or signs you already know. For example, if you can't remember the word for *daughter*, say 'girl child'. If you can't remember the word for *pan*, say 'thing that you can cook food in on the stove'. Using circumlocution gives you more practice with the language, and your listener will usually be able to help you with the word you were looking for after they understand what you mean.

Learn culturally-appropriate conversational openings, closings, and small-talk topics

There's a reason that greetings, introducing yourself and small talk are practiced so much in most language classes. It's because they are so important to most interactions, and only through practice will they become automatized as a [procedural](#) skill. Prioritize learning typical greeting and leave-taking routines in your L2, as well as what the common topics in that language or culture are for small talk and meeting new people (such as the weather, how family members are doing, what you are doing that day). Feeling confident and fluent in these everyday conversational domains will allow you to function more comfortably as you meet others or travel.

Record yourself talking or signing

Record yourself telling about your day for a set amount of time, and for an extra challenge you can tell about what you did yesterday and what you will do tomorrow to practice your past and future tenses. Even if you aren't brave enough to listen to yourself right away, the recordings will create a useful record for you to listen to in the future to track your progress.

Talk about the things around you

Start describing your surroundings to yourself once in a while. If you know the phrase *Esto es una banana* (This is a banana) in Spanish, and you have a banana sitting next to you, say it! You can describe the banana too: *Es amarillo, larga y rica* (It's yellow, large, and tasty.). Though this is supposed to be spoken out loud or signed visibly, it can be done silently in your mind as well.

Read and/or watch out loud

To combine the skills of speaking with listening and reading, when reading a book or watching a show or a movie you can read out loud or say the character's lines along with them! You can make a goal to read one chapter or page of a book out loud per day, reading at your **i+1**.

Interact with artificial intelligence

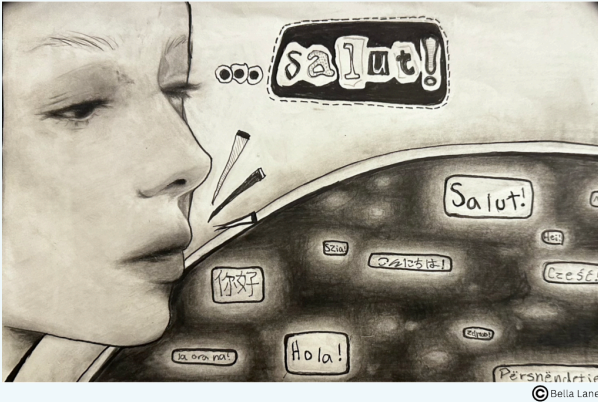
If you are feeling nervous about communicating with a real person, you have the advantage of using AI to practice your interpersonal speaking without worrying about the needs or judgements of your partner. Be cautious, however, because AI may not reflect linguistic diversity. It might correct your utterances or prompts to reflect the **standardized** varieties only.

Let go of perfectionism

Remember that the word 'perfect' doesn't apply to language learning! Embracing the messy nature of language is critical for getting into the process and enjoying it. Don't let a few bumps along the way discourage you from reaching your goals.

Former LING 144 student Bella Lane captures the messy nature of language learning in her drawing and explanation below.

Illustration by Bella Lane



Explanation

Bella explains,

“My theme/focus for this project was on overcoming insecurity & perfectionism in language learning, and the core importance of using language to connect with the world. This is a charcoal drawing I made, I specifically used charcoal for this project because it’s

a messy material that you really can't be shy with. You just have to jump in and create something as you go, which aligns with what ideas I wanted to portray. I depicted the jump into language learning as speaking a greeting aloud, the letters imitating the look of collaged magazine clippings to represent the imperfect, haphazard "mod-podged" feeling that I've personally experienced when learning new languages. I wanted the imperfection to come across, so I also represented that with the greeting itself which may be a more casual one than normally used with strangers. I drew the responses to it illuminating from the globe, one back in French and the others in different languages. This is because the language learning process is not isolated, and you begin to see communication with the broader world as a tangible possibility going beyond a specific language. When you let go of the idea of perfection and instead embrace the process by using what you've learned, it enables you to interact and connect so much more with the world around you. That's what I really wanted to express with this."

STRATEGIES SPECIFIC TO SIGNING

Sign slowly with clarity

"Clarity in forming signs far outweighs the importance of speed.

In the study of sign language, the clarity of your signs is your articulation" (Duke, 2009, p. 28). Just as it is okay to slow down in a spoken L2 in order to articulate sounds clearly, it's fine to slow down while signing, and to get in the good habit of well-articulated signs from the start. Sloppy or rushed signs will not gain you time in the long run. For practice, try websites like [Handspeak](#).

Put aside your spoken language grammar

It is a mistake to try to sign words one at a time in the same order as they would appear in a spoken language. Signed languages have their own grammars, and concepts may be signed in a different order or combined in different ways. For example, American Sign Language typically uses a topic-comment order, in which a topic is introduced first before commentary is added about the topic. Body movement, facial expressions, and head movements can all provide grammatical information that in a spoken language would be communicated through **particles** or **affixes**, such as the use of -ed (a 'd' sound) to show past tense in 'played'.

Let your dominant hand do the signing

Signers are typically dominant on one hand or the other; they are "left-handed" or "right-handed" signers. Choose the hand you feel most comfortable signing with to be your dominant signing hand. It is not recommended to switch dominant hands while signing, even if you are ambidextrous.

Use facial expressions

In signed languages, facial expressions are as integral to communication as the hands. Raised or lowered eyebrows, squinting or widening the eyes, blinking, extending a lower lip, or pursing the lips are all examples of using the face to communicate not only emotion or emphasis as might happen in spoken languages, but grammatical or **lexical** information as well. Remember to engage your face to make your signing clearer and more effective.

Maintain eye contact as much as possible

Maintaining eye contact with those you are signing with is very

important. Looking away from a signing person is like “sticking your fingers into your ears when someone is talking to you” (Shelly & Schneck, 1998, p. 64).

Allow your own signing style to grow

“Because no two people are alike, no two people will sign in exactly the same way. You can study sign language with the same teacher for years, learning all the signs exactly as presented and copying the teacher’s every move. But, as soon as you get comfortable with signing on your own, your use of ASL will become individualized. You’ll develop your own personal style of signing and nobody else will do it quite the same way you do” (Shelly & Schneck, 1998, p. 65).

STRATEGIES SPECIFIC TO PRESENTATIONAL SPEAKING/SIGNING

Be aware of your audience

Although it’s always important to consider who you are communicating with, for presentational speaking it is particularly important because you will not be able to easily change what you are saying while you are presenting. This is different from conversation in which you are directly influenced by others’ responses (see [here](#) for a refresher on the difference between *interpersonal* and *presentational* speaking/signing). Are you speaking to people who are experts in your topic, or who are completely new to the topic? Are you speaking to people who are themselves fluent speakers of the language, or are many of them learners of the language? You will adjust both the content and the delivery of your presentation accordingly.

Use key notes on slides or notecards

Most of the time it is perfectly acceptable to use slides or notecards during presentational speaking. Just like when you give a speech in your **L1**, visual aids can be your friend! Just try not to include too much of your speech on the slides, to avoid reading them. Bullet points or key words are best.

Plan to use cohesive devices

Remember the **cohesive devices** we discussed in the listening/viewing strategies? They are also good for you to learn to use as a speaker or signer, to help those listening to or watching you! Learners usually rely on simple connecting words at first such as *and, but, so, because*. As you become more proficient you can expand your use of these phrases to clarify your meaning and increase your own fluency.

Practice in front of the mirror or to your pet

Just as you would for a speech in your **L1**, practicing beforehand is key. Include some practice in front of the mirror, a pet, or some stuffed animals to get used to imagining an audience. If you have several stuffed animals you can place them around the room to practice making good eye contact. You can also use faces on sticky notes as an alternative!

Use the shadowing technique

Shadowing refers to speaking along with a recording of someone else, either at the same time or slightly after them. Shadowing a more proficient speaker can give you practice with the sounds, timing and rhythm of the language. You can adjust the speed of the video to be slower if that helps, and you can read along using a transcript as well. Shadowing is also a good technique while listening to audiobooks, if you have a written version of the book to look at too. An example of shadowing can be found [here](#).

Try not to memorize what you will say

Importantly, try not to memorize your presentation word-for-word. Memorizing can backfire if you no longer are thinking about the underlying message you are trying to communicate. If something distracts you during the presentation, you may have trouble starting your speech again without repeating some part of it. Instead, memorize the key points you will make (and include them on notecards or slides), and practice talking about them many times, even if each time you word the points a little differently. This is called **extemporaneous** speaking (or signing).

If you forget your exact wording, think about your key points

If you are prepared to speak **extemporaneously**, you will stay focused on communicating your key points, and distractions or disturbances during your speech will not derail you as easily. You can simply return to 'What do I want to communicate here?'. It's much better to confidently express your points, even with some language errors, than to try to recite a memorized script.

Slow down and be patient with yourself

It can be tempting to rush through a speech that you have prepared, but this does not allow the audience time to think about and process what you are saying. Excellent public speakers often speak carefully and relatively slowly, and include pauses after they say something new or important (the TedTalk speakers included in this textbook are good examples of this).

Can you think of any other speaking or signing strategies that we could add to any of the lists above?

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Your Turn

BIBI HALIMA AND KELI YERIAN

Now we invite you to reflect on your own language learning path. It can be useful to first think back on your past experiences with language learning to better evaluate and choose your next steps in the future.

LOOKING BACK

- Recall a time when you had to prepare a formal speech or story in your **L2**. Now, try to think of a time you talked about something more casually. Can you now identify the differences between presentational and interpersonal modes as an informed language learner?
- Do you remember a time you were struggling to speak or sign in your **target language**? How did it go? Did you use any strategies? If yes, which ones and how did they work?
- Have you ever had a conversation in any language where you suspected there was a miscommunication related to culture or **pragmatics**? What makes you think it was cultural? Did you try to learn or understand more about it?

LOOKING AHEAD

- Which of these speaking and signing principles and strategies are most relevant and interesting to you? Which of these are you interested in trying next?
 - What resources can you identify around you? How would you use them to help you with your speaking or signing goals?
 - Out of the strategies we described in this chapter, which one would you consider using to minimize any anxiety or feeling of perfectionism you may have while speaking your L2?
-

CHAPTER 8 - READING SKILLS

CHAPTER SECTIONS

1. **INTRODUCTION**
2. **READING PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY**
3. **HOW DO WE KNOW? SUPPORT FOR THE PRINCIPLES**
4. **READING STRATEGIES & STORIES**
5. **YOUR TURN**

Introduction

KELI YERIAN; LOGAN FISHER; ABHAY PAWAR; AND BIBI HALIMA

As you progress in your language learning journey, you'll probably start reading in addition to listening and speaking. Your initial reading experiences might range from deciphering airport signs to texting a friend to reading a menu or the first page of your language class textbook.

Let's take a moment to note that reading in general is actually "quite miraculous. Our brains were not designed to be reading brains" (Grabe, 2016, p. 301). Humans do not automatically develop the ability to read or write; these are skills that are socially passed down from generation to generation. So we can celebrate our ability to read in any language!

Although not all language learners need to focus on the ability to read and write (literacy) in their **L2s** as a goal, the ability to read in a second language is often very helpful for language acquisition, especially when learning in school contexts. Reading skills allow learners to have access to far more **input** in the language and also allow visual access to the language, which makes it easier to remember as you learn. Reading gives you access to new forms of **discourse**, such as literary and academic written texts. These usually contain more crafted language with a wide range of **idioms**,

grammatical structures, historical content and cultural nuances – so much that help make a language rich.

So what are some ways we can develop reading skills specifically in a second language? Let's check out some of the ways Abhay approaches reading in one of his L2s, Italian. Abhay shows us some key techniques he uses while reading a book with vocabulary that he doesn't know yet.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=170#oembed-1>

Let's take a minute to think about what we just saw.

- First, notice how Abhay picked a text that is close to his own reading level. Although he doesn't recognize enough words in the text for it to be truly at his level yet, there are plenty of visual and context clues that make the text accessible so Abhay can avoid looking up every word.
- Notice how he uses his prior experience (**schemata**) for how children's books are written to guess at what the title refers to and the opening phrase "One day".

- He also notices high-frequency words in this story (for example, *topo*) and their variations (*topino*, *topolino*) to guess at the meaning. Children's books can be a good choice for novice and even intermediate level readers since they include many pictures, although their vocabulary and structure can sometimes be surprisingly complex and culturally nuanced. Remember they are written for children who are growing up with the language as an **L1**!

In this chapter, we delve into more strategies such as those above that are aimed at honing your reading abilities in a second language. From understanding how to find reading materials at your proficiency level to navigating vocabulary acquisition, these strategies can play a pivotal role in your linguistic growth.

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Reading Principles to Live By

CAMERON KEATON; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

This chapter is about reading, so we will be discussing both the interpretive mode (receptive skills) and the interpersonal mode (interactive reading and writing skills). As in the previous chapters on listening and speaking skills, in this chapter we provide principles that can help guide you, this time in developing your reading skills. We then discuss some of the theory and research supporting these principles, and finally show a variety of strategies and stories that have been gathered from students in LING 144 at the University of Oregon.

So what are the principles we recommend for reading in a second language?

READ FOR FLUENCY AT YOUR LEVEL

Have you ever tried to read something in your **L2** and felt completely overwhelmed looking up words in every sentence? Reading doesn't have to be this way! You can read fluently as long as you're reading at a level that's right for you. If you are at a novice level, for example, you can read simple texts fluently, meaning you can process the meaning easily and at a fast pace without looking up many words. This kind of reading experience is

called *extensive reading*, and it's a great alternative to learning new vocabulary just by studying decontextualized words with flashcards.

Think of reading like training a muscle: effective reps make the muscle grow while ineffective reps can result in lack of progress and frustration. It is always good to challenge yourself, but not so much that you stop reading! You ideally should limit the amount of unknown words and grammar structures you are reading so that it stays motivating. Finding your level is as important in reading as it is in listening.

Graded readings is the term for readings that are designed to be stepping stones for different proficiency levels. For example, in most majoritized languages you can find short books written specifically for readers at different levels, such as novice, intermediate, and advanced. These books are called *graded readers* and are defined by Lima (2012, para. 1) from the Extensive Reading Foundation as "...books of various genres that are specially created for learners of foreign languages." The term "graded" refers to how "the **syntax** and **lexis** are controlled in order to make the content accessible to learners of the language".

There are options for graded readings other than graded reader books. Most textbooks include readings written for the level of the class. In addition, magazines, blog posts for learners, or even reading subtitles for simple videos in your L2 can help you read at your level of fluency. It is important to remember during your language learning journey that it takes time and you don't have to jump into the most advanced levels of anything, at least not at the beginning!

You might ask, how can I find readings at my level?

Here are some ideas for you!



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=178#h5p-37>

Research Note

Kara (2019) shows that students who used graded readings in an **extensive** reading program scored significantly higher when it came to reading comprehension than the students in the control group.

The study also concluded that reading more extensively, even if the texts are less dense and shorter, improves reading comprehension more than reading less extensively, even when the text is more dense.

Read at your level



KEEP READING, DON'T STOP TO LOOK UP EVERY

WORD

When it comes to language learning, it's okay to not understand everything all the time. We keep learning that way! When we suggest that you read "at your level" what we actually mean is to read just slightly *beyond* your level so that there are a few words or structures you don't know or feel confident about yet (but not too many). As we explained in [Chapter 6](#) about listening skills, the idea of finding your level was promoted by Stephen Krashen (1982, as cited in Western, 2020) as $i + 1$, where the "i" stands for the level you are at, and "+1" refers to the little bit you don't know yet. Reading a little bit above your level is like taking on the next level in a video game. Staying always at the same level will bore you, while going ahead too fast will probably end the game.

When you are reading at a good **i+1** level, you will understand enough in the reading to be able to use context clues to guess at the parts you're not sure about and keep reading without stopping. This keeps your focus on the meaning of the reading. For example, if you read the sentence, "The tree fell down in the [unfamiliar word here] with a big crash" you could make a good guess at the meaning of the unfamiliar word by knowing that trees usually grow in the forest or woods. You don't have to interrupt your reading to look the word up – just see if the word pops up again later and the new context will confirm or disconfirm your guess. For example, if you read in the next sentence that "A neighbor saw the tree fall down from their window", you might make a new guess that the unfamiliar word is "yard". Another advantage of reading at your level is that you are also practicing reading the words and structures that you already do know (like *tree* and *crash*), but each time in a different context, which helps you to deepen your understanding of how those words are used. Overall, reading without stopping keeps your focus on the big

picture of the reading, which can help you make inferences along the way.

Research Note

Multiple studies show that despite not understanding every single word you are reading, you can use context clues to understand what you are reading. For example, Rokni and Niknaqsh (2013) investigated the effects of

context clues on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension. They found that the experimental group that practiced using context clues outperformed the control group on a reading comprehension test.

Use context clues

One day in the winter, a tree fell in the *trunk* and it caused a loud *crash!*



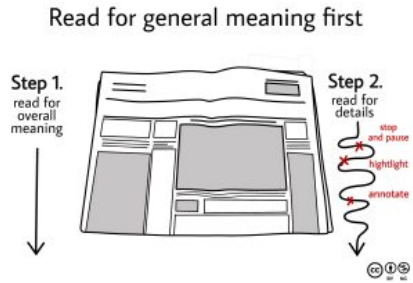
READ FOR GIST AND MEANING FIRST, THEN READ AGAIN FOR DETAIL

When you read at your level and don't stop to look up many words, you are *reading for meaning*. Reading for meaning gives you the opportunity to understand the overall meaning of the text, without getting interrupted or stuck on a few unfamiliar words or grammatical forms. The first time you read something in the language you are trying to learn, whether that be a **graded** book or a magazine, it is best to read for overall meaning. But then, if you take the time to read through a second or even third time, you'll see you will understand even more. This is when it's recommended to pay attention to the grammar clues more closely and to stop to look up words you still aren't sure of just from the context. You can also pay attention to cultural clues that you may have missed the first time. Reading through the text multiple

times allows you to understand something different on each read through. This exposure is crucial to your L2 reading comprehension development because it can help improve your word recognition skills, grow your vocabulary, and advance your reading skills (Taguchi et al., 2016).

Research Note

Studies show that reading multiple times is beneficial to your understanding of a passage. Maragolin and Snyder (2017) found that passages that were read twice were understood more deeply than passages that were read only once. Studies like this demonstrate the value of reading through a passage multiple times, and why it is okay to not focus too much on new grammar or vocabulary on your first read through.



FOCUS ON HIGH-FREQUENCY PHRASES AND VOCABULARY FIRST

When you are on your language learning journey everything may seem important. Every word, every phrase, every sentence. However, when you first begin it is helpful to give priority to words and phrases you will see a lot. High-frequency words and phrases are “commonly occurring words in written and spoken language. They are often referred to as sight words and used frequently in written texts such as books, articles, and other literary materials” (Voyager Sopris Learning, 2024, para. 3). Examples are the words “good” and “people”, which are in the top 100 most frequently used words in English. Luckily, **graded** readings and modern language textbooks focus on the most frequent words already. But

if you're reading something beyond your level and the words are unusual or specific, like "overalls" or "stutter", you might not want to spend time memorizing them yet. High-frequency words can give you a running start on accessing more texts more quickly and growing a broader knowledge of the language.

Research Note

High-frequency words, because they appear so frequently, serve as the building blocks of language. Nishida's (2014) study of intermediate and advanced L2 readers of English in Japan shows that readers who are

more effective were "able to carry out lower-level reading processing nearly automatically" (p. 133), both in terms of recognizing vocabulary and sentence structures. This automatic processing must be developed by frequently encountering the words over time.



READ CONTENT THAT YOU CARE ABOUT AND IS USEFUL TO YOU

You will see a lot of progress on your language learning journey if you read on your own for pleasure. And outside of a classroom context, you can choose what content you want to read! One of the best practices is to read and use content that you truly like and find interesting. For example if you want to learn about French housing items, you could read a magazine on interior design in French, follow conversations about shopping on social media, or watch a French series about realtors. Another example could be using subtitles in your **L2** while you watch your favorite show

(even if you listen it in your **L1**). This would be a great opportunity for you to learn and pick up new vocabulary in your language as you will be watching something you enjoy and reading subtitles in the language you want to learn. So, when it comes to deciding topics or **genres** for you to read, pick ones that are useful to you and that you enjoy.

Choose content you enjoy



Research Note

Multiple reading studies have supported the idea that students understand readings more when they are interested in them. For example, Asgari et al. (2019) conducted research with two groups of students to measure whether readings based on students' stated interests would have an influence on their performance in L2 reading comprehension. Asgari et al. found that the pleasure reading group made greater gains than the control group.

USE READING STRATEGIES THAT MATCH YOUR PURPOSE AND GENRE

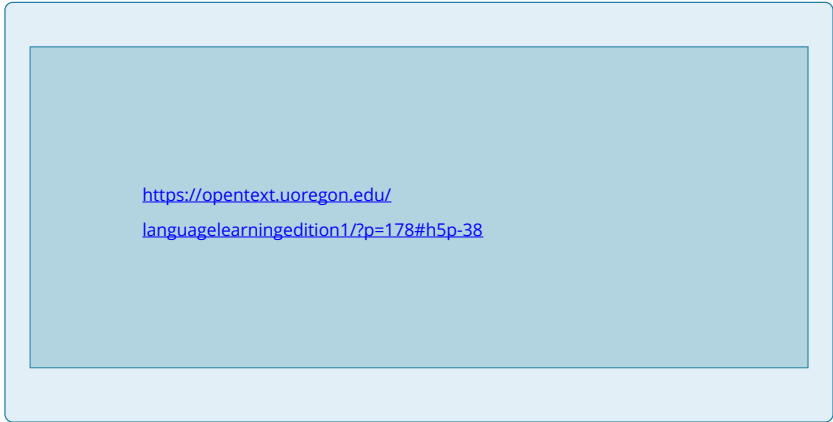
Another way to say “genres” is “different categories of texts”. For example, novels, magazines, blogs, text messages, and textbooks are all different written genres. Depending on the genre you are reading and your purpose for reading it, it is recommended to employ different strategies to read them. For instance, when you’re reading a textbook, you might do more careful, intensive reading to be sure you understand key concepts. However, when you’re reading a newspaper, you may be more inclined to skim the text to get an overview of the day’s news. The strategies match the purpose of the genre. A textbook is written to convey complex ideas that should be read carefully, whereas a newspaper is designed to show you a lot of headlines at once.

Below are some strategies that can be implemented when reading in your L2. There will be a deeper dive into the “why” behind these strategies in the next section of this chapter.

Example reading strategies to match the genre

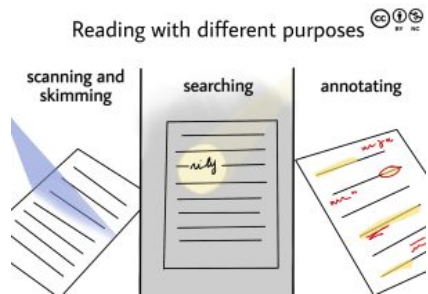


An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:



Research Note

These strategies can be useful in different contexts. For instance, scanning a text can be used if you need to find something in the text quickly without fully reading it, such as when you are looking for the name of a celebrity in social media post. Scanning allows you to search for an item within a text, which can be useful if you are reading a long text and just need to find specific elements. Grabe (2016) writes, “One of the most important factors in reading comprehension abilities is how reading processes vary depending on the reading purpose” (p. 299).



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How Do We Know? Support for the Principles

KELI YERIAN AND BIBI HALIMA

There is plenty of evidence in research to support the reading principles we have introduced so far in this chapter. Let's focus on the benefits of *extensive reading* first. Waring (2022) defines extensive reading as "[T]he reading of a large amount of material with high comprehension and minimal interruptions and is the type of reading we do in our daily life in our first language when we read novels, webpages, and emails" (p. 384).

Studies on extensive reading show that **reading extensively at an appropriate level** is more effective than only intensively reading or studying in a language (Nakanishi, 2015). As just one example, Suk (2017) designed a quasi-experimental study of 171 English learners in Korea who were divided among four classes for a period of 15 weeks. The two control groups did 100 minutes of intensive reading in their classes per week, while the two experimental groups did 70 minutes of intensive reading and 30 minutes of extensive reading. In other words, the experimental groups still engaged in intensive classroom reading instruction, but 30% less time, while the rest of their time was spent just silently reading for pleasure at their levels. The experimental groups strongly outperformed the control

groups at the end of the term on comprehension, reading rate, and vocabulary tests. Extensive reading allowed these students to improve their reading and vocabulary skills *implicitly* (remember [Chapter 2](#)), promoting “the incremental growth of habitual associative knowledge, the tacit learning of co-occurrence patterns in the input we receive” (p. 74).

One reason learners are so successful in extensive reading programs is that they are generally able to **choose content they are interested in**. Considerable research on both **L1** and **L2** learners has shown that students who have a strong interest in the topics they are reading are more likely to engage and learn more effectively (Asgari et al., 2019). One study of 34 adult learners of English in Iran, for example, showed that the students who were able to read about topics that interested them scored higher on subsequent assessments than those who were reading topics of less interest to them (Ebrahimi & Javanbakht, 2015). These results show that learners will improve when reading topics they enjoy. We can infer from this that even if we can’t control the reading materials in a class or in an app, we can explore topics on our own that interest us. This will keep our motivation strong and will allow us to learn more with less effort.

For adult language learners, **graded** readers can be perfect for **extensive** reading on topics that interest us, especially at novice levels, because they are designed to include different levels of the most frequently used words in a language. Novice-level graded readers include only the first 500-1000 most frequent **word families** and are also controlled for more simple grammar structures, while intermediate-level readers include up to the 3000 most frequent word families. The first 3000 word families are considered the set of “high frequency words” in a language (Masrai, 2019). Roughly 90% of the words in most non-graded texts belong to this set of high-frequency words (Nation, 2006), so **focusing on**

learning these words first will pay off quickly. Reading books that are limited to high frequency words guarantees that the learner will read these words many, many times in context without interrupting their reading to look up less frequent words. It is noteworthy that to learn a new word in your L2 you need to see it 6-10 times, and to retain the word for a long period of time you need to see it around 20 times (Waring & Nation, 2004). Reading without stopping will give you maximum exposure while encountering new words in an enjoyable way.

As we noted in previous sections, you are not limited to **graded** readings however. Research shows that *authentic texts* that are inherently more simple, such as popular daily newspapers or social media, or texts that have a straightforward purpose such as road signs or medicine labels, can also be very useful for L2 students to learn to read. Authentic texts, unlike graded readers, are those that have not been designed for language learners. Numerous studies have shown that certain kinds of authentic texts can be accessible to even novice learners, particularly if they are accompanied with reading strategies that fit the genre of the text (Zyzik & Polio, 2017).

KELI'S SPANISH LANGUAGE READING PATH

Let's take a break here to see an example of these principles in practice. Halima documented the progress of Keli's extensive reading in Spanish in 2024. Over a period of seven months, Keli (who had the advantage of already speaking French, another Romance Language) was able to progress from a novice-low level in reading to high-intermediate. She read something in Spanish nearly every day during this time, including graded readers, movie subtitles, and online blogs for learners. She also used Babel, a language learning app, and took live group and individual lessons that focused on listening and speaking.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=180#h5p-39>

While extensive reading is excellent for supporting [implicit learning](#), research also points to the effectiveness of combining extensive reading with time spent on intensive, [explicit learning](#) while reading (Pressley & Allington, 2014). Recall the example of Suk's (2017) research above, in which students who combined intensive and extensive reading had the best outcomes. If you are learning a language independently, this can look like setting aside time to reflect on new vocabulary and consciously notice the forms of grammar you are reading. You may choose to **re-read certain passages** of a reading that you enjoyed and write down the words you are learning in a vocabulary journal, or highlight examples of a certain grammatical form to see how it is functioning in context.

This is what Keli was doing with some of the higher level readings as seen in the slides above. This approach is called a *Focus on Form*, and "consists of primarily meaning-focused interaction in which there is brief, and sometimes spontaneous, attention to linguistic forms" (Loewen, 2018, p. 1). *Focus on Form* contrasts with a *Focus on Forms* (with an 's'), which is the more traditional focus on language structures through studying vocabulary lists or memorizing grammar rules. Research shows that intentionally

focusing on form, whether it be incidental (brief and unplanned) or structured (such as in a lesson in a class or progress in a language learning app), is beneficial when it is done within an overall meaning-based approach to language learning (see, for example, Shintani, 2016).

Focusing on form implies that you are reflecting consciously on your learning, which is the process of metacognition ([Chapter 5](#)). Consciously using various reading strategies (indirect or direct) is also part of metacognition. Here is where you can start **using different strategies for different purposes and genres**, just like you do in your first language(s).

Research shows that reflecting on your purpose for reading is important for selecting appropriate reading strategies. Unfortunately, language classrooms may only practice a few strategies in the same way and with very limited **genres**, for example “find the main idea” in short reading passages in a textbook (Ediger, 2006). But real-life reading involves different kinds of genres, such as blog posts, social media, subtitles on videos, graded readers, news stories, or academic papers. As you start building reading proficiency beyond the novice level you can first think, “How can I best read this text”? One qualitative study by Ediger (2006) followed two graduate students who were reading articles in their L2 for the purpose of writing a research paper. They used the strategies of: reading the conclusion first; skimming to compare the level of detail in the paper to the level of detail they needed for their paper; taking notes; checking the meaning of specific terms in other sources; and re-reading an article to find specific passages. The students also found that speaking aloud about which strategies they were using (as they were asked to do as the methodology for this study) was in itself a helpful metacognitive strategy. These strategies are clearly different from how you might read social media (e.g. skimming for interesting topics or opinions)

or a graded reader (e.g. not stopping to look up words, using context clues).

Let's go ahead and jump into some of these reading strategies next!

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Reading Strategies & Stories

KELI YERIAN; CAMERON KEATON; AND BIBI HALIMA

In this section, we'll look at some specific strategies that relate to the research-supported principles for reading that were discussed in the previous sections. These strategies are concrete actions that you can take advantage of in your learning journey. As with the skills strategies in the previous two chapters, the strategies below have been drawn from multiple sources. Some were crowd-sourced by students in our LING 144 *Learning How to Learn Languages* class after they reflected on their own language learning experiences.

This chapter does not yet have student stories included in it. We will invite future cohorts to add more strategies and create more stories to illustrate them.

METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES FOR READING

Think about *why* you are reading

The purpose of your reading will help you choose appropriate direct strategies. For example, are you just trying to get the overall idea of the text? You might choose to skim the text in this case. Are you trying to find some specific information? You might choose to scan for that information. Are you trying to evaluate whether

the text might be very biased in some way? You might choose to look at the source carefully or look for language that plays on your emotions.

Think about *what you are reading*

Like we mentioned before, the type of text (**genre**) can relate strongly to what kinds of strategies are most helpful for reading it. Is it a graphic novel that you can read for pleasure without worrying about every word, using visual clues for context? Is it a prompt in a written exam that you must read very carefully word for word? Is it a chart or graph that you can scan to find specific answers in?

Make a plan to read

This can be as thoughtful as a specific SMART goal or as casual as a reminder on your phone to leave 10, 20, or 30 minutes at the end of your day or during a break to read a little in your L2, for fun or for studying.

Take advantage of your language class

Although we are emphasizing in this book how much you can learn independently, if you have an opportunity to take a language class, take advantage of the fact that the teacher is already choosing readings more or less at your level. Make the best use of the reading resources that are part of the class or that the teacher might be able to point you to.

SOCIO-AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR READING

Find a cozy place to read... or read on the go

Where and when are you most comfortable reading? Do you like to find a quiet place with good natural light? Do you like reading in your bed? Do you like reading on your phone whenever you have a few minutes? Think about what works for you and go for it.

Enjoy a tea, coffee, snack or whatever you like while you read

Many of us like a hot drink in winter, or a cool one in summer, to keep us company while we read. Snacks are great too as long as it's not mindless eating. Make reading a pleasure!

Talk about what you're reading

Reading does not have to just be an individual activity that you do passively. You can explain or discuss what you've read with a classmate or friend to help you process the meaning, organize your thoughts about it, and remember key vocabulary.

Play online multiplayer games

If you already enjoy playing games online, try those games in your target language with others who are using that language. Usually there is a lot of reading associated with the gameplay, either as part of the game itself, or written by the players.

Read things you enjoy

If you're taking a language class or working in your L2 you may need to read some things that are less interesting sometimes. But when we are learning a language we can also read for pleasure and choose what we are reading. What do you like to read in your L1? Short stories? Online articles? Social media? Do the same thing in your L2, as we discussed earlier in this chapter.

STRATEGIES FOR INTERPRETIVE READING

Use your prior experience and knowledge (schemata)

Think about what you know about the topic or context in the reading. How much do you already know about it? Can you 'fill in the blanks' if you can't understand all the description or explanation in the text? For example, if you are reading a news article online in your L2 about climate change, think about what you already know or have experienced related to that topic. This is your prior **schemata** and it will help you to engage with the content more quickly and actively.

Predict what will come next

Use your background knowledge and your understanding of the reading so far to guess what is going to happen next. This can help activate further **schemata** in your mind and help you recognize or

guess new words in your L2. Even if you are wrong it will make the new content 'stickier'.

Read titles and headings first

Titles and headings contain the key ideas of the text – read these most carefully in newspapers, online articles, academic papers, and textbooks. This strategy can be particularly helpful if you find yourself feeling overwhelmed by a wall of text in your L2.

Use visuals to help you understand

It may be obvious that visuals such as pictures, photos, and videos will help you understand genres such as graphic novels, newspapers, blogs, or children's books. But visuals can be more than images. Even noticing how paragraph structure relates to outline of a text, how headings are positioned, and which words are bolded or italicized can help you see the organization and flow of key ideas.

Use context clues in the text to help you understand

This strategy relates to the one about using your background knowledge (*schemata*). If you saw the following sentence and didn't know the word in the blank spot, what would you guess the word was? *She was having trouble navigating the stairs with her _____s. She hoped her broken foot would heal soon.* You might guess the word *crutches* because you know her foot is broken, that people with a broken foot might use crutches, and that crutches are hard to use on stairs. Before stopping to look up a word you don't know, see if you can guess from the rest of the linguistic context.

Use grammatical information and word forms to help you understand

In the example above, the unknown word has an 's' at the end of it: *She was having trouble navigating the stairs with her _____s. She hoped her broken foot would heal soon.* Readers who understand that plural nouns in English are usually marked with an 's' would know that the unknown word is probably plural. This knowledge can help you narrow down your guess. You know the answer is not *cane* for example.

Reread important parts at least one more time

Especially if you are reading something intensively and must understand each word, it is best to read the whole thing through for meaning the first time, then return to it for closer reading, as we discussed in the [Principles section](#). If you try to understand each word one by one the first time through, you might miss the big picture or implied meanings that are easily lost if you are too narrowly focused. It is like looking only down in front of your feet as you walk instead of also looking up and ahead to see where the path is leading you.

Use dictionaries and translation tools (wisely)

There is nothing wrong with using a dictionary or translation tools if you are using them to truly learn and not just to get through a homework assignment without thinking. Good dictionaries like [Word Reference](#) will provide related words, examples in context, and audio clips in addition to definitions. Translation tools like [Reverso](#) or [Google Translate](#) can give you an idea of what longer phrases and sentences mean, though they are notoriously inaccurate at times, especially with subtle differences in pragmatics or style.

Read and/or watch out loud

Remember you can combine the skills of listening and reading, such as when you are watching a show or a movie. You can read the subtitles aloud as you listen. Remember you can slow down the playback speed if you want to.

Ask artificial intelligence to create texts for you

One of the best ways to use AI is to ask it to create stories or other genres of texts in your second language. You can specify your level, and adjust your level if the level is too high or low. Be cautious, however, because AI usually does not reflect linguistic diversity, just **standardized** varieties.

Ask artificial intelligence to summarize or analyze texts for you

If you are reading an online text that you are having trouble

understanding, you can try pasting it into an AI tool to see if it can help you with the meaning. You can ask it to summarize key points of the reading in the target language, or interpret implied meanings. Just be careful that you do not rely on AI to do your thinking for you! Check your own interpretation against that of AI to see if you agree and if you trust what AI is telling you.

Use artificial intelligence to analyze the language choices in a text

You can also ask AI to analyze the grammar, vocabulary, or pragmatics of the text, to help you see linguistic patterns and understand why they might be there. For example, you could ask AI to explain why the simple vs. perfect tense was used in different parts of a story, or which words in a dialogue might be related to politeness. Again, use your own judgment and don't trust AI blindly. It could easily be wrong!

Skim the text for the main ideas

Often just reading the first sentences of paragraphs gives you a clue to what the whole text is about. Quickly skimming over the introduction, conclusion, and main headings of a text also gives you the main ideas.

Scan the text for what you need

Are you looking for a particular name, date, fact or theme? Look over the text with just that goal in mind until you see it pop out. Knowing the genre can make this easier: If you're reading a bill, you know to look for the total amount in the corner. If you're reading a map, you can scan for the names of places you want to go.

Highlight linguistic elements that you want to notice explicitly

When you read a second time, you can focus in on specific things that you want to notice and learn explicitly. For example, you can highlight or copy new **idioms** or specific grammatical structures. You can write these elements in a vocabulary journal to look over later.

Build strong associations between the sounds of a language and graphemes

Building automatic recognition of how **graphemes (letters, characters, radicals, diacritics)** are pronounced in your L2 is an important step for novice readers, and continues to be important as you level up. Some languages, such as Hawai'ian, Spanish, and Korean have straightforward sound-grapheme correspondences, while others (such as English and Mandarin) have more variations and exceptions.

STRATEGIES FOR INTERPERSONAL READING

Maintain a high tolerance for ambiguity

Texting quickly makes for very strange message errors sometimes, especially if autocorrect corrects something in an unexpected way. It can also be hard to know what someone really means in writing, even with helpful emojis. When these things happen, texts can become **ambiguous**. This is where you need to have a higher tolerance for multiple possible meanings, and it's a great opportunity to use what you know about your relationship with the person texting, context clues, and common sense to grasp the overall meaning of the text. Don't be too quick to jump to interpretations that might not be right.

Ask clarifying questions

Since this is interpersonal mode, you can ask questions in the moment to clarify what they just wrote to you!

Incorporate what they write into what you write

If the person who is writing you is more proficient in the language and you learn some new words, phrases, or slang, you can try using it too! For example, notice how they say hello or goodbye, and adopt the same phrases yourself (as long as the pragmatics are the same).

Take advantage of visuals like emojis

Much of the time the basic emojis are used similarly across languages, but sometimes there are some differences. If you're texting with someone from another **languaculture**, don't assume

you are using emojis the same way. For example, “in China the slightly smiling emoji is not really used as a sign of happiness at all. As it is by far the least enthusiastic of the range of positive emojis available, the use of this emoji instead implies distrust, disbelief, or even that someone is humouring you” (Rawlings, 2018, para. 12).

Change the purpose of your reading for different texts

The *What Can I Read at My Level?* CASLS video below provides a different point of view on finding appropriately leveled reading material. They suggest that instead of focusing on finding texts at the right level of difficulty, you can simply change the purpose of your reading. For example, novice level readers can focus on finding answers to basic questions like who, where, when, what, even in a more complex text. This video shows that there are many ways you can choose to approach reading, depending on your own motivations, purposes, and needs.



One or more interactive elements
has been excluded from this version
of the text. You can view them online here:
[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=182#oembed-1](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=182#oembed-1)

Can you think of any other reading strategies that we could add to any of the lists above?

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Your Turn

BIBI HALIMA AND KELI YERIAN

Before closing this page, take a moment to reflect on your experience with reading in your L2. It can be useful to revisit your past experiences to assess your reading skills and make informed decisions about your future goals.

LOOKING BACK

- Reflecting on your L2 reading journey, what type of content have you been engaged with so far? Have you explored a variety of reading materials? Was there a specific genre you think you enjoyed better than others? How do you think interest-based reading can influence your reading habits?
- Can you recall a time when you tried engaging in extensive reading? How was the experience? Were there any specific challenges? Did you use any strategies to make the most of your extensive reading despite the challenges?
- Based on your past L2 reading experiences, have you already been re-reading and using focus-on-forms strategies? How has it helped you to evaluate your own

progress?

LOOKING AHEAD

- As you work toward your future L2 reading goals, how do you think you will consciously adopt or adapt specific strategies from this chapter to match with different purposes and genres?
 - If you haven't already identified your reading level, what steps you will take to determine your current level in reading? Do you think reading at your level will keep you motivated?
 - Given the value and benefits of extensive reading, how could you personally increase the volume of input through reading? What could you do to make it consistent and manageable for you?
-

CHAPTER 9 - WRITING SKILLS

CHAPTER SECTIONS

1. **INTRODUCTION**

2. **WRITING PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY**

3. **HOW DO WE KNOW? SUPPORT FOR THE PRINCIPLES**

4. **WRITING STRATEGIES & STORIES**

5. **YOUR TURN**

Introduction

FAITH ADLER; LOGAN FISHER; ABHAY PAWAR; KELI YERIAN;
AND BIBI HALIMA

Writing is typically the last skill you will encounter or practice during language learning. After all, we don't use it nearly as much as the other skills, even in our **L1**. But consider all the areas you might use writing regularly. You might send text messages and emails online, write resumes and essays, or write journals or poetry. Writing touches many areas of our life, with different situations demanding a variety of different writing styles.

Writing is typically considered a presentational skill, that is, you are presenting information without the expectation of having an immediate response; however, with the rise of texting and emailing where responses are rapid, it is also becoming an interpersonal skill that is important for online communication. In fact, texting can be a fantastic way to practice writing.

But what are some thought processes that go into writing? How can we make the process of generating ideas in our L2 easier? Abhay has some ideas for writing about his favorite car to his friend, Lorenzo – in Italian this time!



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=187#oembed-1>

What can we notice from Abhay's approach to writing?

- He writes about content he enjoys.
- He writes to a real person who will read it and respond to him.
- He is also focused on writing ideas, not words. This is important because the same idea isn't always translated word-for-word in different languages.
- Abhay didn't get caught up in worrying about not knowing certain words. Instead he used **circumlocution**.
- He reads it out loud at the end to check how it sounds.

As with the other skills chapters, these are just example strategies that you can also choose to adopt. It's fine if you make other choices that work better for you.

This final skills chapter focuses on writing in both the presentational mode and in the interpersonal mode (interactive writing skills like texting). As with the previous three chapters, we provide core principles for guidance, and then discuss some of the

theory and research supporting these principles. Finally we show a variety of strategies and stories that have been gathered in part from past students in LING 144 at the University of Oregon.

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Writing Principles to Live By

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

Though at first it can be intimidating to write in your **L2**, as well as find ways to do so intentionally, writing can be useful, motivating, and for some people, an indispensable part of a language learning toolkit. Even if in small ways, we write almost every day. Whether that be casual texting or formal emails, developing writing skills in one's L2 can serve language learners in a variety of ways. And just as with all the other areas of language learning, as your writing skills improve so will the other areas. They all draw on one another for growth!

Let's take a look at some core principles for writing in a second language.

WRITE TO COMMUNICATE

What does it mean to write to communicate?

When you text a friend, do you use abbreviations, shortened phrases, or slang? Though these may not reflect "**standard language**", this doesn't matter. Your focus is on communicating a message.

Writing to communicate means using the vocabulary, grammar,

and language skills that you already possess to share your thoughts or feelings. This means that while the writing might not always be “totally correct”, it can be understood by a reader even if it requires some interpretation and **negotiation of meaning**.

As we learned in [Chapter 1](#), practice may not make perfect, but it will make proficient. Don't be afraid to start simply and make mistakes as you learn to communicate your written ideas and feelings in another language.

Research Note

Write to communicate



Park's (2022) research showed that students who free-write or journal in their L2 are more likely to become faster at L2 writing and increase their confidence over time. After free-writing for only 10 sessions, students reported a decrease in writing anxiety, and they were able to express themselves more proficiently in their L2. Not only this, but their progress that was measured quantitatively (by calculating written words per minute) also improved over time.

KEEP GENRE AND AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS IN MIND

Do you use the same wording when texting a friend as when writing an essay? How about when writing a chemistry report versus writing a poem? Perhaps some of you would answer “yes!” confidently, but we’re guessing in most cases the answer would be no...

When writing, we should consider various factors such as audience, purpose, topic, and more. For example, you likely wouldn’t use the same language when posting on a casual online forum as when you’re writing an essay-style response to a test question. Keeping these factors in mind can help you to determine level of formality, word choice, and other **stylistic factors**. Distinguishing between styles of writing that are typical for different **genres** will improve your clarity of writing and ability to express your thoughts and feelings to your intended audience in your L2. When you pay attention to differences in genre in your target language, your writing can more closely approximate the expectations of readers in that culture.

Research Note

Understand the genre and audience



Ahn's (2012) research showed that focusing on genre across 20 writing opportunities allowed students to recognize patterns in different L2 genres of writing. The students learned about genre expectations of their L2 (as they may vary from one's L1!) and wrote within genre for the language. As they practiced on their own, they could make informed choices on when to adopt or not adopt certain patterns based on their own experiences and the voice they wanted to project within the genre.

BUILD IN TIME FOR REVISION

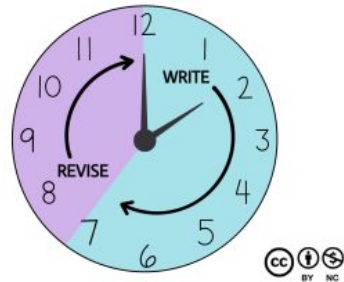
Though language can be thought of as first and foremost a tool to communicate meaning, this idea doesn't take away from the importance of leaving ample time to revise when you want or need to, especially for writing. Finding just the right word to express your meaning, or checking carefully for grammatical errors, for example,

is a way to build accuracy in your target language. In fact, revising for accuracy, even in text messages, can be of equal importance to communicating for overall meaning. Depending on who we are writing to, or how important the written text is, we may focus on accuracy to varying levels (remember our discussion in [Chapter 4](#) about pragmatics). Giving attention to both writing to communicate and building time for revision helps us to become well-rounded writers.

Research Note

Your ability to communicate in your L2 writing may sometimes be hindered by a lack of grammatical or other practical skills and knowledge.

Coomber's (2016) research shows that students who invested in building self-correcting skills in their language learning journey experienced a variety of benefits. They were not only able to self-correct more effectively over time, but also noted feeling more confident about their ability to self-correct and the quality of their writing overall.



USE TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT YOUR LEARNING

Closely tied with the previous point, when you believe you have reviewed your work and made changes to the best of your ability, don't be afraid to utilize outside sources and editing tools (such as [Grammarly](#) and [Copilot](#)) to improve your writing even more. However, this is not the only way to utilize technology in language learning. Apps such as [HelloTalk](#) and [Slowly](#) allow you to connect in writing with other speakers of your L2 (native and non-native). This can be an excellent opportunity to practice casual writing or

ask questions about cultural norms that lie below the surface of the iceberg that you may not be able to find the answers to otherwise.

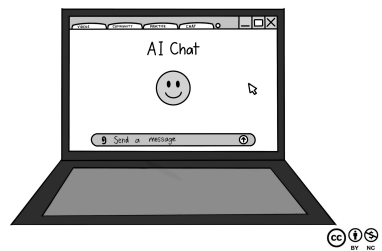
Recently, the emergence of generative Artificial Intelligence has given a tremendous boost to digital tools, including those for language learning. AI can be an incredible tool for supporting your writing, for example. It can generate ideas, analyze your drafts, and offer alternative grammar and vocabulary suggestions. But like any powerful tool, it can be misused as well, and even undermine your own learning if you use it to avoid the productive struggle of writing by asking it to do the writing for you. We encourage you to treat AI as a tool to improve your own thinking, not as a replacement for it.

Research Note

Students who use technology both inside and outside of the language learning classroom tend to show increased learner achievement and enthusiasm about its use (Diallo, 2014).

Enayati and Gilakjani (2020), for example, show that over the course of just 12 sessions of practice with a software that provided personalized interactive vocabulary tutoring, students were able to increase their vocabulary size at a higher rate than students who studied the same vocabulary using more traditional methods. The benefits of using technology for individualized learning pathways produced better results.

Use your resources



ALLOW YOUR VOICE AND STYLE TO GROW

It's only natural that you will not be able to fully express yourself in your **L2** writing, especially in the beginning. This likely happens in your L1 sometimes, too! However, as you go through this struggle, **negotiating meaning** with yourself and others, you will slowly

develop a unique *voice* in your L2. Our unique voices, or individual styles of personal expression, can indirectly communicate about who we are without us directly explaining our identities or histories.

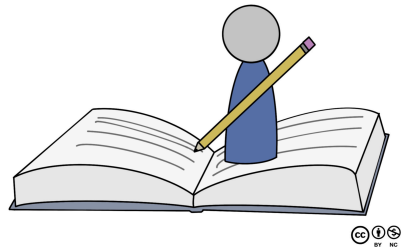
Just as there will be times when you must clarify and negotiate your meaning, there will be other times where you write something that those around you find quite profound without any need for negotiation. You might even be surprised by what comes out when you allow yourself to write freely. As we explored earlier in [Chapter 4](#), learning new languages and cultures can have a significant impact on our perception of the world and expression of ourselves as we navigate exchanging meaning with others. Learning a new language can support our creativity as we explore new ways to express ourselves.

Research Note

Kubokawa's (2022) research shows that when students were supported in developing voice in their L2 through poetry, students felt a greater sense of **agency** and investment in their language studies.

Through experimenting with both the norms and rules of their L2, students were able to develop a deeper understanding of their L2 as well as themselves in relation to that language and culture.

Allow your voice and style to grow



WRITING ACROSS DIFFERENT CHARACTER SYSTEMS

Different character writing systems are used by languages all around the world. While some may have small differences from your L1, such as different pronunciations of letters or the use of

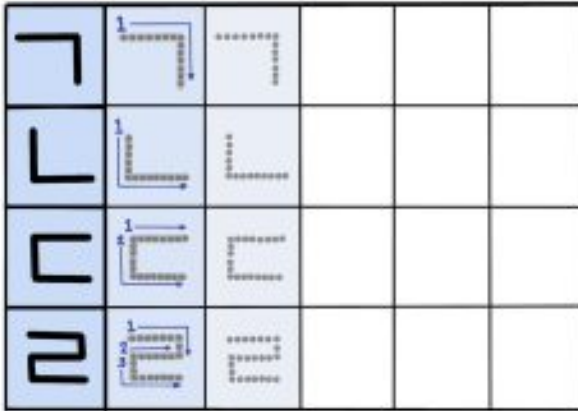
accents in the alphabets (such as how Spanish uses written accents on words but English doesn't), others might have dramatically different writing systems, such as the differences between Arabic and Spanish. A new script system can feel like an intimidating wall to climb when we are considering learning a new language. However, it certainly shouldn't be something that we let get between us and learning a language we are passionate about.

When learning a new writing system, it is constructive to consider what is the same about the new system compared to your L1, as well as what is different. This allows us to make easy connections with what we already might know, as well as notice unfamiliar elements to focus our attention on. This might start from shared sentence structure, characters, grammatical features, or otherwise. Even when it seems there is no overlap between two writing systems, a few points of similarity can always be found, if only in small ways.

From here, we can utilize some learning strategies such as using mnemonics to assist us in learning new characters. However, it's true that much of the work is going to be done through the use of rote memorization strategies and materials such as flashcards. In general, learning the system sooner than later and practicing the writing system as frequently as possible can help you move beyond the tedious memorization that must be done so you can start expressing your own meaning in new and creative ways.

Research Note

Different character systems



Qu et al. (2024) show that keyword mnemonics (one way of memorizing a second character system) can help support memory. When students were using rote memorization as opposed to mnemonics, they had a more difficult time reproducing learned characters. In contrast, when students took part in the highly creative process of coming up with mnemonics to learn new characters, they found more success in retrieving the information.

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How Do We Know? Support for the Principles

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

“The Proof is in the Pudding”

As in the other skills chapters, in this section we will address more in-depth some of the theory and examples of research that support the principles in the previous section.

The ability to simply get your meaning across to others is a cornerstone of communication in a language. During all stages of learning a language, this focus on meaning is key. Especially in the beginning, working on building comprehensible language skills for communication can build a well-rounded foundation of language knowledge. This focus on communication is written about in **writing to communicate** and focusing on meaning first.

Writing freely for communication (such as in blogs, text messages, drafting, etc.) can create a safe space for learners to experiment with different ways to express their meaning without over-worrying about “perfect” accuracy in their writing. In fact, having perfect grammar does not necessarily mean that meaning has been successfully expressed or communicated.

One study by Park (2022) followed 17 students who practiced free writing in their **second language** over the course of one academic term. Results showed that not only did the students' anxiety about writing in their L2 decrease, their writing speed, **fluency** and confidence increased. In other words, the students' ability to communicate through writing (regardless of accuracy of form) increased when they were exposed to frequent casual writing activities in which they were simply encouraged to share their ideas without the pressure of "perfection".

These findings are echoed by Witte (2017, as cited in Matsuda and Nouri, 2020) who shows how practicing communication and informal writing in **genres** such as mind-mapping, reflective writing, or journaling can help improve our **metalinguistic** and **meta-rhetorical** skills. Prioritizing expression of meaning over accuracy is especially key for language learners who may not have the goal of academic or other formal writing, but simply want to communicate with friends or family.

It's important to notice that when we communicate, we don't communicate in a vacuum. We communicate to other people (an audience) and for specific reasons (a purpose). This brings us to the next principle, **keeping genre and audience expectations in mind**. Research shows that being aware of and writing within genre can facilitate any language learner's journey. It helps establish expectations for the author, their relationship with the audience, and the context in which the writing is delivered. It also enables the writer to use social conventions, linguistic features, and rhetorical structure to deliver a message with a high level of intentionality.

Have you ever heard the quote by Pablo Picasso: "Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist"? We can apply this advice to writing too! Once you learn the "rules" of genre, you become free to creatively break them. Dirgeyasa (2016), in their review of extensive research on this topic, suggests that by

practicing writing within the confines of genre, language learners can develop their writing skills from dependence (within a strict set of guidelines) to fruitful independence. When they compare their own writing in their L2 to the writing of others within their goal genre, students are able to reflect on similarities and differences in the writing styles and adjust their own writing. This newfound awareness of linguistic features of their L2 allows students to become more independent over time. In other words, even though the process of following genre expectations initially is restrictive and more confined, ultimately it allows students to be able to produce work more creatively and freely as their command of the language grows.

As you develop awareness of how to write within (or, by choice, outside of) genre, you can **allow your voice and style to grow**. As we discussed in [Chapter 7](#), Sociocultural Theory suggests that learning is a deeply social process in which language, literacy, and rationality “mediate the relationship between the individual and the social-material world” (Lantolf et al., 2007, p. 208). This theory claims that in the beginning stages of learning, the environment, culture, and language strongly influence the learner, but as the learner becomes more competent, they in turn also become an influence on others, contributing to the formation of the future environment, culture, language, and so on. In other words, with time the learner becomes an active contributor to the world of communication in the new language. Your unique voice as a learner also matters!

Identity Theory goes hand in hand with this idea, recognizing “sense of self as socially constructed and socially constrained” (Ortega, 2009, p. 241). This theory suggests that identity is negotiated within societal and cultural structures. Identity is shaped not only by the individual’s personal investment but can also be imposed on the learner by others. When someone has high levels of investment, they tend to improve more quickly in their second language due to

future-self envisioning. However, they may not be able to display their identity within a given culture.

These two theories (Sociocultural Theory and Identity Theory) tell us that as we develop competency in a second language, we have greater influence over our environment and a growing ability to establish an identity within a community. We have a greater capacity to project our own perception of self in our second language through our newly developed voice. This becomes a necessary part of the language learning process as we move from “individual language producers” to “members of social and historical groups” (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p. 79). Our words become an incredibly important tool to differentiate ourselves from others and develop community, where all members can learn from one another in many aspects.

Based on a review of related literature on voice in **second language** writing, Riyanti (2015) notes that while our speaking voices are relatively distinct (identifiable through tone, rate, pitch, etc.), our expression of voice in writing may require more development to come through clearly. The author draws on their own experience as an international student to describe how second language writers may struggle to find their own voice or be perceived as not having a strong voice due to, for example, unfamiliarity with audience expectations. Awareness and development of voice allow the second language learner to more fluently express themselves in their second language and tell a story about who they are without explicitly saying it.

Up to this point, the focus of the principles has been largely on communicating ideas and expression of self, but there is also plenty of evidence to support **building in time for revision**, which can help you to **clarify your meaning and focus on accuracy**. Although focusing on communicating your meaning is of primary importance, research shows that learners benefit from good

feedback and revision. Recall our discussion of Swain's (1985) review of research on French immersion schools in [Chapter 7](#). Swain noted that while students were able to build high levels of comprehension skills and basic fluency in their second language without explicit instruction on accuracy, their ability to accurately produce complex output was limited.

Swain and other scholars therefore recommend that language learning should include a *Focus on Form*. In this case "form" refers to the grammatical and vocabulary elements of a language, but it could also refer to explicit cultural or **pragmatic** knowledge. A Focus on Form approach includes opportunities for students to notice the gap between what they would like to say and what they are able to say when attempting to communicate specific ideas. Through explicit instruction on form in output (for example, grammatical nuances of meaning in writing), students are able to more effectively communicate and express more complex meanings to their intended audiences. For those who wish to write at a professional or academic level, Doughty and Williams (1998) suggest that focusing on form can further develop **interlingual competence** in second language writing skills that would not otherwise be possible.

Using technology to support our learning is one way to help us revise and focus on forms, among the many other benefits it has. Early research on technology in language learning was focused on simple ways to employ it, but recently with the emergence of new tools such as language learning apps, AI, **online third spaces**, and more, the fields of Digitally Mediated Language Learning (DMLL) and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) are thriving. These areas of research seek to explore all the potential applications of computers in language learning.

Arvanitis (2019) reviews research beginning in the 1980s on the role of technology in the language classroom. Their research showed

that students who answered a survey about DMLL and CALL were generally more optimistic about language learning and found studying less intimidating and more enjoyable when using these tools. Students reported that using technology provides many benefits, such as updatability, interactivity, and accessibility. However, it was noted that technology was best used as a supplement as opposed to a main source when possible.

One way that technology has become a supplement to language learning is by making *third spaces* available online. Oldenburg (1999, as cited in Sadler, 2020) describes the decline of in-person third spaces in modern life in the context of the U.S. These spaces are defined as public spaces for community to gather beyond either the home (first space) or work (second space). Sadler (2020) notes that virtual worlds such as multiplayer online games and chat exchanges provide third spaces for participants to interact socially and learn language informally. He draws on his prior survey research (2012) of 237 avatars to show that over two thirds of respondents report using an L2 while playing and commenting on the games, and one half reported that playing had a positive effect on their L2 proficiency. Sadler (2020) concludes by stating, “a number of language students around the world are already using them to engage in informal language learning” (p. 97).

Another way technology has become more relevant in language learning is through the use of language learning apps such as [Babbel](#), [Duolingo](#), or [Mango Languages](#), as well as the integration of AI technology into these apps. Kang and Yi (2023) note that AI can improve **multimodal** literacy in language learning. Using AI's ability to produce images, students can give the AI specific prompts with a specific image in mind. Their language must be specific and accurate in the prompt in order to produce their desired results, so this feature can be utilized to test one's own multimodal literacy and improve specificity in their **L2**.

A final consideration for the second language learner is how to **write in a different character system** if they need to. When we write in our **L1**, we don't have to think carefully about each keystroke or stroke of our pen provided we are already literate and do not have a learning disability such as dyslexia. When we begin learning a new character system, however, our progress can seem much slower as each stroke takes much more energy, intention, and time than in our L1.

In order to begin closing the gap between our **L1** and **L2** writing abilities, we need to regularly practice activities that will help us move writing in the new character system from our working memory and short-term memory to our long-term memory. We are making our declarative knowledge more procedural ([Chapter 2](#)). Based on their research on learners of Japanese kanji, Chikamatsu (2005) highlights that extensive exposure to characters in context is crucial as a first step to learn a new **orthography**. Then, with the use of computer support, learners are able to more quickly recognize, select, and produce new characters as they write.

As we close this section, this video from the Center for Applied Second Language Studies ([CASLS](#)) can inspire you to engage creatively with your new writing system and to learn vocabulary more deeply.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded

from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

[https://opentext.uoregon.edu/
languagelearningedition1/?p=197#oembed-1](https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=197#oembed-1)

It may seem like a waste of time to develop plans and strategies and look at research when you could just be jumping right into learning your L2's writing system, but this couldn't be further from the truth. By looking at all of these principles and why they can help us become more proficient language learners, we get a much deeper look into what factors actually change the way we are perceived based on how we write which is crucial for high level proficiency.

Consider how long it took you to write comfortably in your first language. Perhaps even now it isn't always fluid. This is not a fast process, and there isn't necessarily any magical key to fast-tracking learning a new writing system. It is something that comes with time, and the best gift a learner of a new writing system can give themselves is patience.

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Writing Strategies & Stories

KELI YERIAN; FAITH ADLER; AND BIBI HALIMA

As in the previous skills chapters, this section shares some strategies for learning to write in your L2. As before, some of these were crowd-sourced from students taking LING 144 *Learning How to Learn Languages*, and we hope more will be added by future cohorts. Though not all of these specific strategies will work for everyone, feel free to try out a few and see what works for you. You might be surprised about which strategies stick!

A few of the strategies have students' stories included. Enjoy finding and reading them!

METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES FOR WRITING

Think about *why* you are writing

Keeping your purpose in mind can help a lot with getting started on your writing. Are you writing to tell someone about some news? Are you writing just to express some feelings in a journal? Are you writing an essay or story for a class? Are you writing an email or a short text to someone to arrange a meeting? All of these choices involve different styles and definitely have different implications for how much you review and revise your writing.

Think about *what* you are writing, and *who* you are writing to

Similarly to the point above, what you write depends a lot on who you are writing to, and why. The question of **genre** pops up again here. Are there expectations that the reader will have about your writing when they read it? For example, if you are writing a news story, the reader will expect to have the key facts of the story near the beginning of the text. Or if you are writing a paragraph to show your ability to use the past tenses to your teacher, you will want to review that grammar carefully before you turn it in. If you are writing an analysis of a piece of literature, your reader will expect to see a clear thesis statement in your introduction. If you are writing a text message, you may want to be careful to include the emojis that help signal your attitude or emotion.

Make a plan to write, and a plan for what you're writing

Depending on your goals, making a plan usually helps to achieve them! Again, [SMART goals](#) can help you really pin down your goals, but even simply having a routine of writing in a journal in the morning or night, or giving yourself extra time to revise for important assignments, reflects the power of the metacognitive cycle.

You can also take some time to plan out what you will write as well, for example with an outline or mind-map, especially if it is a longer composition that needs to be coherent as a whole.

Use visuals to map out or illustrate what you are writing

Remember the benefits of [multimodality](#)! Visuals of what you are writing can be helpful in so many ways. Just as you can draw a mind-map to *plan* your writing, you can use a mind-map to help *revise* something you have already written! By drawing out the main ideas or logical progression of what your essay says, for example, you can see if it flows well and makes sense.

And if the **genre** allows it, you can create or include illustrations or designs that enhance your writing as well. Most readers love to see visuals (which is why we tried to include a lot of them in this book)!

Take advantage of your language class

As we have said before, if you are taking a language class, take full advantage of it! Especially with tasks involving writing, the teacher is there to give you feedback and structure, and you can ask the teacher lots of questions. People who are studying independently often don't have such easy access to writing feedback or practice with the different genres that a class provides.

SOCIO-AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR WRITING

Keep a journal

By keeping a journal, you can frequently practice writing in a casual, low-pressure environment. This is an opportunity to practice daily-use language as well as practice writing about any specific topics you are learning about, but don't feel ready to discuss with others yet. Writing in another language can be an interesting way to explore emotional topics as well, since strongly emotional words usually have less impact on us in another language.

If you make frequent entries, this is also a good opportunity to see how much you have grown over time. The first page of your journal is likely to look dramatically different than the last, and this can be a huge encouragement at times when you don't feel that your language skills are improving.

Indulge in freewriting

Freewriting is a way to increase fluidity in your writing in any language. Allow yourself to write without worrying about mistakes and accuracy. You will notice that while practicing freewriting, you brain might keep switching from one language to another. That's okay, embrace all your languages and do not hold back from writing words in different languages while writing in your L2. Welcoming **translanguaging** in your writing will help you gain confidence and engage with your learning creatively.

Milo, a past LING 144 student, wrote a free-form poem that captures the fluid nature of thoughts in writing and how

translanguaging enhanced their creativity and clarity of expression in writing.

Más que yo, by Milo

Más que yo

¿Cuáles son
mis motivaciones de verdad
de aprender más lenguas?
¿Por qué prefiero distanciarme
de mi own language?
No sé. ¿Son mis razones rooted in
mi dolor,
su engaño,
nuestra historia?
Or do I actually enjoy
este proceso, de
making new connections?
¿De qué estoy esperando?
...Why not both?
¿Por qué no me permito
to heal
Y
disfrutar completamente
este journey?

Maybe
if I relearn the words
en otra lengua,

they will be kinder this time.

Quizás

estaré más fuerte esta vez.

Maybe

I could finally tell them

¡NO estoy bien!

¡DEJA de llámame ella!

¿Por qué me dueles como así?

Este soy yo, no me puedes cambiar;

Lo siento mucho.

¿...Quieres ser amigos?

Tengo miedo de

Taking what's not mine;

No quiero ser

entitled,

ignorante,

inconsciente.

Quiero expresarme,

en maneras que

aren't possible in English,

but también

quiero ser

amable, y

respetuoso.

Solo quiero entender

más que yo.

Quiero ser
más que yo

- Milo Coine

Translation by Keli Yerian

Más que yo	More than
¿Cuáles son	me
mis	
motivaciones	What are
de verdad	my real
de aprender	motivations
más lenguas?	for learning
¿Por qué	more
prefiero	languages?
distanciarme	Why do I
de mi own	prefer to
language?	distance
No sé. ¿Son mis	myself
razones rooted	from my
in	own
mi dolor,	language?
su engaño,	I don't know.
nuestra	Are my
historia?	reasons
Or do I actually	rooted in
enjoy	my pain
este proceso,	my
de	deception
making new	our history?
connections?	Or do I

¿De qué estoy
esperando?
...Why not
both?
¿Por qué no me
permito
to heal
Y
disfrutar
completamente
este journey?

**actually
enjoy
this process
of
making new
connections?
What am I
hoping for?
... Why not
both?
Why don't I
permit
myself
to heal
and
completely
enjoy
this journey?**

Maybe
if I relearn the
words
en otra lengua,
they will be
kinder this
time.

Quizás
estaré más
fuerte esta vez.

Maybe
I could finally
tell them
¡NO estoy bien!
¡DEJA de
llámame ella!
¿Por qué me
dueles como
así?

**Maybe
if I relearn
the words
in another
language
they will be
kinder this
time.**

**Perhaps
I'll be
stronger this
time**

**Maybe
I could
finally tell
them
I'm NOT
okay!
STOP calling**

Este soy yo, no
me puedes
cambiar;
Lo siento
mucho.

me her!
Why do you
hurt me like
this?
This is me,
you can't
change me
I'm really
sorry.

¿...Quieres ser
amigos?

Tengo miedo
de I

Taking what's
not mine;

No quiero ser
entitled,
ignorante,
inconsciente.

Quiero
expresarme,
en maneras
que
aren't possible
in English,
but también
quiero ser
amable, y

**Do you want
to be**

friends?

I'm afraid of

Taking

what's not

mine;

I don't want

to be

entitled,

ignorant

unaware

I want to

express

myself

in ways that

aren't

possible in

English,

respetuoso.
Solo quiero
entender
más que yo.

**but I also
want to be
friendly, and
respectful.
I want to
understand
more than I
do**

Quiero ser
más que yo
-Milo Coine

**I want to be
more than
me**

Explanation

In the poem, I specifically mention the desire to distance myself from my own words, and that using other languages allows me to do that. This is something I have thought about a lot recently, and I think that this struggle clearly shows how important language is both practically and emotionally. Words and their intent have an unspeakable impact on how we go about our lives, and this can be a blessing and a curse. I've noticed that for me, both sides of the coin can be really intimidating; being perceived correctly can feel just as uncomfortable as not being perceived correctly.

In the second stanza, I primarily talk about how learning a new language allows me to express myself differently than in English, and how freeing that can be. I think it's safe to say that every language has at least a few phrases, or individual words, that have no direct translation into another language. The context of each word in its given language also changes. One of the biggest reasons I chose to write in Spanish, besides just knowing it well, is that it is a gorgeous language with which to write poetry. I've found that I actually prefer it to English, if only because the words come more easily and beautifully in Spanish. It's like it was built for poetry. In this stanza, I end it with a bunch of things I'm often too anxious to say outright in English; a variety of different emotions in each

phrase, and somehow, they feel easier to say in Spanish. I think that this aspect of the poem overall shows that language paths are more than just the practical side of learning, but that there are also mental and emotional effects.

In the second to last stanza, I briefly talk about my fears, and what I truly want out of learning languages. My biggest fear is just stepping over the line from appreciation to appropriation, and generally being ignorant of my actions and intentions. I have to remind myself that it's not inherently appropriative to learn a new language, and that most of the time it's mutually beneficial. I also know deep down that I am very careful of my actions and that I have only the best intentions; as long as I stay true to that, I will have an extremely hard time messing up.

In writing this poem and in taking this class, I realized that everything I want in learning a new language boils down to one thing: I want to learn about, understand, and be more than just myself. I want to travel the world, experience things and people that are different from me, connect to the world around me in a variety of ways. I think that in one way or another, this is everyone's goal in learning a new language, whether they know it or not.

Build your writing community

There are many ways that you can find or build an online community among writers of your **L2**. This community could be made up of people from a language class you attend, friends you've made online, an online group that is already arranged in your town/city, or an online gaming community.

You can create group messages or talk individually with members of this community, use one another as resources, or **negotiate meaning** and nuance of vocabulary and grammar. This also may open up the opportunity to talk with speakers who use different dialects or other proficient speakers of the language who can help to guide you on your language learning journey, and offer you additional tips based on their own experience.

Write notes to a friend, family member, or pen pal

Do you have a roommate who is also studying French? Leave little handwritten notes for fun! Do you have a grandparent who speaks your heritage language? Send a text or email using the language (they will probably *really* appreciate this, knowing how grandparents are). If you really want some regular practice, use an app like [Slowly](#) to connect with other learners around the world who are using your L2.

Ask others to review your writing

If you are writing something that needs to look good or be clear to your reader, getting help from someone else can help you know if it makes sense, flows smoothly, or has errors or typos that you missed. Although editing tools can help with this too, having a real person look at your work can be a fun way to learn with another person and get a real person's point of view. If you're taking a language class with a friend, take advantage of what you are both learning together to strengthen your goals of language learning.

Ask more proficient speakers to reformulate what you have written

Tutors or friends who are very proficient in your L2 and willing to

help you with your writing can also help you by *reformulating* some of your writing. Reformulating is when someone rewrites your ideas in a way that is more typical or natural for a very proficient or native speaker. Reformulating doesn't focus so much on errors or typos, but on elements of voice, cultural expression, and common word collocations in the language. You can look at the differences between your own writing and the reformulated writing and discuss them together. Be sure to only turn in your own work if this is an assignment that is supposed to reflect your current independent abilities, however.

When Keli Yerian (the faculty lead on this textbook project) was learning French in college, she had a French roommate for one year who helped her reformulate some of her writing assignments to show her how she would have expressed some of the same ideas. Keli loved the discussions she had about the language and felt she was improving a lot by doing this. However, one day her French teacher took her aside and questioned whether Keli's writing was independent work. Keli was embarrassed and at the time was unable to explain how much she was learning. She was careful to only submit the work she did independently afterwards, but continued to learn from her roommate in parallel.

Find a place and time for writing that is comfortable for you

Is quickly dashing out an essay on your phone in bed really the most comfortable for you? Think about what would make writing more pleasant and motivating for you. Try to find a special corner in the library, on the lawn, or near a window in your house that makes you feel ready to write.

STRATEGIES SPECIFIC TO PRESENTATIONAL WRITING

Review your writing if it needs to be clear or accurate

Budget in the time to look back over your own work to see how much you can improve your own communication without relying

right away on digital tools to help you. Can you independently notice changes you would like to make?

Read your writing aloud

If you carefully read your own writing aloud, you will often catch awkwardly written sentences or errors much more easily than by just reading silently. Listen to what you are reading, and see if the rhythm feels right, the length feels right, the words feel right, and so on.

Use digital tools to help you revise and edit (but wisely)

Digital writing tools available on the web can help you find typos, errors and unclear places in your writing. If you use these tools, use them to learn rather than to just do the writing for you! Notice if you have patterns of errors that you could learn to fix on your own. We recommend you use these tools only after you have tried to revise your own writing yourself first. Also, remember that digital tools can be biased or even wrong in terms of the voice and variety it is using. Always use the tools mindfully, and never use them to write for you when your independent writing is expected.

STRATEGIES COMMON TO BOTH INTERPERSONAL AND PRESENTATIONAL WRITING

Don't stop frequently to correct small errors, look up words, or translate

This strategy should not come as a surprise to you by now, but we still have to list it! When you're first trying to get your ideas down on paper, try doing it without stopping to edit your work. Although this isn't true for everyone, stopping to wonder, "Is this the right conjugation?" or "Is this exactly the right word?" can derail you from the flow of your thoughts, resulting in accurate grammar or words but less interesting and coherent content. Try just writing what comes to mind at first, using the language that you already remember, and even using your L1 now and then to fill the gaps. You can revise later!

Be creative in the way only an L2 writer can be

This might sound like the opposite advice as reformulation, but they can actually go hand-in-hand. As **L2** users, we sometimes come up with very unusual and creative ways to express our ideas that native speakers might not think to say or write that way. Although these unusual expressions might look “wrong” to a proficient speaker, they also can look unique and intriguing, and they might just work sometimes! If you like the way you expressed something in your L2, ask others if it still makes sense to see if you could keep it.


Trace new writing systems

Learning how to handwrite in another writing system is getting less and less common, but it is also an embodied way to connect with the history, culture and feel of the language. There are many templates you can find online for practicing the new script through tracing the lines.

Incorporate what you read into your own writing

One of the best ways to improve your writing skills in your **L2** is to read often in your L2. Sometimes you can be quite intentional while you are reading to take note of the grammatical and vocabulary choices of the author. Reading gives you an opportunity to expand your own **lexicon** and turns of phrase. You can notice and use sentence structures, vocabulary, figures of speech, and anything else that you like to try it out in your own writing.

Create mnemonics for different writing systems

When learning a language with a different writing system, mnemonics can be a helpful tool to help you memorize characters. For example, Japanese character  is pronounced like the “ee” in “eel” and looks like two eels swimming around each other. Even though mnemonics don’t work for everyone, for many they can dramatically increase the speed at which we can learn a new writing system.

Keep a vocabulary journal

One of the best ways to use writing to learn vocabulary is to simply

try communicating about something in your L2, see where the gaps are in your own knowledge, and keep a vocabulary journal about it so you can review these new words later. Are you trying to write about a favorite food and don't know the word for an ingredient? While revising your writing, look up the word and write it in a vocabulary journal (which might be a physical journal or might be a file on your computer or phone). It's likely that if you want to use it in your writing, it's something you will want to remember later. Focusing on words you actually need can be more motivating and memorable than memorizing a random list of vocabulary you might need someday in the future.

Translanguage

The languages you already know are your friends in language learning! Don't try to ban them from your thoughts if they come to mind first. Just notice them and feel free to use them if the L2 words don't come to mind. This is your brain **translanguaging**, in other words using all the resources it has for communicating meaning. You can look up the L2 equivalents when you get the chance, and revise your writing at that point. Eventually the L2 words will also come to mind easily, and your translanguaging will become more intentional rather than necessary.

Translanguaging is both fun and empowering. Below is a poem written and translated by Faith when she was taking LING 144. Like Milo's poem above, it shows how powerful translanguaging can be to communicate both literal and deeper meanings through multiple languages.

Faith's Poems

十一月

My second
host family.

I met them
today.

They don't *Jyuu ichi gatsu*
speak like (November)
me.

Rocks in my
throat
replace air.

変わってる。
Generational
living.

Little
brothers,
too.

Modoritai. (I
want to go
back.)

The first few
days move
slowly.

I mourn. 戻
りたい。

I shiver at
night.

Drenched in
that
uncertainty. *Ganbatteite,
maemuki
nanoni*

It goes on for
weeks. (Despite my
best efforts to
keep my head
up.)

頑張っていて

前向きなの
に。

学校は
 づらいことだ
 け。

I am exhausted. *Gakkou wa dzuraikoto dake.*

Language becomes a burden. (School is nothing but painful.)

I hate this lack of control.

This new
world I see
Is so much
larger than
me.

*Dou yatte
semaku
naraseru?*

どうやって

狭くならせ
る？

(How can I
force it to be
smaller?)

I hide in my
room and
weep.

She tucks
 her kids in
 And calls for *Orite mita.*
 me from *Goshujin to*
 downstairs. *mikan.* (I went
 downstairs
 降りて見た。 and saw her.
 Her husband
 ご主人とミカ was there, too,
 ン。 with fresh
 mandarin
 She asks me oranges.)
 to lend my
 ear.

隠れよう
とした私に

*Kakureyou to
shita watashi ni*

She might
have seen
me.

(To the parts
of me I tried to
hide)

She speaks
gently, heart
on sleeve.

*Tango tarinai. (I
don't*

単語足りな
い。

*understand a
word.)*

頑張るよ。
頑張るしか
ぬ。

I want to
hear them.

理解するま
で、
くれた言葉
を。

Ganbaru yo.
Ganbaru shika
nu. (I'll try my
best. There's
nothing else to
do.)

Rikai suru
made, kureta
kotoba o (Until
I can
understand
the words that
you gave me.)

十二月	<i>Jyuu ni gatsu</i>
途中ぐらい。	<i>tochuu gurai.</i>
まだきつい。	<i>Mada kitsui. Da</i>
だが、違うんだ	<i>ga, chigaun da.</i>
また変わって	<i>Mata</i>
る	<i>kawatteru. (It's</i>
	<i>sometime</i>
	<i>around</i>
	<i>mid-December</i>
	<i>now. It's still</i>
	<i>harsh, but</i>
	<i>there's</i>
	<i>something</i>
	<i>different</i>
	<i>about it.</i>
	<i>Things are</i>
	<i>changing</i>
	<i>again.)</i>

メッセージ、
送った言葉

届いたよ。

読みながら泣
く

正直言う。

*Messeeji,
okutta kotoba
todoita yo.
Yomi nagara
naku. Shoujiki
iu. (The
message, the
words you
sent. They
reached me,
just so you
know. I cried
as I read them.
I tell you the
truth now.)*

久しぶり。
隠れた自分を
見られたね
弱虫の自分
どう思うか
な？

*Hisashiburi.
Kakureta jibun
o miraretane.
Yowamushi no
jibun dou
omou kana?*
(It's been a
long time
since
someone
really saw me,
behind the
front I put up.
The real me
has become
so frail. I
wonder what
you think,
Kana?)

この心
めっちゃ重
い。

言えないよ。

ちゃんと理解

してくれるか
な？

*Ko no kokoro
meccha omoi.
lenai yo.*

*Chanto rikai
shite kureru*

*kana? (This
heart feels so
heavy. I can't
even begin to
explain, so is it
even possible
for you to
understand?)*

言葉なし
ちゃんと理解
できた、かな。
感じているよ。
何、この気持ち？

*Kotoba nashi
chanto rikai
dekita, Kana.
Kanjiteiru yo.
Nani, ko no
kimochi?* (Even
without words,
you
understood
me. What is
this feeling? I
know that I
feel it.)

分かったよ。
言葉いらな
い。

Butこれこそ

何よりみた
い。

話しようと
し。

*Wakatta yo.
Kotoba iranai.
But kore koso
nani yori mitai.
Hanashiyou to
shi. (I finally
got it. I know
that we don't
need words,
but that's
exactly why
now more
than ever I
want to try. I
will use
everything I
have to speak
to you.)*

かな達へ、
気づいたこと
は
自由化で
いない内に
行けそうにな
る。

*jiyuuka de
iranai uchi ni
ike sou ni naru.*
(To the family I
found in Kana,
I realized that
not having the
need for
words to
communicate
was what
freed me. I
think that I
now have the
strength to
move
forward.)

Explanation

This set of poems, following the style of Tanka (a Japanese poetry format characterized by a syllable pattern of 5-7-5-7-7), recounts my experience as an exchange student in Japan. The writings on the left side are as I wrote them, and the accompanying text on the right includes readings of the Japanese characters as well as translations of the Japanese portion's meanings. The change in language from primarily English to primarily Japanese is meant to represent my transition in comfort level with Japanese throughout my exchange. Also representing this is the use of some word play toward the end. One example of this is using my host mom's name, Kana. There is also a sentence ending in Japanese that is pronounced the same way, meaning something like "I wonder". I used this toward the end to say things that could be interpreted as both "I wonder what you think?" and "What do you think, Kana?". I translated this as "I wonder what you think, Kana?" for simplicity's sake. This is one of the examples of word play I used to represent my advancement and deeper understanding of language as my abilities evolved.

I remember well when I was preparing to switch host families. I had gotten used to life with my first host family who could speak English well. Though at first it had been a great learning tool, I began to abuse it as a crutch. I was terrified to switch families, especially

once I learned that it would be a family who spoke less English than I did Japanese. Not only that, but it would be a family with a grandma, grandpa, and two little brothers in the house. Having been the youngest of four siblings by six years my entire life, then an “only child” in Japan, it was something totally foreign to me.

In the first part of my stay with them, I was incredibly lonely. I was running into language difficulties constantly with my friends at school and my family at home. I started to isolate myself as much as possible, while simultaneously keeping my head up in front of others and claiming that all was going smoothly. I had gotten pretty good at this act, as it’s one that I grew up putting on. However, Kana (my second host mom) saw right through it. She saw me like nobody had ever before. We didn’t need to exchange any words for her to understand me. We could communicate in other ways, such as hand gestures, broken translations, or otherwise, but most of the time we didn’t even need that. She always seemed to have this magical intuition to know what I needed when I did.

I avoided the affection she showed me at first. But she chased me relentlessly, and this is what changed the entire trajectory of my experience with my host family, my exchange, and arguably my whole life. I had never had someone fight so hard for me. And as

I began to accept Kana and her family in, and allow them to see me, I was able to become more bold in my attempts at not just communication, but also language. I was able to shed my fears about “wrongness”, and simply communicate. I finally felt safe to make mistakes, no matter how many, and grow from it. I saw how effective the method was, and from then on actively sought out opportunities to put myself in places to make mistakes. Kana, without ever teaching me a “method” directly, as she wasn’t a language teacher herself, managed to teach me just about everything that I know about language learning. She taught me how to enjoy and make the most out of every day, wherever I was, whenever. I will never be able to thank her enough for the person that she helped me to become.

Use circumlocution

An alternative to **translanguaging** or looking up a word when you don’t know or remember it is to simply use the words you *do* know to describe it, what we call *circumlocution* (‘going or speaking around something’). For example, you can describe what it looks like, what it sounds or feels like, or what it’s used for. A *fork* can become, ‘the thing you eat with that has four fingers’. A *song* can become ‘music with words’. A *dinosaur* can become ‘a very, very big animal in the past’. *Skiiing* can become ‘going down snow on a hill’. Circumlocution can sometimes be even more interesting, poetic, or memorable than the word you were searching for!

STRATEGIES SPECIFIC TO INTERPERSONAL WRITING

Don't worry about mistakes

Texting is naturally full of weird spellings and errors, so your L2 errors will fit right in. Interpersonal mode is far more tolerant of mistakes than presentational mode, so let yourself make them, as long as your writing still conveys your meaning the way you want!

Add an L2 keyboard

It's easy these days to add keyboards from other languages on your devices. This can help you easily find the symbols you need for your L2.

Learn from autocorrect

When you have your L2 keyboard, you can notice what it suggests for autocorrect as you type or text. Often autocorrect includes suggested words that are the most expected next words, and in this way it helps you use and learn common collocations (words that tend to go together statistically in the language). It also gives you the expected conjugations of verbs based on the rest of the prior sentence.

Can you think of any other writing strategies that we could add to any of the lists above?

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Your Turn

BIBI HALIMA AND KELI YERIAN

Now, let's turn to our last reflections on language learning skills. Each of our journeys as language learners is going to look different, especially depending on how much you engage with writing in your **L2**. In similar fashion to previous chapters, let's consider how you have engaged with your L2 writing in the past and how you can incorporate it into your future .

LOOKING BACK

- Recall a time when you had to write something formal in your L2. Now, try to think of a time you wrote something more casual. What was different about it? Why?
- If you tried learning a new writing system, were you patient with yourself during the process? What helped you to stay patient yet also motivated to persist with the repetitive practice needed to master a new script?
- What are some strategies for writing in your **L1** that have been successful for you so far? Which of these are applicable to your L2 writing as well?

LOOKING AHEAD

- Imagine you want to add a comment to a conversation in another language on social media. How would you apply your understanding of **genre** and voice to what you write?
 - How do you think you will navigate technology to support your writing without giving up your own voice and agency? How does it intersect with your own sense of ethics while you using a tool to support your L2 writing?
 - Do you think you could build in more time for revision and accuracy in any of your L2 writing efforts? In what situations would it be useful for you to do this?
-

CHAPTER 10 - FACING FEARS AND FINDING OPPORTUNITIES

CHAPTER SECTIONS

1. **INTRODUCTION**

2. **WEAVING IT IN: RETENTION IN THE DAY-TO-DAY**

3. **“HITTING A WALL”: WHAT TO DO ABOUT ANXIETY AND MOTIVATION?**

4. **WHAT’S NEXT? BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

5. **VISUALIZING LANGUAGE LEARNING PATHS**

Introduction

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

“The limits of my language mean the
limits of my world.”

-Ludwig Wittgenstein
Tractatus logico-philosophicus, 1922

We’ve come quite far on this journey together! Now that we’ve learned so much about language learning and how to plan our process and strategies, let’s make a few more connections in this final chapter and work on bringing together all that you have learned.

In the first section, we’ll talk about retention and integration of the language skills into everyday life. Life can get busy, and it can feel like a chore to maintain language skills over time, especially when you’re not prompted to use it regularly as you would in an immersion context. We will introduce a few ideas for how to make **linguaging** across languages part of your daily routine.

Then, we’ll discuss some of the potentially unforeseen roadblocks in language learning like language anxiety, plateauing, and motivation. These “walls” can feel intimidating when we run into

them. It's important to start adding the right tools to our toolbox ahead of time so that when we come face to face with them, the walls don't feel so tall!

To help with **motivation**, we'll highlight some of the benefits and opportunities that bilingual individuals get to experience regardless of what language they might be learning. Of course, there are some wonderful benefits that immediately come to mind for most, but we will also discuss some of the less recognized benefits of language learning that linger below the surface.

Finally, we will end with several inspiring stories and media that describe the diverse language paths of some of our students in LING 144.

CHAPTER GOALS

By the end of this chapter, I will be able to

- Consider ways to incorporate languaging into my everyday routine
- Have a strategy in place to overcome various “walls” I may run into during my language learning journey
- Recognize the many benefits and opportunities of learning languages

References

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Weaving it in: Retention in the Day-to-Day

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is language attrition?
- How is retention different from learning something for the first time?
- What are strategies for language retention?

Now that you've seen through many lenses of how to learn language and enhance your current language learning routine, we can take a look at ways to enjoy language learning as an everyday part of life as opposed to a one-time experience. The upkeep of language doesn't have to feel like a chore, and we hope that the topics we covered may have sparked some inspiration for you.

Below, we will explore some methods and suggestions for integrating the language skills into your everyday routine. However, when thinking of how you'll piece things together, keep in mind that the process is not one-size-fits-all and you should stay true to your language learning goals!

As we go from language learners to “language do-ers”, treating your **L2** as a well-integrated part of your regular routine becomes very important to language maintenance. There's nothing like the feeling of reaching a goal (like finally being able to understand a certain podcast or show, or finally being able to maintain a conversation) but the reality of language is that if you don't use it often it will start to fade away over time. So how do we keep a steady flame once we've attained our initial goals?

Bardovi-Harlig and Bunghardt (2020) discuss *attrition*, the point at which a language learner's attained proficiency falls due to lack of contact or practice with the **second language**. In particular, the **output** skills of speaking and writing tend to fall victim to attrition. There is a variety of both technology-related and traditional methods to decrease the odds of attrition over time and maintain language skills. One of the important factors to keep in mind is that focusing on *meaningful communication* as opposed to arbitrary study is most effective. This may look like engaging in a phone call with a friend who speaks your L2 as opposed to sitting down and studying flash cards of grammar or vocabulary out of context. Even if the strategies for retention don't look too different from learning strategies, there is a level of intentionality and proactiveness that is particularly important for long-term retention to be effective.

Bardovi-Harlig and Bunghardt also refer to a study by Ludwig et al. (2009) that discusses what aspects should be present in retention plans in order to bring about the most effectiveness. These are:

A Focus on Implicit Knowledge. When we are seeking to

retain language (as opposed to when we first learn it) we may benefit most from activities that make use of our existing implicit knowledge. This happens through re-exposure to language in context, either in-person or within a virtual world. It's best to re-activate what we already know through reading, listening, or jumping into a simple conversation as opposed to explicitly re-learning information.

Emphasis on Learner Production. A focus on production allows for the continued development of your ability to “language” spontaneously. **Productive** skills (speaking/signing and writing) are at greater risk of **attrition** than receptive skills (listening/viewing and reading), so it can be valuable to keep in touch with productive skills specifically. But even if you can't focus on production often, staying exposed to input in the form of listening, viewing, and reading will keep the language active in your mind and prepare you for when you do have the opportunity to speak or write.

Opportunities to Learn New Language in Small Doses. Even though retention focuses most on keeping what you have previously learned alive, you can still be learning new things too! Continuing to read, listen, or interact at **i+1** reduces potential boredom, strengthens the linguistic system, and keeps language learning fun. Just keep the new material bite-sized and the process enjoyable so that it doesn't feel like a burden to just maintain the language.

Often, maintaining a language might look like simply replacing an everyday task that you do in your **L1** with doing it in your **L2**. Perhaps you start listening to a podcast in your L2 in the car as opposed to your L1, or you play video games in your L2. This can be easier to do and access in some skills than others, such as listening

or reading. Integrating productive skills can be a little more difficult and less accessible but, again, a bit of intentionality will go a long way. Think of things like texting a friend in your L2, continuing to journal, or even creating a video journal. Not only will you get to practice frequently, but you'll have a record of your progress for times when you feel like you don't have as much traction.

To look at what retention may look like in one case, please enjoy Dr. Keli Yerian's story about her experience with study abroad and weaving French back into her life:



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<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=207#h5p-40>

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“Hitting a Wall”: What to Do about Anxiety and Motivation?

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is second language anxiety and how can we try to overcome it?
- What does it mean to hit a language plateau?
- How can we stay motivated to continue learning a language?

We addressed many language learning myths throughout the text, but we want to address one more with you here to close: the myth that language learning can be quick and easy. You’ve likely seen the “Learn a language in JUST A WEEK!” style articles and videos, and as nice as it would be if it were true, it isn’t quite so simple. You’ll

go through many ups and downs as you go through the experience of language learning. Some days, you'll be able to focus on the language for hours without issue, and the next you might struggle just to keep your Babbel or Duolingo streak going. It can be easy to get discouraged with a process that moves so slowly in a world that demands instant gratification.

THINK BACK

Do you recall the [fixed and growth mindsets](#) discussed in Chapter One? Learning a language can sometimes feel like a slippery slope. Just when you think you've memorized all the vocabulary you need to talk about something you love, you might stumble to recall vocabulary as you try to talk about it later with a friend. It can be easy to become discouraged and fall into a fixed mindset. However, adoption of a growth mindset can help us to engage in the **metacognitive** cycle and trust that success will come with time.

SECOND LANGUAGE ANXIETY

We're all familiar with the feeling. You rehearse what you're going to say a hundred times in your head before you go up to the counter to order a coffee, but when you actually get there no words come out. Or the teacher begins calling on students to translate sentences on the board, and you feel your stomach drop. As language learners, we've all faced countless situations where we've known what we're supposed to say but when the time comes the words just won't come out or our mind seems to go blank.

Anxiety is our mind's way of preparing us for negative consequences (such as negative judgement from others or our inability to express ourselves) that may or may not occur in the near future. Anxiety is our body's way of protecting us from situations that it interprets as dangerous or unpleasant. However, in the case of L2 learning, anxiety can negatively impact us as learners and be detrimental to our growth.

Papi and Khajavi (2023) tell us that Second Language Anxiety can lead language learners to freeze up, tremble, or sweat when they need to perform in their **second language**. Despite how it may feel, you are not alone in any Second Language Anxiety you may experience. So how can we overcome this feeling?

First, we should ask ourselves what are the contexts in which we experience the highest levels of Second Language Anxiety. Think, do you feel anxious when you are talking to a friend casually? When submitting an essay? Ordering at a restaurant? Next, we can break this down to look at what it is about those situations that makes us anxious. Is it the spontaneity? Is it speaking in front of others? Is it the lack of two-way communication?

By diving a little deeper into what it is about **linguaging** in our **L2** that makes us nervous, we can take baby steps to increase our

confidence and decrease anxiety slowly over time. For example, we can begin to implement strategies such as adopting a growth mindset ([Chapter 1](#)) or incorporating metacognition ([Chapter 5](#)) in order to help us visualize future plans and manage feelings of nervousness or anxiety around languaging. Throughout this book, we have been providing ways of adjusting how you think about language learning and adopting specific learning practices and strategies to stay motivated and reduce anxiety. You can tailor these suggestions to your own needs in order to move forward. Let's see how Faith managed her anxiety about speaking as she was first learning Japanese.



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MAINTAINING YOUR MOTIVATION

Even when we overcome a wave of anxiety as language learners, of course other doubts or discouragement may begin to enter our mind. We might feel like we're **plateauing** or begin to lose **motivation**. You're not alone in this feeling either. It is absolutely normal to go back and forth between feelings like this while

navigating learning a second language. When you get into cycles like this mentally, feel free to take a deep breath.

First, let's think about what **motivation** really means. We touched on motivation earlier in the textbook in Chapter 1 through the lens of [intrinsic and extrinsic motivation](#), but what is motivation from the “30,000 foot view”? Is it a thought? Or maybe it's a feeling? Dornyei (2001) tells us that “motivation explains why people decide to do something, how hard they are going to pursue it and how long they are willing to sustain the activity” (p. 7). There have been many theories on which elements contribute to motivation, and psychologists believe that motivation is at the center of whatever we try to achieve.

We can learn from Dornyei (2001) that at a basic level, we (consciously or subconsciously) consider the benefits of an action, how likely we are to be able to complete the action, and whether or not our environment supports our action. In line with our earlier discussion on motivation, much of this comes from within us. Though, of course, there is a bit more to it than just that, it gives us a good starting point.

Even when we're in the “perfect” conditions, sometimes language learning can feel overwhelming. If there is more to motivation than just having the right conditions, what else contributes to it?

The TED Talk below by Angela Lee Duckworth discusses the concept of “grit” that has been recently researched in the field of psychology. Carol Dweck, at the head of much of the discussed research, claims this “grit” strongly connects motivation levels to one's ability to learn with a growth mindset ([Chapter 1](#)). When learners understand how the brain changes and grows in response to challenge, they're much more likely to persevere when they fail because they “don't believe that failure is a permanent condition”.



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We can see through these materials that **motivation** is not a topic we can understand with a “one-size-fits-all” approach. It’s something deeply personal and non-linear. However, using the tools in your toolkit you’ve developed while reading this book, you may be able to recognize the core values that prompted your language journey in the first place, and see how you can continue using these values as motivators going forward.

Without connecting the way we learn to our values, we may lose motivation. Tools such as metacognition ([Chapter 5](#)) help us resist this by allowing us to reflect upon our journey frequently and check its alignment with those values. This can be an intimidating but exciting challenge as we dive deeper in our personal language learning journey. For those who are up to the challenge, there is an incredible reward on the other side!

Let’s see how Faith continued her Japanese learning when she was hitting some plateaus.



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What's Next? Benefits and Opportunities for Language Learners

FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

PREVIEW QUESTIONS

- How can language learning lead to benefits at different levels?
- What opportunities can result from these benefits?

When you learn a language, it goes without saying that one benefit is being able to speak to people in a different code. But it's also about much more than that. It's about opening yourself up to a new way of life and creating connections and opportunities all around the world. It's about getting to know your own culture more deeply and learning to think both critically and creatively. It's about

promoting linguistic and social diversity and ultimately supporting social justice. All of these benefits reflect back on the learner to build confidence, self-awareness and intentional living. Let's look at each of these benefits below in more detail.

INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS

THE MULTILINGUAL BRAIN

First, let's consider the benefits to your own physical body. Did you know that learning languages can actually change the way your brain appears and functions? When learning a **second language**, we challenge our brains in a way that not much else can. We have a unique opportunity for **cognitive** development. This Ted ED video by Mia Nacamulli explains how learning additional languages at any age can positively affect the brain.



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here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1?p=211#oembed-1>

According to Wei et al. (2024), there actually isn't much change in

the brain in the first phase of second language learning, but as we continue our journey the **white matter** subnetworks in our brains change significantly. The plasticity in white matter language networks allows for more efficient interaction between the language areas within and between each hemisphere. Bak et al. (2014) further suggest that these positive effects on the brain of **bilinguals** can even help our brains fight age-related **cognitive** decline. In this study, 262 participants were tested in a variety of areas such as memory and speed of information processing. Individuals who were bilingual showed a decreased rate of cognitive decline (such as in IQ over time) when compared to individuals who didn't speak a second language. The results were comparable to those of individuals who practiced other health-preserving habits such as regular physical fitness or abstaining from smoking. These results became even more apparent the more languages that the participants knew.

Another relevant study to support the point of **cognitive** development is by Bialystok et al. (2012). This research shows that **bilingual** children outperform their **monolingual** peers in tasks involving executive function, which includes abilities like attention management, reasoning, and flexible problem-solving. Their ability in excelling in these tasks is likely because of the way they deal with the challenges that they face in juggling and mastering two languages.

INCREASED JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Another personal benefit to you as a bilingual or multilingual person is your increased employment and career opportunities. With the seemingly never-ending expansion of careers in global markets, bilingual employees are increasingly valuable for both public and private employers hoping to extend their reach. Knowledge of another language and culture can help you to stand

out as a candidate and open opportunities that otherwise may not have been possible.

The educational report “Bilingual job statistics: demand soars, pay increases, career advantages” (Eser, 2024), published on a website named [Zipdo](#) that provides comprehensive market data and statistics, highlights the following facts for job seekers in the U.S.:

- 1 in 5 job postings in the United States require or prefer bilingual candidates.
- Bilingual employees can earn 5-20% more per hour than their monolingual counterparts.
- Their job opportunities have also skyrocketed by 30% in the last five years. With a 35% higher chance of being hired, bilingual employees are clearly paving the way to success – and lets not forget the 50% higher chance of landing that coveted leadership role (Eser, 2024).

Moreover, in a review of relevant studies, Churkina et al. (2023) point out that knowing the language of a host country increases the job prospects in that region. They write, “Research on language and earnings has been conducted in the US, Canada, Germany, Australia, India, and Israel. There is broad consensus that lack of proficiency in the host language worsens [...] job market prospects” (p. 4).

BENEFITS TO COMMUNITIES

Beyond these benefits to the self, learning additional languages provides deeper connections to and among people from different cultures and communities. It allows you to learn about different ways of thinking and living, and helps you understand your own culture as well.

BUILDING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Chen and Padilla (2019) offer a framework called the GEAR Model that emphasizes the role of **bilingualism** and **biculturalism** as assets in positive psychology. They classify these assets into four positive dimensions: psychological **G**rowth; cognitive **E**xploration; linguistic **A**wareness; and social **R**einforcement (p. 1).

The social reinforcement dimension in particular focuses on the benefits of bilingualism in terms of building social connections. It explains that people with bilingual proficiencies are better at navigating diverse social environments with their adaptability skills. Just as they can switch between languages, they become adept at navigating different cultures as well. The authors note that, “Research on the social effects of bilingualism has consistently shown that speaking more than one language increases one’s ability to respect more linguistic and racial diversity” (p. 6).

Language learners can also build community in ways not limited to interacting with L1 users of the target language. Learners can form relationships with other learners based on mutual understanding of the joys and challenges of studying a second language, especially those studying the same language.

These communities can be built in-person inside or outside the country of study, as well as online through platforms such as Facebook or [HelloTalk](#). Not only do these relationships contribute to learning the language itself, but they can also often support motivation to keep learning.

STUDYING OR WORKING ABROAD

One important way to build social connections across communities is to study, work, or live abroad. There are many opportunities that will allow you to move abroad temporarily such as joining a study

abroad program like [Rotary](#) (see [Chapter 4](#)), or teaching English in another country. However, did you know that there are many other ways to live abroad? Some of these options are open to both speakers and non-speakers of the **local language**, but the options only widen the more familiar you are with the native tongue.

Organizations like [WWOOF](#) and [International Volunteer HQ](#) allow you to volunteer abroad in exchange for room and board accommodations. Often, these programs won't require many hours of volunteering, giving you an opportunity to explore your country of interest and experience the culture not only within the home of your host but out in whatever city you may be in.

Even if you already have a job in your home country, many industries with global connections are open to transferring employees to international branches based on experience if it benefits the company. Having the background knowledge of a language or culture will, in most cases, greatly increase the possibility to get transferred to the country of that language or culture.

BENEFITS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

As we explored in [Chapter 3](#), there are reasons to learn a language beyond the more general individual and social benefits. By learning a second language you can also be contributing to social justice. When we value the existence and use of multiple languages in the world, we are respecting human diversity and history. This becomes particularly evident when we consider **minoritized** and **endangered languages**.

For example, at a macro level we can support **linguistic rights** at the governmental and educational levels. When children from minoritized language communities are able to access education

in their first languages, for example, they are more successful in school. When these same speakers see their home languages valued and appreciated in public life beyond school, their identities and feelings of belonging can be strengthened. Recall [Halima's story in Chapter 1](#) where she tells how her teachers enforced the use of English and Urdu over her home language Punjabi.

Similarly, in situations involving refugees, asylum seekers, or other language learners moving to a new country under unforeseen circumstances, we can advocate for access to language materials in multiple languages. This provides greater access to health care resources and other governmental benefits. Finally, supporting efforts to **revitalize** endangered languages is another way to engage in linguistic social justice, whether or not you actually participate in the revitalization efforts yourself.

At a micro level, we can see how being open to and even promoting linguistic practices such as **translanguaging** in schools or other domains can support social justice. Ateek (2024) suggests that using translanguaging as a transformative pedagogy in schools can “serve as a participatory approach and a drive to social justice” (p. 172). Students who can use their home languages in schools, for example, have greater access to comprehension of the content they are learning while navigating their multilingual identities more confidently.

Another example of promoting everyday **linguistic justice** can be seen in the role of bilingual people who serve as “language brokers” (linguistic and cultural translators), common in immigrant families or in families who speak minoritized languages. As explained by Chen and Padilla (2019), “The ability to serve as a language broker is another example of an asset brought on by bilingualism [... It] reinforces the social connection by bringing together people of different ages and backgrounds who otherwise might not interact with each other and thereby facilitating communication in a

positive way across language barriers within and between ethnic groups” (p. 7). This means that people who are able to use multiple languages can level the playing field and create a welcoming environment for others who do not speak those languages.

BACK TO BENEFITS TO YOUR SELF

As you can see, language learning comes with so many benefits and opportunities, ones that you can't necessarily find everywhere else. By learning languages and supporting language learning in general, we can create a more enriching environment for those around us, learn to communicate more thoroughly across languages, gain chances to try new things and ultimately build confidence in who we are. In fact, contributing positive efforts to our communities is shown to be good for our own well-being and peace of mind too. In the words of Scott (2023), “According to research, it just may be true that it's better to give than to receive. [... E]xpanding your ability to focus on the needs of others can really help you as well. It's true: Altruism is its own reward and can actually help you relieve stress” (para. 2). In short, language learning is an outwardly focused effort but also works inwardly, making us more peaceful, resilient, and more courageous.

In the end language learning is a deeply personal experience. The new paths to explore are truly endless. There is no limit to what you can learn about yourself and the world.

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Visualizing Language Learning Paths

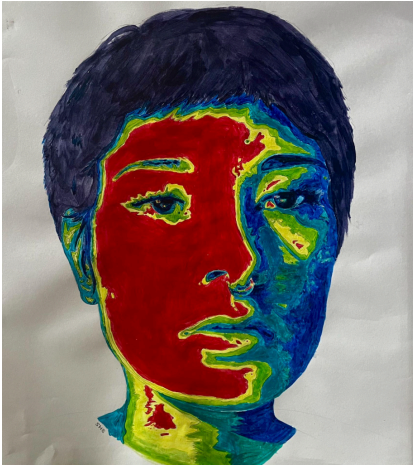
FAITH ADLER; BIBI HALIMA; AND KELI YERIAN

To close this chapter, and the textbook as a whole, we share with you some stories and media that former students of LING 144 have created to illustrate their own or others' language learning paths. They chose whichever media they wished to in order to tell a story about what language means to them. For example, some chose to make a game board, representing the various unexpected twists and turns that learning a language brings into their lives. Some created artwork or videos to illustrate their experiences. Others wrote poems or sang songs about what made them fall in love with language and how it has changed their outlook on life.

Overall, these stories reveal the spirit and passion of language learners across the spectrum. They also reveal some of the pain and struggle associated with learning languages or simply being **bilingual** and **bicultural**. We are sharing these stories with the hope that they encourage you to reflect on your own language learning path, both past and future.

SYUREI'S STORY

I have been fortunate enough to have grown up immersed in Japanese and American culture and to have had the language passed down to me as well. I would not be who I am without the influences of both. My values and beliefs come from understanding both cultures and I feel I have a more open mind because of it. Though I am very grateful for all the opportunities and experiences I have had because of my multilingualism, it has also followed with much struggle. For example my view of what fluency should look like and what I felt I had to do to fit in.



I created an art piece that showcases what it was like growing up being multilingual and the ups and downs I have faced within my language learning journey due to that cause. The first thing that I want to highlight is the two sides to the face. They have different shapes, patterns, and colors to showcase the very different journeys I have had to take to achieve a level

of fluency within both languages. With my English, ever since I moved to America, though I understood English, I struggled greatly with spelling and grammar. I was made to focus intensely on doing things “correctly”, at times being corrected on my pronunciation even when they comprehended what I was trying to say. Eventually, living most of my life here in the States I adapted and learned to achieve the standardized form of English. But doing so, with a fixation on speaking fluent and correct English, I neglected my Japanese. This caused me to forget certain vocabulary words and

lose progress in my Japanese abilities. I had originally felt that I had more proficiency in Japanese, but it quickly became the opposite and put me in a position of having to relearn it. Having to face frustration and combating issues such as an identity crisis, questioning if I was still “Asian enough” even if I wasn’t able to achieve “perfect” Japanese, and at what point I feel I have achieved fluency.

But as I grew older I came more to terms with who I am and understood that I did not have to abandon either of the two languages or identities, and that they can coexist. You can further see this multiplicity in how there are many colors that complement each other and hold unity. I have realized language learning is more diverse and more colorful than I used to believe. By gaining new techniques, an understanding of culture, and importantly, an understanding of oneself, we can reach whole new heights within language learning. We can see that it is not a black-and-white process but rather a more unique one.

ADDY’S STORY



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This comic shows my path learning Spanish. I originally began

learning the language in middle school which I represented with the conjugation handouts. From there, my interest and motivation shifted. I started to continue my learning outside of class time by using language learning apps, listening to music, and watching telenovelas. Now I find myself trying to participate in real conversations in Spanish whether by a phone call with a friend or text messages for online language exchanges. At the end of my comic, I show myself studying abroad and living in a Spanish-speaking community which is a major goal of mine that I hope to achieve in the upcoming years.

SAM, SAM AND SADIE'S SONG



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here: <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/languagelearningedition1/?p=215#oembed-1>

We wanted to create a whimsical song based on an intercultural relationship between an American man and a French woman. Sam D. and Sadie wrote the lyrics and sang, Sam B. wrote the music and accompanied with the piano. The story starts in Paris where the man first sees the woman, and it's clear that they both have immense feelings for each other. Unfortunately, they cannot communicate in a common language, so the man starts to learn

French in order to truly express how he's feeling. The man uses his metacognitive cycle to work through this hardship of learning a language. He's aware he needs a process to say something new to her and uses every form of procedural and declarative-based learning so he can learn quickly. He talks to the neighbors, reads and watches the news, all in a massive attempt to express himself and woo the lady of his dreams. Ultimately in the end, he knows enough to finally communicate his feelings in French. This jazz-themed song has a happy-go-lucky feel with hints of yearning pieced throughout it and should be a goal for any language learner. Maybe a piece of your future heart might need to speak another language for love?

QUINLYNN'S BOARD GAME



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Language Paths Board Games Rules

Prompt

Congratulations! You have just made it out of middle of school and now are beginning your first year of high school. One of your classes this term is French class, and you are sitting at a table with a bunch of kids you have never seen before. Each person has their own history with language learning and brings a unique perspective to the knowledge journey you are all going to depart on shortly. Shuffle the player cards and deal 1 out of each player at random.

Goal

Your goal, as a player, is to reach the end of the board first.

Rule

The youngest player starts, then the turn continues clockwise. At the beginning of each turn, you must roll one D6 to determine how many spaces you should move forward. If the player rolls a 6, they do not move 6 spaces and instead draw an additional event card.

After rolling the die, the player must draw an event card and read the prompt aloud.

Event cards

Event cards vary greatly. Some may only pertain to the player who drew the card, some may apply to all players, or some may apply to a few characters with specific characteristics.

Note

The nature of the board game as a medium portrays a distinct discrepancy between the message of the game I have created and the reality of a language learning journey. While I have tried my best to represent many walks of life both through the events that affect the player's and the stories told through the playable characters – all of which are based off people I know in real life, the biggest inaccuracy lies in the fundamental rules of the games: there is no finish line in language learning.

LOGAN'S STORY

In this free verse poem, Logan (one of the authors of this book)

describes their experience in Spain as a person using a Mexican variety of Spanish.

“Suenan como tienen una mosca en la boca chicos”

“You sound like you have a fly in your mouth”

I sat in the unairconditioned Spanish classroom,
lined by bricks painted with bright colors

And a television displaying a tour of the biggest cities
in Spain

Our project: Report on a city assigned to us, and talk
about a specific tradition

I practiced and practiced my presentation

Producing the sounds that, to my tongue, felt
unnatural

I orated to the class, putting on my best mask

“En Valenthia, hathen muchas cosas en la playa, y
cothinan un plato de vegetales con
marithcos y arroth que se llama paella”

I was proud of myself for having pronounced the
words correctly,

or so I thought

because before long my teacher retorted,

“The word mariscos doesn’t have a ‘th’ in it”

I made a mental note and tried again the next day,
and the day after, and the day after

Only to find out that my accent would never be good
enough

Because I grew up speaking the dirty Spanish,

Mexican Spanish

There was no winning unless I was one of them

But maybe I was happier being an outsider

I was welcomed with open arms the minute I stepped
into my Kindergarten classroom

Though I didn't speak the language and was greeted
with

"Hola, como estas"

And didn't know how to respond

Everywhere I looked someone was smiling at me,
with me

There was never a doubt in my mind that I didn't
belong there

I didn't know about prejudice

I didn't know about colonization

All I knew was that the language that I was learning
was a language of

Love

Compassion

Empathy

And yet upon going to Spain

the place that colonized the country that embraced
me

I felt

Colonized

My accent was colonized

My likes were colonized

My personality was colonized

And it's impossible to not be a product of colonization

Yet I wanted more than anything to return to the
Spanish I knew and loved

The Spanish that hugged me when I learned it

Because it isn't just a language

It's a people

A people that had been hurt by the very same people

That hurt me for sounding like one of them

And to be clear

I don't believe that Spanish people now are colonizers
like they were

I don't believe that they go and pillage villages and
take gold anymore

I don't believe that they extort indigenous populations
for cheap labor anymore

I do, however, believe that they tell you your accent is
wrong

I believe that they are held in a higher light
internationally

I believe that they will humiliate you for being a

product of them
I believe it because I've seen it firsthand

As we were walking through the airport coming back
from Spain
Our eyes sagging
Our brains foggy from a lack of caffeine – or maybe
that was just me
We pulled out our passports as we approached the
line that spanned the better half of a mile

We looked up at the signs
One read “EU CITIZENS ONLY”
One read “THESE PASSPORTS ONLY” with various flags
next to it, including the US
The last read “ALL OTHERS”
As if the majority of the world can fit into one category

The class was all American with privilege built into our
blood
One teacher American like us, and the second a
Spaniard
Yet the third and final professor Mexican

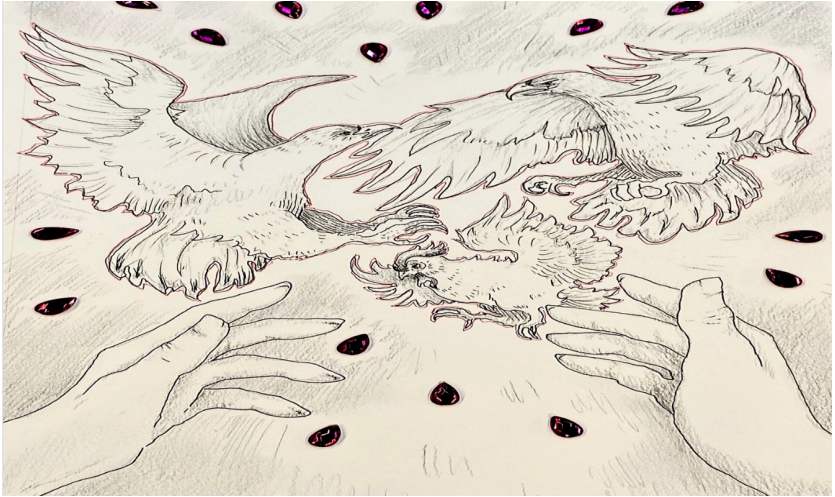
She stepped out of line to question her heritage with
a security worker
He looked perplexed
As if the validity of her identity was a puzzle
He finally determined that she was not allowed in our
line
In fact, as a result of being associated with her,
We weren't allowed there either
We walked over, heads down, to the line of "ALL
OTHERS"
Ashamed because they told us we should be

"Mi pais se llama chinga tu madre"
"My country is called 'fuck you'"
My teacher said to me at the gate
Tears streaming down her face
It wasn't the first time
And I knew it wouldn't be the last
That she would be treated
Dirty
Otherly
Less than
Nothing can explain
The pain
The humiliation
The dehumanization

That I saw that day
When identity became a tangible power in front of my
eyes

I have learned to love sounding like the minority
I have learned that learning the language of the
oppressed holds more power in my heart
Not just because I was welcomed by it
But because of the truth it uncovers
I have learned many lessons in my studies
And my favorite is, and always will be,
Those who chose to learn the language of the majority
are language learners
But those who chose to learn the language of the
minority are history learners

DAISY'S DRAWING



Bird Fight Drawing Explanation

For this drawing, I had a lot of ideas surrounding language and the application languages have in my life. I decided to focus on the difficulties of maintaining multiple languages, especially the struggle I have with maintaining multiple Romance Languages as an individual with ADHD and my desire to acquire my heritage language, Armenian. The similarities between French and Spanish contribute a

lot to the mental confusion I find myself in at times. Even when I am following a train of thought in English, sometimes Spanish or French thoughts will muddle my focus, or when I try to use one of said languages, similarities in the language makeups will lead me to include words, phrases, or tenses belonging to the other. I think this concept relates well to class concepts, like multiple-language-retention, but also reflects how unique individual paths towards language learning, or learning in general, can be. For this piece, I illustrated two golden eagles and a gallic rooster struggling amongst themselves just within my reach. The golden eagles represent Armenian and Spanish, as they are respectively the national symbols of both Armenia and Mexico. The gallic rooster is the national symbol of France. The gems pasted around the birds portray a tussle happening with them to reflect the conflicts between the languages. I used a Micron pen, graphite, a red gel pen, and gem stickers.

Closing Statement

FAITH ADLER

We opened this textbook with recognizing all of the conflict going on in the world around us. Especially with the rise in media coverage, it can feel like we're in a world that might not ever be able to heal. However, we believe it is the power of language and culture that can bring us all together. It is our sincere hope that you are able to take what you've learned in the process of reading this textbook and use it to help bring others together.

Just by reading this text, you already have a tremendous head start. Learning a new language certainly isn't an easy task. The path will not be straight, and your trajectory won't always be consistent, and that is okay. Be patient with yourself in reaching your personal language goals. The satisfaction is indescribable. Every step you take is another step in the right direction. It will take dedication and resilience, but you are not alone – we are all in this together as forever language learners!

Remember that there is no “normal” way to learn a language. Even when you've found a system you like, it might not always work so well. All of this is okay. This is one final reminder to be kind to yourself as you are learning a second language. Take baby steps, and don't be afraid to take a breather every once in awhile. Stay in-tune with yourself, and don't be afraid of slow growth as you

become the resilient language learner you were always meant to be. Let's see what we can do together!

Faith Adler, on behalf of the Open Pedagogy Team

Feedback and Suggestions

We enthusiastically invite feedback from students or learners who are using this book as a guide or supplemental material for language learning. We also deeply appreciate feedback from instructors using these materials, faculty in linguistics and related fields, individuals interested in OER, instructional designers, and any others using this book. You can leave feedback and suggestions at https://oregon.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b1uRwICrBButLn0

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Glossary

accents

A patterned variation of pronunciation in a language. Usually tied to a specific region, community, or individual

accuracy

How correct one's language use is according to the specific language ideology held by interlocutors

active learning

Learning that involves the learner being an active participant in the learning process through creating, investigating, thinking, discussing, etc

adjectives

A word that modifies a noun, usually attributing some characteristics to the noun

affective filter

How our learning is filtered through our emotions (our 'affect') and that the success of our learning is directly tied to factors like anxiety, motivation, and more

affixes

An additional element added to the front, middle, or end of a word to modify its meaning in some way

agency

In the field of education, this term refers to the student's ability to actively participate in their own learning by making meaningful choices in selecting content or learning goals

ambiguous

Having multiple possible meanings

Attrition

The loss of proficiency in a second language that you used to understand or speak more fluently in the past

authentic materials

Materials that have not been designed or modified for language learners

biculturalism

The practices of people who represent and identify with two or more different cultures

bilingual

Someone who speaks two or more languages. Speaking more than two languages is also referred to as multilingualism or being multilingual

bilingualism

The ability to communicate in two or more languages

characters

A graphic symbol (such as a hieroglyph or alphabet letter) used in writing or printing

circumlocution

"A communication strategy that allows language learners to express themselves even when there is a gap in their linguistic knowledge. This is achieved through using descriptions,

explanations and definitions instead of the unknown target structure” (Worden, 2016).

classroom methodology

A group or set of methods used for the purpose of creating an effective learning environment in the classroom

cognates

Words genetically related in origin, descended from the same ancestral root

cognitive

Of relating to the mental processes such as thinking, reasoning, perception, memory, problem solving, and learning

cognitive overload

A mental state where the amount of information given exceeds one's ability to process it, leading to mental exhaustion

cohesive devices

Words or phrases that indicate shifts in the discourse and create flow in a spoken or written text

collocations

A noticeable arrangement or conjoining of linguistic elements (such as words). Ex: “Make the bed”, “To save time”

communication strategies

“The ways in which an individual speaker manages to compensate for this gap between what she wishes to communicate and her immediately available linguistic resources” (Faucette, 2001, p. 1).

comprehensible input

Language input that is slightly beyond the current level of the

recipient (i+1 in Krashen's terms). As a rule of thumb, this means that no more than one word per 10 words is unknown

Critical period hypothesis

According to this hypothesis, age plays a critical role in acquiring a native-like proficiency for any language. It claims that there is a limited time frame in which to learn languages well that spans from early childhood to adolescence

Culture

"A word that suggests social patterns of shared meaning. In essence, it is a collective understanding of the way the world works, shared by members of a group and passed down from one generation to the next" (Biswas-Diener & Thin, 2024).

culture shock

Both positive and negative feelings associated with adjusting to a new culture

Deaf/deaf

Deaf with a 'D' refers to those who identify as culturally Deaf and are usually deaf from birth. On the other hand, deaf with a 'd' simply refers to a profound loss of hearing

diacritics

A mark near or through an orthographic or phonetic character or combination of characters indicating a phonetic value different from that given the unmarked or otherwise marked element

discourse

An orderly and usually extended expression of thought

domains

Different contexts of language use, such as home, school, or work

endangered languages

Languages in danger of losing all speakers and disappearing

extemporaneous

A way of communicating, such as in a speech or class presentation, that is prepared through outlining and practice, but not written out or memorized word-for-word

extensive

The language learning technique of listening or reading extensive amounts of text to improve general comprehension. It is done without stopping to look up words or analyze the text

fathah

Fathah in Arabic script is a small diagonal line placed above a consonant indicating a short vowel sound. For example, **ف** has a fathah on the letter **ا** that makes the sound "pa"

fluency

The ability to speak in a language spontaneously without unnecessary pauses, even if some errors might occur

gamification

The use of game-like thinking and game-like mechanics in non-game situations, typically to engage users

genre

A specific type of written or spoken text, such as novels, newspapers, blogs, speeches, conversations, etc

gist

The overall idea of a spoken or written text. The "essence" of the text

graded

A text that has been simplified or originally written to contain a

limited set of forms (in this context, 'forms' refers to vocabulary and grammar)

graphemes

The smallest meaningful contrastive unit in a writing system (letters, characters, radicals, diacritics)

growth mindset

"a belief that intelligence can be strengthened and expanded through dedication and hard work" (Rasmussen, 2021).

hamza

Hamza (ء) in Arabic script is a letter or a sign on the letter that represents a glottal stop, which is a sound produced by briefly stopping airflow in your throat or glottis. An abrupt little pause in the middle of saying "uh-oh" is a glottal stop

hegemony

Dominance and authority of one or more groups over others through their influence on shared norms and ideas

heritage languages

Family or ancestral language

high-context

Typically values implicit communication where those receiving a message are expected to interpret the message based on a variety of factors, such as environment, relationship, and tone of voice. It can be referred to as more indirect culture

i+1

Stands for comprehensible input, or a language level that is slightly above your current level

idiolect

The particular way an individual speaks

idiom

A type of phrase that has a new meaning different from the definition for the individual words put together

in-group

A social group that one identifies with psychologically

Compare to "out-group": a group that one does not identify with

indigenous and ecological knowledge

The knowledge that people develop through their interaction with each other and environment alike

indigenous language

A language that is native to a region and spoken by the local community

indigenous languages of the Americas

Languages that originated and were spoken by the peoples of the Americas prior to colonization

input

In this context, language that we are exposed to, e.g. through hearing, viewing (if signed languages) or reading

intercultural competence

"The capability to shift one's cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities" (Hammer, 2015).

interlingual competence

The ability to navigate and understand two or multiple languages including switching fluidly, translation, and interpretation

jargon

Specialized vocabulary used by a specific profession or in a specific domain that are usually difficult for those outside of that field to understand

L1

Language(s) you are first exposed to and learn. Note that individuals can have multiple L1s if they are raised in a bi- or multilingual community

Linguaculture

The idea that a language is made up not only of its grammatical and vocabulary elements, but also past knowledge, inventions, cultural information, and behaviors that contribute to language change over time

language family

A group of languages that all descent from a common ancestral language. For example, languages like Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, Galician, and Romanian all belong to a common language family, commonly known as Romance Languages

language ideologies

A set of shared beliefs and feelings about language that connects language and society

language learning aptitude

A prediction of an individual's ability to learn a foreign language, compared to others, within a specific timeframe and under particular conditions

language variety

A shared version of a dialect or a language in a community. This term is used as a neutral term to avoid the distinction between language and dialect

linguaging

A verb form of the word "language" emphasizing the fact that using language is an action of active communication, not just an object of study (a noun)

learner language

The written or spoken language produced by a learner that reflects their own developmental stage of learning

letters

A character representing one or more of the sounds used in speech; any of the symbols of an alphabet

lexical

Of or relating to the vocabulary, words, or morphemes of a language

linguistic justice

The social action of people (scholars, academicians, activists, community members) that challenges the discrimination against languages and advocates that language rights are basic human rights

linguistic purism

Related to Standard-Language Ideology, this is the prescriptive practice of describing one language variety as being the most "correct" or most "pure", and therefore of higher value than other varieties

linguistic rights

Linguistic rights are the human and civil rights related to the individual and collective right to choose the language(s) for communication in private and public space

linguistics

A scientific study of language including its structure and use in social groups

linguists

People who study languages and their many different structures and functions. This includes the study of morphology, syntax, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, phonetics, phonology, semantics, educational linguistics, and more

literacy

The ability to read and write

literally

The most basic sense of a word or expression

local language

A language spoken and used in a specific region by a specific group of people

local languages

Languages specific to local people of a particular community, region, or social group

low-context

The use of more explicit communication that doesn't require as much interpretation on the part of the receiver. It can be referred to as more direct culture

marginalized

Something (such a language varieties or social groups) that is disempowered and excluded from mainstream discourse leading to struggle for visibility

mental schemata

Our prior framework of knowledge that organizes and interprets information based on our prior experiences in the world

meta-rhetorical

The ability to consciously think about and adapt rhetorical strategies, such as how to persuade a specific type of audience

Metacognition

"The use of reflective awareness to make timely adjustments (self-regulation) to behaviors that support a goal-directed process" (Scharff, 2023). In simple words, it's also defined as thinking about thinking

metalinguistic

The ability to consciously reflect on language, including its use, structure, and relationship with different elements such as culture

metaphorical

A figurative, imaginative, symbolic use of a word or phrase

minoritized

In this case, a language(s) that has less prestige in a given context

monocultural

The process by which only a single group's expression of culture has power and/or is allowed, reducing cultural diversity

monolingual

Speaking only one language

motherese

A specific way of talking to infants or young children, also commonly known as baby talk

motivation

Reasons and objectives that inspire people to learn a new language(s). It can be intrinsic motivation that comes from within and linked to personal fulfillment. It can also be extrinsic that is influenced by external factors such as learning a language as an academic requirement to complete a degree program

multimodal

Use of different modalities such as sight, hearing, or touching

native

This refers to the L1 speakers of the language; however, we are problematizing this term because we do not want to imply that native speakers are always model speakers. See Chapter 1 for Nativespeakerism

nativespeakerism

An ideology that native speakers are better speakers and have the more 'authentic' knowledge of the target language(s) than those who have learned the language(s) later in life

negotiation of meaning

A process of interaction in which speakers mutually negotiate their intended meaning using strategies such as clarification questions, repetition, and rephrasing to convey a clear message

nonverbal

Not involving words, such as facial expressions or gestures in spoken languages

online third spaces

Virtual spaces that provide opportunities for interaction and community building

orthography

A conventional system of writing including rules for spellings, punctuation, and word making

output

In this context, language that we are producing, e.g. through speaking, signing or writing

particles

A word element that has a grammatical function that does not fit into the main parts of speech (such as noun, verb, adjective)

perception of self

How an individual views themselves and understand their own identity including strengths, weaknesses, values, and emotions

plateauing

A state when an individual feels there is a little or no significant change despite continued effort or practice

pragmatics

The study of how context affects meaning

prescriptivism

A strict adherence to established language rules and norms, considering deviations from the standard form as incorrect or improper

prestigious

Having a high level of regard. Within sociolinguistics, a prestigious language variety is one that is considered more "correct" by those in power and society

prior schemata

Familiar information that can be used to provide context to future encounters

productive

Having the power of producing; generative; creative. In the context of language, creating output in the form of language

prosody

The set of speech variables, including rhythm, speed, pitch, and relative emphasis

proxemics

The study of how personal space and physical distance influence our communication with others

radicals

Denoting or relating to the roots of a word

rationality

The ability to think logically and make decisions based on reason and evidence

receptive

Having the quality of receiving, taking in, or admitting. In the context of language, taking in input in the form of language

redundancy

When something is repeated. Sometimes this is unnecessary repetition, but other times the repetition can be useful, as in this case for listening

referent

The thing or idea that is being referred to

regional dialect

A variation of a language specific to a certain geographical location or region

revitalization

An attempt to halt or reverse the decline in use of a language, or to revive a dormant language

romanized

The Latin-based writing of a language that doesn't use a Latin alphabet

scaffolding

Utilization of instructional techniques to progressively move students toward stronger understanding. Supporting information or tools are put into place until students no longer need them, and this process repeats

second language

Any language learned after the first language(s). The term "second language" does not necessarily refer to the 2nd language in time that a person learns. It can be a third, fourth, or other additional language

serotonin release

Often referred to as the "feel good" chemical that is regulated in the brain

Simon Says

A game in which players follow only the instructions starting with "Simon says" given by designated "Simon" player in the game

social dialects

A variety spoken by a social group that is not necessarily located only in one region

socio-affective strategies

Strategies focusing on the social and emotional needs of learners

standard language ideology

"A bias toward an abstract, idealized homogenous language, which is imposed and maintained by dominant institutions" (Lippi-Green, 1997).

standard-language ideology

"A bias toward an abstract, idealized homogenous language, which is imposed and maintained by dominant institutions" (Lippi-Green, 1997).

standardized

A language variety that is considered to be more 'correct' or 'proper' and thus has more power and importance in a community

standardizing

In this context, a strategic decision-making process that elevates a language(s) as more important, superior, or proper than others

stigmatized

Something that is unfairly disregarded and socially discredited leading to discrimination against it

stimulus

Something that causes the change or stirs the action

stylistic factors

Other factors related to the style of the writing such as tone, voice, unity, and coherence

Sub-Cultures

Groups that are part of the dominant culture but that differ from it in important ways

subordinating

In this context, a strategic decision making process that makes a language(s) seem inferior and less appropriate or important than others

suprasegmental

Speech characteristics that affect syllables, words, and phrases rather than only individual sounds

syntax

The way in which linguistic elements, such as words, are put together to form larger units, such as phrases or clauses

target language

The language you are currently learning

tolerance for ambiguity

Willingness to tolerate ideas and propositions that are unclear at first

translanguaging

The practice of mixing languages in a flexible way, either in speaking or writing

verbal

Anything related to words, whether spoken or written

white matter

A large network of nerve fibers (axons) in the brain that make the exchange of information between different areas of the brain possible

willingness to communicate

A term used to describe a learner's probability of choosing to participate in the L2 of their own violation

word families

Words that share a common root word but may be surrounded by different prefixes or suffixes

zone of proximal development

The area in which you are learning with the help of someone (a teacher, mentor or peer) or from learning materials, that push you beyond what you can do on your own