PSYCHLINGO

EXPLORING ENGLISH THROUGH PSYCHOLOGY

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in collaboration with Koło Naukowe Logopedii at APS

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DO YOU NEED PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP?

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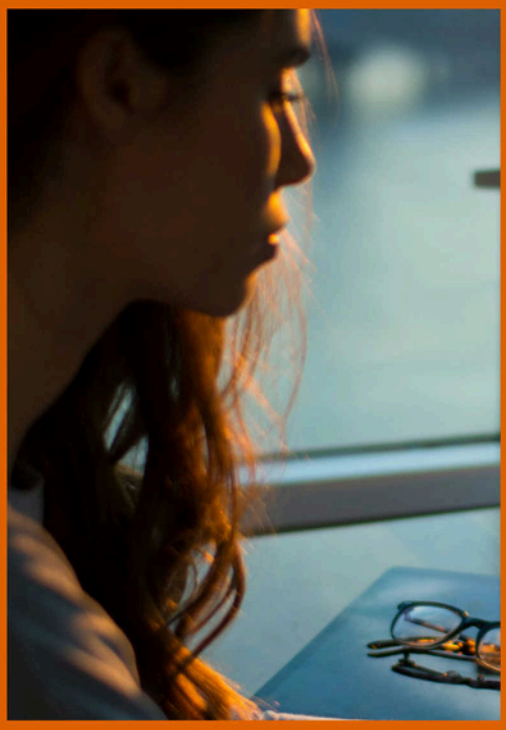


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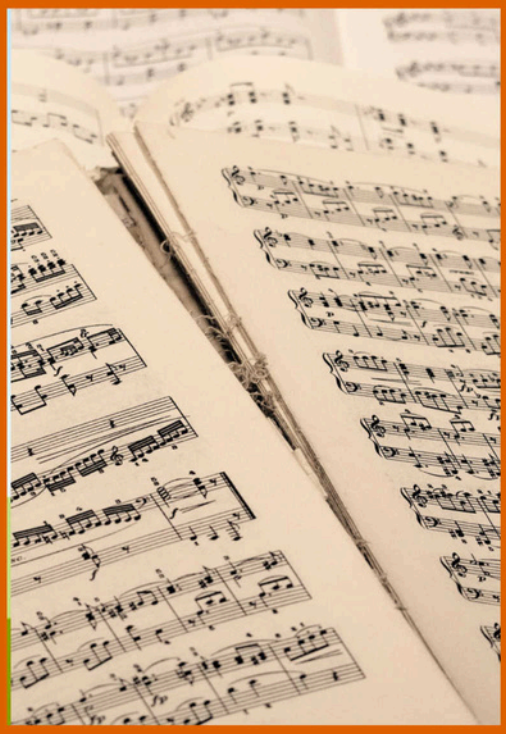

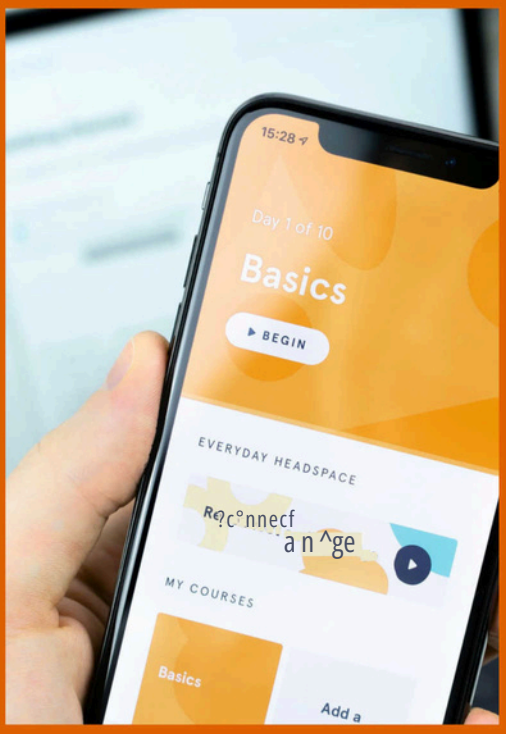
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IN THIS ISSUE

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

As you well know and as you saw in the previous issue, we enjoy testing your language skills and want to give you a space and an opportunity to practise them. This means learning a language. Language is about thinking; it's the most common way to express thoughts, and we spend our lives trying to expand it and find meaning in words – our own, but more often those of others.

But what do we truly understand about learning a language? What is it? Is it just symbols that convey meaning and help share information? Or does it have a deeper significance? I hope so, especially since my work mainly involves working with language.
Is it a way for us to understand each other? If so, why do some people learn more easily than others? Why can children learn multiple languages so effortlessly and quickly? What does education look like in language acquisition? These and a few other questions we try to explore.

Given the vastness of language and its essential role in our lives, we strongly encourage you to explore it further. Language is about thinking, so questions about it often lead to questions about thinking itself. These questions often emerge when we seek meaning. We are only at the surface, so it might be worth delving deeper. So, enjoy and dive in!

I thank everyone who contributed to this issue through their writing and work, helping to bring this edition to life.

Jan Jolicki

Editor-in-Chief

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Bilingualism

By Klaudia Borejko, Adrianna Łasek & Irmina Prędka from Koło Naukowe Logopedii at APS

Abstract The aim of this article is to discuss the phenomenon of bilingualism, as well as analyse the benefits and challenges
associated with speaking two languages. The article also attempts to debunk common myths surrounding bilingualism and multilingualism. In addition, it presents case studies of bilingual children and explores parenting strategies in the context of bilingual upbringing.

Definitions of Bilingualism

Bilingualism can be defined in various ways. Bloomfield (1933) describes it as "native-like control of two languages", meaning a level of proficiency in both languages comparable to that of a native speaker. Weinreich (1966) emphasises the alternating use of two or more languages by a single person, without specifying the required level of fluency. Skutnabb-Kangas (2007) defines bilingualism as the ability to function in two (or more) languages across different socio-cultural contexts, while also positively identifying with both language communities. Grosjean (2008), on the other hand, proposes a holistic approach, underliningt he i mportance of regularly using more than one language in everyday life.

Types of Bilingualism

Bilingualism can be categorised according to several criteria:

- **Based on proficiency level**:
  - Balanced bilingualism (Kurcz, 2005)
  - Full bilingualism (Kurcz, 2005)
  - Unbalanced (dominant) bilingualism (Baker, 2003; as cited in Pędrak, 2018)
- **Based on language acquisition level**:
  - High-, medium-, and low-level bilingualism (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2007; as cited in Pędrak, 2018)
- **Based on language skills**:
  - Productive bilingualism
  - Receptive bilingualism (Baker, 2003; as cited in Pędrak, 2018)
- **Based on the time of language acquisition**:
  - Simultaneous bilingualism (Kurcz, 2005)
  - Successive bilingualism (Kurcz, 2005)

Bilingual Parenting Strategies

These strategies are based on specific rules governing the use of languages within the family. Kurcz (2005) outlines four strategies: person-based, time-based, alternating, and location-based.
These align with the following models:

- **OPOL** (One Person, One Language): each parent consistently speaks a different language to the child
- **mL@H** (Minority Language at Home): the minority language is spoken at home, while the majority language is acquired outside
- **T&P** (Time and Place): specific languages are used depending on the time or setting
- **MLP** (Mixed Language Policy): both languages are used freely and interchangeably (Zurer Pearson, 2013; as cited in Mężyk & Lipiec, 2017)

Case Studies Banu (3.5 years old): a girl from an Azerbaijani family
who, after moving to Poland, showed a decline in communication. The lack of consistency in language use by her parents led to a regression in her speech development.

Henryk (5 years, 4 months): a boy raised in a bilingual environment (Polish and Norwegian) who demonstrates harmonious development and effective communication in both languages.

These examples highlight the importance of a conscious and consistent application of bilingual parenting strategies.

The Phenomenon of Language Transfer

Language transfer involves transferring knowledge from L1 to L2. It may be positive (facilitating learning) or negative (interference) (Kurcz, 2005). The degree of similarity between languages influences the type and intensity of transfer. This phenomenon affects all levels of language – ranging from pronunciation to spelling (Wodniecka-Chlipalska et al., 2018).

Facts and Myths About Bilingualism

A common misconception is that bilingualism can cause speech delays. However, there is no scientific evidence supporting this claim. Bilingualism itself is not a cause of language development issues. Difficulties may arise from inconsistent language exposure, limited use of one language, or misguided educational assumptions.

Conclusion

Bilingualism offers numerous benefits – from enhanced cognitive development and communication skills to deeper cultural and identity connections. The key to successful bilingual development lies in consistent parenting strategies, appropriate exposure to both languages, and awareness of potential challenges such as language transfer. The role of parents and caregivers is crucial. Bilingualism is not only a linguistic skill, but also an emotional and cultural asset.

Photo by Faizan Ali on Unsplash

Glossary

acquisition– the learning ordeveloping ofaskill, habit, or quality
align– to put two or more things into a straight line, or to form a straight line
fluency – the ability to speak or write a foreign language easily and accurately
holistic – characterised by the belief that the parts of something are interconnected and can only be explained by reference to the whole
simultaneous– occurring, operating, or done at the same time
to debunk– expose the falseness or hollowness of (an idea or belief)
upbringing– the treatment and instruction received by a child from its parents throughout its childhood

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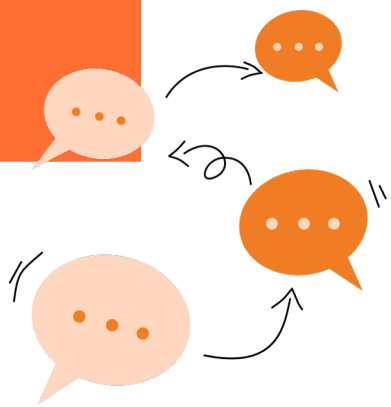
The R in Social Communication



ByKatarzynaSaj

Language is not merely a part of communication but also a powerful cognitive and social tool. It influences how individuals perceive the world, structure their thoughts, and interact with others (Boroditsky, 2011). This article examines the psychological aspects of language in social communication, with a focus on empirical research. Key topics include the framing effect, linguistic relativity, and the impact of inclusive language. Studies from cognitive and social psychology highlight how linguistic choices affect decision-making, social identity, and interpersonal relationships.

Tversky & Kahneman (1981) – The Framing Effect and Language

Let's start with one of the most popular pieces of research. What is the framing effect? The framing effect describes a phenomenon where the way information is presented influences people's reactions and decisions. Tversky and Kahneman conducted an experiment in 1981, which showe d ho w the fram ing e ffect w orks. They c al led it theA sian Di sease Prob lem.

Participants were given a scenario about a hypothetical epidemic that was expected to kill 600 people. They were then divided into two groups and introduced to different sets of choices.

Scenario 1: *Gain Frame*

Participants had to choose between:

• Program A: 200 people will be saved for sure.
• Program B: 1/3 chance that all 600 people will be saved, but a 2/3 chance that no one will survive.

Most people (72%) chose Program A, the safe option.

Scenario 2: *Loss Frame*

Another group of participants had to choose between:

• Program C: 400 people will definitely die.
• Program D: 1/3 chance that no one will die, but a 2/3 chance that all 600 people will die.

In this case, most people (78%) chose Program, the risky option. Even though the options were mathematically identical (A = C and B = D), people made different choices depending on how the information was presented (gains vs losses). When the options were shown as saving lives, people preferred the safe choice. When the same options were shown as deaths, people were more likely to take risks.

This study demonstrates that the way we phrase information (the language and words we use) can significantly impact people's decision-making. The framing effect not only works in private conversations but also has real-world examples in important areas such as:

- Politics: "Tax on the rich" vs" Fairt axation"
- Healthcare: "80% survival rate" vs "20% mortality rate"
- Media: "Refugees" vs" Illegali mmigrants"

Photo by Katarina Bubenikova on Unsplash

widely acknowledged that objects do not have assigned genders, although in many languages, objects are named with grammatical genders. That said, one question pops up – do those grammatical genders influence our view of inanimate objects?

Lera Boroditsky and her colleagues conducted a study in 2003 to understand how grammatical gender in language influences how people perceive objects. The study examined speakers of German and Spani shla nguages – two languages that assign different grammatical genders to the same objects.

Both German speakers and Spanish speakers were asked to describe various objects that had opposite grammatical genders in German and Spanish.

Example Objects:

- "Key" (German: der Schlüssel – masculine, Spanish: la llave – feminine)
- "Bridge" (German: die Brücke – feminine, Spanish: el puente – masculine)

After that part, the researchers compared the adjectives used by speakers of each language to describe the same objects. German speakers (who say "bridge" as a feminine noun) described it with words like: beautiful, elegant, fragile, peaceful. However, Spanish speakers (who say "bridge" as a masculine noun) used words like: strong, sturdy, dangerous, long. Similar results were seen with the word "key".

The results show that the way people describe objects is connected with grammatical gender in their language. The study not only provides evidence for linguistic relativity (the idea that language affects thought) but also suggests that language shapes perception by influencing how we associate certain qualities with objects. This study may also suggest that language can influence gender stereotypes

To sum up, both studies are strong examples of how the structure of language can shape cognition, our views, and decision-making. I hope that with this article, I have started reinforcing the idea that language is more than just a tool for communication – it actively influences the way we see the world.

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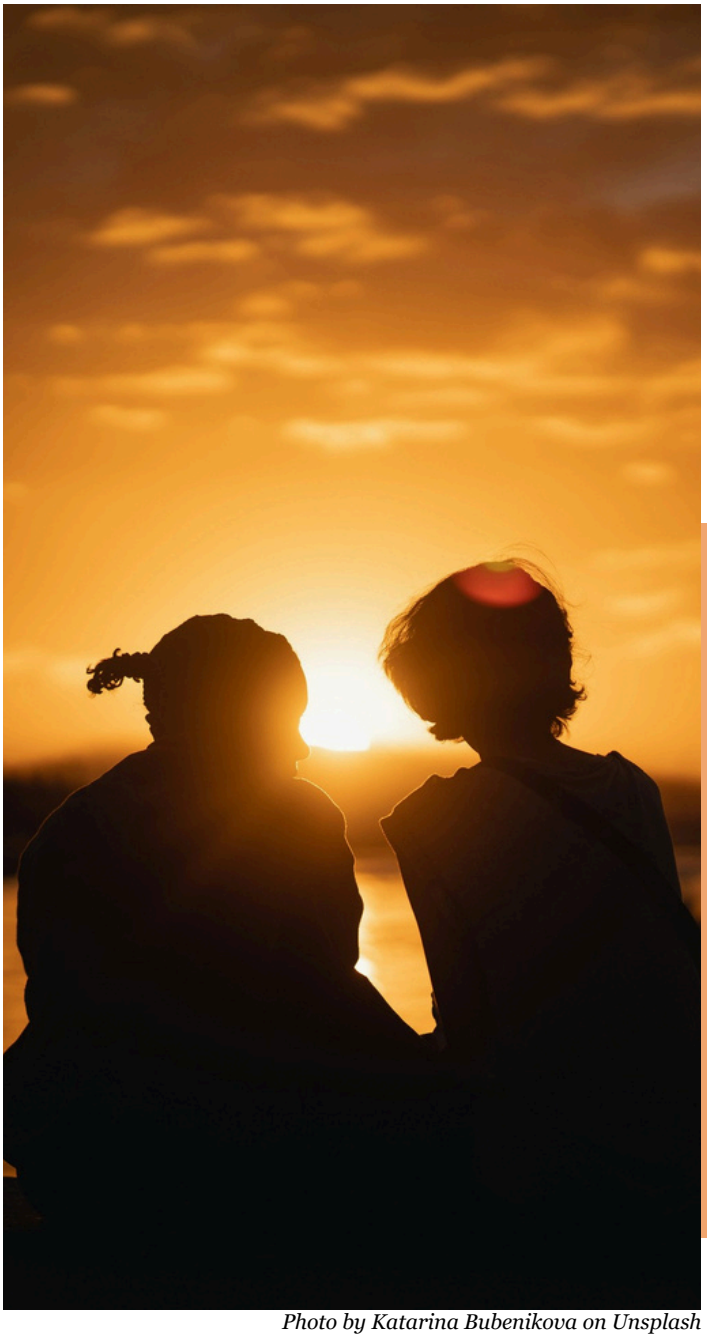

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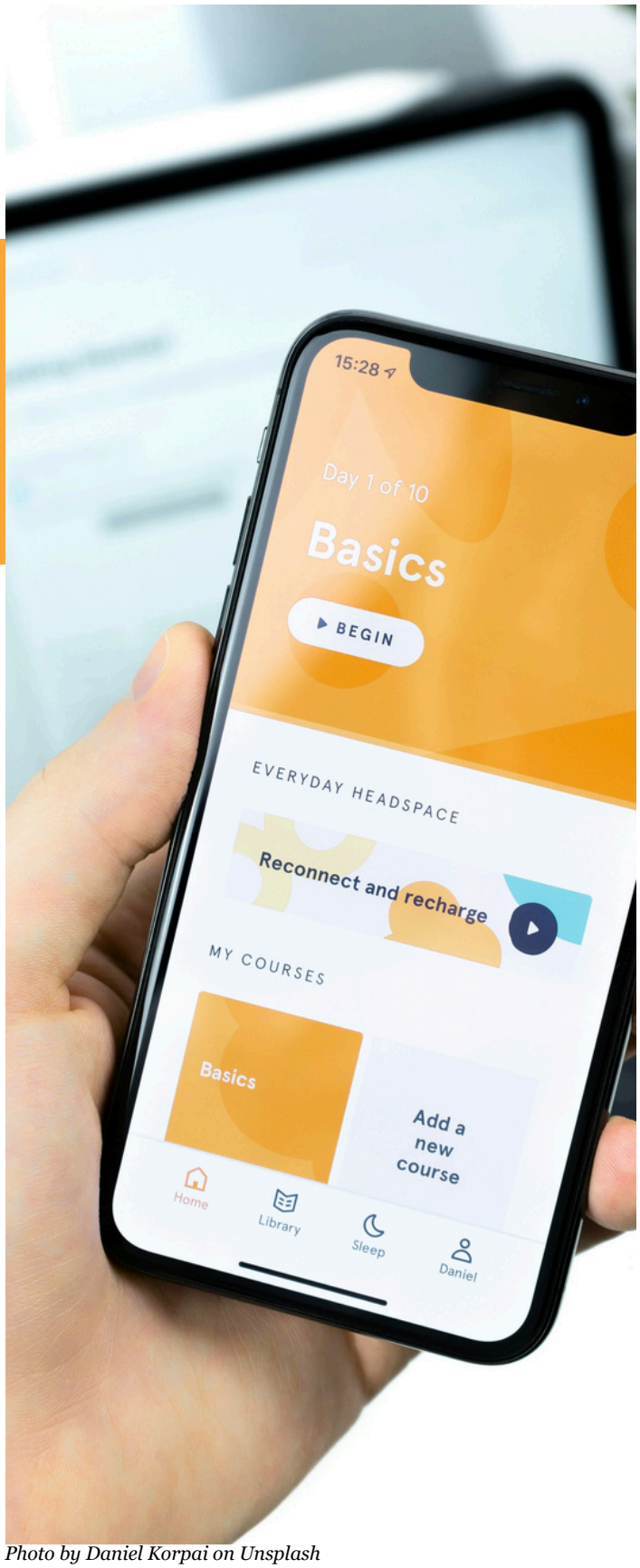
Glossary

fragile – easily damaged or broken
gender – a group of people in a society who share qualities or ways of behaving associated with a gender identity
inanimate object – a thing that is not alive
merely – just; only
sturdy – physically strong and solid or thick, and therefore unlikely to break or be hurt
to conduct – organise and carry out
to phrase – put into a particular form of words
to reinforce – to strengthen or encourage a behaviour through consequences

Do We Still Need to Learn Languages *whentechnologyspeaks for us?*

By Alicja Capała



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Nowadays, due to globalisation, more and more places use and depend on the English language and the ability to communicate in it is often required in advance in many aspects of life, from school to work. People who don't know any foreign languages are often perceived as lacking one of the basic skills, and people are even under pressure to work on personal development, such as learning foreign languages.

Today, the world is offering a helping hand in this field by providing a variety of easily accessible online translators and apps that specialise in translations. Thanks to this, many people who don't really speak the language can consume foreign content and hold a short conversation on a satisfactory level, without the need to devote a lot of time and effort to actually learn the language. For working people who cannot squeeze any more tasks into their day, this makes it easier for them. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that for some people and in specific situations, studying foreign languages is no longer necessary. It is worth noting, however, that knowing a foreign language is also about understanding another culture. Translators can help you understand the words, but not always the meaning behind them – the humour, idioms, or emotions.

Learning a new language through apps

This method of learning foreign languages has become increasingly popular, especially among Gen Z, as it often requires minimal engagement. You just need to study some phrases for 5 minutes, answer basic questions, match words with translations, and for the most part, that's it for daily study. From this description, we can easily conclude that it's possible to learn the basics, but it's not enough to hold a casual chat in a foreign language.

It takes s te pping u p and en ro l li ng in a l a ngu a ge co u rs e if you w a nt to i m pro v e you r language skill s truly. I know it me a n s mo r e dedica t ion, w ork, time,a nd, s u rely, mon e y, but it will p rob a b l y p a y off in the f utu r e, for exampl e , w hen secu ring a job in a f ore ign c ompan y. In the jo b m ar k et, speakin g foreign languag es often m akes candid a tes stand o ut fr o m t he cr o wd . It de m o n strates not o n ly prac t ical com munication sk i lls b u t also openness and cultural awareness – qualities highly valued by international companies.

What they teach in schools vs what you actually need to know

For several years, there has been a prevailing belief that language education in Polish schools is impractical. As the years pass an d it beco mes increas ingly ob vio us to more p eopl e, ide as emer ge on how to ad dres s this situa tion. M any pe ople have s tated tha t the two main ways they le arn t a la ngu age w ere t hr ough g ames and consuming d idn't do f or eign c on tent , a nd s choo l much to help t hem lea rn. During discu ssions, some mentio ned tha t the te achers disc ourage d th em from spea king a nd having co nv ersations by poin ting out ev ery little slip in pron uncia tion, ra ther tha n s imply focusing on com municatio n and i mproving throu gh practi ce. Ma ny of t hose peop le say tha t eve n no w, every ti me they nee d t o speak in Eng lish, they feel nervo us or even run awa y fro m thos e sit uatio ns i n real life. Th er e w as also the q ues tioning of the int ense focu s on lear ning grammar , and why not focus on expa nding yo ur voca bulary fir st and then m ove on to ba sic gra mmar rules? A fter al l, it' s b ette r to sound funny th an b e mad e fun of for not understanding basic words.

This illustra tes the signi ficant imp act of the p sych olo-gical a sp ect of lang uag e le arn ing. Co nfidence and the ab ility tosurm ou nt t hesurtf ear o f m aking m istakes a re just as n ece ssar y as me mor ising gra mmar. M any le arners giv e up not bec ause it's hard , but because t hey're afraid of speak ing – ev en th oug h r eal prog ress co mes f rom pra ctice. W e c an h ope that in the near future, t here will be ch anges in t he c urriculum, making language learning more practical and encouraging.

Glossary

enrol in – toregisterfor or sign up fo r aschool, co urse, etc.
expand voca bulary – to in crea se the n umber of words you know
languag e acq uisition– the natural process of learning a lang ua ge through expos ure and inte ra ction
ut– to dra w som eone's attenti on to
point sth o
somethi ng
prevailing– the most comm on or wi desp read
sens ibly – reasonably
slip – a small mistake
stand out– to be very easily recognisable because you are different, better, etc.
step up – take action, rise to a challenge
squeeze – to fit something into a limited time, often with difficulty
surmount– to successfully deal with a difficulty or obstacle
weave – to include something smoothly into something else

What can be used as a motivation to study a foreign language

For example,there mightbespecificcontent(abouta group, artist,orfieldyoulove)that'sonlytranslatedto one language,mainly English,whichisoftenlistedhigher than theoriginallanguageonthelanguageacquisition speed list(andimagineyou'reateenwhostillstruggles with it).Thissituation forcesustocompromise,because if we wanttoconsume content"sensibly",weareforced to learnagivenlanguagetoacommunicativelevelata breakneck pace.

This typeofmotivation canalsooccurinsituations where youdon'twantto stickoutfromyourfriendsor peer group.It'snotaproblemwhenyouuseatrans-lation occasionallyforyourpersonaluseoratwork(e.g., when replyingtoanemailfromaforeigninvestor),how-ever, it'sbecomingmorecommonforbrandstouse English slogansandforyoungpeopletoweaveEnglish phrase sintotheirconversations,andinthatcontext,we certa inlydon'twanttobecarryingatranslatorround.As bea peer pressure and linguistic exclusion take hold,young peopleoftenachievethe seeminglyimpossible:learning afo reignlanguagein no time.

Technologymightmake communicationeasier,butreal understandingstill comesfrompeoplewhomakean effort to learn and connect through language.

The Science of Baby Talk

– How Infants Learn to Speak

By Patrycja Robak

Have you ever caught yourself speaking to a baby in a high-pitched, sing-song voice like, "Who's a cute little baby?" That's not just a funny habit – it's actually a powerful tool that helps infants learn to talk. Scientists refer to this special way of speaking as infant-directed speech (IDS), and it plays a significant role in how babies acquire language during the first years of life.

Why Do We Use "Baby Talk"?

Baby talk, or IDS, isn't just about sounding sweet. It has specific features – like a higher pitch, slower pace, exaggerated facial expressions, and repeated words – that make it easier for babies to hear and understand the sounds of language. Research shows that babies actually prefer this type of speech over regular adult talk because it grabs their attention and helps them figure out how language works.

When Does Language Learning Begin?

Surprisingly, it starts before birth. In the last few months of pregnancy, babies can hear sounds from the outside world, especially their mother's voice. After birth, they already recognise the rhythm and melody of the language they heard in the womb.

In the first few months, babies coo and make vowel-like sounds. Around 6 months, they begin babbling, stringing together syllables like "ba-ba" or "da-da". This stage is pretty universal – babies across cultures babble in similar ways at first. But soon, they start to sound more like the language they hear every day.

By around 12 months, many babies say their first real words. Between 18 months and 2 years, they start combining words like "more juice" or "mama go". By the time they're 3 or 4, they usually speak in full sentences and can follow basic grammar rules – all without formal teaching.

Photo by Ryan Fields on Unsplash

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How Does the Brain Handle Language? Learning language isn't just about copying sounds – it's a complex mental process. According to Noam Chomsky, humans are born with a built-in ability to learn language. This idea is backed by the concept of a critical period – a window in early life when the brain is especially good at picking up language. Modern brain scans show that some regions of the brain, like Broca's and Wernicke's areas, light up when we speak or listen. In babies, the brain is incredibly flexible, or plastic, which helps them build the connections needed for language very quickly. **The Role of Social Interaction**

Talking to babies is more than just saying words – it's about *interacting*. Babies learn best when adults respond to their sounds, make eye contact, and take turns "talking". This back-and-forth helps babies learn how communication works. Another important aspect is joint attention – when a baby and caregiver focus on the same thing, such as a toy or a pet. It helps babies connect words with objects and actions, which boosts vocabulary growth.

What About Bilingual Babies?

Some people think that exposing babies to two languages might confuse them. But studies show that babies can handle more than one language just fine – as long as they hear both often. Initially, bilingual babies may know fewer words in each language, but overall, their total vocabulary remains consistent. In fact, being bilingual can enhance cognitive skills, such as memory and problem-solving, later in life.

In a Nutshell

Learning to speak is one of the most impressive things babies do – and it starts earlier than you might think. From hearing language in the womb to babbling and saying their first words, babies are wired to learn through sound, social connection, and repetition. So next time you talk to a baby in that high-pitched, sing-song voice, know that you're not being silly – you're helping build the foundation of language.

Glossary

coo – a soft murmuring sound made by babies
enhance – intensify, increase, or further improve the quality
infant – a very young child or baby
pace – speed in walking, running, or moving
pitch – the degree to which a sound or a musical note is high or low
string together – add items to one another to form a series
womb – the organ in the lower body of a woman or female mammal where offspring are conceived

Sources:
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Melody of the Speech

By Daria Fruń

Understanding and using spoken language requires more than just knowing words, as a big part of verbal communication relies on paralinguistic cues expressed through the melodic aspects of speech, called prosody. It includes variations in pitch (intonation), rhythm, stress, and loudness.

Prosodic features can be divided into four distinct types, based on the meaning they convey:

1. intrinsic or linguistic prosody signals statements and questions, distinguishes meanings of phrases and words
2. affective prosody reflects emotional states of the speaker
3. intellectual prosody signals nuances such as sarcasm, irony, or jokes
4. inarticulate prosody signals agreement or disagreement

Prosody also plays a role in the process of language learning. Studies suggest that we begin to absorb language even before we are born – mainly by hearing our mothers talk, as their voices are possibly the clearest sounds we can hear while in the womb. Moreover, some findings indicate that newborns even use prosodic cues to divide speech streams into words and phrases – and that this strategy might be beneficial when learning a new language as an adult, too, as speech melody varies between languages and becoming accustomed to the sounds of the one we are studying will help with both better comprehension and sounding more natural while speaking.

Despite its importance, not all people are capable of prosody. There is a neurological condition, aprosodia, that affects a person's ability to comprehend or convey affective prosody. It's usually caused by damage to the non-dominant hemisphere areas of the brain responsible for speech production, but it also sometimes appears as a secondary symptom in disorders such as posttraumatic stress disorder and multiple sclerosis.

Productive aprosodia occurs when a person's ability to produce prosodic cues is impaired, either due to physical or cognitive limitations (or both). The first type characterises motor aprosodia – a person with this type may und erstan dthe emotional as pects ofwhat they hea r,but is physically incap able ofproducing vo cal inflecti ons and facial expres sions. On t he o pposite side is expr es- sive aprosodi a,wh er e a person' s ability to p roduc e cues rema ins inta ct, yet the cues don'tcon vey th e inte nded meanin g.

Receptive aprosodia results from impairment atthe tsensory perception and/or cognitive levels of faculties such as auditory p rocessing o r emotional comprehension diminishes an individual's ability to assess the significance of changes in speech m elody, or even to notice them.

Disruptions in the functioning of areas responsible for

How wesaysomethingisequallyimportantaswhatwe say. Whilelearninganewlanguage,itmight bebeneficial to keepinmindthateachlanguagehasits owndistinct melody – melody that is crucial in communication.

Glossary

inarticulate – unable to express feelings or ideas clearly, or expressed in a way that is difficult to understand **inflection** – the way in which the sound of your voice changes during speech **intrinsic** – being an extremely important and basic characteristic of a person or thing **pitch** – the degree to which a sound or a musical note is high or low **prosody** – the rhythm and intonation (the way a speaker's voice rises and falls) of language **stress** – the way that a word or syllable is pronounced with greater force than other words in the same sentence or other syllables in the same word **to convey** – to express a thought, feeling, or idea so that it is understood by other people **to diminish** – to reduce or be reduced in size or importance **hemisphere** – one of the two halves of the brain

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Modern, Enjoyable Way of Learning

Incorporating movies into teaching and learningEnglish

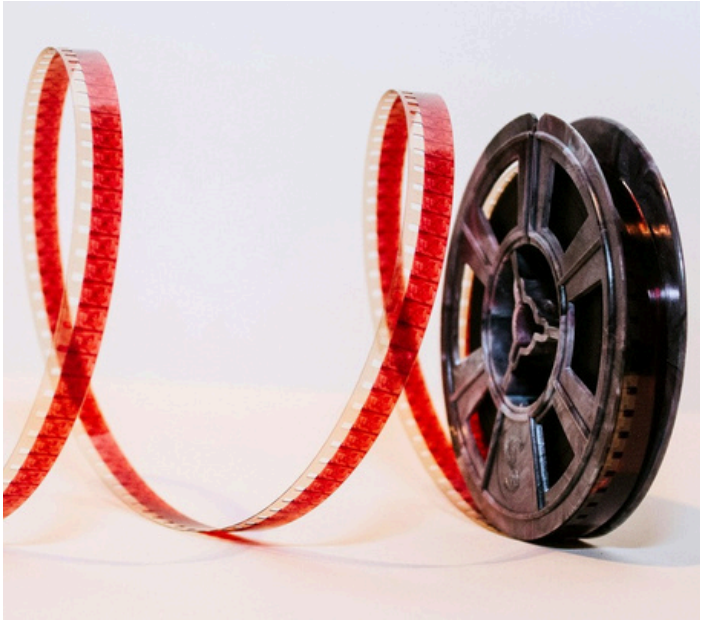
By Joanna Łukasiewicz

If you're a user of social media, it is hard not to notice a new trend towards making learning more fun. Doctors, professors, enthusiasts and geeks make short educational videos. This way, you can easily understand quite complicated concepts from multiple fields. What I love about learning a new language is that you don't even need a good-willed YouTuber or a teacher to learn.

Everyonewithaccess to the web can find versions of televisionseries forchildrenin the preferred language and readsubtitlesintheir native language. The words used in episodesare notovercomplicated, therefore, they are perfect for beginners. Some time ago, I found a French English-version of SpongeBob made especially for speakingviewersinterested in learning French. That's justadropin the ocean.

Moreover, when you get more advanced, you can watch longer forms like movies. Research conducted in China (Li, Wang, 2015) showed that students who watched movies as a part of their English course got better at speaking and listening. Besides that, they got better at writing and became more motivated and culturally aware. Another study conducted in North Macedonia (Ismaili, 2013) showed a significant difference between the experimental group (movies added as a part of the English course) and the control group (same course as before) in language skills, in favour of the experimental group. An experiment from 2014 (Khoshniyat, Dowlatabadi, 2014) showed that Disney movies made learning more enjoyable and helped students memorise idioms. It proved that teaching with the inclusion of movies was more effective than traditional methods. So, if you happen to be a teacher, it's worth giving it a try and bringing movies into your classroom.

Even if your teacher doesn't include modern ways of teaching, or you don't attend any classes, you can learn on your own. Watching movies in a foreign language is a great way to relax and learn at the same time. Also, check out Arlena Witt – she is an English teacher who includes parts of movies, series and songs in her short videos. From my experience, if you know English, it makes learning almost everything easier. If courses or tutorials in your first language don't fulfil your needs, you can always look for alternatives in the language you are learning.



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I believe that teaching and learning shouldn't overly revolve around discipline. Finding a way to make learning fun can be the key to success for many people, especially if you're tired and need to relax after doing your best at uni, work, extracurriculars and housework. How much easier is it to learn a topic that genuinely interests you, in a form that suits you, than just trying to memorise everything when it doesn't make sense to you.

Glossary

extracurricular–an activity astudentdoes outside regular school lessons, such as sports or choir

geek – a person who is knowledgeable about and obsessively interested in a particular subject

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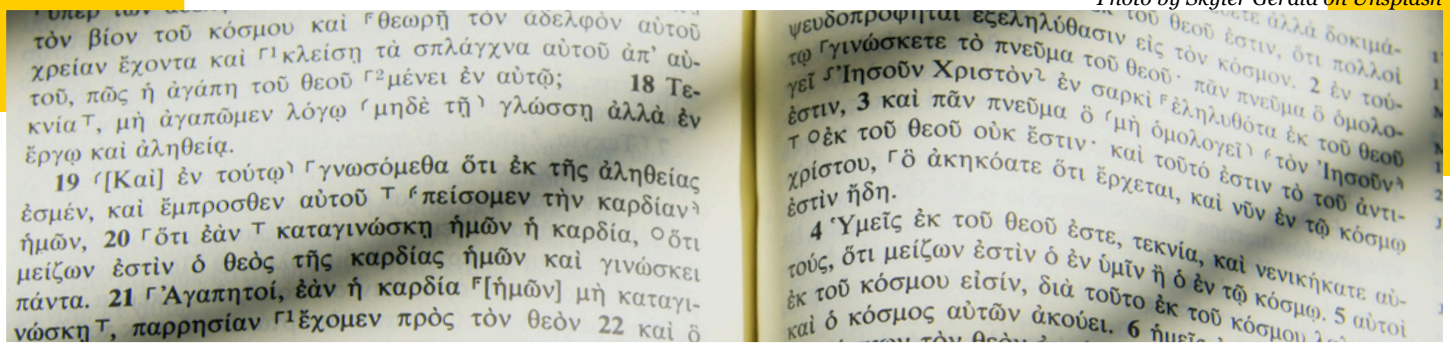
LOST IN TRANSLATION: *Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis*

By Natalia Żamojda



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The Russian word *toska* (тоска) is translated as various combinations of melancholy, nostalgia, grief, longing, and boredom. However, Vladimir Nabokov stated that no English word can adequately express the depth of feeling associated with *toska*. While reading its definition, we might assume that we understand what this feeling is, but these are only assumptions. We are familiar with the components of toska that exist in the English language, but the concept itself remains foreign to us. Russians tend to perceive toska as untranslatable — this feeling is deeply tied to the Russian language and culture. The issue we encounter here is the problem of translations — they are merely paraphrases. Bilingual individuals are those who most often highlight the harmful impact that translations can have on the author's intentions. It appears that translations most severely distort jokes, sayings, and all forms of ambiguity. We then tend to say that the comicality or dramatic nature of the dialogue has got *lost in translation*. This idiom became particularly popular after Sofia Coppola's film of the very same name and is often used as a concise summary of the complex issue of the relationship between the individual and language of the culture that surrounds them. This work aims to explore the issue of loss in translation from a broader perspective.

Language is a very significant means of regulating our actions. We live, speak, and think in language; however, there are many different languages and, even within each of them, every individual has their own variation of what they know and use. Does this deeply personal form of language we live with impose any limitations on us? This dilemma was pointed out in 1921 by the great thinker of linguistic philosophy, Ludwig Wittgenstein. In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, the Austrian philosopher wrote his famous words "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world". The number of thoughts I can express with words thus determines the number of thoughts I can grasp.

things I can know. This position was further explored in the works of subsequent thinkers, eventually leading to the development of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which is the subject of this paper.

The viewpoint, also known as the theory of linguistic relativity, states that human thinking, perception, and other cognitive structures are shaped by the language in which an individual functions. The name of the hypothesis originates from the surnames of two linguists who studied the languages of Native Americans: Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. The hypothesis inspired research and discussions about the differences in thinking between societies that use different languages (Klimczuk, 2013). Therefore, it helps explain the previously mentioned issue of words, phrases, and situations that are untranslatable.

To make the concept of the hypothesis as accessible as possible for the reader, I will refer directly to the work of Edward Sapir (Sapir, 1964):

> *Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. [...] No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.*

Based on the hypothesis, two positions have emerged: the currently accepted linguistic relativism (a weaker version) and linguistic determinism, which assumes that language completely determines thought (a stronger version). Even a simple observation, such as the fact that we can grasp at least the essential meaning of terms foreign to our culture, serves as a strong argument against the deterministic position (Klimczuk, 2013). The Russian toska may seem distant and complex to us, burdened with some cultural nuances, yet we are still able to capture some of this complexity in an English definition. The relativist perspective softened the stronger version, replacing the idea of complete linguistic determination of thought with a limited impact. In this paper, I have selected two studies that support the validity of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

Lera Boroditsky, in her work *Does Language Shape Thought?* [...] (2001) presented the results of studies on differences in time perspective between English and Mandarin speakers. The author described time orientation in English as mostly horizontal:

> *We can talk about the good times ahead of us or the hardships behind us. We can move meetings forward, push deadlines back, and eat dessert before we are done with our vegetables. In Mandarin, horizontal terms are used, but vertical terms are also common: The spatial morphemes shàng ("up") and xià ("down") are frequently used to talk about the order of events, weeks, months, semesters, and more. Earlier events are said to be shàng or "up," and later events are said to be xià or "down."*

Boroditskystudied studentswhosefirstlanguagewas either Englishor Mandarin.First, studentswereasked prime questions — simplespatial scenarioswithshort descriptions,and thentargetquestions about time(e.g. "March comes earlier than April", with true/false answers). Reactiontimes weremeasured.Participants responded faster whenthe arrangementofobjectsinthe prime questionmatchedthewaytimeisperceivedintheir language: English - (horizontal), Mandarin (vertical). Therefore, Boroditsky's study suggests that native language influences thinking.

Eventhough itmayseemthatLeraBoroditsky'sresearch analysed theissuefromaratherabstractperspective—by studying the perceptionoftime—therearealsostudies exploring the influence of language on social issues. Does

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language modify the perception of gender roles? This question was posed by Prewitt-Freilino et al. (2012) in a study analysing the relationship between gendered forms in languages and gender equality in specific countries. The authors identified three types of languages based on their grammatical categorisation of gender: grammatical gender languages, natural gender languages, and genderless languages (Prewitt-Freilino et al., 2012, as cited in Stahlberg et al., 2007). In grammatical gender languages, nouns are always defined with grammatical gender — masculine, feminine, or neuter (e.g., Slavic languages). In natural gender languages, nouns are mostly not defined, but they coexist with personal pronouns that specify gender (e.g., English). Genderless languages do not categorise gender with their noun system (e.g., Finnish). The authors assigned language categories to 111 countries and then compared them with the Global Gender Gap Index — an indicator that takes into account gender disparities in various areas of life. The study confirmed that in countries where grammatical gender languages are spoken, lower gender equality is observed, compared to countries, where the languages of the two other categories are spoken (Prewitt-Freilino et al., 2012).

Studies presented here demonstrate that the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is reflected in empirical research. They also highlight various dimensions of language's impact on thought — it can be analysed through the lens of time perception, as well as through a more pragmatic perspective, such as gender equality. The hypothesis explains why it is impossible to translate a book or any piece of culture perfectly, and why the language barrier is much more than just a communication issue. The relationship between language and cognition offers a vast space for inspiring research that can help us understand the limits of our thinking, as well as the cultural differences.

Glossary

ambiguity – the quality of being open to more than one interpretation
concise – giving the relevant or necessary information clearly and in a few words
distort – give a misleading or false account or impression of
encounter – unexpectedly be faced with or experience something
longing – an intense desire to do or have something
merely – just; only
spatial – relating to or occupying space
vast – of very great extent or quantity

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Learning a Language

At Any Age

By Jasmīne Zīle

Have you ever been fascinated by the idea of learning a new language?

Maybe after a really satisfying vacation or a trip to another country, where the culture enchanted you and the way people spoke their language seemed so elegant that you fell in love with it? Or maybe, in your imagination, some languages are associated with certain feelings or aesthetics, and you often dream of how wonderful it would be to read or recite French poetry, listen to operas without needing to read the libretto first, or fully understand the meaning of that favourite song of yours.

For me personally, diving into a new language feels like stepping into a slightly different reality. Languages are fascinating. Sometimes, it happens that during a trip, you already memorise a few curse words, fun or polite phrases, and head back to your homeland, eager to continue exploring. And there you are, making a study plan, maybe even buying a dictionary or a textbook with basic grammar, and starting your journey. But how long will it last? How far will your motivation take you? (My shortest "record"? One sleepless night with Hebrew — and I never looked at my scribbles again.) Maybe you'll even sign up for a course, and if you still haven't lost your eagerness to learn after simple (perhaps even trivial, but necessary) "introduce yourself" lessons — congrats! You are already ahead of many! If you continue, soon you will start to understand simple texts... but what about speaking? The speaking barrier is one of the most common difficulties when learning a new language. Or (let's get wild with our imagination!) you will start speaking, but for some reason you will get stuck at a certain level... and the usual techniques for breaking through a language plateau might not be enough.

In short, there are many obstacles, but have you noticed how easily children seem to overcome them? It's a common fact that after a certain age, it just becomes harder to memorise and process new information. More free time and playfulness children have is undoubtedly helpful, but the reasons, as you might guess, are much deeper. Neuroplasticity, working memory differences... well, yes, but the article would be too long if I listed them all. In this article, I would like to share my personal experience and focus on elements of language learning that depend more on approach and mindset than on age.

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The Adult Brain vs t he C hild's B rain: T he R ole o f the Sensitive Period

My Latvian teacher, Inguna V., once said that it's possible to learn to speak Latvian (or any other language) without an accent up until the age of 12. At the time, I didn't realise that she was referring to the study by Johnson & Newport (1989), which demonstrated that children who started learning a second language before the age of 12 could closely achieve near-native proficiency. This study is related to the Sensitive Period Hypothesis, which suggests that there is an optimal window (the best time, in simple terms) before puberty, when the brain exhibitshigher neuroplasticity. This increased plasticity allows us to acquire linguistic structures, grammar, and pronunciation more efficiently. The Critical Period Hypothesis (before the age of 5) is essential for acquiring a native (first) language. Meanwhile, the Sensitive Period, whichtextends until puberty still allows for highly efficient language learning . She told us thisbecause she wasasbc native Latvian speaker teachingat a Polishgymnasium in Daugavpils (Dyneburg), the largest Russian-speaking city in Latvia.My class-clasmte mates and I were 10–11 years old.For context, many people in our city speak Latvian fluently, but some — even if they can communicate effortlessly —struggle to develop a natural, native-like Latvian accent. For some reason, that wasn't my case, even though Latvian was my second language. I might have had stylistic (word sequence) errors due to interference from Russian. Still, I intuitively grasped Latvian grammar and pronunciation without difficulty — an experience that aligns perfectly with the Sensitive Period Hypothesis. It turns out that during this period, I unintentionally engaged in a process known in linguistics as Extensive Reading, which aligns with Krashen's Input Hypothesis.

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How come I never consciously studied Latvian and Polish?

First grade at elementary school wasn't easy for me. My first language was Russian, but I had to learn to read and understand subjects like maths and science in Latvian. I was studying in a Polish school, where I was suddenly surrounded by Polish — a language I didn't understand at all. Unlike my classmates, who had attended a Polish-language kindergarten and were at least familiar with the language through songs like "Kolorowe kredki" and such, I had zero exposure.

But through different games and integration activities, Polish stopped being frightening. My brain automatically caught similarities with Russian, and I started to understand it intuitively. Sometimes it was enough for me to hear just one Polish word root that matched the Russian one, and my brain would immediately understand the suffixes, prefixes, a slightly different pronunciation, the stress on another syllable, or a different grammatical form. After six months, I could read fluently in Polish with understanding. Of course, those were simple books adjusted for kindergarteners and first graders, so there was nothing particularly miraculous about it.

But what about Latvian? And here we return to Extensive Reading and Krashen's Input Hypothesis. One day during the summer holidays, I went to the library and started reading in Latvian. At first, I didn't understand anything. Later, I thought I was simply making up my own stories in my head while staring at the words. And then... it happened. I realised I was truly reading. I was understanding. It wasn't just my bored mind hallucinating while staring at weird symbols on a page. I remember this moment vividly — it amazed me so much that, for the next few years, I continued reading for hours on end, sometimes six or eight hours at a time. I wouldn't even notice time passing. I didn't translate a word, but soon understood everything and helped my classmates translate some words during essay writing. We used to write reviews of books or essays on specific topics in Latvian during lessons; we were allowed to ask the teacher, "How do you say some word in Russian in Latvian?" I became that translator on equal footing with the teacher. Sometimes, even she would tell my classmates, "Ask Jasmine." One of my annoying classmates even called me "Jasmine– Google Translate."

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This is an example of acquiring the language at quite a young age, but there is a more interesting case I witnessed later in my life. During my time at a music high school, I had a music literature teacher who spoke very eloquent Latvian (music literature eloquence). I once overheard gossip among other teachers about how she, as a student in our high school before attending Riga's Music Academy, spoke with a thick Russian accent. But when he returned to teach, his Latvian was flawless. Only later did I start noticing some subtle stylistic errors that filtered into his otherwise polished speech. Nota bene — in adulthood! Yes, he didn't start from scratch but achieved fascinating eloquence later in life. So if you have some rudiments of Deutsch from school (or any other language from any period of your life), don't be so quick to give up on revising them.

The Latvian teacher I mentioned earlier, Inguna V., was not only brilliant but also passionate and curious. I suppose she didn't learn Polish as a child (as I recall her saying she started learning Polish at university for a semester or so). Still, since she taught at a Polish gymnasium, she somehow became immersed in it. She never minded asking questions and sometimes even taught us new Polish words — casually adding a Polish equivalent after giving the Latvian term in Russian or English. Now I see how unique that environment was, because it wasn't just the teacher s wh o learnt Polish — even the maintenance staff did. We had a cosy school atmosphere where everyone knew each other, and even the janitors were greeted by name. I recall noticing that many staff members, including those in the cafeteria and maintenance, began working at our school without speaking a word of Polish — yet quickly picked up basic phrases (not so surprising, right?). But what was surprising was that some of them, after just a few months, could hold simple conversations. I only realised how far they'd come years later. During secondary school, I once addressed one of the new workers in Polish. They stumbled, hesitated, but a few months later, I tried again in Russian or Latvian, and they answered proudly in Polish, refusing to switch back.

Now, when I reflect on it and try to explain such progress, I hypothesise that one of the key factors was the strong presence of school events, celebrations, and genuine immersion in Polish traditions. I often saw the maintenance staff standing at the back of the auditorium during performances, listening, helping, and bringing things. It was a small school, so interactions between people were frequent and natural. That is why I believe two important elements overlapped here: passive exposure and participation — a sense of belonging and a genuine openness to trying and communicating.

This leads me to the first conclusion of this article:

Language learning can occur passively through immersion and observation, or actively through conscious effort and engagement. Both work, but for adults, the active part becomes more crucial.

Photo by Ben White on Unsplash

Why Learning Swedish at 18 was a whole Different Story

As simple as it might sound... I just wasn't a child anymore... but let me explain what it really means to learning a language not as a child.

1) You are not fearless anymore. If you are — congrats, but that's not common, so guard your fearlessness like a treasure. Most adults are quite self-conscious. We worry if we sound stupid, whether we pronounce things wrong, and when you talk to a stranger in a foreign language, you might first think:

"Wow, does he really understand me? Oh, wait, he's asking me to repeat... maybe I pronounced it wrong, and it means something completely different? Or does he have hearing problems? Is my accent understandable?"

When you are a child, you just try, and somehow it works. You play, ignore your lack of fluency, and draw pure joy from play and interaction. Good language courses are often designed to incorporate practice from the very beginning; however, for the learner, this requires overcoming their own self-doubt and shame. You must confront your ego, stop taking yourself so seriously, and expect perfection from yourself. It just looks like children don't have that kind of arrogance. To soak up information like a sponge, you need to stop being your own critic (at least in language learning). Until you focus too much on self-criticism, a lot of information (and fun) just bypasses you.

2) Implicit vs E xplicit L earning

How Structured Learning Helps or Hinders Adults

Adults often need clear rules and frameworks (grammar, vocabulary). However, these rules and frameworks are only tools, and adults sometimes spend too much time preparing them instead of fully using them. When I was a private teacher, I provided no more rules and grammar than a person actually needed. Excess theory without practical application can hinder progress. While speaking, you can concentrate and keep in mind some grammatical rules, but not all, so there is no point in giving them to a learner when they are not ready and can't really control and stick to these rules in speech. The best option is to learn rules and systems as an answer to questions that arise from encountering a language.

But it's not all negatives... there are advantages to using your "age privilege" correctly.

Our consciousness is a double-edged sword. Yes — it can make things much more difficult, but it can also make them much easier. You have more capacity to concentrate and grasp grammar rules, which may suddenly become not boring but enlightening, serving as a compass and giving direction. You have experienced more, you have more possibilities to form complex associations, stick to grammar rules and structures, and use life experience as a gut feeling and intuition. You don't just pick up what you hear; you are grammatically aware and can consciously analyse these rules. All this can happen thanks to consciousness — only if you use it right. Beware: analysis can help, but it can also paralyse. That's why learning a language is not only learning the language but also working with your mind and thinking. Sometimes it might be really hard, mind- and ego-breaking, but... no, I won't say it's worth it. Go find out for yourself!

3) The Role of Play, Social Interaction, and Environment

When you are an adult, what is the most typical way of learning a language? Tyrant owl of Duolingo, language class with lists of words to memorise. You name it.

What is the most typical way of learning a language for a child? "I learnt it by watching cartoons" (yes, seriously, I knew such a person), or "My dad speaks that language, I learnt it through play", or "I learnt from friend...". Children learn through play and relationships, th ey "c atch" th e l anguage through games, singing, and spontaneous interactions. For adults, this also

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works, but it requires consciously creating space for free conversations and language games. And it takes courage to get involved in such games. The more interactive and natural the contacts are, the easier it is to overcome the speaking barrier. But creating interactive contacts... that's also hard, especially in adulthood.

The concluding thoughts of this article would be — yes, we can't underestimate the sensitive period — but still, there is no fixed limit to growth, no age beyond which learning becomes impossible.

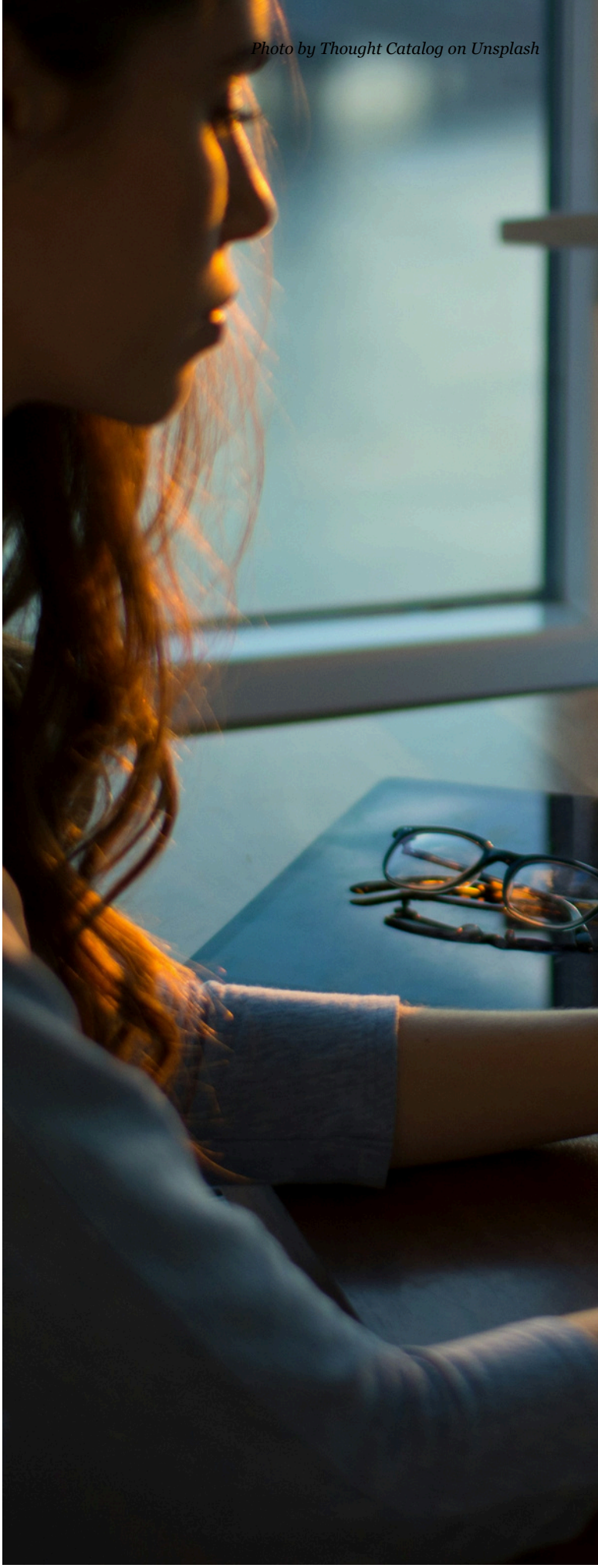
Passive exposure — familiarises you with language and reduces the distance; active use — builds fluency. For children, it's easier because they are more often naturally in a stimulating environment, absorbing language through play, connection, and exposure. The real challenge for adults is that they need to recreate those conditions intentionally, but they can also learn, and sometimes even faster.

Some brief advice drawn from this article could be summarised as follows:

- Find opportunities to recreate inten tionally conditions for language learning.
- Confront your ego and stay open.
- Have fun, as children do.

Glossary

dive into– becomesuddenly and enthusiastically involved in oroccupied with something
eager– wanting very much to do or have something
enchant– put (someone or something) under a spell
libretto – the text of an opera or other long vocal work
overlap – if two or more activities, subjects, or periods of time overlap, they have some parts that are the same
proficiency– the fact of having the skill and experience in doing something
puberty– the stage in people's lives when they develop from a child into an adult
rudiments– the simplest and most basic facts
to bypass – to ignore a rule or official authority
to hinder – to limit the ability of someone to do something, or to restrict the development of something
to plateau– to reach a particular level and then stay the same
to scribble– to write or draw something quickly or carelessly



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Johnson, J. S. ,& N ewport,E .L. (1 989).C riticalpe riodef fectsin se cond la nguagele arning:T he influence of m aturationalst ateon th eac quisitionof En glishas a se cond la nguage.

Interview

with Joanna Rzyska

By Jan Wolicki

"I've got a degree in French philology from the University of Warsaw, and since 2001, I've been the owner of a Polish- French nursery. Before that, I worked as a journalist, but it was just a brief episode in my life. While running the nursery, I founded a children's publishing house, Dwie Siostry, *with Jadzia and Ewa, and I managed it for about 15 years."*

Joanna Rzyska

Jan Wolicki: How did it all begin? How was it that French came into your life? Were you exposed to it from very early on, or did it start a bit later?

Joanna Rzyska: I had contact with French from early childhood because my mother was a French teacher. However, those were the times when parents did not give children as much attention as they do today. My mother worked a lot – she had three jobs and was a university lecturer, so she taught me French whenever she could find time. But she took me with her on trips to France when she went there for professional training. So, in fact, I learnt through immersion – while my mother was doing her internship and studying, I stayed, for example, for a month at her friend's and that's how I gained knowledge.

JW: It's often said that French is an impossible language to learn, that as soon as one becomes an adult, there is no way of learning it. Is there some truth in that? What are the differences when it comes to learning French as children and as adults?

JR: I personally started to learn French in a systematic, academic, if you will, manner in secondary school. And yes, I was surrounded by the language from time to time. It has c omplicat ed grammar and orthog raphy indeed,butw hic hone does n't?Whe none trai ns and is d ed icated, I t hi nk it is a s h ard as any other language.

JW: So it is no greater challenge than, say, Spanish or Russian?

JR: No. The problem arises w hen o ne w ants t o achieve perfect pronunciation because the middle ear loses its elasticity around the age of six or seven. However, if one has a "good ear", i t i s n ot a s ignificant o bstacle.

JW: So, when it comes to vocabulary, grammar and communication in French, is it not harder?

JR: I don' t thin k s o.My m othe r, who taugh t both Fren Fde nch and Ital ian, alw ays sa id t hat students struggled to read correctly in their second year of studies, while her Italian students were already speaking in full sentences. So there are some differences. I can't deny that.

JW: I suppose we will get back to those. But as you said, you started strea publishing company. What brought you to that idea? What were your reasons?

JR: My friends and I were young mothers when we opened it in 2004, and there was no classic children's literature on the market.

JW: Which means?

JR: That, for example, we did not have Maurice Sendak, Miroslava Saska, Davida Mc Kee – we were the ones who brought them in. I remember one conversation at a book fair where a French publisher, surprised that we were buying the rights to Sendak, asked whether we would really be the first to publish him in Poland, and she emphasised how lucky we were. Those were the times right after the political transformation, and many authors simply hadn't been translated yet.

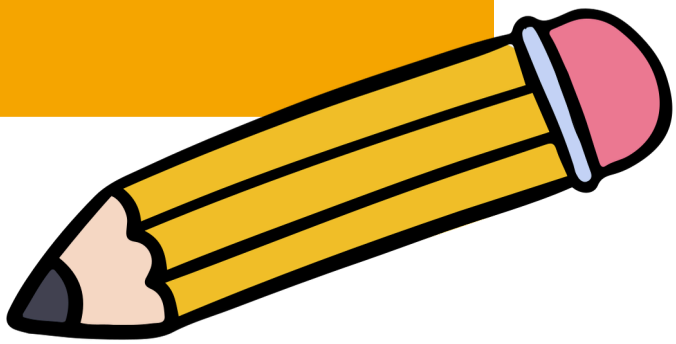
JW: And now? **JR:** It seems to me that there is a great abundance of them. In the early 2000s, there were books, but they were poorly translated, and there were many "market" publishers – even Andersen was unreadable then. Now we have everything. Still, there are commercial publishers whose editorial, graphic and substantive quality is very poor. However, we have many publishers that focus on quality, though often they have to fight for survival. Even though statistics show we read more, the market indicates that parents are looking for books for younger children, specifically at the kindergarten age. And then we have a vacuum. Then school begins, required reading appears, and apparently it's hard for parents to balance one with the other (reading for fun and reading for school) – so they stop reading for pleasure and leave it to the school. So we also need to make sure that these required readings aren't just old classics but books that can fascinate children.

JW: Do we have books in French that children can learn from?

JR: This crisis of books in foreign languages hasn't been quite taken care of. For example, in Warsaw, we had a French bookstore at the French Institute that had been around for 30 years, but it closed not so long ago. There were French books from France, but now parents mostly use Amazon because it is convenient in terms of both time and cost. To get textbooks, you really need to know where and how to look.

JW: So there's a practical problem when learning a language other than English, which is already hugely popular – namely, the lack of tools.

Photo by Clarisse Croset on Unsplash



JR: For sure, it requires much more effort from parents, who are not only looking for appropriate tools but also for schools. For example, in Warsaw, there are two bilingual (French) secondary schools. And in the rest of the country, there are 19 accredited ones. That's about 2% of foreign language or bilingual schools, which means that French will undoubtedly become an elite language.

JW: And that's why you opened the nursery? Did it arise from a mar ke tgap ?

JR: When we opened it, we didn't think about that. It hadn't crossed my mind. I was a young mother with a degree in French philology, and I admired my university friends who had learnt F r ench in ch ildhood. They had the space and, later, the ease because they didn't have to struggle with pronunciation or grammar, making the degree more of a direction than a challenge. I wanted to give the same opportunity to my child. When I started looking, there were only two such nurseries in Warsaw. One was at the French embassy, but the instructions were entirely in French. Due to the lack of alternatives (journalism would have involved too much travel), my friend, who later founded French school *La Fontaine*, and I decided to start a home-based nursery, giving children what we did best. We taught them French.

JW: And how did it grow?

JR: At first, we had five children (two of them our own). We did everything ourselves, from cooking to teaching. It grew slowly. After four years, we moved to a villa on Zakopiańska Street.

JW: And when did the school appear?

JR: When my sister, Jadzia, appeared. She's a lawyer with a systematic and administrative approach to business, and I could feel her energy, which made me confident she could do it. To this day, it rests mostly on her shoulders. We were 15 at the time, and the school was created largely thanks to the efforts of our stud ents' pare nts, w ho had be en ad vocatin g for it for s ome time.

Af ter a few years o f being ask ed tofind altern atives so o ur ch ild ren cou ld contin ue lear ning French, we finally started the school.

JW: What about people who speak French? You said that it would become an elite language. Is this process of elitisation already happening?

JR: Yes, there are fewer and fewer people who speak French. When I was younger, French was considered chic. Now it's a bit different. Sometimes parents who don't speak French or don't have an interest in French ask me if there is a point (to put their child in our nursery). That's when I use this argument – English is everywhere now, so a second language is replacing it in some way as an added value whose role was assigned to English for so long. And learning a language isn't just about the language itself. Learning a language is, above all, brain development – gaining bilateral flexibility, which is useful for life. It's logical and causal thinking, and at the same time, it's discovering the cultural mosaic of the Francophone world. We teach French precisely in that Francophone context – we show children that you can speak French not only in France.

JW: What is the situation with children's outcomes in your institutions? In public schools, a foreign language is treated as just another subject, often pushed to the side. In your nursery and school, a child spends half of their time with a native speaker. How does it affect their results?

JR: In my opinion, it has a very positive effect. Studies show that children from bilingual homes have slightly delayed speech development because it occurs in two channels simultaneously, which increases the cognitive load. Children learn two language codes at the same time, and in my opinion, it doesn't make much of a difference whether a child starts speaking at two or two and a half years old. Children at our nursery learn through immersion. As you said, they spend half a day with a native speaker. If we compare them with children who haven't had earlier exposure, those who have learnt in this way have greater ease with learning other languages. For example, they pick up English faster, looking for connections and connotations at the syntactic level. Children without prior exposure, as we can see in our school, progress more slowly. Learning a language is much more of a struggle for them. Those who learnt through immersion associate learning with a teacher who ate with them, laughed and played with them.

JW: And this enigmatic talent for learning languages – what would that be exactly?

JR: When we begin to learn, it's hard to talk about talent itself, because, as we know, neural connections are being formed, and those that we exercise become stronger, while over time, it's harder to develop new ones. They already have a well-established path for learning a language, the children have simply learnt how to learn a language.

Photo by moren hsu on Unsplash

Photo by Cash Macanaya on Unsplash

JW: What does it look like, then, for children who start primary school without any prior exposure to the language? Do they leave it with a good command of it?

JR: We have lots of children who reach that level very quickly. Often, however, these are children from bilingual homes. Those who learn from scratch vary – some catch up very fast, while for others it takes more effort, although eventually they succeed. After all, their brains are still very young. But it is already a different stage. In nursery, we learn through play-songs, manipulating blocks. Learning is multisensory. We can bombard children with these methods, and it's just the same with language. In a nursery, language is primarily used for communication, to talk with a teacher or colleague. In school, you get a textbook. You have to read something and do tasks. There, learning is less fun. Neurodidactically, it is a different level altogether.

JW: Going back to how children actually are taught in nursery – how did you teach them?

JR: There is no single method. At first, it is all about listening and getting used to the melody of the language. It is an intensive process. Sometimes parents come after the first year asking: H*ow come my child still doesn't speak French?* I tell them that their child has just begun to speak Polish. They are at an even earlier stage with a foreign language. After the child has a vocabulary of about 100 words, which usually happens after a year in nursery, the fun begins: "c'est à moi", "c'est à toi", and it is still playful learning. The last stage comes when children begin experimenting, when they try to say something. They become narrators.

JW: Is it the same for adults?

JR: Yes, the steps are similar. Teachers working with beginners have the most challenging job because they just ask and answer their own questions. Sometimes it looks funny — teachers talking to themselves. As we get older, we become more susceptible to stress. We are afraid of being judged, and when we learn in a group, that fear only grows stronger. Children don't have these barriers, they don't worry about grammar and rules. They just say "give", "have", "go garden", "give eat". They get their message across, and the fine-tuning comes quickly.

JW: So what is the key to learning a language?

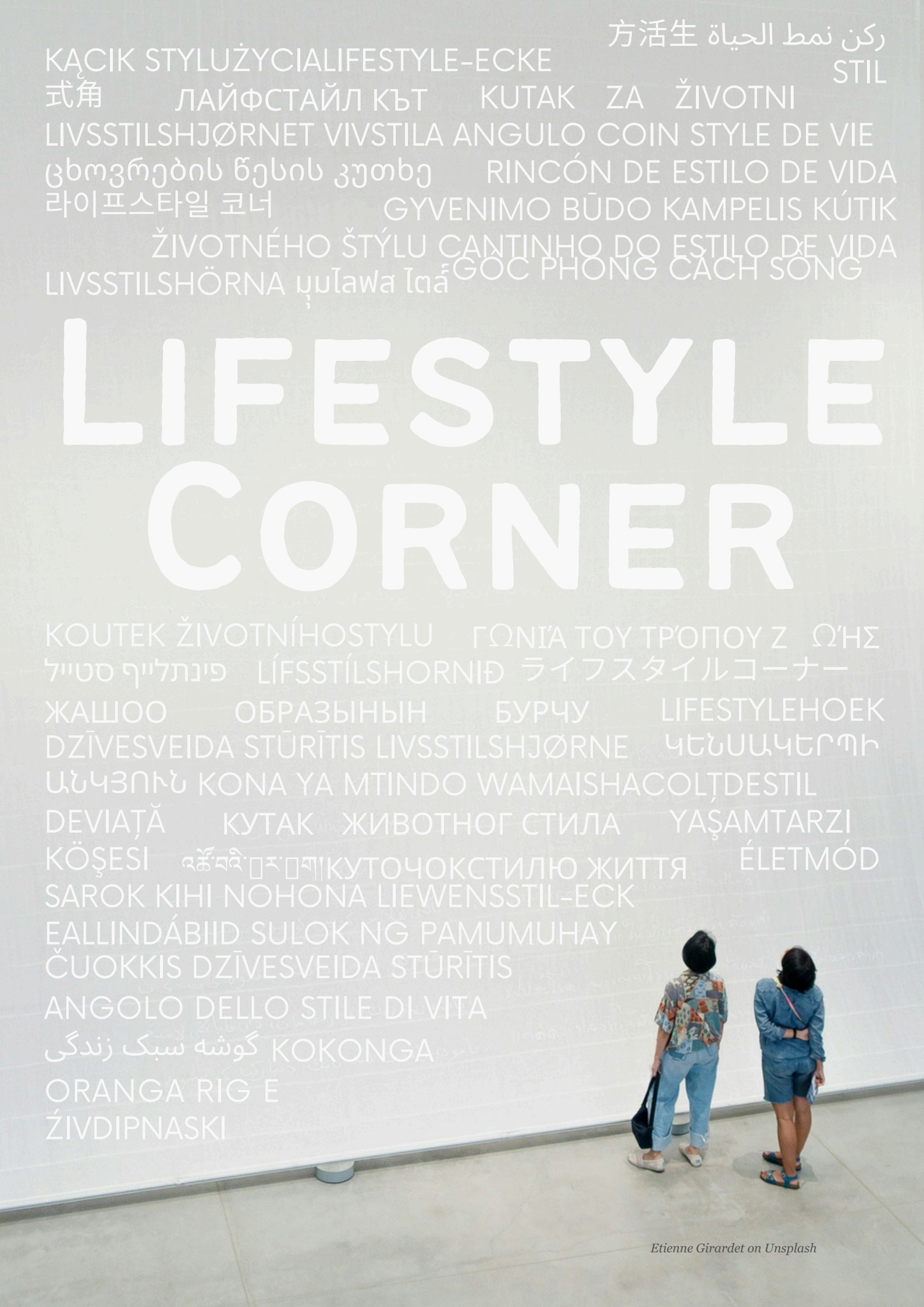
JR: To learn a language, we have to become children again.

JW: Thank you very much.

JR: *Merci beaucoup!*

Glossary

cognitive load – the mental effort needed to learn or process information
commercial publisher – a company that publishes books mainly to make money
connotation – an additional meaning or feeling associated with a word beyond its main meaning
cultural mosaic – learning about different cultures through a language
elite language – a language spoken by a small, privileged group and regarded as special or important
immersion – learning a language by being immersed in it constantly
market gap – a demand for a product or service that is not currently available
melody of a language – the rhythm, intonation, and flow of how a language is spoken
multisensory learning – learning that uses more than one sense
neural connection – a link in the brain that helps you learn or remember something
neurodidactics – teaching methods based on how the brain learns
nursery – a school for very young children before they start primary school
required reading – books that students must read at school



Etienne Girardet on Unsplash

Mathematical Linguistics

We use language every day – in text messages, in conversations, and when reading. We learn language from the very beginning of our lives. Most people think that this is a field of the humanities, but that's not entirely true. A particularly interesting area is mathematical linguistics – but what is it?

It was first introduced in Poland by the Institute of Mathematics at the University of Wrocław. Did you ever think that you could learn to write in a dead language using logic and maths? Now you know you can! The Wrocław Mathematicians' Foundation runs competitions – the Tower of Babel for primary schools and the Mathematical Linguistics Olympiad for secondary schools, which can lead to international olympiads. Competition tasks are based on dead, lesser-known, or imaginary languages. Sometimes you need to translate something, match vocabulary , o r deco de somethin g. Y ou do n't n eed special ised knowl edg e to take pa rtinth em .A swe can rea d on the organi sers' web sit e, all you n ee d is:

- the ability for synthetic and analytic thinking;
- skills in formulating and testing deductive hypotheses;
- and standard school linguistic knowledge.

With all of that, you can, with a little effort, solve the tasks presented there. It's really fun to do, especially if you like logical puzzles. If you want to try it out yourself, type "lingwistyka matematyczna" into your browser, click the Un iversityof Wr oclawlin k, the n "za dani a", and have fun!

Ezra Milewska

Pun Please

Whichdinosaurknowsa lot of synonyms?
Athesaurus.

.Why ar e apostr ophes terrible to date?

Because th ey are too posse ssive.

Whimsical LANGUAGE

Idioms

To have a silver tongue

Tobeverypersuasiveand speakina charming, convincing way.

To speak volumes

To say a lot withoutusingmanywords(or without saying anything at all); something that reveals a lot by itself.

To be tongue-tied

Tobeunable to speak,usuallyfrom nervousness or embarrassment.

To speak Greek to someone

Tosaysomething inawaythelistener doesn't understand; to be incomprehensible to someone.

To be lost in translation

Whenmeaning ornuance ischanged orlost while translating from one language to another.

Proverbs

Actions speak louder than words

Whatapersondoes isa better indicator of their character than what they say.

A good listener is a silent flatterer

Humanbeings havean innate desiretobe listened to, so if you listen to someone attentively, you'll flatter them.

Kind words will unlock an iron door

Gentleness, patience, and kindness can overcome even the most stubborn or difficult situations and people.

Speak your mind

Thisencouragesone tosaywhatthey really think.

Words cut deeper than a knife

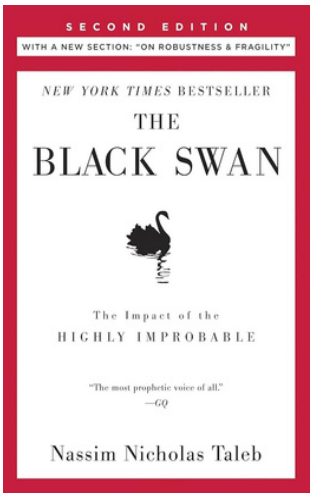
Verbalinsults and hurtful comments can cause more profound and lasting emotional pain than a physical wound.

Rise o f t he P lanet of the Apes

Reviews byJanWolicki

Rise ofthe Planet of th e Apes (2011), directed b y Rupe rt Wya tt, i s a reb oot and or igin s toryo f the c lassic Pla netof theApes ser ie s, an d i t s ets out to explore the riseo f intellig ent apes . Itmay not be high cin ema , but i t is n ot a bad film. O ne m ay th ink t hat Wyatt gave us th e sam eold stuff. Who h asn't hea rd about P lan et of the Ap es?I t's no t e asy to b eat such a classic . B ut I d on 't t hink he tries t o do th at.He giv e sus thebeginnin gsof that alternat ive w orld. An d besides tha t, th ereisan emotio nal a nd sci entific story. And a s we have seen inmanycin ematographic endeavours,t he mai n questio n i s "What d oes i t m ean tobehum a n?" Who is more human e— the bru te with a h um an bod y or th e ap e withabig he art?And soon. It is important a n d stimul ates one i nt ellectually, I suppose.But whatis important in terms of language? Because it plays a big role in that movie. Well,firstly, we see theprocessof acquisition and learning from context,and the y portrayitqui te well.Andsecon dly, the metap horical mom ent thathap pens in the movie , themomentthatchanges every thing , that s ets a mileston e in that hypoth eticalworld.Themomen t tha t destroys th e line between man and a peand isshown asa fina lstage o f evolut ion: t he m om ent onestarts to speak . Wh en you watch it a nd look atit from th is pers pective , it tendsto be m oretho ug ht-provoking than one would expec t.

The Black Swan



Most of us prefer to get informationfromsourcesthat provide some assurance that the information is accurate. Butisthereapossibility that some information cannot be verified as a ccurate?N assimNicholasTalebtouche s on that, as well as a few other things: how we lookattheworld,themisconception that we can be certain of anything and the word gamesbeingplayedonus.For example, w hen you go to thedo ctor and are checked for cancer,youwon'thaveadiagnosis s aying, "You don't have it " ; yo u will get something like: "Wehaven'tdetectedany signs of cancerous cells", which means that you should trust thetechnologytestsand the doctor's eyes.You should not absolutely believe that noneofthesetestscouldmake a mistake, and more , that the y are s o advanced that they wouldn'tmissathing.Do you really believe that? Taleb exp lains t hat the idea we are taught– thatsomething is merely possible – is mistaken, and that ultimately, n o one canpredictthefuture (even thoughmany lucrative jobsattemptprecisely o wever, there are severalthingstoconsiderwhenanalysing what is honest, i t is not. H being said nd how the narrative can be misleading.Nevertheless,it m ostly bro ade ns your horizo n s, and the sam e goesfo r languages.Thisbookopens you up to looking at the world from a nother perspe c t ive. Doesn'tlearninga newlanguage do the same?So enjoy . And think.

ADVENT CALENDAR

In the run-up to the holidays

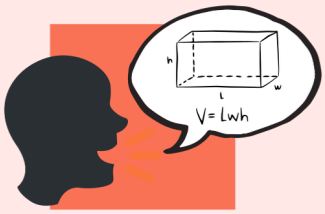
6.12 I WILL HAVE GIVEN SOMEONE A PRESENT	7.12 I WILL HAVE MADE MYSELF SOME HOT COCOA	8.12 I WILL HAVE COMPILED A CHRISTMAS PLAYLIST	9.12 I WILL HAVE MADE A CHRISTMAS DECORATION	10.12 I WILL HAVE DECORATED THE CHRISTMAS TREE
11.12 I WILL HAVE PUT ON WOOL SOCKS	12.12 I WILL HAVE BAKED GINGERBREAD COOKIES	13.12 I WILL HAVE DECORATED MY GINGERBREAD COOKIES	14.12 I WILL HAVE HUNG UP THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS	15.12 I WILL HAVE GONE CHRISTMAS SHOPPING WITH SOMEONE
16.12 I WILL HAVE RELAXED UNDER A COZY BLANKET	17.12 I WILL HAVE HELPED SOMEONE	18.12 I WILL HAVE WRAPPED THE PRESENTS	19.12 I WILL HAVE WATCHED "THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS"	20.12 I WILL HAVE PUT ON A WARM SWEATER
21.12 I WILL HAVE DRUNK A CUP OF WINTER TEA	22.12 I WILL HAVE TALKED WITH MY BEST FRIEND	23.12 I WILL HAVE MADE A CHRISTMAS-THEMED DRAWING	24.12 I WILL HAVE SPENT CHRISTMAS EVE WITH MY LOVED ONES	25.12 I WILL HAVE WISHED SOMEONE A MERRY CHRISTMAS
26.12 I WILL HAVE PLAYED A BOARD OR CARD GAME	27.12 I WILL HAVE CLEANED UP MY EMAIL INBOX	28.12 I WILL HAVE SUMMED UP THE YEAR 2025	29.12 I WILL HAVE PLANNED MY GOALS FOR THE NEW YEAR	30.12 I WILL HAVE CHOSEN MY NEW YEAR'S EVE OUTFIT
31.12 I WILL HAVE STAYED UP UNTIL MIDNIGHT	1.01 I WILL HAVE WATCHED THE FIREWORKS	2.01 I WILL HAVE FILLED IN MY NEW CALENDAR	3.01 I WILL HAVE DONE MY FIRST WORKOUT OF THE NEW YEAR	4.01 I'VE STARTED FOLLOWING MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION
	5.01 I WILL HAVE HAD A GINGERBREAD COFFEE	6.01 I WILL HAVE SUMMED UP THIS CALENDAR		

Language Exercises

Exercise 1.

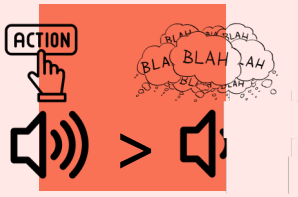
Guesstheidiomsandproverbs based on the given images.

Answersonpage 38



1. .....

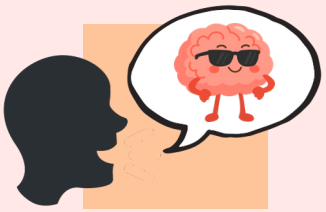
2. .....



3. .....

4. .....

5. .....



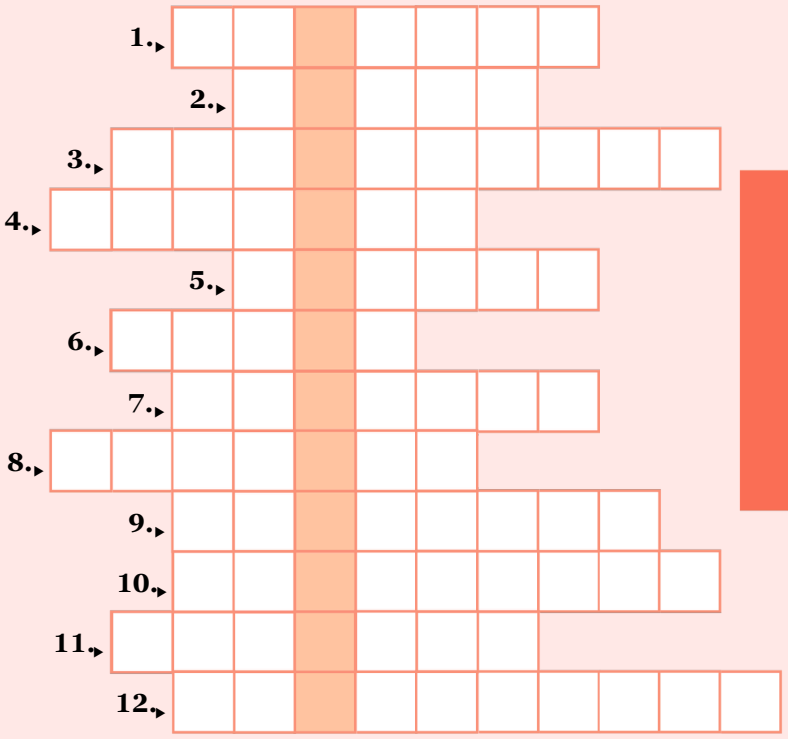
6. .....

Exercise 2.

Completethecrosswordpuzzle using the provided clues. The solution is indicated by the numbers in the orange squares.

1.the stage in people's lives when they develop from a child into an adult
2.the degreetowhichasoundoramusicalnoteis high or low
3.the way in which the sound of your voice changes duringspeech,forexample,whenyouemphasise particular words
4.giving the relevant or necessary information clearly and in a few words
5.a very young child or baby
6.to put two or more things into a straight line, or to form a straight line
7.the ability to speak or write a foreign language easily and accurately
8.put (someone or something) under a spell
9.characterised by the belief that the parts of something are interconnected and can be explained only by reference to the whole
10.to strengthen or encourage a behaviour through consequences
11.the rhythm and intonation (the way a speaker's voice rises and falls) of language
12.one of the two halves of the brain

Solution



Exercise 3.

Readthetextandchoose the correct answer for each question.

In a 1940 article, Benjamin Whorf wrote that English speakers use one word for snow, regardless of whether it's falling snow, snow on the ground, snow drifts, or slushy snow. The word for all of it is ... "snow". However, to Eskimo people, falling snow is so different from snow on the ground or slushy snow that they use several distinct words for it and other types of snow. Whorf believed that because Eskimos have many names for snow, they think about it and their environment in ways that others do not. The number of snow words that Eskimo people were supposed to have soon increased from a dozen to fifty, then one hundred, and even two hundred. So how many Eskimo words for snow are there? The answer is complicated. First of all, there is no single Eskimo language. Eskimo is a broad term for people living in the polar regions of Greenland, Siberia, Iceland, Canada, and the US. They speak many languages, each with its own dialects. All these languages easily form long, complex words by joining smaller word elements.

In the case of one language, West Greenlandic, there are two roots for snow: "qanik" (snow in the air) and "aput" (snow on th eground).Fro m"qani k",y ou get w ords like "qanipal aat"(feat heryclu mp s offa llingsn ow) ,and from " aput", wor ds suchas "apusiniq" (snowdrift). Addit ional ly, the reare snow wo rdsth atus e ot her roots. Bu t is "ig luqsaq ", mean ing"sn ow fo r igloo mak ing" (i glu:"hous e" an d -qsaq :"m a teria lf or"), a w ord fo raty pe o fsnow o r just ate rmfor ab uilding m at erial? There arep robab ly a s many w ord sfor snow i n English asthere are in"E skimo" langu ages. In Englis h, wind-dri vensnow i s calleda "b lizz ar d", a "white- out", a "sno wstorm ",or a "snow s how er". Snow o nthe groun d could be" slush", an"a valanc he" ,a"s no w drift", ora "h ardpa ck". Fallin g snow may be "sle et" or a "fl urry". Oth er wordsforsnowinclude graupel,oronding,toname justafew.

1.Whorf believed that Eskimo people think differently about their environment because:

a) they live in cold climates
b) their language has unique features
c) they have many different words for snow
d) they do not use adjectives

2. The term "Eskimo" refers to:

a) one single language spoken across the Arctic
b) a group of unrelated Antarctic languages
c) people living in Nordic regions
d)severalArcticpeoples speakingdifferentlanguagesand dialects

3.Theword "igluqsaq"ismentionedinthetext because it is unclear whether it is:

a) a verb or a noun
b) a type of snow or a building material
c) a scientific term or slang
d) an English borrowing

4. According to the text, English actually has:

a) only basic words for snow
b) fewer snow words than Eskimo languages
c) probably as many snow words as Eskimo languages
d) no descriptive words for snow

5.Which of the following is notlistedasatypeof falling snow in English?

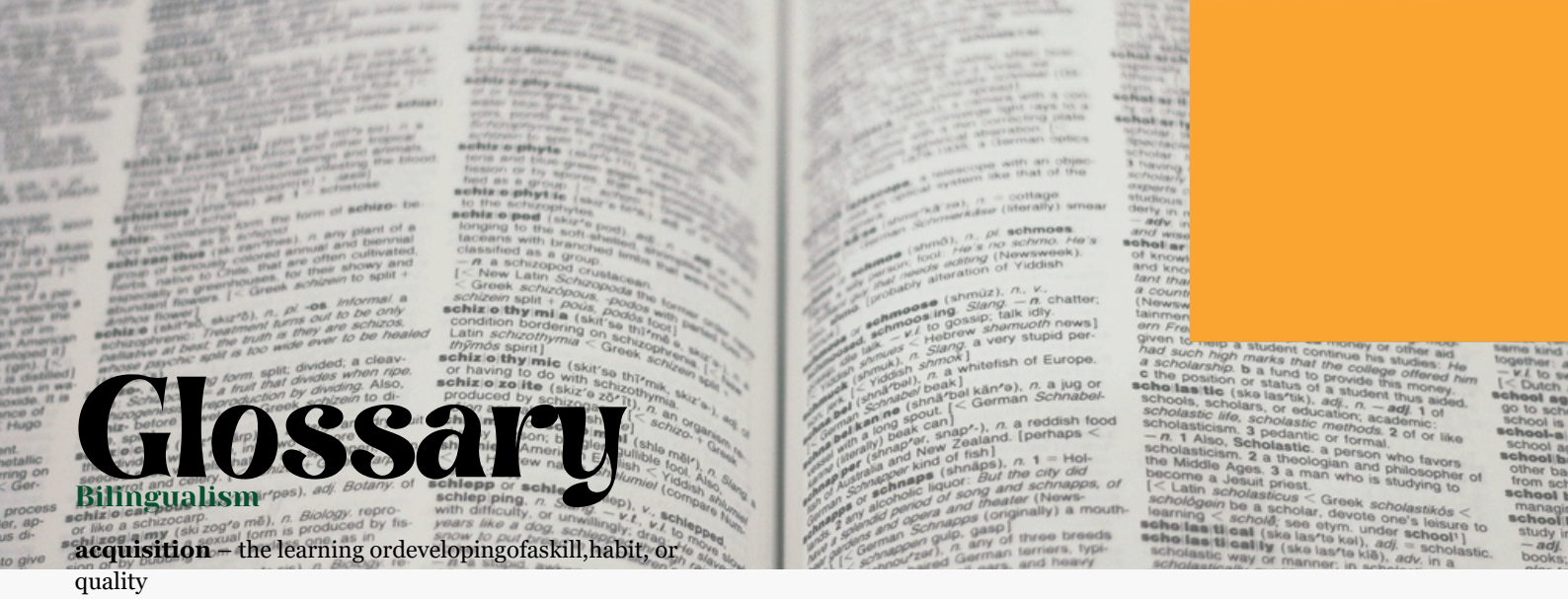
a) hardpack
b) flurry
c) snowstorm
d) sleet

6.ThereferencetoEnglishterms like "slush" and "sleet" helps to:

a)arguethatEnglishhasborrowed heavily from Arctic languages
b) show that only English uses metaphorical snow words
c) downplaytheculturalimportance of snow in Eskimo societies
d) demonstratethatEnglishformsmany specialised terms as well

7. The overall purpose of the text is to:

a) argue that linguistic diversity is declining globally
b) debunk a myth about the number of Eskimo words for snow
c) promote Whorf's theory
d) document the full range of Arctic snow words



Glossary

Bilingualism

acquisition – the learning ordevelopingofaskill,habit, or quality
align – to put two or more things into a straight line, or to form a st raight li n e
fluency – the ability to speak or write a foreign language easily and accurately
holistic – characterised by the belief that the parts of something are interconnectedand can only be explained by reference to the whole
simultaneous–occu rring, op eratin g, or done at the same time
to debunk–expose the fals eness or ho llo wnes s of (an idea or be lief)
upbringing–thetreatment and instruction received by a child from its parentsthroughout it s ch ildhood

TheRoleof LanguageinSocialCommunication

fragile – easily damaged or broken
gender – a grou p of peop le in a society who share qualities or ways of b e ha ving a sso ciated wi th a gend er id entity
inan im ate obje ct – a thin g that is not al ive
merely – ju st; only
sturdy – p hysi cally strong and solid or thick, and therefore unlikely to break or b e hurt
to cond uc t – or gan ise and carry out
to phrase – p ut into a part icular form of words
to reinfor ce – t o str en gthen or encour ag e abehaviour through con sequences

Do We Still Need to Learn Languages

enrol in –toregisterfor or signup for aschool, course, etc.
expand vocabulary – to increase the number of words you know
language acquisition – the natural process of learning a language through exposure and interaction
point sth out – to draw someone's attention to something
prevailing – the most common or widespread
sensibly – reasonably
slip – asmallmistake
stand out– to be very easily recognisable because you are different, bet ter, etc.
step up– ta ke action, rise to a challenge
squeeze – to fit something into a limited time, often with difficulty
surmount – to successfully deal with a difficulty or obstacle
weave – to include something smoothly into something else

The Science of Baby Talk

coo – a soft murmuring sound made by babies
enhance – intensify, increase, or further improve the quality
infant – a very young child or baby
pace – speed in walking, running, or moving
pitch – the degree to which a sound or a musical note is high or low
string together – add items to one another to form a series
womb – the organ in the lower body of a woman or female mammal where offspring are conceived

Learning a Language at Any Age

dive into – become suddenly and enthusiastically involved in or occupied with something
eager – wanting very much to do or have something
enchant – put (someone or something) under a spell
libretto – the text of an opera or other long vocal work
overlap – if two or more activities, subjects, or periods of time overlap, they have some parts that are the same
proficiency – the fact of having the skill and experience in doing something
puberty – the stage in people's lives when they develop from a child into an adult
rudiments – the simplest and most basic facts
to bypass – to ignore a rule or official authority
to hinder – to limit the ability of someone to do something, or to restrict the development of something
to plateau – to reach a particular level and then stay the same
to scribble – to write or draw something quickly or carelessly

Melody of the Speech

inarticulate – unable to express feelings or ideas clearly, or expressed in a way that is difficult to understand
inflection – the way in which the sound of your voice changes during speech
intrinsic – being an extremely important and basic characteristic of a person or thing
pitch – the degree to which a sound or a musical note is high or low
prosody – the rhythm and intonation (the way a speaker's voice rises and falls) of language
stress – the way that a word or syllable is pronounced with greater force than other words in the same sentence or other syllables in the same word

to convey – to express a thought, feeling, or idea so that it is understood by other people
to diminish – to reduce or be reduced in size or importance
hemisphere – one of the two halves of the brain

Modern, enjoyable way of learning

extracurricular– an activity a studentdoes outside regular school lessons, such as sports or choir
geek – a person who is knowledgeable about and obsessively interested in a particular subject

Lost in Translation

ambiguity –the qualityofbeing open to more than one interpretation
concise – giving the relevant or necessary information clearly and in a few words
distort – give a misleading or false account or impression of
encounter – unexpectedly be faced with or experience something
longing – an intense desire to do or have something
merely – just; only
spatial – relating to or occupying space
vast – of very great extent or quantity

Column: Mathematical Linguistics

deadlanguage – a languagewhichis no longerin everyday spoken use, such as Latin
deductive – a logical approach where you progress from general ideas to specific conclusions
humanities – a wide range of academic disciplines that study the various aspects of human culture
synthetic – having truth or falsity determinable by recourse to experience

Interview

cognitiveload – the mental effort needed to learn or process information
commercial publisher – a company that publishes books mainly to make money
connotation – an additional meaning or feeling associated with a word beyond its main meaning
cultural mosaic – learning about different cultures through a language
elite language – a language spoken by a small, privileged group and regarded as special or important
immersion – learning a language by being immersed in it constantly
market gap – a demand for a product or service that is not currently available
melody of a language – the rhythm, intonation, and flow of how a language is spoken
multisensory learning – learning that uses more than one sense
neural connection – a link in the brain that helps you learn or remember something
neurodidactics – teaching methods based on how the brain learns
nursery – a school for very young children before they start primary school
required reading – books that students must read at school

Whimsical Language

to have a silvertongue – to be very persuasive and speak in a charming, convincing way
to speak volumes – to say a lot without using many words (or without saying anything at all); something that reveals a lot by itself
to be tongue-tied – to be unable to speak, usually from nervousness or embarrassment
to speak Greek to someone – to say something in a way the listener doesn't understand; to be incomprehensible to someone
to be lost in translation – when meaning or nuance is changed or lost while translating from one language to another

"***Actions speak louder than words***" – what a person does is a better indicator of their character than what they say
"***Speak your mind***" – This encourages one to say what they really think
"***A good listener is a silent flatterer***" – human beings have an innate desire to be listened to, so if you listen to someone attentively, you'll flatter them
"***Kind words will unlock an iron door***" – gentleness, patience, and kindness can overcome even the most stubborn or difficult situations and people
"***Words cut deeper than a knife***" - verbal insults and hurtful comments can cause more profound and lasting emotional pain than a physical wound

Last but not least...

TED

Why love is harder in a second language

Magdalena Hoeller, October 2024

Saying "I love you" often feels more meaningful in your first language than in any other language you learn later in life, explains linguist and polyglot Magdalena Hoeller. Unpacking the hidden challenges of intercultural relationships — from language barriers and humor gaps to subtle power dynamics — she shares how couples can turn these struggles into opportunities to grow closer.

Watch here!

Did you know that...

the most beautiful word according to J.R.R. Tolkien is "ce llardo or"? The mea ni ng ofit – simp lyado or le ading to a cel lar – is far from being remarkab le. Howe ver,Tolk ien belie ved tha tthe way the word sounde d whe n spoken aloud , flowing an d musi cal, made it part icularlybeautiful.

Second vs Foreign Language

Second language with a foreign language. A second language is learnt in a place where it is spoken every day and is necessary for communication, school, or work. In contrast, a foreign language is studied in a place where it is not spoken, except in school and when talking to a foreigner, and is mostly learnt in classes. For example, a person who moved from Poland to England learns English as a second language to attend school and talk to teachers and friends. If they learnt English at school because it's part of their curriculum, then English is their foreign language.

Answers to exercises

Exercise 1.

1.to speak volumes
2.to have a silver tongue
3.actions are louder than words
4.to be tongue-tied
5.to be lost in translation
6.to speak your mind

Exercise 2.

1.puberty
2.pitch
3.inflection
4.concise
5.infant
6.align
7. fluency
8. enchant
9. holistic
10. reinforce
11. prosody
12. hemisphere

Solution: BILINGUALISM

Exercise 3.

1.c
2.d
3.b
4.c
5.a
6.d
7.b

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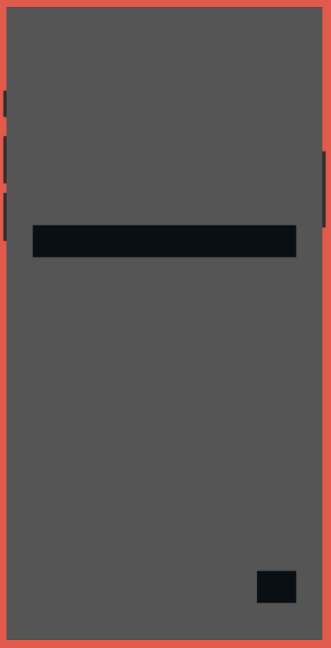

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