



# MULTILINGUAL LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF MINDSET AND LANGUAGE RESOURCES

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**Abstract.** This paper presents a case study delving into the intricate relationship between the mindset, language resources, and contemporary language learning practices. While addressing the shifts in obstacles to language learning over time, including the inundation of unsolicited digital information and a concerning decline in students' self-discipline, the author offers suggestions for potential rectification of the observed challenges. In order to probe deeper into language learners' mindset, their rapport with emerging technologies and resources, and their proficiency in time management, an interactive survey was conducted. Collected between March and June 2023 among (a) the participants of the Polyglot Gathering Online in March 2023 and (b) single-language and multilingual students, the data, although limited in scale, revealed a consistent and enlightening trend. Many participants highlighted the disadvantages of technology in language learning, noting their propensity to get distracted, be overburdened with information, and curtail genuine human interactions. Yet, the adoption of technology for language learning was acknowledged as beneficial, simplifying the search for language resources and practice tools. The recurrent obstacles identified ranged from time constraints, waning motivation, and self-discipline challenges, to the detrimental practice of incessant self-comparison. In line with these findings, the advice given by the participants for aspiring language learners highlighted the importance of consistency, enjoyment, and abstaining from self-comparison. The insights garnered from the interactive survey further illuminate the dynamic between learners' mindset, their engagement with new technologies, and their time management adeptness. The research results emphasize the need for targeted strategies and interventions in the ever-evolving digital learning landscape.

**Keywords:** language learning, modern technologies, multilingual learning, learning obstacles, mindset, language resources

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# МНОГОЯЗЫЧНОЕ ОБУЧЕНИЕ: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ РОЛИ ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКОГО НАСТРОЯ И ЯЗЫКОВЫХ РЕСУРСОВ

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**Аннотация.** В данной статье представлено исследование, посвящённое сложным взаимосвязям между психологическим настроем, языковыми ресурсами и современными практиками обучения языку. Рассматривая изменения в препятствиях для изучения языка с течением времени, включая наплыв непрошеной цифровой информации и снижение самодисциплины учащихся, автор предлагает рекомендации для потенциального исправления наблюдаемых проблем. Чтобы более глубоко исследовать психологический настрой изучающих язык, их взаимоотношения с новыми технологиями и ресурсами, а также их умение управлять своим временем, был проведён интерактивный опрос. Собранные в период с марта по июнь 2023 года среди (а) участников Съезда полиглотов в Интернете в марте 2023 года и (б) одноязычных и многоязычных студентов, данные, хотя и ограниченные по масштабу, показали последовательную и многое проясняющую тенденцию. Многие участники подчеркнули недостатки технологий в изучении языка, отметив свою склонность отвлекаться, перегружаться информацией и сокращать реальное общение с людьми. Тем не менее, применение технологий для изучения языка было признано полезным, так как они упрощают поиск языковых ресурсов и инструментов для практики. Диапазон выявленных регулярно встречающихся препятствий простирается от ограничений времени, снижающейся мотивации и проблем с самодисциплиной до пагубной привычки непрерывно сравнивать себя с другими. В соответствии с этими выводами, в советах, данных участниками для начинающих изучать языки, была подчеркнута важность постоянства, получения удовольствия от занятий и избегания сравнения себя с другими. Наблюдения, сделанные в ходе интерактивного опроса, проливают ещё больше света на динамическую связь между психологическим настроем учащихся, их взаимодействием с новыми технологиями и их умением управлять своим временем. Результаты исследования подчёркивают необходимость целенаправленных стратегий и коррекции поведения в постоянно развивающемся ландшафте цифрового обучения.

**Ключевые слова:** изучение языка, современные технологии, многоязычное обучение, препятствия в обучении, психологический настрой, языковые ресурсы

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## Introduction: language learning in the digital age

**L**earning a foreign language is a complex process that involves multiple cognitive, socio-cultural, and emotional factors. While some of these factors have been constant over time, others have become increasingly significant in recent times.

Technological advancements have remarkably increased the speed of communication, transportation, and access to information. This has impacted language learning in many ways, both positive and negative.

From the positive perspective, it has brought new language resources, such as online language learning platforms and apps which provide accessible and interactive language learning experiences, or digital tools like Skype, Zoom, and social media platforms that allow real-time interaction with native speakers across the globe and thus facilitate immersive language practice without geographical constraints. In m-learning scenarios, where learners utilise their mobile devices for language acquisition and global interaction, a notable advantage is the flexibility it affords.

This approach enables learners to engage in educational activities in the course of various daily situations, such as while commuting, during outdoor activities, or even amidst their part-time job responsibilities. Essentially, it provides the opportunity for continuous learning irrespective of location or circumstance [8, p. 310–311]. Additionally, accessing language resources from all around the world has become significantly easier, and one now has the previously unavailable convenience of purchasing language books online.

Furthermore, services like Netflix and YouTube provide a vast amount of content in various languages, enhancing exposure to foreign languages [3, p. 33]. Online language communities, where learners can ask questions, suggest resources, and get support from fellow learners, are also new and useful tools [7, p. 4–5].

Learners' communities can be exceptionally beneficial when learning a foreign language for several reasons. First, learning is often more effective when it is collaborative. In learner communities, students can help each other understand concepts and correct each other's mistakes, which aids learning and retention. What is more, a community provides ample opportunities to practice the language in a safe and supportive environment. It can be particularly beneficial for improving conversational skills. Besides that, learning a new language is a commitment that requires consistent effort, and being part of a community can provide motivation through shared goals and accountability. Seeing others progress in their learning journey can inspire you to stay on track.

A further advantage of the new technologies in language learning are podcasts and audio books: there are countless podcasts available to help learners improve their pronunciation and listening skills as well as enable them to learn useful vocabulary on the topics of their interest.

Music streaming and the large availability of lyrics also offer an enjoyable opportunity to improve one's language proficiency as well as to learn about the culture of the country [6, p. 1362].

Last but not least, faster and more accessible transportation has made it easier to travel for language immersion programs, providing firsthand language and cultural experiences.

Nevertheless, the impact of technology on second language acquisition can be seen both as a tool and as a challenge.

Technological advancement has made language-learning resources more accessible than ever. On the other hand, the sheer volume of available resources can be overwhelming, making it difficult for learners to choose suitable tools or stick to a consistent study plan. Digital enhancement has greatly facilitated access to information and language resources but has also raised expectations for quick responses and immediate results, and when these do not come quickly, many language learners feel discouraged by not seeing the outcomes they were hoping for. Finding efficient language learning techniques is crucial to maintaining the motivation high and creating sustainable habits, and sticking to them is essential for one's motivation. In an era when people want everything immediately many individuals seem to struggle more than before when it comes to learning languages.

The rise of technology has also led to an increase in distractions, which can hinder language learning. This is particularly relevant in today's digital age, where smartphones and social media can easily divert attention from learning tasks. We are constantly bombarded with news, updates, messages, and notifications, which can contribute to a feeling of always needing to catch up. This provokes a higher level of anxiety than ever [11, p. 6–11].

Some studies investigate the link between smartphone use and well-being, suggesting that excessive smartphone use can interfere with various aspects of life, including learning [2, p. 267].

The consumer culture, driven by continual advertising and the promotion of new products, creates a constant desire for the new and the next, making concentration and learning much more challenging [5, p. 124–127].

Nowadays, people tend to be highly distracted by all the technologies available. Most check their e-mails and messages at least dozens of times a day on average, and the myriad of instant gratifications offered by the digital media make the slower, more gradual rewards of language learning seem less appealing.

In today's fast-paced world, people are often juggling multiple responsibilities and distractions simultaneously. This can make it hard to find the necessary time to devote to foreign language learning, which requires consistent effort and practice over an extended period.

To add to this, people are also inundated by advertisements from companies claiming that learning a language with their applications or courses requires almost no effort on the student's part. Until some years ago, the main obstacle was that one's learning method was not practical and they could not structure their study time according to their learning goals. More recently, the problem seems to be much more about the decrease in self-discipline and a growth in anxiety, which has a significant impact on one's mindset.

### Psychological factors in language learning

The process of acquiring a new language is multifaceted and shaped by an array of cognitive, socio-cultural, and emotional elements that can affect an individual's commitment to language learning. Some key psychological aspects that come into play are motivation, **anxiety** (and language learning anxiety in particular), **self-efficacy**, cognitive abilities (including memory, attention, auditory and phonetic processing abilities, and problem-solving skills), **learning styles and strategies** (preferred ways of learning, which can impact how one approaches language learning), and the **mindset**.

**Motivation** is one of the most crucial factors in language learning. It is the driving force that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviours. Two main types of motivation are often distinguished: intrinsic (driven by the joy or satisfaction derived from the learning itself) and extrinsic (driven by external rewards or outcomes, such as career advancement). Despite the fact that lack of motivation is not a new concept, there is an observed link [1, p. 120–121] between the decrease in willingness to put effort into language learning and the rise of instant gratification in the modern era.

In today's fast-paced, digital world, we have become accustomed to getting things instantly. Be it information, entertainment, goods, or services, everything is at our fingertips. This "instant gratification" culture can impact our approach to learning, including language acquisition. Language learning is a gradual process that requires time, patience, and consistent effort. It is not something that delivers instant results. Therefore, people who are used to instant gratification might find it hard to stay motivated and dedicated in the long-term process of learning a language. They might be discouraged by the lack of immediate progress and, therefore, reduce their efforts.

Furthermore, many language learning apps and online platforms use gamification strategies to make the process seem quick and easy, reinforcing this expectation of immediate results. While these platforms can be useful tools, they might also contribute to unrealistic expectations about the effort required to truly master a language. While instant gratification can create challenges, it does not make language learning impossible. A balanced approach that combines the convenience of modern language tools with

traditional, in-depth study can lead to successful language learning. Understanding that true proficiency comes from continued practice and immersion can help combat the effects of the instant gratification culture.

**Language learning anxiety** refers to the feelings of tension, apprehension, or fear that individuals may experience in relation to learning a new language. This can be a significant barrier to successful language acquisition and can negatively impact a learner's motivation and self-confidence, and can make learners more hesitant to practice speaking, which is crucial for language acquisition. There are several potential sources of language learning anxiety:

- a) Communication apprehension. This is a type of anxiety specifically tied to real-time communication in the foreign language. Learners might be afraid of making mistakes, miscommunicating, or not being able to express themselves accurately.
- b) Fear of negative evaluation. This involves apprehension about being judged or negatively evaluated by others, including teachers and peers.
- c) Linguistic difficulties: the perceived complexity of the language being learned can also cause anxiety.
- d) Test anxiety: examinations or assessments in the language learning context can be a source of anxiety for many learners, although they are necessary to incentivise learning and objectively assess students.
- e) Pressure of our interconnected world: the perceived (and often real) necessity of learning a foreign language might also add pressure, and hence anxiety, for some learners.

On the other hand, modern times also bring resources that can help alleviate this anxiety. For instance, there are numerous online tools and platforms that allow self-paced learning, provide interactive and engaging content, and offer opportunities for practice in a less intimidating environment.

There are a variety of strategies to help alleviate language learning anxiety. What works best can often depend on the individual learner's personality, learning style, and specific sources of anxiety. Some techniques that can be useful include:

- 1) Positive reinforcement and awareness of self-talk: learners should focus on their progress and achievements, no matter how small, rather than dwelling on mistakes.
- 2) Exposure and practice: the more a learner practices, the more comfortable they become. This includes both passive consumption (listening, reading) and active use of the language (speaking, writing). Of course, if one feels anxious, speaking can present a real challenge, this is why taking little but consistent steps in doing all these activities greatly helps to feel more confident. Especially at the beginning, trying to speak in the target language with other learners who have a similar or slightly higher level can be of great help. At the same time, according to the author's teaching experience, even anxious students can speak a new language from day one with the right method.
- 3) Relaxation techniques: practices such as deep breathing, yoga, and mindfulness can help reduce overall stress and anxiety levels. While breathing techniques can be particularly useful before exams or speaking activities if the learner feels particularly anxious, meditation practice and working on self-love can be very effective if done over a long time because they improve the overall mindset. In the classroom setting, in some cases of visible stress, the author suggested doing face yoga in the target language, and the students after only five minutes were extremely more relaxed and eager to learn.
- 4) Preparation: feeling well-prepared can significantly reduce anxiety. This could involve extra study before a class or exam, or rehearsing a conversation or presentation in advance.
- 5) Seeking help: discussing learning issues with fellow language learners can provide a supportive environment where everyone is facing similar challenges and can thus reduce anxiety. Talking about anxiety issues with teachers, tutors, or counsellors can also be very helpful.
- 6) Use of technology: there are numerous language learning apps and online resources that offer interactive and engaging content, which can make learning more engaging and less intimidating. These tools often allow learners to progress at their own pace, reducing the pressure often associated with traditional classroom settings. At the same time, it is important to choose resources carefully, in order to avoid wasting valuable time.



7) Setting realistic goals: rather than striving for perfection, learners should aim to focus on making steady progress. Setting achievable goals can enhance motivation and provide a sense of accomplishment.

8) Cultivating interest in or related to the target culture: developing an appreciation for the culture associated with the target language can enhance motivation and make the learning experience more enjoyable.

In general, some level of anxiety when learning a new language is very common. The key is not to let it hinder the learning process but instead to view it as a part of the journey towards language proficiency.

The way the learners see themselves and in particular the learners' belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task (self-efficacy) influences the learning effort. Higher self-efficacy can lead to increased motivation and effort [10, p. 61–63]. Learners could work on themselves to enhance self-efficacy in language learning, and teachers could help bring awareness of this topic and explain or put into practice some self-efficacy boosting techniques. Some techniques of this kind may include:

1) Recalling past successful experiences: past experiences of success are a powerful source of self-efficacy.

2) Creating successful experiences in language learning: language learners could start with simple tasks that they can successfully complete, gradually moving on to more complex tasks as their skills improve. Consistent practice and incremental progress can help build a strong sense of self-efficacy.

3) Observing peers having a similar language level succeed: in a language-learning context, this could involve group activities in a friendly environment. Seeing peers with similar language skills performing tasks may help other learners to believe in their own similar abilities and encourage them to try similar tasks.

4) Encouragement from teachers and peers can boost a learner's belief in their own abilities. Positive feedback, particularly when it is specific and constructive, can be very effective. For example, instead of simply saying "Good job", a teacher could say, "You have made great progress with your pronunciation of these difficult words".

5) Anxiety, stress, and negative emotions can lower self-efficacy, while positive emotions and relaxation can enhance it. Learners could learn and use techniques for stress management and relaxation (like deep breathing, yoga, or mindfulness exercises), and teachers could cultivate a supportive, low-anxiety learning environment, providing learners with the right tools and opportunities so that they can see their own progress and potential.

6) Realistic goal setting: setting achievable, short-term goals can help learners see their progress more clearly, thereby increasing their sense of self-efficacy. Over time, these short-term achievements add up and contribute to a sense of long-term progress.

7) Real-life application: encouraging learners to use the target language in real-life situations (like ordering food in a restaurant, or having a short conversation in the target language outside the classroom) can boost their confidence and demonstrate that they can effectively use the language outside the classroom.

**Mindset** is a significant factor in the learning process for individuals of all age groups. The concept of mindset in educational research is often drawn from the work of Carol Dweck [4, p. 8–9], who distinguishes between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. Individuals with a fixed mindset believe that their abilities, such as language proficiency, are static traits that cannot change significantly over time. They tend to avoid challenges, give up easily when faced with obstacles, and see effort as fruitless or even negative. Those with a fixed mindset might feel discouraged by their mistakes and may even avoid opportunities to use the language for fear of making errors.

Individuals with a growth mindset, by contrast, believe that their abilities can be developed and improved over time through hard work, effective strategies, and input from others. They embrace challenges, persist in the face of setbacks, and view effort as a path to mastery. Learners with a growth mindset view failures and mistakes as opportunities for learning and improvement. This attitude is particularly beneficial in language learning, where making errors is a natural part of the learning process.

A growth mindset encourages adult learners to experiment with various learning strategies and seek out resources to aid their learning and adjust their strategies as needed. Adults with a growth mindset are likely to have a higher sense of self-efficacy, meaning they believe in their ability to learn and use the new language. This belief can promote positive experiences, fuel one's motivation and help get the desired outcomes in language learning. Studies also suggest that helping students cultivate a growth mindset can influence how they approach challenges, how much effort they put into learning, how they deal with setbacks, and how they interpret and respond to feedback [ibid., p. 79]. It is important to note that mindset is not a fixed trait in itself – it can be developed and changed. Interventions can be designed to promote a growth mindset in adult language learners, which can lead to resilience and more success in language learning.

While it is clear that the fast-paced world and the overuse of the digital media play a huge role in the lack of time language learners face, it is also true that the growth of anxiety (and language learning anxiety in particular) and lesser willingness to make an effort can lead to lower efficiency in learning a language. When our observed results do not match our anticipated or potentially unrealistic expectations, our self-efficacy can decrease while our fear of failure may go up. When we are afraid of failing and we do not do much about it, with time we tend to not even try anymore.

Research efforts should thus focus on the learner's mindset and the excessive use of social media, given that these factors are intricately intertwined. Increased social media consumption can heighten anxiety, as it often does not address our genuine needs and consumes valuable time. This time could be better invested in activities that bolster our mindset, enhance self-efficacy, and facilitate language learning, which, in turn, could mitigate the feelings of anxiety. Considering recent statistics which indicate that individuals spend a substantial number of hours on their phones and specifically on social media platforms daily, there is a compelling argument to be made about the potential of reallocating just a fraction of that time for more enriching activities like language learning.

According to a survey conducted in February 2021 in the United States, nearly half of the participants stated that on average they spent five to six hours on their phone on a daily basis, not including work-related smartphone use. A further 22% of the respondents said that they spent three to four hours on average on their phone daily<sup>1</sup>. Recent statistics show that people worldwide spend on average three hours using their mobile phone, and one in five smartphone users spends upwards of 4.5 hours on average on their phones every day. Weekdays average more smartphone use than weekends. On average, people check their phones 58 times per day<sup>2</sup>.

People are busier than ever but, if learners redirected even thirty minutes of their typical social media usage towards focused language learning, they would likely see more pronounced results and would experience an enhancement in their self-efficacy. If, on top of that, people added some time to reconnect with themselves and truly relax, anxiety levels would decrease and their mindset would improve with positive consequences for their life and language learning. Many people use their phones to escape from stress, boredom or challenging tasks. However, using our phones to take a break (from something that is happening or not happening in our life) is not necessarily rejuvenating or effective. More effective breaks could include:

- a) Physical activity: even short bouts of physical activity can improve mood and concentration. Walking, stretching, or any other form of exercise can boost cognitive function and memory.
- b) Meditation or mindfulness practices: these can help to reset the brain, reducing stress and enhancing focus.
- c) Napping: a short nap can significantly improve the cognitive function.

<sup>1</sup> Ceci, L. Average time spent daily on a smartphone in the United States 2021. Statista, 14 June 2022, [statista.com/statistics/1224510/time-spent-per-day-on-smartphone-us/](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1224510/time-spent-per-day-on-smartphone-us/) (accessed 2 September 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Howarth, J. Time spent using smartphones (2023 statistics). Exploding Topics, 9 January 2023, [explodingtopics.com/blog/smartphone-usage-stats](https://explodingtopics.com/blog/smartphone-usage-stats) (accessed 2 September 2023).

- d) Creative activities: engaging in activities such as drawing, playing (including just briefly) an instrument, or crafting can provide cognitive rest by utilising different parts of the brain than those involved in most work or study tasks.
- e) Leisure reading or listening to music: these activities can help reduce stress and offer mental respite.
- f) Nature breaks: spending time in nature, even just a short walk in a park, or simply looking at nature scenes can rejuvenate the brain and improve attention.
- g) Social breaks: interacting, even just briefly, with others in real life can help to relax and feel more energetic.

### Multilingual learning

When we talk about the importance of the mindset in language learning, it applies not only to when people want to learn or improve their proficiency in one language but even more to **multilingual learning**. The author has been learning multiple languages at the same time for the past twenty years and only more recently there has been a rising interest from learners and institutions. Despite this, many people are against multilingual learning because they claim that learning multiple languages at the same time reduces the language learning speed and makes students mix languages up. In the book *How to Learn Multiple Languages at the Same Time*, the author explained that the time required to learn a language is not at all proportional to the number of languages we learn [9, p. 12]. At the same time, the author also showed that the main reasons why students mix languages up lie not in the fact of learning multiple languages but rather in not training enough the language or languages they know worse [ibid., p. 10]. The reasons for mixing languages up are almost always:

- 1) speaking (or learning) one language much more often than the other(s), so the brain goes back to the more frequently used (or learnt) one;
- 2) rarely speaking these languages;
- 3) knowing one of the languages very well but the other(s) not so well in comparison, and not practicing the newer one(s);
- 4) not being used to switching between languages;
- 5) the specific features of one or more languages are not clear yet<sup>3</sup>.

For these reasons, in multilingual learning just as in single-language learning, the key factors that lead to successfully learning languages are: (a) the method, (b) consistency, (c) the motivation and (d) the mindset. If we are consistent in learning but we do not use an efficient method, we might still learn the language but it will take much longer. Naturally, if we do not have a strong intrinsic and or extrinsic motivation to learn a certain language or languages, we will give up sooner or later. The last three points are well known among language experts, and many language learners can easily recognize how much the method, the consistency and the motivation can enhance language learning. The fourth point, the mindset, is still, in the author's opinion, partially neglected (not so much by researchers but rather by language learners). The vast majority of students who struggle learning one or more languages are usually not patient towards themselves, have difficulties with coming to terms with the time and effort required by the learning process, do not see learning as something enjoyable, and have a hard time finding time to devote even just twenty minutes a day to learning. All this has been worsened by the culture of immediate gratification and all the false images social media engenders. The author's experience in both learning and teaching has shown her that the real problem consists not in the fact of learning more than one language at the same time, but rather in the learners' approach to and their mindset in learning *any* language.

<sup>3</sup> When learners engage with two or more linguistically similar languages, a comprehensive understanding of the distinct linguistic features of each language is crucial. These features often manifest themselves as consistent patterns, such as distinctive vowel shifts or the frequency of specific letter combinations. For instance, while Italian infrequently ends words with a consonant, this is more common in Spanish. Similarly, the letter combination "ie" is prevalent in Spanish (e.g. "pienso", "cierto") but less so in Italian (e.g. "penso", "certo"). A thorough grasp of these nuanced differences facilitates the differentiation and independent retention of each language in the learner's cognitive processes.



## Survey

With the aim of researching language learners' mindset, their relationship with new technologies and resources, and their time management skills, the author created an interactive survey that she proposed during the Polyglot Gathering Online in March 2023 (100 participants) and to 100 single-language and multilingual students. Although it would be desirable to gather the answers of respondents on a much bigger scale, the data collected seems consistent and elucidative.

The study showed that 70% of the learners are not satisfied with the use of their time: 98% of them usually check their phones more than three times per hour and 80% check their phones every time they get a notification. Almost all participants stated that they were not comfortable without their phones for more than one or two days. To the question "How long can you concentrate when studying languages without looking at your mobile phone?", almost 50% of the polyglots who answered this question said that they check it often or relatively often, while 50% do not check it while studying, which may indicate that non-polyglots would probably check their phones even more often.

When asked what they think the disadvantages of technology with regard to learning languages are, many participants said that new technologies are tiring, offer too much information and too many sources of distractions, and create a lack of meaningful contacts in everyday life. On the other hand, they found that the way to approach language learning has positively changed over time because it makes it easier to find resources and practice languages.

What is more, 91.66% of the survey participants at the Polyglot Gathering stated they were studying every couple of days but did not study with the same frequency all year round. The recurrent answers to the question "What do you think are the biggest obstacles when you (or your students) learn a language?" were: lack of time, not being consistent, loss of motivation, distractions, self-discipline issues, comparing themselves to others, the mindset, and not truly believing in their own skills.

Besides, 50% of the interviewees said that they are not able to study if they feel tired, frustrated, anxious or have a lot on their mind. Their ideal state of mind before they start studying is feeling relaxed/calm, happy, focused or energetic.

To the question "What are the three pieces of advice you would give to someone who wants to learn languages?", many of the respondents answered: "Learn little and often", "Enjoy learning", "Don't compare yourself to others", "Relax, don't stress yourself".

When answering the question "Why do you think many people get discouraged from learning a language?", they mentioned slow results, not using the languages they are learning, the fact that learning a language is hard work, and the negative effects of comparison.

A good part of the interviewees mentioned results and connection to people as the factors that motivate them to learn more.

To the question "What mindset do you think one must have in order to be sure of achieving one's language goal?", the most common answers were: having clear goals, having confidence, being perseverant, enjoying learning, and being willing to make an effort.

Regarding the use of technology to learn languages, 42% of the interviewees use an app to learn languages every day. However, 70% stated that they do not believe it is possible to learn a language only by using an app. They said that the main advantage of using apps to study languages is that they are easy to use and stick to and engaging. On the other hand, the main disadvantages of using an app for learning purposes are, in their opinion, phone notifications, screen time and the lack of real communication.

More than 80% of the respondents feel that, when learning a language with a teacher, the results greatly depend on their self-study but that practicing is crucial. The majority of them do not think that it is possible to learn a language without making much effort but if you enjoy what you do, it will not feel like much effort.

As for possible techniques or solutions to overcome common learning issues, many of the interviewees suggested that, when there is an information overload and it is difficult to choose the material to study, picking one and being consistent helps.

Several participants noted the problem of having so much material that they occasionally forget that they have certain language resources. For such situations, other respondents recommended using tangible resources, adhering to a single resource, or, in the case of digital materials, keeping them constantly open on their computing devices.

During the survey, the most common tricks to stick to language learning habits and routine suggested by the respondents were: (a) picking the same place and time to study, (b) having fun while studying, (c) talking to people to use the language, (d) tracking one's progress, and (e) being consistent for a certain number of days, after which sticking to a routine becomes easier.

### **Practical recommendations**

It is true that while technology, and smartphones in particular, offer invaluable resources for language learning, they can also contribute to information overload, distractions, and potential lack of motivation. However, by following certain strategies, it is possible to minimise these drawbacks and maximise the advantages. Some of the possible strategies are:

- 1) Creating a dedicated learning schedule. Setting aside a specific time each day for language learning can help instil discipline and structure. Apps that allow scheduling or reminder setting can be helpful in this respect.
- 2) Using apps that limit distractions, for example, by blocking certain websites or controlling the learner's study time.
- 3) Choosing quality over quantity: instead of trying to use every available resource, learners could choose a few high-quality ones that align with their learning style and objectives. This can help avoid information overload.
- 4) Using gamified learning platforms: gamification in language learning apps can enhance motivation and make learning more enjoyable. Naturally, learners should choose the apps that truly help them get closer to their language goal, should use other resources too as apps alone cannot teach everything, and should practice speaking (if they are interested in speaking the language they are learning).
- 5) Setting clear, achievable goals: instead of vague goals like "learn French", learners could set specific, achievable goals like "learn ten new French words per day". Having clear, achievable goals can also help learners keep motivated. This could mean learning a certain number of new words each day, being able to hold a basic conversation by a certain date, or being able to read a book in a foreign language. This provides a clear direction and a sense of achievement.
- 6) Practising mindfulness: mindfulness techniques can help learners focus their attention on the task at hand and reduce distractions. This could be as simple as taking a few deep breaths before starting a study session.
- 7) Finding a language exchange partner or a way to use the language as this can provide social motivation.
- 8) Incorporating language learning into their daily life, for example, by learning during commuting or waiting times or by listening to a podcast or the radio while doing house chores.
- 9) Regular practice: learning a little bit every day is typically more effective than trying to learn a lot at once. Regular practice keeps the language fresh in your mind and increases the chances of long-term retention.
- 10) Taking regular breaks: studies suggest that taking regular short breaks during study sessions can improve focus and retention. The Pomodoro technique, for example, involves studying for 25 minutes, and then taking a 5-minute break, which can be less intimidating than other techniques that require more study time in one go.
- 11) Tracking progress: if the learner studied every day or so and wrote down how often and what he learnt (e.g. the topic, number of pages, time), seeing tangible evidence of his progress and persistence may boost his motivation.

Apart from these techniques, which can be especially useful in facing the challenges of the digital era, there are techniques that learners can try out to improve their language learning experience. It is only by experimenting with different strategies and techniques that the learners can find what works best for them. That said, there are a few widely recognized strategies that can enhance language learning:

1) Immersion: learners could surround themselves with the language they are trying to learn. This is one of the most effective ways to acquire a new language. This could mean travelling to a country where the language is spoken, but it could also mean using technology to immerse themselves in the language, such as changing their phone language settings (if their level allows it), listening to music or podcasts, watching films, or using software or apps in the language they are learning.

2) Speaking from day one: even if it sounds uncomfortable at first, trying to speak the language right away can help get rid of the fear of speaking a foreign language that so many learners have. Starting with simple phrases and gradually building up would also help them develop communication strategies such as simplifying what they want to say. Most people would like to be able to say everything they can say in their mother tongue in the target language. By learning to simplify what they want to say, they can avoid frustration and see that communication is possible at all levels.

3) Engaging multiple senses: research suggests that learning happens more effectively when multiple senses are engaged. This could mean reading out loud, writing down words by hand, using flashcards with pictures, listening to big amounts of authentic material, etc.

4) Interactive learning: instead of just passively taking in information, engaging in more active activities would result in better word and grammar retention. This might involve writing in a journal, writing words by hand, saying aloud words or sentences one has recently learnt, etc.

5) Make it enjoyable: finding ways to enjoy the learning process is crucial to long term commitment. This could mean watching films or reading books in the foreign language, learning about the culture of places where the language is spoken, etc.

As everyone's learning style is different, what works best will vary from person to person. It is important to experiment with different strategies and resources until learners find what works best for them.

## Conclusion

The survey conducted among the Polyglot Gathering participants and multilingual and single-language learners showed consistency between their own experience and the statistical data concerning the use of technology mentioned in this paper. On the one hand, it is clear that there are too many distractions in everyday life. On the other, technologies can have a very positive impact on language learning by opening the door to many more resources and a way to improve one's language skills. By reducing distractions, students would become more focused and would have more time to devote to efficient language learning, and by using enjoyable resources, they would feel more engaged and motivated.

At the same time, the survey results are in line with the literature on the language learner's mindset: there is a great need to improve one's mindset, especially in terms of self-perception, efficacy, and avoiding comparing oneself to others. By improving one's mindset, one would become more confident about his own abilities, which would most likely lead to being more persevering and willing to make an effort to reach goals.

In this light, it would be very interesting to conduct studies focusing on (a) how to take advantage of the potentially numberless learning strategies and resources available in the modern era; and (b) on helping students to improve their mindset. More generally, it would be highly beneficial if learners became more aware of the great impact of their mindset on the outcome of their learning process. This should push language learning authors, publishing houses, language schools and institutions to give even more importance to the psychological components of language learning. This would foster awareness among language learners so that, instead of being their own obstacle to their language learning success, they can experiment with new positive approaches to language learning, can apply useful techniques to manage their time, and thus find language learning more rewarding and fulfilling.

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