

THE CONQUEST TO A NEW LANGUAGE

by:

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To learn a language is to have one more window from which to look at the world.

- Chinese Proverb 9

As foreign materials like movies and television programs have found their way into our lives, so is foreign language. Other than the English language, students and teachers have more than once uttered some of the Korean words like *annyeonghaseyo* which means hello, or *arigatou* which is thank you in the Japanese language. One can get tempted to learn a new language especially when one hears it often from their favorite Korean actors or actress of their much-loved telenovelas. Besides, it may be an amusing way of spending time while being locked up during this time of the pandemic.

Learning a new language has also benefits for the mental capacity of a person and after scanning the brain of a person who just learned a new language, a Swedish study showed there is an increase in the size of the brain. The website Livingbilingual.com further claims that being bilingual delays the onset of Alzheimer's, dementia, and other neurological issues. Not only does it increase one's brainpower, but it is easier to learn and understand the culture and values of the country from which the language is from. These are just some of the many benefits of learning a new language but how long does it take for one to learn a new language?

It is not as easy as one wants it to be, that is learning a new language. There are a lot of considerations for this endeavor like one's motivation for learning, the commitment

for time, the medium to use, and the desired level of language acquisition. However, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), the U.S. government's premier foreign affairs training provider, concluded that the time it takes to learn a language depends on the difficulty of the new language especially in comparison to one's vernacular language.

Compared to English, FSI categorized the language like Swedish, Afrikaans, Dutch, French, Norwegian, Romanian, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese to be Category I. Mastering these languages, according to their studies, will take 575 to 600 hours. If one allots 10 hours of learning a day, this will take 2 months. On other hand, most teachers and students cannot commit to 10 hours so good planning of time allotment must be explored and must be committed into.

The German language (Category II) and the like will need 30 weeks or 750 hours to attain the fluency one desires while languages like Swahili, Indonesian, and Malaysian (Category III) will take 36 weeks to master. Category IV which includes languages like Hindi, Thai, Hungarian, Latvian, Bulgarian, Bengali, Nepali, and others will take around 44 weeks as these languages have significant linguistic differences. Lastly and yet the most desired languages to be learned in the Philippines are in Category V, that is, languages like Korean, Japanese, Arabic, Mandarin, and Chinese. These languages can be learned in around 88 weeks or 2200 hours.

These categories may not apply to all scenarios as there is a lot to be considered, however, this reference can be a guide in exploring one's journey towards a new language.

Heads up! It all might seem tedious and arduous but learning a new language is a worthwhile adventure and there are many suggestions as to how it can be made easy. Ten hours a day can be impossible for most people so 2-3 hours a day as long as it is consistent is ideal. The frequency of the session is important in the retention of the words and phrases learned.

Making sure to speak the words accurately and practice using them is also vital. In this case, one must learn from the experts of the language. Videos on the correct pronunciation are available online as long as one checked its credibility. A native speaker of the desired language can also be a good sparring partner to practice and get used to the language. Recording oneself while speaking the new language can also help to check the proper pronunciation and to avoid having the language fossilized. One can also practice by talking to oneself like asking about one's day and like or dislikes.

Listening to movies, songs, and videos of the new language will also help in retaining the words and their pronunciation. In addition, repeating a dialogue of the actors and actresses is a good way to practice speaking the new language.

Memorizing a certain number of words a day with their meaning can also help in making this adventure easier. Exploring how the grammar of the language works is vital as it may not be the same with the English language. Sentence structures and phrases can be tricky but it will save one considerable time compared to memorizing the language sentence by sentence.

Furthermore, learn as kids do. Remember that one has barely knowledge of the new language and acquiring it does not happen all night. The journey is a step-by-step process, from small words to sentences and eventually into paragraphs. Frustrations are inevitable but no one can achieve anything by quitting. Learning from mistakes coupled with commitment is important.

A lot of people dream of learning a new language but only a few will dare to make it happen. And like most things acquired through hardship and perseverance, the fruits are always worth the climb.

You can never understand one language until you understand at least two.

- Geoffrey Williams

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