

# Day 6

Language Knowing and Learning

# Questions to talk about

- ❑ What's the point of knowing two languages?
- ❑ How does someone learn their first language? How about their second or third language?
- ❑ What are some reasons adults want to learn another language?
- ❑ What are different ways to go about learning another language?

“One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way.”

— Frank Smith, To think



*"I say to hell with it. If it can't be said in English, it ain't worth saying at all."*

Choose your  
muse

**Thalia**  
**Muse of Comedy**

*Is your learning  
going to be fun?*



**Melpomene**  
**Muse of  
Tragedy**

*Is your learning  
going to be a  
pain?*

# Auditioning for the right language muse

Learning French would be a ...

Chore, Picnic, Sermon, Party, Prison, Vacation, Slog, Treat, Punishment, Reward, etc.

What I'd like to do with French is ...

Retire to France, Read French writers, Find my way around Paris and Montreal, Rent a vacation place in France or French Canada, Cook a la francaise, Talk with strangers, Understand movies, Buy stuff, Study in France or French Canada, Research my French ancestry. etc.

# Learning a language: Knowing vs knowing about

**Studying** a language essentially means *learning about* the language for the purpose of increasing your knowledge of it. This could involve:

- Reading a published grammar or description of a language
- Searching a bilingual dictionary
- Reading about the social and cultural fabric of the language
- Asking bilingual speakers about the language
- Doing an Internet search about a language in the news

**Acquiring** a language means *learning* the language for the purpose of being able to speak and/or read it yourself. This could involve:

- Making use of native speakers, bilingual speakers, printed language teaching guides, audio materials, Internet resources
- Taking classes
- Moving to or visiting long-term a country where the language is spoken
- Actively communicating in the language with speakers wherever you find them
- Using the language appropriately in natural settings

# Goals and objectives of language study & learning

**“How wonderful— to translate from one language to another, and by so doing bring people closer to one another— what a beautiful idea.”**

— Olga Tokarczuk, *Drive your plow over the bones of the dead*

## Language Study -- linguistics

- Etymology: Where did the word “blahblah” come from in language X?
- Language history: How did language X develop?
- Pronunciation: Why do foreigners have an accent?
- Decoding: How do you pronounce language X?
- Contrastive analysis: How is language X different from my language?
- Social language use: How do individuals vary their speech in language X?
- National language: What is the language picture where language X is spoken?

## Language Learning -- communication

- Cultural domains in language X: How do you go to a restaurant in language X?
- Content areas in language X: How do you talk about climate change in language X?
- Oral communication: How do you relate personal information in language X? How do you understand a film in language X?
- Reading: How does language X do train schedules, newspapers, or poetry?
- Writing: How do you write a job resume, a story, a grocery list?
- Translating: How do you share info in a foreign language with someone who doesn't understand it?

# Adults learning language: Do's and Don'ts

## Working with a teacher

- Make it relevant and fun for me
- Don't criticize or test me
- Find out what I already know
- Teach within my comfort zone, but also expand my comfort zone
- Give me explanations at my request
- Let me discover things on my own
- Don't worry too much about my errors
- Teach to my interests & background

## Working by yourself

- Choose your resources for comfort
- Sweat the small words, not the big ones
- Focus on recognizing & practicing patterns
- Learn your vocabulary in content chunks
- Deemphasize overt memorization (maybe)
- Repeat stuff, then repeat more
- Discover things as you need to know
- Put your thoughts into words
- Listen to lots of different stuff
- Use your native language as an aid



Myth 1: In learning another language, vocabulary is not as important as grammar or other areas. **Reality: Vocabulary learning is a necessary pathway to learning grammar.**

Myth 2: Using word lists to learn second language vocabulary is unproductive. **Reality: Contextualized word lists help build grammatical competence and cultural frames**

Myth 3: Presenting new vocabulary in semantic sets facilitates learning. **Reality: Words in semantic sets don't include the context needed to discriminate the words.**

Myth 4: The use of translations to learn new vocabulary should be discouraged. **Reality: Particularly for adults, translations help build links to the concepts adults already know.**

Myth 5: Guessing words from context is an excellent strategy for learning second language vocabulary. **Reality: Too many words have specialized meanings to be able to guess at their meaning in context.**

Myth 6: The best vocabulary learners make use of one or two really good specific vocabulary learning strategies. **Reality: The effectiveness of a learning strategy reflects the learner's preferences for how to learn.**

Myth 7: The best dictionary for second language learners is a monolingual dictionary. **Reality: Definitions in a language you're learning use language often more difficult than what the learner is looking up.**

Myth 8: Teachers, textbooks, and curricula cover second language vocabulary adequately. **Reality: Learners learn vocabulary that interests them from media and sources that interest them.**



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“The problem with defending the purity of the English language is that English is about as pure as a cribhouse whore.”

— James D. Nicoll, in Usenet group rec.arts.sf-lovers

# Mistakes: Making them and correcting them

## Making mistakes

- They're gonna happen
- Most native speakers are forgiving of learners
- Languages are tolerant of errors
- Words are adaptable to different interpretations
- Your home language affects the kinds of mistakes you make

**Literally, do not sweat over mistakes.  
Have fun with them, if possible.**

## Correcting mistakes

- Mistakes that impede understanding need correction
- Decide on how much correction you want and when you want it
- Some mistakes shouldn't be corrected
- Correcting too many mistakes can change your identity

**“Do you know what a foreign accent is? It's a sign of bravery.”  
— Amy Chua, Battle hymn of the tiger mother**

# Machine translation



# Travel in Poland with a Language Tour Guide



Here is a short video clip of a travel episode in Poland by the owner of the RealPolish.pl Polish learning web site. Also available on YouTube.



This audio file is from the beginning collection of Piotr's RealPolish audios.