

Re: History of French

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2004-09/1794.html>

From: Ruud Harmsen (realemailseesite01_at_rudhar.com)

Date: 09/14/04

Date: Wed, 15 Sep 2004 00:00:16 +0200

14 Sep 2004 14:40:02 -0500: hrubin@odds.stat.purdue.edu (Herman Rubin): in sci.lang:

> *What does it mean to learn a language "properly"?*
>
> *Does learning English properly mean that one should be*
> *able to understand Shakespeare, or to understand gutter*
> *dialect? The current approach seems to prefer the latter.*

Both can be useful and interesting.

>> *Both exist, next to each other. If you haven't already learnt a*
>> *language as a child, teaching it a "correct" standard language is*
>> *wasted effort.*

> *Nonsense. An adult can learn a correct language much*
> *more easily, [...]*

So why do grown-ups always have an accent? Even those who started early, and made a serious effort to perfectionate their accent in a foreign language?

> *not having to unlearn the confusion which*
> *a child encounters.*

There is hardly any confusion. There is training and patterns. And discovering what doesn't conform to them.

> *What is not realized is that the*
> *child spends far more time learning the language than*
> *the adult does.*

You are right there. 14 hours a day, 7 days a week, for several years. Every single activity a child is involved in is also language-learning. Any adult spending that much time on language learning would make great progress too.

- >As to "any native" knowing and applying it automatically,
- >my encounters with native Americans who are college students
- >indicate that neither is the case.

It is. In one sense it is, in the other it is not. And do distinguish between language variants, if they learnt some other variant than the standard at home, that's two different variants, each with its own rules.

- >Grammar is the structure of a language. Vocabulary and
- >usage fit into the structure, and a good presentation of
- >this makes learning much easier.

Children learn grammar and vocabulary at the same time, before ever having thought of the difference. That is the best method, even for adult.

- >There is a book by Gould, *_Russian for the Mathematician_*.
- >He claims that if one learns the grammar, the alphabet,
- >the connectives, and 40 Russian roots, one could read
- >mathematical Russian.

I know the grammar, alfabet, spelling, pronouunciation of Portuguese very well. Yet I still have great difficulty understanding, speaking and writing it. Reading is easier, especially technical texts about subjects I'm already familiar with.

I guess I could read a Russian article about some Windows user's skills without even knowing Russian. That not the point. If I hear a news item about Iraq in Dutch or English first, and then hear the same thing in Russian, I can understand a lot of 'Russian'. Does that mean I have a working knowledge of that language? I don't think so.

- >Even back when English grammar was taught in grammar
- >school, learning the grammar of a foreign language
- >pointed out parts of English grammar which the school
- >classes did not cover.

English grammar is very complicated, especially if you use books that don't think it works the same as Latin.

--

Ruud Harmsen - <http://rudhar.com>