

Re: Why can't daddy?

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2006-05/msg00507.html>

- *From:* "Peter T. Daniels" <grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Wed, 10 May 2006 13:36:31 GMT
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Claudio Grondi wrote:

Harlan Messinger wrote:

Ruud Harmsen wrote:

Wed, 10 May 2006 07:51:36 +0800: Lee Sau Dan
<danlee@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>: in sci.lang:

"Claudio"
==
Claudio
Grondi
<claudio.grondi@xxxxxxxx>
writes:

Claudio> My own experience from trying to
check myself if it is
Claudio> true, that generally children learn
faster than adults
Claudio> is, that adults are often able to
learn much faster than
Claudio> children can.

How much time a day does a child spend on
learning a language?

14 hours a day?

How much time a day can an adult afford on
learning a language?

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20 hours a week, if an intensive course, otherwise 3.

Everyone seems to be assuming that the L2 learning being discussed is in a classroom context. How does that differ from the case of people who move to a place where they don't speak the local language and pick it up through daily living and just getting by?

In this context a funny thing I experienced once comes to my mind:

As I was fishing at a lake at night I have met a guy working for some years as a foreign worker in a mining company there. Happy to have someone to talk to I started a conversation in the language of the country he was living and working, but this failed due to as he stated (translated here to English in a manner to give the right impression about his language skills):

"No time ... language ... to learn – few words ... at work ... need – ... native friends ... no have."

Ok, I thought, lets talk to each other using his native language, but ... this also failed! He stated (translated to English):

"many years ... ago, speaking ... language – can't ... it anymore."

So we were sitting next to each other for hours and enjoyed fishing in this nice silent night feeling to understand each other without any words.

I think, that in a standard case (i.e. usual situation) an adult doesn't get enough attention from others and doesn't have the time to percept the language, especially when working hard for living. This is in my eyes the main reason why many foreign workers even after twenty, thirty years don't speak the language of their host country very well, where their children (also these which were 10–12 years old when changed the country of living) do that mostly even without any foreign accent after they learn it at school they have been forced to visit there.

So the standard case to progress in learning a new language for an adult is to force himself to take the time and get the necessary attention in context of a self–study or a kind of classroom situation.

A child gets usually corrected when using wrong words or phrases – the adult is confronted with impatience or a laugh as the person he speaks to is usually not ready to put the efforts in correcting his language mistakes. Lucky are these ones who are in deep love with a foreigner and living in his native country for a while – they are getting enough attention from the partner and his friends to pick up the language trough daily living with the loved one and his companions (friends, family, co–worker, etc.).

If I were to detail all the grammatical errors in your (perfectly understandable) message, do you think that your next message of similar

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length will contain any fewer errors? or even that it will not contain the same errors found here?

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Peter T. Daniels grammatim@xxxxxxx

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