

Re: Why can't daddy?

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- *From:* Claudio Grondi <claudio.grondi@xxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Wed, 10 May 2006 19:23:32 +0200
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Peter T. Daniels wrote:

Claudio Grondi wrote:

Harlan Messinger wrote:

Ruud Harmsen wrote:

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

"Claudio"
==
Claudio
Grondi
<claudio.grondi@xxxxxxxxxx>
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

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a child spend on learning a
language?

14 hours a day?

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

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

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

As you will be probably the only one ready to do it for me, it would maybe lower my error rate in similar sentences in my directly following next messages, but I doubt it will have a really sustainable effect on me considered in terms of months or years. If all the newsgroup members will insist on grammatically correct messages before replying to them, always elaborating on the errors and always waiting for the correct version before any reply, I am quite sure (if I would take the patience to bear it not stopping to post at all) I will be improving over the time.

Below I list some problems I am aware of which are probably specific to my way of speaking/grasping a language:

– I have trouble to switch between languages, so I speak correctly only when using one of them for a longer time (at least some weeks of intensive everyday communication). Mixing languages when speaking usually slows my speech down and increases the error rate, especially in the language I was not using for a longer time (this seems not much depend on the language, native or not).

In between as I am lately often using simultaneously three(sometimes four) languages (English, German, Polish, sometimes Russian) in reading and sometimes in speaking I have noticed, that my "internal" language differs from all of these, so that sometimes ideas are coming up in another language as this one I am just speaking/writing and sometimes ideas are coming up without any associated word in any of the languages and I have to put some efforts into finding/recalling the appropriate word or phrase.

– I am loosing some of the feeling for the language after I am a longer time not speaking it in everyday life. Writing and reading messages helps a bit, but it is usually not enough to get things really improved. As it was the case in the past at school and apparently (according to you) it is still the case, I am not able to learn and grasp the grammar stuff. I have to rely on my feeling and this gets much better when I am living some weeks/months in the corresponding country having some long discussions with native speakers everyday. My English, being at its top condition after my longer (six weeks) visit to USA many years ago has got in between damaged by taking part in many scientific European meetings, where people from all European countries were speaking "European English" (the worst case for my ears and the feeling for the language are French people speaking bad English).

– especially I know, that I have a problem with writing conditional sentences in English, so if you will be so kind to try to explain to me the problems I have with it in a way I become able to memorize it in spite of my aversion to grammar I will sure appreciate your effort (also on other problems I have and I am not aware of).

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If you(or anyone else) are really into language internals looking for someone on whom you can see the impact of efforts towards learning or other measures (I mean, I am capable of having an above-average insight into this matters), just drop me an email. I am eager to serve as a subject in order to get also myself more insight into the very basics of grasping and memorizing language messages, especially when related to the impact of language perception on mental and health conditions caused by existence of subconscious emotional blockades originating from words or similar "mystic" barriers or patterns governing our behavior like it is sometimes demonstrated even publicly on stage with random chosen people using hypnosis (is it a trick or actually real truth?). I have some experience with this subject which provides many hints towards evidence, that the pure perception of speech/text in a given language can have very devastating impact on mental and health conditions.

Claudio

P.S. I run a spell check on my texts (also on this one) and detect this way usually not only typos, but also misspellings due to usage of German alphabetizing of English words (same happens in the reverse direction in my German texts if I mix writing messages in both languages at the same time).