

Re: Why can't daddy?

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- *From:* "Peter T. Daniels" <grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Wed, 10 May 2006 19:43:50 GMT
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Claudio Grondi wrote:

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@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

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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?

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?

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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

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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.

Exactly. One of the greatest linguists ever, who died on December 31 of last year at the age of 81, lived in Chicago for 50 years; she was a master not only of Akkadian, but of Sumerian and Elamite as well; yet her Hungarian accent never diminished, and she confessed to never being able to master certain aspects of English grammar (restrictive vs. non-restrictive relatives, in fact). This despite her also being a keen analyst of poetry in all her adoptive languages (as a student in Paris, she and her classmates translated a Babylonian epic into perfect alexandrines ... though she would never let anyone see the ms.).

L1 and L2 acquisition are qualitatively different.

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Peter T. Daniels grammatim@xxxxxxx

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