

Avoid bullshit

“Beware of false knowledge; it is more dangerous than ignorance.” - **George Bernard Shaw**

The industry of language learning, as every other industry, is full of pseudo-science or some techniques which work just for few cases. It can be confusing when we are a beginner, some people say that other say that. You'll need to avoid them as soon as possible because you'll feel like you're learning but in fact they are just wasting your time. I want to present you some of the methods you should avoid and of course why you should avoid them. Let's hunt bullshit!

Labeling

We all know that method. The concept is to put post-it notes on every stuff in our room. They say it helps you to remember the word by making you visualize what's the meaning of the word. Even if put an image on a word is a good thing, putting post-it notes everywhere will just make your room look like a blackboard in a meeting room.

It doesn't work because you get used to these notes and at some point, you just skip them. You don't even notice they are here and their value is equal to zero. We, most of our time, do things automatically, like closing the door, put some

stuff on the desk, ... The problem is that you don't remember the overall process of these actions, you can guess but you don't know the feeling, how you did it, etc... Your post-it notes will be erased in the process so think about it before to change your room's color with a flashy one.

Passive language learning

As you can imagine, passive language learning can be done in a lot of different ways. Before to give you a list of these ways, I want to tell you that some of them can appear as stupid, but they are in fact recommended by a bunch of writers. Here is the list:

- Sleeping and listening to audio
- Change language settings of phone or video games
- Putting music or video in the background to get used to the language
- And much more...

Well, these techniques will just give you the illusion of learning at the moment, but you'll quickly realize that your level doesn't improve. If you don't realize it, it can be a problem because you'll be frustrated, and you will probably quickly abandon the quest. Passive learning, listening, and reading are not influencing your knowledge, it only influences your perception of yourself. Your current state will

be in the “working” mode but the brain will not absorb anything.

Jump in the water

Do you want to learn how to swim? Jump in the water! That sentence is everywhere, and that sentence is misunderstood by almost everyone. Everyone thinks that you should jump in the deep water with no one around you and by survival instinct you’ll survive and swim like a dolphin. The same concept exists in language learning, it is called immersion.

If you want to die by drowning, it’s the best path to follow. The original meaning of that sentence is more to jump in an uncontrolled environment but in which you can find people to teach you and to give you knowledge in order to improve. Going in a country with any preparation and without finding ways to learn except by trying to interact with locals will just result in a waste of time. You’ll just guess and finally learn the language but after 10 years. Is that your goal?

Learn a language in 24 hours

I hope you laughed when you read the title but unfortunately some people actually promise it on the web. Do you really think that people spent thousands of years to develop a language and that you can learn it in 24 hours? Isn’t it a little bit disrespectful? When you listen to that kind of people they

claim being able to speak more than 5 languages, and they are fluent in each of them.

When I looked at some of these videos I discovered one guy speaking Chinese with a girl. His level was so bad I could do better after one week on language class. But for his point of view, he is fluent because he can order food and can say hello. What I want to do here is not criticized but more to tell you that being fluent is mostly subjective, being fluent for someone can be survivor' skills, for another it could be having discussions and for another it can be grasping the cultural meaning, the speaking skills, the writing skills and the reading skills. I just want you to be aware of it.

The methods' scope

Some methods are working but they are working under some conditions. Being able to learn a language by translating your mother tongue into the new one can work (not completely) for similar languages but it will never work for different structures. You need to be skeptic before to read a method and you need to ask yourself:

- What are his/her goals?
- What is his/her mother tongue?
- Can these tips be applied in my case?

This is really important because we cannot consider that you can learn generically a language. Even if you read about the universal grammar, you still need to think that languages are

linked with the culture. Be careful about it and prefer to believe in methods explaining how to speak another language which is similar to the one you know. If you're learning from scratch a language and its culture, I invite you to read the last two parts of this book.