

The Umbrella Concept that Sits Above All Of Language Learning

As promised in the “How To Not Waste 6 Months Learning Chinese Naively (It's Hard!)” resource (check it out if you haven't already!), this is the extremely important umbrella concept that overarches what we've talked about on how you can effectively achieve your Chinese goals.

This concept is:

progress = motivation

Don't let the simplicity of this statement fool you as to how important it is. This correlation makes or breaks your Chinese learning experience as it has for thousands of language learners before you.

Let us explain what this is and what it means for your language learning.

What does this mean?

Every language learner that fails to learn Chinese fails because they lose the motivation to keep learning. It's almost never because they didn't have the ability to do so or they didn't see the benefits of learning.

They stopped because they felt like they were stagnating in their current way of learning and the efforts they were putting in weren't rewarding.

They didn't feel the progress they were making so they said “what's the point” and quit.

How does this concept affect my learning?

If you're serious about being someone that can learn a second language, no matter how you choose to learn, your goal should be to generate a feeling of progress for yourself.

For someone learning for the superpower of being able to communicate to native speakers, this might look like:

“Everytime I order at a Chinese restaurant I strike up a conversation with the waiters. When I started learning Chinese, I was fumbling around a lot with my tones but every time I do this I see myself having longer and more complex conversations with them.”

You can create this feeling of progress by putting yourself in situations where you’re tested in real life where you can see your progress.

The important distinction is that you’re looking to create the “feeling of progress” which is not the same as real progress. The two factors are moderately but not entirely correlated.

Here’s some ideas on how you can create a feeling of progress:

- Schedule in calls with real people so someone else can track your progress for you
- Write (and save) diary entries in Chinese over time
- Read progressively harder Chinese books
- Strike up conversations with Chinese strangers and see how complex you can bring the conversations to
- Start talking to Chinese-speaking friends around you in Chinese
- Change your device languages to Chinese

We build this feeling of progress with the Practical classes to give you opportunities to talk to other students with a teacher there to correct your mistakes. But we believe if you can do this outside of the classroom it’ll have the greatest impact.

The intensely motivating stupid psychological trick that will carry your language learning

If you know a bit of psychology or economics, you may be familiar with sunk cost fallacy which is “our tendency to follow through on an endeavor if we have already invested into it, whether or not the current costs outweigh the benefits.”

We see this all the time with students that get to the HSK 4 (intermediate) level.

Even if for nothing else, the feeling of “but I’m already halfway, let’s just finish it” is an intense motivator and leads to success for all of these students who reach business or even native level proficiency.

It’s entirely irrational but we believe that if you can use your biases to create better outcomes, shouldn’t we?

If this is true for you, how should you think about learning Chinese?

It's simple, if you can learn past the intermediate level then you can bet that you will end up going all the way to being conversational, business fluent or native fluent.

It can be hard to accept this on face value so please try verify this feeling against your own experience:

- Have you ever wanted to change your university degree halfway but finished it because you were already halfway?
- Have you ever found a book to be boring halfway but finished it anyway?
- Have you ever finished a plate of food because there was one more bite left and not because you actually wanted to eat it?

If you think that you can use sunk cost fallacy to trick your brain into helping you learn Chinese then your milestone could be just to push through the beginner and intermediate levels, after which sunk cost fallacy will take care of the rest.

Final thoughts

Thank you for taking the time to learn with us and we hope that the ideas we share will be useful for your Chinese learning forward.

If you have any further questions, want to geek out with us about language learning or just share your experience. You can email us at content@culturestride.com. Just a couple of lines has the power to really make our day!