REFLECTING ON LEARNING

MODULE 1

One of the best ways to improve your foreign language learning is to self-reflect. By looking back on your learning, you can find out what your strengths and weaknesses are and establish a better way to work towards your learning goals. Self-reflecting can help you track your learning progress and achievements, but also revise what you have learned. This is a great way to activate your mind and improve your memory, which can strengthen your knowledge of a new language. Adopting a habit of self-reflection is crucial to your success, and you can do that by including a few simple and short activities into your daily learning routine.

1. Reflecting on learning

Reflecting on learning may sound complicated but what it really is is just a very useful tool that you can use to your advantage. We learn different skills and acquire knowledge as we go through life, but we rarely think about the ways in which we have learned. Reasons for this are numerous, maybe the last time we learned something new was during our formal education and we were so focused on moving on to the next phase that we never really stopped to think about the processes we go through and why we go through them. When we transition from formal learning to informal learning our motivations for learning change. This is where reflecting on learning becomes important. When you don't have a lot of time to dedicate to learning a new language you need to make every moment count. As you include reflective learning in your process, slowly but surely you will notice your capacity for learning increasing.

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2. Understand your learning process

Understanding the learning process means that we take time to understand the material we're working on and its concepts, how well we can implement what we have learned and realize which learning strategies work for you. It can also help us understand and realize which parts of the learning process we enjoy the most, what our preferences are and how we feel about them. Most importantly, it can help us focus on our goals to know where and when we plan to implement something that we have learned and what we hope to achieve.

While reflecting on our learning process we may ask ourselves the following questions:

- Which parts of the material do I understand well? How do I know that I understand this material well? How can I check if I understand it?

- Which parts of the material do I struggle with? What specifically am I struggling with, and why? Can I form specific questions about the part of the material I am struggling with?

- Are there any changes that I can make to my learning process to make it better for me?

- Should I ask someone else for help, either with my reflection on learning or with the learning itself? If so, then what questions should I ask, and who is a good person to help me with this?

3. Becoming aware of your learning process

Becoming aware of our own thinking processes, the way we learn and the way we should be learning is the first step in strengthening our own capacity to learn. Reflective learning enables assessment of the "why" and "how" of the learning, as well as what needs to be done as a result. If this becomes a part of your routine, it will be easy for you to describe what you need to learn, and how as well as the whole learning process.

Metacognition is a process of becoming aware of the road you need to take to "close the gap" between what you know and what you need to learn. Reflecting on learning means you are aware of your goals, and you know exactly how you should get there.

For example, it means that you will ask yourself how well you understand each topic and know exactly what you should focus on more, and/or which topic you should spend more time on.

4. Change the strategies you use

A part of self-reflection in learning includes understanding what types of tasks help us most to improve and what we feel most comfortable doing. We all like to take in information in different ways. Sometimes the reason for the lack of progress we may be facing, or progress that is slower than wanted or expected can be as simple as the materials not being available to us in a form that suits us. We all respond to different stimuli and find which is yours. Don't think there is one way to improve your language skills. If you are working on improving your listening skills and you don't like answering questions, but really learn the best when you take notes then adjust the task to what works the best for you. This will help you realize your full potential, reduce the stress of learning, it will increase your self-confidence, and inspire you to be more curious about the topic of your studies.

5. Correct your own mistakes

It is important we become aware of the processes we go through as we are learning, to understand what we are capable of and the progress we make. One of the ways to start becoming aware is to take a good look at our mistakes. They are a normal and welcome part of this journey you are on. Don't be afraid of them, use them! When you can assess your skills while you are working on improving them you won't lose time practicing something you are already good at, but instead, you will focus your time and energy to get better at things that require your attention. This may seem difficult, but it is highly effective. Whenever you do any task that involves reading comprehension, writing, gap filling, or answering questions don't just check if your answers are correct or not and move on. To really engage yourself actively in the learning process try to write down explanations for each of the wrong answers.

More resources

Still want to continue learning about the topic of this unit?
Not to worry, we have made a selection of further resources that you can use if you would like to find out more.
Just click on the links and keep learning!

1. **Own the assessment process**
2. **Bullet journal for language learning**
3. **The role of self-reflection in learning and development**
4. **Reflective practice – thinking about the way you do things**
5. **Why reflection encourages a better learning experience**

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