

Learn How to Learn. Learn How to Learn. Learn How to Learn.

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**With
Mr. Chaghazardi**



#65
GOLDEN TALK

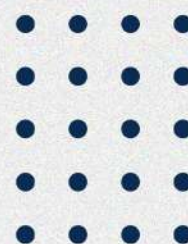
LEARN HOW TO LEARN...



Welcome to **the 65th episode** of Golden Talk, brought to you by the **Iran-Australia Language Institute**. I'm Dr. Alikhani, the creator and organizer of the Golden Talk series. In Golden Talk, we aim to provide our audience with opportunities to notice English in the context of real-life situations and topics, offering them authentic language exposure. We also focus on helping our audience learn to develop their thoughts, take turns in conversations, and enhance their communication skills. Meanwhile, we feel responsible for raising awareness about topics that impact our lives, encouraging our audience to practice arguing for or against ideas and to develop their critical thinking skills. In this episode, titled "*Learn How to Learn (1)*," we aim to address and clarify some of the common misconceptions about language learning and learning itself.

IDEAS IN CONVERSATION:

Read this conversation between the Golden Talk show host and an educator about language learning.



Host: Golden Talk Show Host (Host): Good evening, everyone and welcome to another episode of Golden Talk! Today we have a special guest with us, a renowned EFL/ESL teacher trainer and educator, and the author of the series "Let's Learn How to Learn," Dr. Jane Smith.

Welcome, Dr. Smith!

Dr. Jane Smith (Dr. Smith): Thank you! It's a pleasure to be here.

Host: Let's dive right in. So, what do we exactly mean by learning? When can we say that a new word, for example, has been learned?



Dr. Smith: That's a great point to dive into. A common misconception about learning is that it's simply about recognizing new words or grammar structures. People often think that if they can recognize a word on a vocabulary list or in a text, they've learned it. But, in reality, learning a word goes far beyond that.

When we talk about truly learning a word, we mean that you can use it naturally and correctly in various contexts. It's not just about retention and recognition; it's about active usage. For instance, you might recognize the word "acquire," but can you comfortably use it in a sentence like, "She acquired a new skill during the course"? That's the real test.

To say a word has been really learned, it should become part of your active vocabulary. This means you can recall it and use it spontaneously in conversation or writing without having to pause and think. It's like having a tool in your toolkit—you don't just know it's there, you know how to use it when you need it.

Host: I liked the toolkit analogy (قیاس، تشبیه). Speaking of learning new words, though, why do so many learners fixate on expanding their vocabulary more than any other language system or skill? Is that all there is to learning a new language?

Dr. Smith: Of course not! You might know the meanings of all the words in a dictionary, but still not be able to speak a language. But to answer your question, many learners obsess over vocabulary because it feels like the most tangible and measurable part of language learning. Learners might think that if they know enough words, they can piece together sentences even if their grammar isn't perfect. This can work to a certain extent, especially in basic communication. However, to achieve higher levels of precision and exchange complex ideas with fluency and accuracy, a deeper understanding of grammar and context is necessary.

There's also the issue of how languages are traditionally taught. Many language apps, and unfortunately some teachers, emphasize vocabulary drills and lists outside of context because they are easy to create and assess. This can promote the idea that learning a language is primarily about memorizing words. But it isn't!

Host: So, it's really about **integrating** all these elements—vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and cultural understanding.

Dr. Smith: Exactly. Think of language learning as building a house. Vocabulary items are the bricks, grammar, and sentence structure are the mortar (ملات مثل سیمان و آهک), pronunciation is the **finishing touch**, and cultural understanding is like the blueprint that ensures everything fits together correctly. To be a **proficient** speaker of a language, you need to work on all these areas simultaneously.

Host: Dr. Smith, how long does it take to become proficient in a new language?

Dr. Smith: The time to become proficient in a new language varies based on several factors such as the learner's native language, the **target language**, study intensity, and learning methods. For most European languages, **reaching a B2 level** on the CEFR scale typically requires about 600 to 800 hours of **guided study**. More challenging languages like Chinese or Arabic can **take up to 2,200 hours**. **Consistent, daily practice and immersion can significantly speed up the process.**

Host: Can you learn a language on your own?

Dr. Smith: Yes and no! Improving your level through self-study is technically **feasible**, but it has its limitations because language learning is **interactive by nature**. Self-study gives learners the **autonomy** to work **at their own pace**, but **progress is not measurable**, there is no **curriculum** and therefore, learning is not systematically planned, and most importantly, without **constructive feedback** from teachers or native speakers, it's difficult to **refine your language skills**.

Host: That reminds me of another question I was going to ask you: Do adults and infants learn a language in the same way and through a similar **mechanism**?

Dr. Smith: That's a great question. While there are some similarities, such as the need for **exposure** and **repetition**, the mechanisms are significantly different. Babies acquire language through natural **immersion, without formal instruction**. They **pick up on** patterns and sounds through **constant interaction** in their environment. Adults, on the other hand, often rely on more **explicit** learning methods, such as studying grammar rules. They have more cognitive tools **at their disposal**. They can consciously analyze language structures and use their first language as a reference point. However, they also face challenges like less neuroplasticity compared to infants. Adults often need to **unlearn ingrained habits** from their native language, which can make learning a new language more complex.

Host: So, learning to unlearn is perhaps another key phrase here, and maybe a skill, too. Lastly, Dr. Smith, how can social media platforms be a **double-edged sword** in language learning?

Dr. Smith: Social media platforms can be both beneficial and **detrimental** in language learning. On the positive side, they provide access to diverse content, real-time communication with native speakers, and exposure to **authentic language use**, which can enhance learning and cultural understanding. However, the downside is that social media often features informal language, slang, and incorrect grammar, which can **mislead** learners. To **make the most of** social media, learners should **supplement** it with more **structured learning methods** and **be mindful of** the accuracy and appropriateness of the language they encounter online.

USEFUL LANGUAGE

Idiomatic language:

1) learn by heart: memorize something thoroughly.

• Example: "He learned all the vocabulary by heart."

2) Sharpen your skills: improve or refine your abilities.

• Example: "He took a course to sharpen his skills."

3) Get the hang of something: become familiar with or learn how to do something.

• Example: "After a few tries, you'll get the hang of it."

Other words and expressions:

4) Lifelong learning: ongoing, voluntary pursuit of knowledge.

• Example: "Lifelong learning keeps the mind sharp."

5) Consistent effort: regular and continuous application of energy towards improving skills.

• Example: "Consistent effort is necessary to achieve long-term success."

6) At one's disposal: available for use at any time.

• Example: "With numerous online resources at one's disposal, learning new skills has never been easier."

Interesting terminology:

7) polyglot: a person who knows and is able to use several languages.

• Example: "He's a polyglot who speaks six languages."

8) language immersion: A method of learning where learners are placed in an environment where they must use the target language.

• Example: "Language immersion programs are highly effective."

9) curriculum: the subjects comprising a course of study.

• Example: "The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects."

10) proficiency: a high degree of competence or skill.

• Example: "Her English proficiency is impressive."

11) retention of skills: the ability to maintain and recall learned abilities over time.

• Example: "Regular practice is crucial for retention of skills."

12) language barrier: difficulties in communication between people who speak different languages.

• Example: "Traveling helped her break the language barrier."

13) authentic: genuine; real and true, not fake. In this case, texts and materials that have been developed by native speakers of a language for purposes other than language learning

• Example: "She used a variety of authentic resources, such as movies and news, to create worksheets."

SPEAKING QUESTIONS

Read the following discussion questions and think about them.

1. To what extent you rely on social media platforms and/or different apps for language learning purposes? Do you find the useful? Why/Why not?
2. What are your weaknesses and strengths when it comes to learning English as a foreign language? What should you have done in the past? What have you been doing recently to sharpen your language skills? Any success?
3. Is it more effective to learn a new language through structured classes or self-study? Discuss.
4. How can language learning apps be improved? If you could develop a language learning app, what features would you incorporate in it?
5. To what extent do you think cultural understanding impacts language learning success?
6. Should social media play a significant role in modern language education? Debate the pros and cons.
7. Do you think native speakers of a language can do a better job of teaching the language than non-native speaking teachers?
8. How can language learners achieve a balance between vocabulary retention and active usage?