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PRINCIPLES OF POLYGLOT FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Annotation. Polyglots, people who speak multiple languages, often develop their own unique approaches to learning. Nevertheless, they share common principles that help them master languages effectively.

Keywords: language, polyglot, textbook, dictionary, translation.

Аннотация. Полиглоты — люди, владеющие несколькими языками, часто разрабатывают свои уникальные подходы к изучению. Тем не менее, у них есть общие принципы, которые помогают эффективно овладевать языками.

Ключевые слова: язык, полиглот, учебник, словарь, перевод.

Who are polyglots? Are they different from ordinary people who speak only their native language? However, there are fewer and fewer of them in the modern world. The majority of the world's population are bilinguals or trilinguals.

Kato Lomb, Hungarian translator, writer and, as she preferred to call herself, linguist Kato Lomb managed to master 28 languages in her long life, sixteen of which became her "working languages" (from and into which she translated in writing and orally). She believed that the division of people into those with and without "special linguistic abilities" was wrong. In her book "How I Learn Languages. Notes of a Polyglot" shares her experience: how to make it easier to memorise new words, increase vocabulary, master correct pronunciation. At the same time, she does not deny traditional teaching methods. The book, written in a lively language in the manner of conversation (with changes and additions made by the author for the Russian edition), will be read with interest by all those who study foreign languages, from beginners to professionals - translators and teachers.



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When learning a new language, Kato Lomb tried to immerse herself in it: reading books, doing grammar exercises, listening to the radio, communicating with native speakers. This approach proved to be fully justified.

Kato Lomb shares her methods with readers on how to learn languages properly:

Principle 1 - getting to know a language with the help of a dictionary. Before learning any language, Kato Lomb bought a thick dictionary. It was from this dictionary that she learnt the rules of reading in a particular language. Kato studied what sounds and letters there were in the language, measured the length of words, tried to "feel" the language. It is noteworthy that she did not learn the words, but simply "scanned" them, ran her eyes over them, actually read them. After a while, she began to understand how to distinguish parts of speech in the visualised language, how to distinguish a noun from a noun, an adverb from an adjective, etc.

Such a start seems strange, but, according to the polyglot, it helped her to feel the language "to taste", to make friends with it.

Principle 2 - doing grammar exercises and reading. After her first acquaintance with the language, Kato bought a grammar book with exercises and keys, as well as several collections of fiction in the language she was learning. The polyglot did without the help of a teacher. She did the exercises in the textbook every day, not skipping any of them and following the order in the books. Afterwards, Kato checked them against the correct answers. If she found a mistake, she rewrote the sentence and wrote another five or six similar sentences to consolidate her knowledge. Periodically, she reviewed the notes, paying special attention to the places where there were corrections.

Since learning grammar is not much fun, Kato started reading adapted literature at the same time. She bought simple books with short stories that interested her. The first time she read them, she would write down the words she could guess from the context in a vocabulary notebook. When reading a text passage for the second time, she dealt with unfamiliar words - she looked up their meaning in the dictionary. However, she did not write out all of them, but only those that she often used in her native language. She wrote out whole phrases or passages of sentences rather than individual words.



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Principle 3 is listening comprehension. Since it is impossible to learn pronunciation from a dictionary, Kato used the listening method. She listened to the news first in her native Hungarian and then listened to the programmes in the language she was learning. It wasn't easy, but she persevered, writing down unfamiliar words on a sheet of paper while listening. Immediately after listening to the news, she would look for a translation of these concepts (as long as she remembered the context in which they were used). After 2-3 days, she would copy the new words into her vocabulary notebook, repeating them in this way.

Once a week, Kato recorded a news report and worked hard with it: she listened to it several times, concentrating on the pronunciation of native speakers. In addition, during repeated listens, she could catch unfamiliar words she had missed before and familiarise herself with them.

Principle 4 - language practice. Along with all other skills, the polyglot also improved her speaking skills. Kato tried to find a teacher for speaking practice, but it was not always possible. Then the polyglot looked for a native speaker in her city who had come to the country for a long period of time. She communicated with him, though not with "him" but with "her". Kato preferred to communicate with women, because they are more talkative and willing to make contact. The polyglot asked her tutor to correct her speech mistakes and speak slowly so that she could understand every word.

Principle 5 - written translation exercises. Kato did a lot of translation exercises from her mother tongue into the target language. If she had difficulty in doing so, if she did not know how to form a sentence, she wrote fragmentary word combinations or just a set of words. Afterwards, she asked her tutor to check the text, correct and explain the mistakes. Kato rightly believed that what she had heard was easily forgotten, so she always completed the translation exercises in writing.

As for language practice abroad, the polyglot argued that such a trip would be useful, but would not guarantee you an increase in your language skills. You can learn any language in your own country. Kato notes that two categories of language learners will benefit minimally from travelling: those with a beginner's level - you simply won't understand native speakers, and those with a high level - it's hard to notice the difference in knowledge before and after the trip.



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10 universal commandments from Cato Lomb:

1. Practise your language every day. If you have no time at all, at least ten minutes. It is especially good to practise in the morning.
2. If the desire to study is weakening too quickly, don't "force" it, but don't give up. Think of some other form: put aside the book and listen to the radio, leave the exercises of the textbook and browse the dictionary, etc.
3. Never cram, never memorise anything in isolation, out of context.
4. Write out of turn and memorise all "ready-made phrases" that can be used in as many cases as possible.
5. Try to mentally translate everything you can: a flashed advertising board, a sign on a poster, scraps of conversations you overhear. It is always a rest, even for a tired head.
6. Learn firmly only what is corrected by the teacher. Do not reread your own uncorrected exercises: when reading repeatedly, the text is memorised involuntarily with all possible mistakes. If you study alone, you should only learn what you know to be correct.
7. Write out and memorise ready-made phrases and idiomatic expressions in the first person singular.
8. A foreign language is a fortress that must be stormed from all sides at the same time: reading newspapers, listening to the radio, watching unduplicated films, attending lectures in a foreign language, working through the textbook, correspondence, meetings and conversations with friends - native speakers.
9. Don't be afraid to speak, don't be afraid of possible mistakes, but ask to be corrected. And most importantly, don't get upset or offended if you do get corrected.
10. Be firmly convinced that you will achieve your goal at any cost, that you have an unbreakable will and an extraordinary ability for languages.

As seen in Commandment #3, the concept of context is also one of the key concepts in her approach. Kato Lomb considered ineffective the method of memorising individual words (in a list) in isolation from their context, because contextual associations make it easier for the mind to recall these words later.

Commandment No. 4 is about memorising stable linguistic formulas, the use of which simplifies the construction of speech in a foreign language.



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Kato Lomb recommended that language learning should begin with reading fiction in the language, which should be done from the very beginning, as this is what allows you to immerse your mind in the language microclimate and also allows you to learn the language with interest. About how you should read when the language is barely familiar to you, she also gives detailed explanations in her book *How I Learn Languages*.

Some languages she personally started learning without even having a dictionary at hand (e.g. Japanese), and sometimes, with only a dictionary, she could deduce by logical reflection the rules of syntax and morphology in a language.

Kato Lomb proposed a simple formula that determines the outcome of language acquisition.

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