



Overcoming the B1 Barrier in Foreign Language Learning: The Continuous Learning Technique

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Abstract: Several challenges are encountered in learning a foreign language in line with different language characteristics. These challenges are mostly experienced by adults and, initially, are not observed in the A1 and A2 levels. At the B1 level, basic topics such as the general grammar of the language, forming correct sentences and accurate use of key conjunctions and prepositions are covered. At this stage, students are expected to master certain language structures. Many visual or written documents and teaching methods on foreign language teaching can be found. However, the knowledge of language needs to be activated in time. It is possible to attain the desired goal in a short time by following methods in listening, reading, writing and speaking or by practicing these methods regularly. The Continuous Learning Technique, developed according to the case under study, can bring results in a short time and without mental fatigue by using the data from the foreign language learning techniques to date. This article has been prepared with a qualitative method and consists of explanations and comments based on sampling.

Keywords: *Activation, Continuous Learning, Language Levels, Critical Threshold, Motivation, Foreign Language Teaching.*

Introduction

The dilemma of activating language after a certain level reveal the foremost problem in language learning. The most challenging issue for learners in this process is to attain the proficiency for conveying their knowledge of language to speaking accurately and understanding the interlocutors correctly. Although speaking comfortably to the best of one's knowledge of target language without the fear of committing any mistake is much desired, this method does not suffice in the long-run vis-à-vis understanding the logic of the respective language. Achieving the knowledge of language obtained in the first two stages of learning at the B1 level and having a command on the language is essential.

At the A1 (Beginner) level, learners learn to communicate simply; they can briefly introduce themselves, ask simple questions and express possession. At the A2 (Basic User) level, they can introduce themselves in a little more detail. They can describe the events around themselves in different words and communicate in short expressions on basic topics. At the B1 (Intermediate) level, learners can talk about their experiences, convey their ideas, dreams and wishes through certain patterns of the target language, explain their plans with reasons, understand and interpret intermediate-level texts, express their travel observations, and express and write facts and figures on daily life (CEF).

The existence of a critical period in the foreign language learning process is scientifically defined. This hypothesis is considered primarily related to the bio-linguistic and neuro-linguistic¹ subsidiaries

¹1. Biolinguistics was first presented by Noam Chomsky (Chomsky 1957) in his paper 'Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory' in prominently seeking answers to questions 1. What is the knowledge of language? 2. How can this knowledge of language be acquired? 3. How can this knowledge of language be implemented? 4. How does this knowledge of language get activated in the brain? and 5. How did this knowledge of language emerge in the

species? (Boeckx, C., & Grohmann, K.K. (2007). The biolinguistics manifesto. *Biolinguistics*, 1,001-008).

²2 Neurolinguistics is a new and deeply interdisciplinary field, influenced by psycholinguistics, brain science, aphasiology, (psychological) neuroscience, and more. The point and purpose of Neurolinguistics is to motivate researchers and all who are interested in the microbiology of language to engage in ancillary studies by providing

of a language. This phenomenon's relationship with the neurons in the brain, which play an active role in learning, is highly significant. Language learners younger than 13, the age when human brain accomplishes focus, can learn any target language with a proficiency no different or almost identical to their mother tongue. This is related to the flexibility of neurons in the brain. While neurons are flexible during the focusing period, they gradually harden afterwards (Demirezen, 2003). Vis-à-vis the phenomenon of critical period, any learner over 13 inevitably reaches the critical language level in the language learning process, rather than acquiring a language. As each stage in language learning has its critical level, the language learning process has its own critical level in general.

Learning Process

Learning is a multifaceted process, significantly affected by learners' psychological, social and economic statuses. The technique effectively used and described by R. Feynman is akin to this study. Feynman lists five key items one needs to have as pre-requisites before engaging in learning. These items can also be termed as Feynman's life philosophy:

1. Do not focus and worry about what people around you think and feel. Do not pressure yourself into other people's opinions of your success and your practices. Everyone thinks and says many things. This should not concern you. If you do so, you will keep yourself away from an environment of uncertainty.
2. What you want to do is your priority. What you want to be is secondary. In this respect, you must

constantly explore. You must not remain superficial. The most exquisite details are concealed within. Pay attention to the inclination within and concentrate towards that direction. If you focus on your main goal, other things you want to do will be okay.

3. One need not know everything. If you have this notion, drop it immediately. It's also nice to not know something occasionally. Believe me, living without knowing is much more interesting and beautiful than having answers that might be wrong. Do not deny your ignorance; rather, accept it and let it guide you to new discoveries (Gribbin, J., & Gribbin, M. (1997).

4. Let go of unnecessary hassles to do your job better. Spend minimal time online.

5. Keep humor in your life. Always be honest. Do not fool yourself, because the easiest person to fool is yourself. (Özdemir, C., & Uygur, E. O.).

In this study, no objective like drawing a philosophy of learning was chosen; yet, examples have been provided for implementing the world-renowned foreign language teaching methods on an individual scale in a most feasible and short-cut manner. Based on the available learning opportunities, the most prominent feature of this study is to enable students to concentrate themselves on the learning objectives and enter an active and deep learning process. The lack of brain fatigue during the learning process with different learning materials can be stated as the most significant factor that makes the Continuous Learning Technique successful.

them an outline of the subject fields. (Akkurt, İ. O. (2021). The Neurolinguistics: A Spectrum of Research. *Türk Eğitim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 2(1), 24-27).

Method

This study has preferred the qualitative method in line with the objectives. To attain the objectives of the study, a case study was chosen with the aims to find answers to the questions of "how" and "with what". In a single case study, a current situation is focused and is chosen as excerpted from the respective individual's real-life environment (Stake, 1995:2-5). Similarly, researchers who also conduct multiple case studies focus on a single situation. However, they change the task environment to explore and detect the situation under different settings. In this study, it has been deemed appropriate to provide various examples on a single case. The only case in this study is the problem of exceeding the critical threshold faster at the B1 level. Different examples implemented in this situation are utilized to expand the argument. Since the research was conducted on a case study, the experienced parameters of swift and successful clearance of the B1 level in language learning have been provided.

Theoretical Framework

Foreign Language Teaching Methods

The foreign language learning methods once used and are still used effectively have been defined by the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Department. These methods have formed a field of implementation through different techniques. Each newly developed method is either a complement to the previous method or a response to it. In this study, it is found appropriate to introduce the argument by highlighting the defining features of respective methods. The "Continuous Learning Technique" is to create a new perspective based on the foreign language learning methods defined. This perspective will include mostly viewing, listening, writing and reading activities. Therefore, knowing foreign

language learning methods in terms of contents and objectives is to create motivation for individuals on the path of language learning.

Direct Method: Implemented by making reading-writing-speaking and listening activities functional without using the mother tongue, this method progressed by incorporating physical activities. (Tilley, H. (1918).

Natural Method: "The natural method can be defined as communicating with foreign language learners by exclusive use of the target language, which is the mother tongue of the teacher, right from the beginning, and achieving this interaction with one another in a manner that may create a text, but with a simple series of sentences that can be understood without any formal grammatical explanation." (*ibid.* Tilley, H. (1918).

Grammar Translation Method: Shaped by bringing the grammatical rules forward in the line of induction, this method perceives no harm in presenting the mother tongue and the target language together. The method also includes vocabulary-based and translation-based assignments (Hengirmen, 2006).

Cognitive-Based Method: This method advocates that active learning is based on a process. Prior knowledge of language is preserved and sustained by linking it with new learning. Language learning develops by itself, because the mind remains active. This method defines language as a process of production and communication (Doğan, 2012).

Communication-Based Method: This approach sees language as an element of communication and, similar to the cognitive-based method, supports the view that learning does not occur through self-

assessment of acquisitions. On the contrary, learning has a culturally based expansion. (Demirel, 2010).

Listening and Speaking-Based Method:

Developed as a behavioral model from a psychological viewpoint and a structuralist one in terms of linguistics, the dominant notion in this approach is that language naturally relies primarily on listening, reading, and speaking, with writing developing later. This method places importance on dialogues (Demirel, 2010).

Eclectic Method: This method is more flexible than the others. The general framework is determined and the learning is embarked with the methods closest to the target. (Isçan, A. (2017).

Suggestopedia: Developed in the psychology of learning, this method advocates the view that the environment should be well organized for better learning, and the effect of auxiliary factors such as music and painting are vital on learning (ibid.).

Group Learning Method: It is student centered with the objective to enable learning and speaking skills more easily by overcoming anxieties and fears in a group setting. (Samimy, K. K., & Rardin, J. P. (1994).

Silent Way: A method aiming to provide learning with different materials to strengthen intuition and estimation skills, the role of the teacher is passive and the learner is fairly active. (ibid.).

Total Physical Response: It advocates the view that psychological readiness and focus are at the forefront in learning. Removal of negative effects is essential for learning and brain functions play a very significant role in motivating a learner. (ibid.).

Audio-Visual Method: This method advocates the use of technical facilities as learning takes place more easily in classrooms designed as language labs and equipped with audio-visual devices. (Demircan, 2013).

Task-Based Method: This method considers listening, viewing, writing and reading activities as together and focuses on the learning process. Case studies and projects are given importance. In the tasks, the teacher assumes the role of monitor and corrector. Most tasks are done by the learner. (Doğan,2012).

Content-Based Method: This method developed on a different line than the other learning methods. Defined as creating content according to the needs of the learner, the method is based on preparing different curricula for different occupational groups. (Liebscher, G., & DAILEY-O'CAIN, J. E. N. N. I. F. E. R. (2005).

Learner Competencies Required in B1 Level

The learners can understand direct factual information about common every day or work-related topics, and can define both general messages and specific details. They can use general expressions, provided it is expressed in spoken manner. They can understand the main themes of clear and standard topics on familiar topics regularly encountered, can generally follow the main points of long discussions, provided they are delivered in clear speech and pronounced in the standard dialect.

They can follow lectures related to their fields of study or give speeches on their fields of study, provided they have subject knowledge. They can use simple and clear expressions in presentations, generally follow simple and short conversations on familiar topics, and understand standard and clearly

delivered speech. They can understand operating instructions and simple technical information for everyday equipment, and follow detailed instructions.

They can understand the informational content of the majority of material published in different forms, present their views on relevant topics in a clear and standardized speech, understand the main points of radio bulletins and simpler recorded material on familiar topics, read simple and factual texts on topics related to fields of study or interests, and comprehend their meaning satisfactorily.

They can understand well enough the description of events, emotions and wishes in personal letters, correspond regularly with pen-pals, scan longer texts and gather information from different sources to find the desired information, utilize parts of a text or different texts to perform a specific task, and find and understand information in everyday materials such as letters and brochures.

They can identify the primary conclusions in clearly indicated argumentative texts, recognize the line of argument, although not essential, in handling the presented topic, can understand clearly written and simple instructions for an equipment, follow several movies in which most of the story is carried and conveyed by visuals and action, grasp the main points in TV programs on familiar topics besides open and vague notifications.

They can distinguish foreign words according to the context in subjects related to their fields of study and interests, occasionally guess the meaning of unknown words from context and infer the sentence meaning, and contribute to any topic, provided the topic under discussion is familiar.

They can communicate with evident confidence in familiar or routine and non-routine matters related to themselves. They can exchange, check and approve information, move beyond routine discussions, express their thoughts on abstract and cultural issues such as movies, books, and music, handle most situations likely to arise while traveling by using a wide range of simple structures, engage in impromptu conversations, and express opinions, and exchange information on familiar, personal interests, or everyday life topics, such as family, work, travel, travel.

They can follow clearly articulated speech addressed to themselves in everyday conversations, but may occasionally have to ask for repetition of certain words and phrases. They can sustain a conversation or discussion, and express and respond to emotions such as surprise, happiness, sadness, interest, and indifference.

They can pass short comments about the opinions of others, and discuss and propose alternatives on what to do, where to go, whom or which to choose etc. They can usually follow the main points in an informal discussion with friends, provided the conversation is clear, give or ask for opinions when discussing topics of interest, and make their views and reactions about the solution of problems or implementation understandable. They can clearly address where to go, what to do, and how to organize an event (such as a trip) and politely express belief, opinion, agreement and disagreement.

They can deal with most occasions likely to arise when traveling, arranging travel or accommodation, or deal with their interlocutors during a foreign visit. They can easily have their work done in stores, post offices and banks, and can voice their complaints. They can talk about a short story, article, speech,

discussion, interview, or documentary. They can directly find and convey factual information, ask and follow detailed instructions, and get more detailed information CEF, (2001, s.58-80).

On Foreign Language Teaching Techniques and the Continuous Learning Technique

Several techniques have been developed in foreign language learning methods in line with the starting point and the target. No matter how perfect the methods and techniques can be, challenging aspects may definitely appear in practice and personal differences. The existing facilities in education systems may not be conducive for implementing the techniques, or conditions may not always be suitable for learning. Therefore, learners' foreign language learning environment helps to motivate them to some extent. Meanwhile, personal differences appear and learning takes place faster with personal focus. Depending on their keenness for learning through visual, auditory or other methods, learners implement their own way. Using selective and task-based approaches and the continuous learning technique discussed in this article support each other. The working principle, called 'the continuous learning technique' here, is an essentially applied method. All recognized foreign language teaching centers elevate their students to the desired level of achievement within a definite duration and through definite schedules of study. What renders the difference in the implementation mentioned in this article is that the learners practice this technique on their own and as per their own study schedule. In addition, this study has revealed the language ability and plus-time the Continuous Learning Technique provided to the learners who experienced personal learning at the B1 level under this case study.

Findings

In this study, the study stages of the student model chosen as a case study have been arranged according to the auxiliary elements used. In the case under study, the mental preparation phase must be addressed first. Feasibly, the factors that compel or motivate the person to learn must be observed. The primary objective for learning a language is acquiring the speaking and writing skills. However, during the language learning process, the learned vocabulary, expressions and the logical features of the language generally lag behind when it comes to activate speaking. With the Continuous Learning Technique, it will be possible to combine the learned knowledge with speaking.

The case study progressed with these steps:

Mental Preparation and Plan

This stage involves motivation to learn a language. The most important factor to stimulate this motivation is the feeling of need. The individual involved in this case study intends to find a job and work shortly thereafter. This is why, he wishes to learn the target language at a medium level and start life in career. He keenly acknowledged the plan in his mind and detailed it in a short time. Meanwhile, he also reserved in learning plan a slot for the A2 level knowledge. According to this plan:

1. He will revise the knowledge of language obtained at the A2 level.
2. He will study the first B1-level foreign language learning book by writing.
3. He will keep his knowledge alive by reading the other B1-level foreign language learning book.

Studying with Foreign Language Teaching

Books

During this plan, which the individual made without going to any language school at the B1 level, he selected two B1-level basic language teaching books as the baseline and followed the topics in those books. An addition book will suffice anyone attending a language school or study course. The individual studied the first book completely by writing, and followed the topics in the second book for repetition. In the book he studied by writing, he also taken notes on the vocabulary he encountered for the first time and where those words were used. He studied to reinforce the new grammar rules he found in the book through the videos he watched.

Reading Story Books

The study plan also includes storybook reading. Another way to have a better command of the spoken language is reading stories. If the story books are read from the A2 level onwards, considerable vocabulary and sentence structure acquisition will be achieved. This acquisition will show its effects directly when the learner reads stories at the B1 level. The individual was joined by two or three people during his story reading. The storybook readings continued in a way to complete a storybook every week, and the individual noted the words, concepts and idioms that caught his attention in each storybook.

Watching Videos

Another part of the case process is watching videos and listening. The listening part, one of the four parts in proficiency tests, is also known as challenging in language learning and teaching activities. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to listening while learning a foreign language. This affects acquiring the pronunciation, intonation, and accent in the

target language. At this phase, the individual can apply his knowledge of language to speaking accurately. The individual under the case study used the advantages of listening by watching a B1-level video for at least 30 minutes a day.

Letter Writing

Crucial in having proficiency of a foreign language, writing in today's practices creates essential learning through writing letters and e-mails. These short but purposeful pieces of writing on respective topics not helps to acquire the spirit of daily speech forms, but also enables the gaining of better thinking and expression skills. In addition, since respective vocabulary and grammar structures of the target language are practiced in these letters, a working target language use is achieved.

Solving Tests

During the B1 achievement process, the learner under study solved 20 tests from an anthology of previous language proficiency examinations. The logic of the items and the concepts in those questions also reveal the logic of target language teaching in the country of residence or in the target language country where the questions were set during the respective period. Therefore, the individual in the language learning process also solved the test logic through this study. A proficiency test consisting of listening, writing, reading and speaking components provides a mental affinity for the target language in a short time through the daily concepts, words and topics it presents.

Teaching Others

This is an essential step for keeping the knowledge of language fresh, retaining it permanently after reaching a certain level of learning, and reinforcing the key structures. Whether they are at the end of

each chapter or at different intervals in the foreign language learning book and even when explanations may be challenging for learners at first, they feel easier the more learning takes place in time. Consequently, the learner's self-confidence and desire for learning increase. Such learning endeavors can be undertaken jointly with spouses and children at home, with friends outdoors, or with people who speak the target language in special centers for language practice.

Conclusion

Learning a language at the intermediate level and gaining the key skills to fulfil daily tasks with ease are crucial. Although the learning process differs as per the characteristics of the target language and its writing system, it is always possible to achieve success through resolve and continuous work. The language mastered at the B1 level is no longer difficult or unattainable, because enough vocabulary with mastery on several grammatical rules have been achieved. From this viewpoint, there is no risk of failure in the Continuous Learning Technique, as long as the conditions are conducive. As in the case example, an individual who in a short time qualified in a language like German – which has tough grammatical rules – with this technique, also achieved success through a solid and well-motivated study plan followed by effectively practicing the four main components in respective language learning methods. The implementations in the case under study may not be suitable for everyone. Some applications may differ from person to person and such personal differences always exist in methods of language learning.

The reasons behind learning a foreign language are basically important. Individual differences and different practices are included in this notion. With the facilities provided by today's virtual

environment, especially those who wish to continue in academics and business can reach their desired level of language proficiency at any time, except for some exceptional cases, with resolve and hard work. It should also be considered this learning endeavor will prove difficult only for those who have exceeded a certain age bracket; meanwhile, it is possible to obtain positive results by utilizing the same technique, perhaps with a slight increase in the time dedicated for language learning.

Figure 1

The work of the individual in the case study-1

Ich bin heute morgen um 7.00 Uhr aufgestanden. Meine Tochter hat die Prüfung bestanden. Peter ist am Wochenende ins Kino gegangen. Der Kellner hat einen Kaffee gebrüht. Wo hat dein Sohn studiert? Der Meister hat eine Auto repariert. Der Auftrag hat nicht funktioniert.

	Prät. (Konjunkt)	Partizip II (Partikel)
ankommen	kam ... an	ist angekommen
abfahren	fuhr ... ab	ist abgefahren
anziehen (sich)	zog ... an	angezogen
aufstehen	stand ... auf	ist aufgestanden
aussteigen	stieg ... aus	ausgestiegen
ausziehen (sich)	zog ... aus	ausgezogen
beginnen	begann	begonnen
bekommen	bekam	bekommen
bleiben	blieb	ist geblieben
brechen <small>masculine</small>	brach	gebrochen
bringen	brachte	gebracht
denken	dachte	gedacht
einsteigen	stieg ... ein	ist eingestiegen
eintreten	trat ... ein	ist eingetreten
erhalten	erhielt	erhalten
essen	ess	gegessen
fahren	fuhr	ist gefahren
fallen	fiel	ist gefallen
finden	fund	gefunden
fliegen	flieg	ist geflogen
geben	gab	gegeben
gehen	ging	ist gegangen

Figure 2

The work of the individual in the case study-2

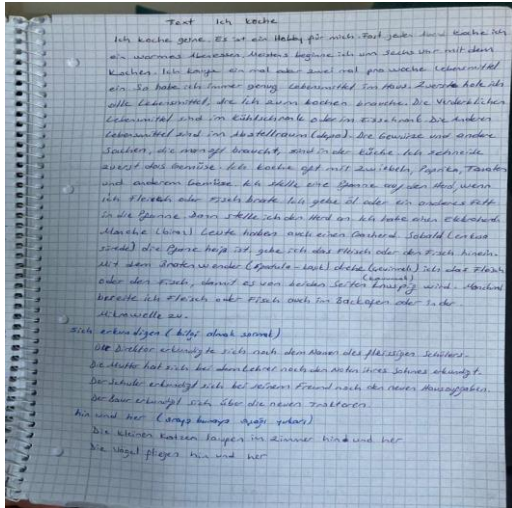


Figure 3

The certificate of the individual



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