



Becoming Fluent: How Cognitive Science Can Help Adults Learn a Foreign Language (MIT Press)

By Richard Roberts, Roger Kreuz

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Adults who want to learn a foreign language are often discouraged because they believe they cannot acquire a language as easily as children. Once they begin to learn a language, adults may be further discouraged when they find the methods used to teach children don't seem to work for them. What is an adult language learner to do? In this book, Richard Roberts and Roger Kreuz draw on insights from psychology and cognitive science to show that adults can master a foreign language if they bring to bear the skills and knowledge they have honed over a lifetime. Adults shouldn't try to learn as children do; they should learn like adults.

Roberts and Kreuz report evidence that adults can learn new languages even more easily than children. Children appear to have only two advantages over adults in learning a language: they acquire a native accent more easily, and they do not suffer from self-defeating anxiety about learning a language. Adults, on the other hand, have the greater advantages -- gained from experience -- of an understanding of their own mental processes and knowing how to use language to do things. Adults have an especially advantageous grasp of pragmatics, the social use of language, and Roberts and Kreuz show how to leverage this metalinguistic ability in learning a new language.

Learning a language takes effort. But if adult learners apply the tools acquired over a lifetime, it can be enjoyable and rewarding.

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Editorial Review

Review

There are many books about language learning in general, but it's great to finally see this scientifically sound account of second language acquisition. I was constantly nodding my head at things that I know to be true as an experienced language learner and coach to language learners, explained in a no-nonsense way drawing on many valid sources. Recommended for people who want to know the facts about adult foreign language acquisition.

(Benny Lewis, international best-selling author of *Fluent in 3 Months*)

Becoming Fluent is written by cognitive psychologists who lucidly demonstrate how adults can successfully learn a foreign language by utilizing strategies based on reliable cognitive science and educational psychology research. The reader will understand how and why he or she can master a new language -- an insight unrealized in previous texts.

(Timothy Jay, Professor of Psychology, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, and author of *The Psychology of Language* and *Why We Curse*)

This is a one-of-a-kind book that will give adult language learners the confidence they need to start or continue studying a foreign language. Engagingly written chapters draw on the authors' personal experiences and findings from cognitive science to illustrate why language learners experience problems and explain what they can do to overcome them.

(Susan R. Fussell, Professor, Department of Communication and Department of Information Science, Cornell University, and editor of *The Verbal Communication of Emotions*)

The authors bring forth concepts, research, and theories in cognitive science to explain how adults learn, making this book that is packed full of useful scientific information applicable to other learning situations.

(*Library Journal*)

The book is helpful for the adult language student but also full of useful information that we can use in other learning situations.

(*Cosmos Magazine*)

Kreuz and Roberts... begin by noting three myths associated with language learning in adulthood: adults cannot acquire a foreign language as easily as children, adults should approach learning the way children do, and one should not use a first language to translate a target foreign language. The authors devote the book to slaying these myths with the weapon of cognitive science.... Studded with pearls of wisdom, the book

touches on the concepts of self-handicapping, cultural awareness, and the art of memory. Including notes, suggested readings, and references, this is an easy, entertaining, thought-provoking read.

(Choice)

One final piece of advice offered by the authors is that readers should approach learning with not only a healthy mind and body, but also with a positive attitude toward the learning process itself. Roberts and Kreuz shine here, as they inspire their readers to truly embrace the language and culture they have adopted.

(PsycCRITIQUES)

About the Author

Richard Roberts, currently a Foreign Service Officer in the US Department of State, taught psychology in Europe and Asia with the University of Maryland University College. Roger Kreuz is Professor of Psychology and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Memphis.

Users Review

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Ernest Baker:

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