

# LEARNING LOG #4

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**Inquiry question: How can we support French language learning after high school?**

Capstone progress: Investigate and report

Time spent: 6h

## GOALS AND QUESTIONS

My goals for this learning log were:

1. Ask FI teachers who learned French as a second language about their experiences with keeping their language skills after high school
2. Refer to the “Analyze and Interpret Collected Information and Data” part of the Investigate and Report process
3. Create my weekly schedules for time management
4. More info on the link between foreign language learning and the brain
  - a. Critical period hypothesis, dual iceberg theory

## WHAT I LEARNED IN RELATION TO MY QUESTION(S)

I read a lot of things about the brain and language learning this time!

Critical period hypothesis -- a debatable theory that argues whether there is a certain age where language learning skills start declining. People believe that after a certain age in childhood (said age can vary wildly), a person can't fully master a language anymore. This could include phonetics, articulation, grammar, and more. It's a debatable theory since nothing has actually 100% proved it yet, but scientists are starting to think that it has to do with the prefrontal cortex's growth in a child. While this is sad news for older learners, it doesn't mean that all hope is lost (and for those of us in French Immersion, we've already learned French for at least ~6 years now, so we've still got that going for us).

Dual iceberg theory -- a theory that states that though on the surface, two languages can vary, below the surface there are overlaps in cognitive ability in language learning. On a website I was on, an example was a girl reading a book in English and then a different book in Spanish. She could summarize both stories she

read, however she had a more limited vocabulary in Spanish than English. In this case, the separation of the two languages would be the girl's vocabulary and oral fluency, while the overlap would be her reading skills and ability to understand the story.

I also learned about the SQ3R (survey, question, read, retrieve, review) study method from a psychology textbook that I'm using for my psychology class. This study method outlines the most effective way to study using psychology (inception?), and I tried applying it to certain contexts where someone who graduated from high school could use it later in life. I spent a lot of time reading that psychology textbook, and there is a thinking and language chapter that I want to read soon, since it may be helpful here?

### **WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT MY PROCESS**

I'm starting to create a series of questions to ask my previous teachers about language learning, as opposed to throwing a vague, "How did you learn French after high school?" at them. I really don't like my questions and I took too long with them, so I haven't actually emailed those teachers yet.

I think I'm getting the analysing and interpreting part of the capstone process, through finding ways of using the aforementioned 3 topics in possible ways of post-secondary studying. Not sure if this was happening now because I didn't know where to start researching so all my notes were a mess, but now I seem to have enough information to start piecing things together. While this was happening, I think I was drifting a lot more to the psychological component of the brain and language learning as opposed to the biological side, which would actually help me narrow down the number of things I need to do as research.

However, I think I did have a good time taking notes down and piecing things together from various sources to help me get closer to my inquiry question. Right now I'm trying to create plausible methods of learning after high school with different contexts, such as a template schedule for someone's who's going into post-secondary, or someone's who's going to work directly after high school, etc...

## **WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT MYSELF**

I'm still terrible at time management! I tried making weekly schedules, but apparently I have no impulse control and I usually take a 3 hour nap, thus ruining the entire schedule. I also only made 1 weekly schedule, which started on Saturday the 21st, so that's not a good sign either. However, I did manage to make a coherent schedule that fit everything in and it worked for the most part when I was following it, so I should continue this for the future.

I should not try and read that critical period hypothesis. I can't keep up because I don't know anything, which is why I ended up reading a wikipedia page to actually understand what was going on. I should keep my sources simpler next time.

I find that psychology textbook really, really interesting, which is probably why I read the first 3 chapters multiple times despite not being able to process that much info at one. I want to read more of it! Due to this, I feel like my research will probably lean less towards biology and more so towards the cognitive side.

I also still enjoy listening to those Duolingo podcasts, and they are a study tool in the post-secondary study outlines I mentioned above.

## **HOW CAN THIS HELP THE COMMUNITY**

The SQ3R method is actually quite good for studying! I think a lot of my friends could benefit from it, since a lot of us happen to have academically-challenging courses this quarter. The steps are pretty simple and straightforward and though it applies mostly to reading a textbook, it can be used in other areas as well.

## **MY NEXT STEPS, WITH DEADLINES**

1. Take email interview responses from teachers and analyze those for the next learning log (early December, before winter break!)
2. Psychology textbook thinking & reading

3. Organize all my research notes, they're a mess
4. I still see people doing surveys. I should debate whether I should do one, I'm not sure how useful it would be here (especially since I will be "interviewing" teachers)

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