



The Dynamics of Mastering Multi-Foreign Languages: A Polyglot's Perspective

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Abstract. The dynamics and challenges in mastering multiple foreign languages often need to be more detailed, especially from a polyglot's perspective. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the dynamics of mastering multiple foreign languages from the viewpoint of a polyglot who can communicate in six foreign languages. This research is expected to provide insight and inspiration for those who want to become a polyglot. This type of research is qualitative research with a descriptive method. The researcher collects data by interviews. The research subject is a polyglot who is 28 years old, mastering six foreign languages, consisting of Arabic, English, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and German. The research concluded that the dynamics of mastering multiple foreign languages by a polyglot involve intrinsic motivation factors, consistency and determination, strategic approaches to learning, and strategies to maintain and expand mastery of foreign languages. Polyglot's obstacles in learning foreign languages include cognitive, psychological, and social aspects. However, these polyglots can respond to these challenges with proactive and ongoing strategies to strengthen and deepen their language fluency. This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamic process of mastering multiple foreign languages from the perspective of a polyglot.

Keywords: *Multiple Foreign Languages, Polyglot's Perspective, Challenges, Learning Strategies*

Introduction

In the era of globalization and digitalization, proficiency in foreign languages is becoming increasingly important. Fluent use of various foreign languages provides advantages in work and education and offers a broader opportunity to interact with diverse cultures from different countries (Fu & Wang, 2022). Currently, English, French, German, Mandarin, Japanese, and Korean are more common in high schools in Indonesia. In this context, becoming a polyglot, or someone who can communicate in more than two languages becomes the dream of many people (Preusse-burr et al., 2023). However, the dynamics and challenges in mastering multiple foreign languages often remain undisclosed in detail, especially from a polyglot's perspective.

A polyglot can speak, read, or write in several languages. They are admired for their extraordinary abilities in language mastery. Mastering multiple languages is essential, as foreign language skills are necessary to use rapidly advancing information technology (Malik-Moraleda et al., 2023; Massoudie, 2020; Perdana & Narayana, 2023). In addition, foreign language proficiency is key to competition in the job market. However, mastering more than one foreign language takes work. Learning a foreign language can be complex and requires

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lots of effort. Even so, research on individuals who have mastered multiple foreign languages, known as polyglots, is rarely done.

Several previous studies in the field of polyglots focus on different aspects. The first study tries to see the relationship between the foreign languages mastered by a polyglot and their cognitive and IQ abilities (Wen et al., 2022). The second study emphasizes how education can adapt to cultural and language changes and influences teaching approaches toward multilingual students (Rifa'i, 2021). These studies view polyglots from different perspectives, but both focus on how language proficiency affects other aspects of life, such as education and individual cognition. The third study analyzes the benefits of language learning through a multilingual approach and compares it with other methods (Mulcaire et al., 2019).

Referring to previous research, this study focuses on how a polyglot can master various foreign languages. This is similar to the first research but varies in that it does not focus on cognitive abilities and IQ linked to language skills. Instead, this study focuses on polyglots' learning process and methods to learn and master various languages. On the other hand, this study also differs from the second and third research because it does not focus on educational approaches or skills transfer between languages but more on the personal and individual process of learning and mastering various foreign languages. Considering this, the study aims to analyze the dynamics of getting multiple foreign languages from the viewpoint of a polyglot able to communicate in six foreign languages. This study will provide a clearer and deeper understanding of polyglots' challenges, strategies, and processes in mastering foreign languages. This study is also expected to provide insights and inspiration for those who aspire to become a polyglot.

Theoretical Framework

The Concept of Polyglot

A polyglot is an individual who can speak, read, and write in multiple languages with profound proficiency and fluency (Hyltenstam, 2021). This capability is more than just knowing a few phrases or essential words in many languages. It leans more towards mastery of the structure, grammar, and cultural nuances of each language they are proficient in. Polyglots often have a deep interest in linguistics and culture, propelling them to study and master various languages (Wei, 2023). Additionally, they possess certain (Carvalho & Sheppard, 2022). While many polyglots acquire their skills through formal education, they also learn additional languages through social interactions, travel, or a desire to understand more cultures and communities worldwide (Carvalho & Sheppard, 2023).

Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is a complex and dynamic process involving the comprehension and production of spoken and written language (Papi & Hiver, 2020). This process typically begins in childhood, when children start to understand and produce words and sentence structures without formal instruction. The acquisition of the first language (L1) often occurs naturally. In contrast, acquiring a second language (L2) or additional languages might require a more structured approach and can happen at any life stage (Chen, 2021; Sampietro & Salmerón, 2021). Factors such as environment, social interaction, motivation, exposure, and aptitude play a crucial role in the speed and effectiveness of language acquisition (Pikhart, 2020; Tai & Chen, 2020). Moreover, research has shown that the brain has an extraordinary capacity to learn and adapt to new languages, although there's a critical period where language acquisition can occur more quickly (Humble et al., 2023). Language acquisition is a blend of biology, environment, and individual experiences, making each language-learning journey unique.

Second Language Acquisition Strategies

Second language acquisition (L2) is when an individual learns a language after learning their first language, often outside of a natural immersion context (Al-Obaydi et al.,

2023). This process differs from first language acquisition, where children learn their first language naturally and without formal effort. In a multilingual context, an individual doesn't just learn two languages but three or more (Martina, 2019). Individuals who learn and master two languages are bilinguals, while those who learn more than two languages are multilingual (Kultti, 2022). On the other hand, a polyglot is someone capable of speaking, reading, or writing in several languages proficiently (Wen et al., 2022). While all polyglots are multilingual, not all multilingual are polyglots. Polyglots typically learn additional languages through formal study or cultural immersion and are often motivated to learn those languages. In summary, L2 acquisition and multilingualism are complex phenomena influenced by various factors, including motivation, exposure, age, and social context.

Materials and Method

This research is a qualitative study using a descriptive method. Descriptive qualitative research is a series of activities that concern analyzing social events, phenomena, or conditions (Nurbaeti et al., 2022). The researcher collects data by interviewing by phone. Subsequently, the researcher conducts semi-structured interviews, audio recordings, and interview transcripts. The research subject is a polyglot who is 28 years old, mastering six foreign languages, consisting of Arabic, English, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and German. The initial stage of this research is to prepare an interview scheme. The questions asked of the subject are well-designed to assist the researcher in discovering how the subject learns and masters various languages. After that, the researcher interviews with the subject by phone. The audio recording from the interview is then transcribed to be analyzed further. After the data has been collected, the data analysis is carried out. In qualitative research, data collection and analysis are usually done simultaneously so the research runs concurrently between data collection and analysis. The researcher checks the interview transcripts and notes the emerging themes. These themes will then assist the researcher in making findings and conclusions. After the data analysis, the researcher writes the results narratively and includes them in the study. This entire process is an integral part of the qualitative research method, which helps the researcher understand social phenomena, such as acquiring and mastering languages from the perspective of the research subject.

Results and Discussion

Results

Learning Strategies to Master Various Foreign Languages

This study aims to understand the dynamics of learning strategies used by a polyglot in mastering various foreign languages. The collected and analyzed data shows that polyglots have a strategic approach to acquiring four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). This is in line with the interview results with the respondents:

"Based on my experience, the strategy in mastering a language is listening, reading, speaking, and writing. I use songs and movies to listen and speak, so we indirectly learn about pronunciation and articulation. For speaking, I study intonation and mimic their conversations until I memorize and practice them. For reading and writing, it's one part because there's a correlation, like starting by learning each letter in every language through writing, and reading from that writing as a form of practice in recognizing those letters." (I-Q1)

Therefore, learners are taught through audio-visual-based learning methods, such as watching foreign language films or dramas and listening to foreign songs to enhance listening skills. This technique is very efficient for learning how foreign language pronunciation sounds by listening directly to native speakers. Various learning resources help students improve their understanding of the intonation and rhythm of foreign languages. To enhance speaking skills, a polyglot uses videos as learning materials and mimics the language's sound or pronunciation from the video. Initially, this is done by introducing oneself to the language being studied. This

is done by downloading conversations in foreign languages, reading, memorizing, and mimicking them. In the context of writing, polyglots learn to write in various foreign language alphabets, such as Hangul, Hanzi, Katakana, Hiragana, and Kanji. She emphasized that writing knowledge can facilitate the reading process, where once someone can write in a foreign language, they will try to understand the writing. This was confirmed from the following interview result:

"In 2-3 months, I mastered the basics in Korean, Japanese, Mandarin, and it was verified after taking a course in Pare, so the total is one year. Then four years, including English." (I-Q2)

Thus, mastering a language requires a long process. In addition, this learning process is complemented by studying grammar and vocabulary, practiced in sentences. Social media, in this case, YouTube, is identified as an effective medium in facilitating the foreign language comprehension learning process. Videos on social media provide visual and auditory stimuli that enhance the percentage of understanding of the foreign language being studied. From this research, the learning strategies used by a polyglot in mastering several foreign languages involve a multi-modal approach that includes various sources and types of learning media. These findings provide a deeper perspective on effective foreign language learning strategies in a multi-language context.

Strategies to Maintain Mastery of Foreign Languages

Based on the findings of this study, there are several strategies used by a polyglot to maintain and expand their mastery of several foreign languages, namely through regular learning, teaching, publishing books, and formal education programs. Implementing general learning strategies by dividing the learning schedule into two categories, namely languages that are complex in alphabet and tone, such as Chinese and Japanese, and languages that are complex in grammar, namely Korean, Arabic, and German. The research respondent appropriately explains this:

"The first foreign language I knew was Arabic because I studied at a madrasa, then English. After that, I immediately learned 3 Asian languages so that I can master Korean, Japanese, and Mandarin." (I-Q4)

Furthermore, a polyglot uses his activities in teaching foreign languages as a form of virtual guidance as a learning method. She instills her foreign language knowledge in students and, at the same time, indirectly nurtures and enhances her knowledge. A polyglot is also active in writing books; four books related to foreign language learning have been published. A polyglot must always maintain and deepen it; writing books can encourage a polyglot to continue learning and hone his skills. Writing these books can also facilitate learning for others who want to learn foreign languages while giving the writer more profound knowledge and understanding of the language masters. In addition, the polyglot also participated in selecting foreign language programs, such as graduates of the Korean Cultural Camp, South Korea, in 2016 and the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant, the US, from 2020 to 2021. These programs not only hone his foreign language skills intensively but also give her direct experience in the cultures of these countries, enhancing his understanding of the language masters. After returning from America, she taught at a private university in Bojonegoro. She continued her Master's studies at a private university in Malang to enhance his knowledge and skills in English. Based on these findings, mastering a foreign language by a polyglot requires a systematic and continuous learning strategy. Even after achieving proficiency, learning and teaching activities remain essential for a polyglot's journey. These efforts show how the dynamics of mastering foreign languages can take place with proactive and continuous efforts to strengthen and deepen language proficiency.

Challenges Faced by a Polyglot

In exploring a polyglot's perspective on the challenges faced in becoming a polyglot, this study has revealed several relevant findings. Polyglot individuals often face various obstacles and challenges in mastering foreign languages. These challenges can come from various aspects, including cognitive, psychological, and social aspects. From a cognitive aspect, the challenges often faced are the complexity of the grammar structure of the language encountered, variability in accents and dialects, and memory and vocabulary knowledge. Given that each language has a unique structure and different complexity levels, this can be challenging for a polyglot. However, this also encourages the ability to adapt and be flexible in learning. The psychological aspect also presents significant challenges. These psychological variables include motivation, self-confidence, and success perception. A polyglot must have high learning motivation, be confident in using various foreign languages, and have a positive perception of their success in mastering the language. Understanding and feeling these challenges allows a polyglot to continue striving to achieve maximum results in their learning process.

In a social context, the challenge faced is finding and maintaining an environment that supports their learning process. One of the main challenges is the lack of access to native language speaker groups, recognized as a valuable language learning resource. However, this challenge also encourages a polyglot to find and utilize alternative learning resources such as digital media or traveling to the native language-speaking country. The interview result with the respondent is:

"Hello, I'll answer this question first, so the challenge in foreign languages emphasizes consistency because I learn languages self-taught, make schedules, targets, diligently seek references, and the solution to these challenges, consistent, diligent, review those languages, and arouse curiosity in learning languages." (I-Q5)

Overall, this insight offers a new understanding of how a polyglot interprets and responds to the various challenges in its learning process. Low perceptions of success expectations and fear of failure often become obstacles, but a polyglot must see these challenges as an integral part of the learning process. The conclusion of this study indicates that facing and overcoming these challenges not only provides benefits in the context of specific language mastery but also has other positive impacts, including increasing resilience, semiotic knowledge, and cross-cultural empathy.

Discussion

Foreign language learning is fundamental to understanding the strategies and challenges polyglot faces. Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition explains that there are five main hypotheses underlying the second language learning process: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the affective filter hypothesis, and the natural variability hypothesis (Patrick, 2019). The input hypothesis and affective filter are very relevant in this research context. The input hypothesis emphasizes the importance of obtaining comprehensive language input. This is in line with the learning strategy applied by polyglots, where they use various media sources, such as films, songs, and videos, to obtain comprehensive language input (Calamlam, 2020; Dwijonagoro & Suparno, 2019; Hwee & Koh, 2019).

Meanwhile, the affective filter hypothesis explains that emotional factors, such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety, can affect language acquisition (Shirahata & Lahti, 2022). This aligns with the psychological challenges polyglots face in their learning process. In addition, Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is also relevant in this context. ZPD refers to the distance between what someone can achieve with help and what they can achieve on their own (Lasmawan & Budiarta, 2020; Nardo, 2021). In foreign language learning, ZPD can be interpreted as the distance between the current language and desired ability. Polyglot often finds themselves in their ZPD when learning a new language,

where they need help from learning resources to achieve the desired ability. This aligns with the learning strategy that polyglots apply, where they use various learning resources to get help in their learning process.

In the context of strategies to maintain mastery of foreign languages, Dornyei's theory of Motivation in Second Language Learning is relevant (Macatuno-Nocom, 2022). Dornyei identifies three main components of motivation in second language learning: intrinsic, extrinsic, and integrative (Demir & Bahattin, 2022; Pow Yean et al., 2022). Intrinsic motivation refers to learning a language due to personal interest and desire. In contrast, extrinsic motivation refers to learning a language for external reasons, such as getting a job or improving social status (Malik-Moraleda et al., 2023; Perdana & Narayana, 2023). Meanwhile, integrative motivation refers to the motivation to learn a language due to the desire to integrate with the language-speaker community (Arns, 2021; Meristo, 2022). In this research context, a polyglot may have a combination of these three types of motivation, influencing their learning strategy and their efforts to maintain mastery of foreign languages. Therefore, the dynamics of mastering various foreign languages is a complex process. A polyglot, defined as someone who masters and uses several languages, often faces unique challenges in their journey to Master various languages. However, what distinguishes polyglots from other language learners is their approach and strategies, as well as the internal and external dynamics that influence their learning process. Thus, mastering various foreign languages involves a complex interaction between personal motivation, learning strategies, and external factors. With a deep understanding of these dynamics, a polyglot can maximize its potential and succeed in its multilingual journey. Focusing on a polyglot's perspective, this research significantly contributes to understanding how individuals can effectively and efficiently master various languages.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the dynamics of mastering multiple foreign languages by a polyglot involve intrinsic motivation, consistency and determination, strategic learning approaches, and strategies to maintain and expand foreign language mastery. Polyglot's obstacles in learning foreign languages include cognitive, psychological, and social aspects. However, these polyglots can respond to these challenges with proactive and sustained strategies to strengthen and deepen their language fluency. These findings will reference further research on effective foreign language learning strategies and methods. In addition, this study also encountered obstacles in collecting data and information about polyglots, so more in-depth research about polyglots with various foreign language backgrounds can be a suggestion for future research. Through this study, it is hoped to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamic process of mastering multiple foreign languages from a polyglot's perspective.

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