

PERFECTIONISM AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Анотація

Перфекціонізм – це постійне прагнення до ідеальних результатів та пред'явлення до себе високих (часто нереалістичних) вимог. Може здатися, що під час вивчення іноземної мови це неймовірно ефективний підхід, який дає завзятість та постійність, що є одними з ключових чинників у досягненні результатів. Але є й негативні сторони перфекціонізму, як можуть уповільнити процес вивчення мови – страх перед помилками, постійна самокритика, прокрастинація внаслідок неможливості бездоганного виконання завдань.

Ключові слова: перфекціонізм, ідеальні результати, вивчення мови, прокрастинація, страх помилок.

Abstract

Perfectionism is the constant pursuit of ideal results and high (often unrealistic) demands. It may seem that when learning a foreign language, this is an incredibly effective approach that provides perseverance and consistency, which are one of the key factors in achieving results. But there are also negative aspects of perfectionism, as they can slow down the process of language learning - fear of mistakes, constant self-criticism, procrastination due to the impossibility of flawless performance of tasks.

Keywords: perfectionism, ideal results, language learning, procrastination, fear of mistakes.

The perfectionism has obvious advantages in situations in which we may find ourselves throughout the day. When learning a foreign language, the perfectionism is also useful to a certain point. Perfectionists tend to appreciate especially linguistic details and exceptions, and could even experience some kind of pleasure in the complex study of a language or in the respect received from others.

Attention to details and the numerous grammar rules can exhaust even the most trained brain and, as a result, instead of communicating and transmitting what we feel, we may experience mental blocks and become ridiculous. Different languages raise different problems during the period of study and it is necessary to master these linguistic details or rules. At the same time, we must measure our efforts and not exaggerate with new information during the study sessions. A rich vocabulary does not necessarily mean that the speaker has also proper conversational skills. Thus, although we know a great number of synonyms for the word *house* in Spanish, we may not know how to express the idea of *home*.

What Is Perfectionism?

Perfectionism is the constant pursuit of ideal results and the presentation of high (often unrealistic) demands on oneself.

Some people have an extreme desire to order the world, at least as far as they are concerned. This drive, though unrealistic, can cause them significant anxiety if they are not able to meet it. This passion to be perfect in all their actions can lead to constant personal doubt and a self-criticism that borders on pathology. Taken together, these qualities are termed perfectionism. Some people think that if they do not meet some lofty standard in all of their actions, it reflects poorly on their person. The perfectionist sets the standards for perfection that they follow and he or she sees it as a personal defect if the standard is not met.

We are trained to seek perfection from a young age. The roots form in school. The traditional grading system engrains in us that mistakes should be avoided at all costs. This programs a deep fear of making mistakes, hence programming us to desire perfection before using an acquired skill. In that case, the probability of making mistakes would be lowest.

The Two Types of Perfectionism

There are two distinct types of perfectionism. The **adaptive perfectionist** understands that no person can be completely perfect in all they do, but they always strive to achieve the high standard they have set for themselves in whatever they seek to accomplish. This is a healthy mental attitude and is one that many high achievers take. The second type, the **maladaptive perfectionist**, has developed a standard that is unrealistic and they expect to meet it every time they work at anything.

Maladaptive perfectionism is unhealthy because there is the constant belief that the environment, as well as every personal achievement, can be controlled. If something is seen as imperfect, this individual takes it personally.

Symptoms of perfectionism in students that can be counterproductive to learning of any kind can include:

- Performance standards that are impossibly high;
- Motivation more from fear of failure than from pursuit of success;
- All-or-nothing evaluations that label anything other than perfection as failure;
- Procrastination in getting started on work that will be judged;
- Long delays in completing assignment because the work must be perfect from the beginning and continue to be perfect as one goes along.

Conclusions

Teachers are expected to try the following:

- building a friendly, supportive learning environment;
- establishing the expectation that mistakes are a normal part of the learning process;
- presenting themselves as helpful instructors concerned primarily with promoting student learning, rather than as authority figures concerned primarily with evaluating student performance;
- articulating expectations that express learning and improvement over perfect performance of assignments;
- explaining how perfectionism is counterproductive;
- reassuring perfectionist students that they will get the help they need to achieve success;
- following through with help, and communicating teacher approval of students' progress and accomplishment

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