

## Language Notes: 7

### Good examples for us all

Do you recognize this story? “.....young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.....They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king’s service.” (Daniel1:4)

This is a story of how people for thousands of years have been learning languages as adults in a foreign culture. Here are four steps to language learning success taken from this passage: 1. Be young, well educated, and very smart in all areas of learning 2. Be single and have all your meals cooked for you by someone else. 3. Study the national literature of the language you are learning, 4. Devote yourself to this study, nothing else, for three years.

Well, for most of us, we will have to settle for two out of four! We can study hard for three years, and secondly we can study the national literature. What literature did they study in Babylonia? You probably recall the book of Job. It is a long poem that was recited by several people who would sit together around a fire at night. When Daniel studied literature, he did not just read it, he memorized it. Lots of it!

Here is a modern, true story of language learning. Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890) is one of the heroes of archeology. He was the son of a poor preacher in Germany who loved ancient history. While in Amsterdam he realized that no one spoke Russian, even though a great deal of trade with Russia was going on. He soon became very rich from assisting with the trade with Russia after learning to speak Russian.

This is how he learned Russian: “He hired an old Dutchman to be his audience as he declaimed Russian two hours each evening. When the tenants of his boarding house complained, Heinrich did not change his system but he had to change lodgings twice before he was satisfied with his fluency in the language.”

Heinrich says this about his language study technique: “This method consists of reading a great deal aloud, without making a translation; devoting one hour every day to writing essays upon subjects that interest one, correcting these under a teacher’s supervision, learning them by heart, and repeating in the next lesson what was corrected on the previous day.” (Taken from *The Discoverers*, page 589) Schliemann went on to find the ancient city of Troy, and learned to speak French, Greek, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and a few others including Russian.

Whatever you think of the PILAT or the LAMP methods, and the emphasis on memorizing personal scripts, know that this method of memorizing has been used for 1000’s of years. What are you going to memorize this year?