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Self-regulation and experience in foreign language learning: a comprehensive analysis of the older-learner classroom

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論 文 内 容 の 要 旨

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This work constitutes a pioneering, comprehensive study on the learning process of foreign languages (FL) in older learners (60 years old and over). It focuses on the effects of experience over the use of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS). This last topic is closely linked to memorization, which has been recognized—by older learners and instructors—as these learners' most salient challenge in FL learning.

Based on several empirical studies and statistical analyses on VLS use, memorization, and other issues, this work offers a model for VLS use in older adults that renders experience as an influential factor for older learners' self-regulation. Experience is defined as the learners' perception of their learning experiences and their ability to recognize instructional discourse in the classroom. The learner's experiential profile, in turn, determines the variables of self-regulation that are more relevant for each learner and, consequently, the variables that should receive attention in VLS use attempts. This proposal rejects theoretical models that assert that a balanced proportion of each participating variable is fundamental for success in VLS use. Instead, this proposal indicates that any learner may use VLS efficiently, provided that he has a clear understanding of his personal characteristics—strengths and weaknesses. Thus, building on qualitative data, this work introduces the concept of *learner re-training*. This construct is based on principles of *critical foreign language geragogy* and the idea that older learners need to assess whether or not previous learning strategies are appropriate for their current psychological and cognitive traits. For this, older learners must undergo a holistic process of re-acknowledgement, wherein the evaluation of experience is fundamental.

Research on FL learning in older adults is limited, and there is no teaching methodology directed specifically to older learners. I believe that developing such methodology is fundamental to improve older learners' level of accomplishment in the FL, self-confidence, overall self-concept and also society's perception of these individuals. This dissertation constitutes a contribution in this regard. It explores in depth the different factors involved in the process, identifies the most important variables for these learners, and makes geragogical suggestions with the intention of creating a particular FL methodology geared toward them.