Memory Strategies Of The World's Top Language Learners
These Memory Techniques Can **Instantly** Boost Your Foreign Language Fluency ... Even If You Wind Up Throwing The Mnemonics Away!

Have you ever wished someone would just inspire you and give you exactly the tools you need to succeed in one blast of self-empowerment at the same time?

Well, if you're into language learning, what I'm about to tell you may be the most important episode of this podcast you'll ever hear. And of course if you'd like the transcripts in handsome PDF form, you can download them here.

You can also scroll all the way to the end for the links mentioned in the podcast for a power-packed injection of inspiration and practical guidance.

Plus, I've got something cool to teach you at the very end about using hats to increase your productivity, so go all the way through for that.

**Here's How Philosophy Can Double Your Fluency When All Other Techniques Fail ...**

Last week I attended the [Polyglot Gathering](http://www.magneticmemorymethod.com/memory-strategies-of-the-worlds-top-language-learners) in Berlin.

Among the many talks, [Christopher Huff’s](http://www.magneticmemorymethod.com/memory-strategies-of-the-worlds-top-language-learners) struck me the most. All of the other presentations were great, of course.
But because Christopher drew some language learning ideas from philosophers I know very well.

He also had some great ideas about memory techniques and more importantly, memory strategies. Taken in the context of philosophy, Christopher presented some exciting ideas you can start applying to your language learning and overall life right away. You may even experience results overnight.

Here's why:

**The Undercover Secrets Of Minimalism And Hedonism**

Christopher talked about two kinds of philosophers, which we could call the minimalists and the Epicureans. The first group like to toss out everything unnecessary and the Epicureans fill everything to excess.

What they share in common is that only the now exists.

You might want to check out philosophers like Plato and Aristotle for more info on this matter.

For example, *Plato's Republic* has many passages on frugality in many aspects of life (including thought). Aristotle talked about minimalism
in terms of the **Golden Mean** and **eudaimonia**, a special definition of happiness.

When it comes to learning a language, minimalism helps you concentrate on the essentials by using *only* the essentials.

**Sell Everything!**

Being minimalist also helps you identify what is essential. If you're only working on mastering one language learning book, after all, you're more likely to discover what's essential in that book in a meaningful way than if you try to find out what's essential in twelve books. You can learn more about this powerful form of whittling down in *How to Memorize a Textbook*.

By focusing on just one thing, you're more likely to get a concentrated vision of what you're lacking.

So minimalism creates focus, understanding and diamond-hard clarity about what you don't know yet. You can make much more powerful decisions because you're a minimalist. You're only going to acquire one more book, one that you select well based on your well-developed knowledge of what you need.

**Epicureanism**, on the other hand, allows for excess. So long as it's linked to pleasure, epicureanism happily encourages maximalism.
How to Over-Exaggerate Everything And Still Get Results

Although it might sound wild, excess can be done intelligently. Christopher pointed out the value in giving yourself rewards of excess (which is different than giving yourself an excess of rewards).

Christopher also implied that having a library of special books you've collected, even ones you're never going to read, is not really clutter. Each book is a memory of the passion behind why you got the book in the first place.

So even though Christopher (and probably you) may never study some of the language learning books in his collection, they serve as part of a language learning whole. It is a specific library, one that contains many touchstones that point to the larger goal of gaining fluency in many languages.

In other words, overkill can be an effective memory strategy.

So there is a sense that bigger is better, especially if people who amass such enormous collections of language learning materials also practice minimalism.

The "Stubborn" Principle That Can Make Your Language Learning Soar
When people select just one book from that collection and work through it in a dedicated manner, they may need to buy a new book thereafter.

But they are strengthening the collection as a whole by adding material that is now much more targeted. It's kind of like growing as a content specialist as you allow the maximalism to inform your minimalism and vice versa.

The Golden Mean between these two extremes is what Christopher called the **Stubborn Quintile**. It basically refers to the percentage of words that language leaners struggle with no matter what.

This concept allows you to identify the material that eludes you and figure out what techniques will best help. Be it certain difficult words, phrases, grammar concepts or other issues, by identifying this 20%, you can approach getting them into memory minimalistically.

**And That's When Things Got REALLY Interesting!**

Christopher talked about certain memory techniques and gave some mind-boggling demonstrations. He sang, for example, the names of the American presidents in historical order. He also showed how he used some of those presidents to remember tones in Chinese.

It was brilliant because he was following one of the fundamental rules of memory: rest new information on information you already know.
For example, he used a very familiar song to assist the recall of all the presidents.

With the presidents in tow, he used them to help memorize tones. Were he to push the technique further, he might find a way to use the memorized tones to memorize something else. For example, a set of tones might be used as an anchor point for developing perfect pitch. Or it could be used to find a note in a song to help with transcription study.

For example, Scott Devine has talked about memorizing the notes of Stand By Me so well that you can see them on the fretboard of your bass.

Then, when you hear a song on the radio you want to learn, you can use that anchor point to figure out a great deal of how other songs might be played.

In other words, by having an Epicurean mass of information in our minds, we have many more opportunities to use that info in explosively minimalist ways.

I loved Christopher's talk very much and was grateful that he attended my own. He's going to be a guest on the MMM Podcast in the near future, and I hope our conversations about memory will continue.
About the 20% concept, I was pleased to dine with Richard Simcott and Lea Tirard-Hersant.

Richard's the man behind Speaking Fluently and you might want to head over to his site for information about the Polyglot workshop he's holding with Alex Rawlings in Budapest.

Richard echoed Christopher's great point that for people who don't have a difficult time remembering words and other aspects of language learning, memory techniques still have a place. There is always an elusive number of words that don't seem to stick in the mind no matter what one does. At least not without the ease that these words could have.

Richard seemed very interested to give Memory Palaces a closer look with the Magnetic Memory Method principles in mind. This is a huge treat for me because he is one of the most respected polyglots in the world and I think he's going to bring insights back to the Magnetic Memory Method headquarters that's going to help us all.

Fill Your Vocabulary Coffers With This Special One-Syllable Memory Strategy

Lea Tirard-Hersant had some exciting ideas too. As she shared at the end of my talk, you can leverage the power of rhyme.
Take a one-syllable word like loon, for example. Loon in English is a one-syllable word that can be rhymed with a one syllable word in French, like une.

To get started with this incredible tool, you can find a pile of one-syllable words that rhyme within your own language. The example she and I played around with were "ache" sounding one-syllable words, words like:

Lake
Break
Bake
Cake
Snake
Rake
Flake
Take
Make
Jake
Fake
Sake
Blake

You could compile a list like this and then ask your language learning partner or teacher to help you find words in your target language to
pair these with. I really appreciate Lea's idea and am looking forward to exploring it further.

Until I have her on the podcast, you should check out a book she worked on with Benny Lewis called *Why French Is Easy*.

**Sticking With The Program May Be The Best Memory Strategy You Ever Use ...**

Finally, I had some very nice talks with Olly Richards from *I Will Teach You A Language*. He's been on the Magnetic Memory Method Podcast before and we've since developed a great friendship. We're in fact now officially collaborating on a Magnetic Memory Live event to take place in London, so stay tuned for news about that.

Anyhow, in talking with Olly about some of my language learning plans and memory experiments for the rest of the year he made a great point. What he suggested is that instead of leaping all over the place, I might do more experiments with languages I'm already fluent in. He suggested that I work with our mutual friend Kerstin Hammes to act as an analyst and coach.

So that's what I decided to do. I emailed her and explained that I want Magnetic Memory Method 2.0 to address more intermediate and advanced issues.
But in order to do that, I need help from an expert German native speaker to help me get a precise picture of where I need to improve and how I should approach it. From there, it's my job to figure out how to make Memory Palaces an advantage, track the processes and share the results.

And since she's in ...

It's going to be great!

**But Wait! There's More!**

You might be thinking ... *hold on there Magnetic Cowboy*. That sounds like a lot of hard work. How are you going to manage all of this with the Magnetic Memory Method Podcast, new books and all that other things you do?

The answer is ...

It's actually pretty easy. In addition to Christopher's minimalism, maximalism and his ideas about The Stubborn Quintile, I'm going to use [de Bono's six hats](https://www.debono.com/six-hats).

In case you've never heard of them, here's a brief overview and how I aim to make these hats work.
De Bono talks about six hats, each of a different color. Each color denotes a different function. Like this:

- White = Objectivity
- Red = Emotions
- Black = Critical thinking
- Yellow = The sunny positivity huge projects require
- Green = Growth through creativity and the generation of new ideas
- Blue = Organization

To apply these principles, I'll spend about 15 minutes on all of these at the beginning of each week.

**White Hat:** For me, being objective means looking at things realistically. Do I have too much on my plate? Do I really need to be doing $x$ when I would be better off doing $y$. For example, I've got:

A weekly podcast to write, record and release ...

Books to write and others to edit ...

YouTube videos to create, cut and upload ...
Emails to answer ...

So wearing the what is all about seeing things for how they really are. It's not about judging them or making changes. It's just about assessing the status quo and creating a solid picture.

**Red Hat:** The red hat is all about checking in with the emotions. As someone with Manic Depression, I feel everything in extremes and I need to be aware of that.

The white hat helps here, but the main goal is to be aware of the emotions and shape them. I use this hat to make sure I'm getting enough rest, nutrition, exercise and meditation and time to memorize. These are the key factors that have kept me alive during some insane times.

When it comes to critical thinking, I wear the ...

**Black Hat:** This hat is about critical thinking, which means creating strategies. You can only do this when you've got all the other hats along for the ride.

**Yellow Hat:** For sunny positivity, meditating and thinking happy thoughts isn't enough. I need to gratitude journal, do my daydream journaling with the non-dominant hand, make sure I'm spending time with my bass and Bach and with friends. The Polyglot Gathering
reminded me of just how isolated I am so much of the time and just how much better things would be if I socialized more.

**Gross ... But True!**

**Green Hat:** In many ways, I've got the green hat on 24/7. I write thousands and thousands of words every day and almost exclusively either from bed or in cafes between walking. I call this Magnetic Roadwork: writing until I have to pee and then moving on.

Finally, the ...

**Blue Hat** is all about organizing. I could use this hat to free up space on my phone, for example.

I have one organizational tip to mention here. The other I talk about on the podcast. These are having an accountability partner and time-tracking.

**The Number One Way To Make Sure You Get Everything Done**

My accountability partner is Sarah Peterson from Unsettle.org. What we do is email a report of what we've worked on throughout the day. Because we're 9 hours apart, she often gets my report in the afternoon and I get hers in the morning.
No matter when they arrive, the timing is always perfect. And we almost always say exactly what the other needs to hear in terms of encouragement and the like.

And it's addicting, so much fun to work and look forward to that email at the end of the day that summarizes what happened and makes a statement about what's going to happen the next day. The productivity benefits have been very rewarding.

Then there is time-tracking. Listen to the podcast for the full description of how that works.

Finally, I'm officially adding a new hat to the color spectrum ...

**Transparent hat:** Transparent is the day of rest, a regular occurrence that is somewhat foreign to me. I'm not sure if I'll be able to do it, but I'll give it a try.

And of course I'll let you know all about how it goes.

So until then, dear Memorizers, keep Magnetic!

**Further Resources Mentioned Throughout The Podcast**

Last week's episode of the Magnetic Memory Method Podcast, [Memory Improvement Tips From Dr. Gary Small](#)
The Accursed Share by George Bataille

Dan Sullivan talking about Speed of Implementation