


JULY

INNER  CIRCLE

07

THIS MONTH
THE ANALYSIS PARALYSIS
OF LANGUAGE LEARNING
& HOW TO BEAT IT



You're so stuck on the details... that you fail to make any meaningful progress.



Welcome back to the Inner Circle, listeners.

Last time, you learned why your worst days are the best days to study a language. You learned why they happen – especially with language learning, and just how powerful “bad days” are in your overall language learning journey. This is definitely not common advice you’d hear from most people.

This time, we’re talking about **the analysis paralysis of language learning**. This is where you’re so stuck on the details – *whether grammar, pronunciation, what resource to use, how to study* – that you fail to make any meaningful progress towards actually speaking and mastering the language. This is a common trap that language learners face.

If you find yourself stuck on minor details, this is for you. In this Inner Circle Lesson, you will learn...

1

Why Language Learners Get
Caught Up in Analysis Paralysis

2

Why You Should Stop Focusing on
Details and Perfection

3

How You Can Avoid Getting Stuck



Does this mean that I got stuck this month?

Thankfully, no.

THE IDEA CAME TO ME AS I STARTED DOING MY MID-YEAR REVIEW. THE YEAR'S HALF OVER, AFTER ALL!

And this is something I'll cover in the next Inner Circle. So, while looking over my progress for this year, I remembered my Chinese lessons from 2 years ago.

Specifically, I remembered getting stuck on pronunciation. You'll learn more about that later.

So, what is analysis paralysis exactly?
It's over-analyzing a situation so that a decision or action is never taken. You end up paralyzing yourself.

Another way to look at it is this: focusing on small details that stop you from reaching the big-picture goal. And it typically comes from aiming for perfection. Getting the details right. Not making mistakes. Things like that.

Now, you might be asking... isn't perfection a good thing? Isn't it better to get the language right before you use it? Aren't mistakes just awful and embarrassing?

And you're not wrong for asking.

Nobody likes making mistakes. But this is the fastest and easiest way to get stuck and not make progress.

Because most people aim for perfection, they all experience analysis paralysis in one form or another. They get stuck. They stop making real progress.

Why? Let's get into the first point.



1

Why Language Learners Get Caught Up in Analysis Paralysis

When I was learning Chinese, I was stuck drilling pronunciation.

I had a tutor who was a real stickler about pronunciation. At first, I was very impressed and excited. I'd sound like a perfect Chinese speaker. Who doesn't want that? That is, until I noticed that **2 months in, I was still not capable of basic conversations.**

And don't misunderstand me – pronunciation and tones are indeed crucial in Chinese.

What good is pronunciation if you're not speaking Chinese? If you're getting stopped every 30 seconds to drill tones instead of continuing?

Maximizing conversation time and speaking more is and has been, my ultimate goal with every language I pursue. Everything else is secondary. Sometimes, you have to keep on moving with your big goal and worry about the details later.

- **If you want to run, go run now. Worry about buying the right sneakers later.**
- If you just want to read more, read the closest book next to you. You can find a topic you like later.
- And if you want to speak more of the language, open your mouth and start speaking now. The rest will come later.

But let's get into it.



Here's why language learners get analysis paralysis

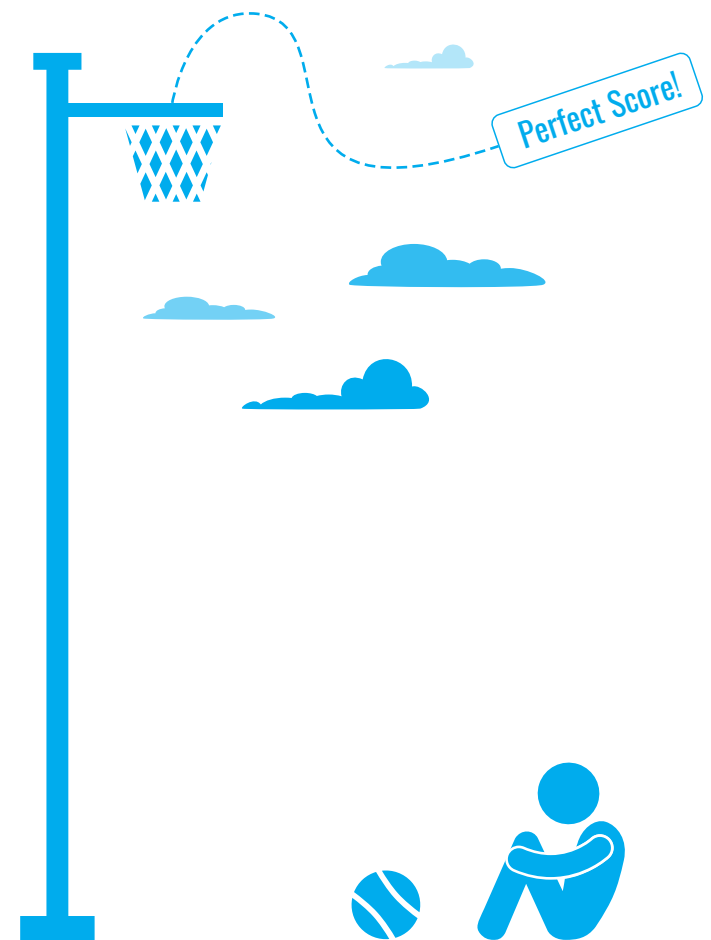
A Perfection is the first reason.

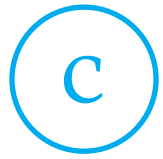
Everyone wants to speak perfectly. Everyone wants perfect pronunciation. **And why do they aim for perfection?**

B Mistakes.

That is, the fear of making them. Or, thinking that mistakes are completely intolerable. That's reason number two. Schools can be blamed for that.

Avoiding mistakes is a mistake in itself. And you'll find out why soon.



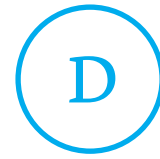


Not looking at the big picture.

This is very easy to do. **It's easy to ONLY study words or grammar rules and justify to yourself that you're learning a language.** But, is it contributing to your overall goal? For my monthly goal of speaking more Spanish, I can definitely say no, it's not. To speak more Spanish, I need to...actually speak, not just study words and rules.

It's simple – if you want to run more, you start moving your legs and go and run.

Focusing on the details instead of seeing the big picture is how you get stuck.



Too many options to choose from.

Should you use books? Or should you study with audio lessons? Perhaps an App? And wait, how about areas of language – should you focus on grammar or vocabulary?

This is another fantastic way to get stuck. And you may have your own reasons too. Step back and look at the big picture. **What's your overall goal? And what details are you caught up in?** Be sure to let us know what they are.

Now you know why learners get caught up in perfection and analysis paralysis. Let's get to the second point.



2

Why You Should Stop Focusing on Details and Perfection

This is a tough topic. People will argue endlessly for perfection. It's great to aim for when you're experienced and can smooth out the details. As a beginner, it's a recipe for paralysis.

A Let's go back to my Chinese example.

My tutor was focused on pronunciation.

As for me, my goal was to speak 5 minutes within 2 months. That's a fairly small, realistic goal. By the end of those 2 months, I had less than a minute of conversation.

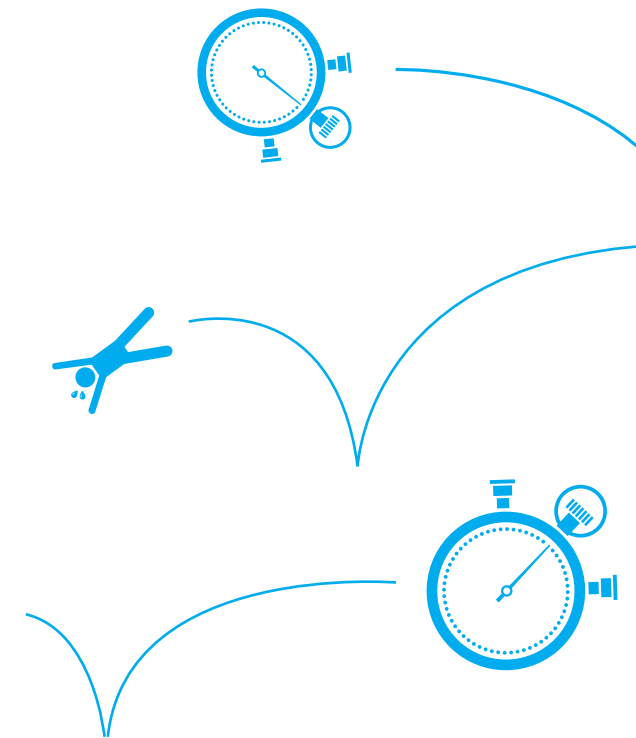
The teacher would stop me at every mistake. We'd drill the 4 different tones. We'd drill various words. All the variations.

Even if I got the tones wrong, a native Chinese speaker would understand my mistake and forgive me. Life would go on. I'd improve.

I spoke less than a minute of Chinese after 2 months. However, I could recite some tones and throw some words at you. That's about it.

The big lesson is – focusing on details stops your progress dead in its tracks.

If your goal is to speak 3 minutes this month, but you're so focused on remembering proper verb conjugation, you won't reach your real goal.



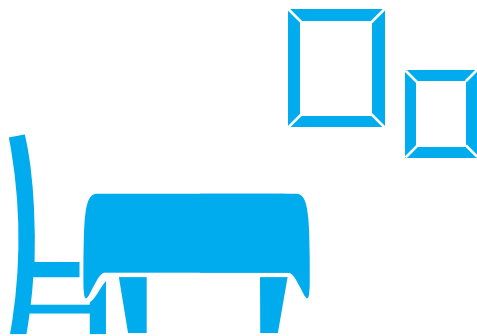


Next, language is a tool for effective communication.

That doesn't mean it has to be perfect or SHOULD be perfect. Native speakers will notice mistakes but they won't blame you for it. The more important part is that they'll probably understand what you meant to say.

In regards to pronunciation, you CAN argue that there's no perfect pronunciation. Sure, you can't paint other languages with such a broad brush, but think of American English.

There's the southern accent, western accent and my eastern, New York accent.



For example, I was visiting another state and talking to a store clerk. I told them "You have an interesting accent." His response? "This isn't New York. You're the one with the accent!"

He had a valid point.

Pronunciation doesn't imply your language is bad. Making yourself understood is the heart of language.

We understood each other just fine.

Another example is grammar. Learners spend a ton of time on grammar. However, there's more than one way to express a message if you don't know the sentence patterns or grammar rules. That way, you don't stop and you keep your conversation going.

One extremely simple example is...if you can't say "where is the bathroom" in your target language, you can simply ask "Bathroom?" Sounds odd, right?

But if a native listener understands what you need, it's effective, is it not?

You can perfect it afterwards.

If you have a good teacher, like my Premium *PLUS* teacher, they will correct your mistakes afterwards. That's a quick correction and fast improvement over wasting your own time looking up and memorizing the proper rules.



C On making mistakes.

It seems counterintuitive, but making mistakes is the fastest way to learn.

If you're speaking with a native speaker, chances are they'll correct you.

If you have your own tutor or are learning with a Premium *PLUS* teacher, like I am, you will get instant corrections and improve faster, as I mentioned earlier.

However, there's a great story I want to tell that nails this concept perfectly. There's a book called *Art and Fear*, and in it, there's a story about a very interesting experiment:

There was a ceramics class where the teacher divided the class into 2 groups. One would be graded on quantity of work. They needed to make 50 pots to get an A. The other was graded on quality. The quality group only needed to make 1 pot. But, it had to be perfect.

The first group was graded on quantity. The second, on quality.

However, guess who ended up with the highest quality pot? You'd think the second group – the quality group – right? That was their only objective, after all.

Wrong.

The quantity group had the highest-quality pots at the end. Simply because they made more pots. They made more mistakes. They learned from them.

The other group sat around theorizing about the best ways to make a perfect pot.

So as you can see, mistakes are an absolute must.

Now, what can you, as a language learner, do to avoid getting stuck?

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Making mistakes is the fastest way to learn.

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3

How To Avoid Getting Stuck In Analysis Paralysis

In other words, here's how you beat analysis paralysis.

A Don't seek perfection.

Aim for "good enough." Remember, language is ultimately a tool for communication. If someone understands you despite the mistakes you make, then you've done the job. You can come back and perfect the details later.

B Make mistakes.

If you want to reach perfection, this is the fastest way to do so. Between spending hours memorizing grammar and not speaking...and speaking, getting it wrong and getting corrected (which takes a minute), one of these is the fastest way.

Tips:

- Like the quantity group in the ceramics class example, aim to make a certain number of mistakes. For example, **aim for 10 mistakes a day**.
- Leave 10 comments on our lessons and do the best you can. Our teachers will give you feedback and help you improve.
- Practice with the Premium *PLUS* teacher. They're the best way to get feedback from a native speaker on any issue you may have.



C Always refer to the big picture.

This can be your yearly goal or ultimate goal. For me, my yearly goal is 30 minutes of conversation. Then, ask yourself, are you hitting your monthly goals? If not, take a look at where your time has been going. It might be going into the little details. You'll want to cut those from your routine.

D Set small, measurable monthly goals with a deadline.

You should be doing this already. These goals, by design, keep your focus on what's important. If your goal is to speak for 5 minutes in your target language this month, you'll be practicing speaking more than anything else. If your goal is to master 100 words, you'll be more focused on the words.

This method, by design, eliminates the analysis paralysis of choosing resources or what area of a language to study. You know what to study and what resource to use. Clearly, audio lessons will help you to speak instead of textbooks.

E Maximize your time around your goal as much as possible.

If your goal is to speak more, try to keep going, even if you make mistakes. That way, you maximize your time and you don't get lost in the details.

Here's what I do with my Premium *PLUS* teacher and my Skype tutor:

- If I ever make a mistake, they know to parrot the corrected version back at me. I repeat it and we keep going.
- If I don't know a word in Spanish, I'll say it in English inside my Spanish sentence. The teacher will follow up with the correct Spanish word. And we keep going.

I did this too when I taught English. My student would say...*"I go there on Saturday."* And I'd ask *"oh, you went there on Saturday?"* And they'd instantly correct themselves! No break in conversation was necessary.

And luckily, there's been no break in my progress thus far. I hit my 15-minute conversation goal for July. However, reflecting on past progress and past trouble spots, like analysis paralysis, is always useful.

For August, I plan to aim for 17 minutes of Spanish conversation.

How about you?

What's your monthly goal? Be sure to set it and stick to it.

Also, let me know – do you get hit with analysis paralysis? What exactly did you get stuck on? And if you're not sure, step back and look at the big picture. What's your overall goal? And what details are you caught up in?

Shoot me an email at inner.circle@innovativelanguage.com

To your fluency,
Peter Galante
Founder, InnovativeLanguage.com

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Do you get hit with analysis paralysis?

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WHAT DID YOU GET STUCK ON? EMAIL ME AT:
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