

# Intrinsic motivation in language learning

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An important problem that language learners constantly face due to the highly undermined and uncertain learning environments (e.g., multiple new words, speakers, word-to-world mappings, etc.) is how to sample relevant information for their learning process. The present research seeks to shed light on how learners engage in optimal information sampling when acquiring the meaning of new words.

Our working hypothesis posits that this critical process is fueled by intrinsically triggered reward-motivation mechanisms, which serve to reinforce information-seeking and explorative behaviors. Recent investigations conducted by our group, focusing on adults learning new words, have unveiled an interesting cross-talk between subcortical dopamine reward-related mechanisms and cortical language networks. This coupling between emotional and language networks suggest that such subcortical-cortical interplay play a pivotal role in triggering language curiosity and facilitating information seeking activities that are needed to optimal sampling during language learning.

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Aula 2.3

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A central tenet of our research is the idea that these mechanisms must be operative during the early stages of language acquisition to ensure curiosity, exploration as well as appropriately selecting which piece of information is crucial for future learning. By elucidating the dynamics of information sampling during language learning, our research aims to contribute to understanding the self-regulatory nature of language acquisition processes.