

# FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS GOT YOU DOWN?

## How to Study a Foreign Language (from *Texas Woman's University*)

Language learning is a highly cumulative process. Every day you keep building on what you did the day before. If you don't keep at the job steadily, pretty soon you're trying to put new information on top of empty space. Thus, it is important to keep up with and learn what is being presented to you about a language day by day.

### • LISTENING AND PRONUNCIATION

1. The basis of all language is sound. Become familiar with the pronunciation of the words in the language and learn what to listen for when the language is spoken.
2. Proper pronunciation takes a great deal of practice. Begin early in learning the new lip and tongue movements correctly.
3. Improve your pronunciation by listening to the language (from people, CDs, or movies) and pronouncing the words yourself until they sound correct. Listen with the aim of accurately reproducing what you have heard.
4. Listen to yourself on tape and practice the sounds by repeating them over and over until you feel comfortable with them. Ask another person to judge your pronunciation.
5. Focus on the meaning of what is being spoken as well as on pronunciation.

### • SPEAKING

1. Do not be concerned with speed, but rather with accuracy.
2. Practice in speaking should be constant. When reading the language, read aloud if possible. Meet with other classmates at a designated time and converse with each other exclusively in the language you are studying.
3. Learn sentence structure. It is one thing to know the meanings of foreign words and quite another to be able to put them together correctly to form a meaningful sentence.

### • READING

1. Know English grammar terms should do. Keeping a grammar book or dictionary handy will help. Also, learn new grammatical terms used in the language you are studying.
2. When you read, do so with a focus on the total meaning of a sentence or passage and avoid looking up unknown words—instead, attempt to determine their meanings based on the context of the sentence or paragraph.
3. Always study notes which accompany a passage that is to be read or translated.
4. Try reading the passage to be translated three times. Read it initially, without translating, in order to get a feel for the language and how the words fit together. Read it a second time and translate the passage. Then, reread the passage a third

time for meaning. This will help you begin to think in the language. When reading, try reading by phrases or whole sentences, and read aloud.

- **VOCABULARY**

1. There are several things that can be done to aid in learning vocabulary. Memorization is important, and good knowledge of the rules of grammar in the language studied will aid this process.
2. Master all of the vocabulary for each lesson. You may want to make flash cards for yourself to aid in this process. Try going over them at least once a day, and keep the number of words you are working with small. When you have learned the word on a card, remove that card from the others. Phrases may also be put on flash cards.
3. Try learning the names of the everyday things around you. Pick, for example, four new things a day to learn.
4. Try these four steps in learning a new word: (1) pronounce and spell it; (2) study its meaning; (3) use it in a sentence of your own; and, (4) write it and its meaning 3 times.

- **WRITING**

1. Study all textbook material before you begin to write.
2. While you are writing, pay attention to spelling, form, irregularities, and word order.
3. Be aware of sentence structure and grammar.

