

A Daily Guide for Language and Culture Learning

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There is a West African proverb which says, "If you don't taste the food, you do not know if the salt is there or not." It is like that with people. If you want to know what they are really like, you must get to know them. You get to know people through talking with them and understanding their ways.

Why learn a language? p. 8

1. To help you survive and live there. ... to find food, to know what to do when problems come up
2. To make friends and know how to interact with different groups of people in the community.
3. To understand the rules people have; what they expect from other people and outsiders; how they work and what things they think are important in life
4. To learn about the problems and issues people face in their lives and how they deal with them.
You want to work together with people, to look at their problems, to find out what to do with them. This helps you learn what people believe.
5. To talk about things that people need to know, in ways you know they understand. The insiders may need to learn how to do things in new ways.

What spoils language and culture learning? p. 9

1. Our way is best. All of us are *ethnocentric* - We learn because our ethnic group believes it is the best way of doing things, thinking or speaking. Inside us grows a natural belief - this is the best way. When we go to work with a different group of people, we take our way of doing things and our beliefs with us. We may think our way of doing things is better. This can cause us to despise the people we work with. We may not even know we do this. Learning their language and ways is then very difficult. Ethnocentrism can stop us from seeing anything good in other people.
We all think our way is best. We need to look at our own ways. In all our ways, some things are good. Other things are weak or wrong. It is the same in their group.

1. Studying and not learning. Some people have problems trying to learn a language because they think they have to study it with a teacher who controls what they learn. So they don't get out and be among people who know and use the language every day while they work. The result is that they don't speak the language well.

2. Doing things in the wrong order. The natural order to learn a language is:

listening > speaking > reading > writing
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 Often we have difficulties with language learning because we try to read and write before listening and speaking.

1. Not learning intensively. Children learn their first language and culture well because they do it nearly all the time. If you only learn language and culture from time to time, you will find it difficult to interact well with people. When you want to learn other new things, you will not be able to use the language freely to do so. Learn intensively every day, do this until you can use the language well enough to go on learning while you move about in your work.

2. Thinking language and culture can be learned instantly. People who think language and culture can be learned in a few months usually give up after awhile. Think of a seed and all the stages of a plant. It takes time to be part of a new group.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you start by observing the insiders. You begin to do these things yourself • you watch those close to you and learn to fit in their family group, or with their friends, their work and other groups • you then learn how people keep their groups together and what you do to fit in better with those groups • you are able to make your own contributions to these groups.
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1. Fear of making a mistake. Fear makes people not speak unless they get it right. So they end up saying little at all. Their learning suffers. A child always makes mistakes at the beginning, but people correct him .. or he will ask what to say. It is natural to make mistakes, the

language is different from our own. Be prepared to let go of fear and pride and try to talk. You WILL make mistakes but you must try again. Work on the mistakes as they occur and seek to learn the correct way.

2. Wanting to start work. Some people think that work only starts when language learning finishes. They want to start their work and so they leave off learning the language. Then they get very frustrated because they can't do their work properly without the language. Language and culture learning is the beginning of our work. Our work cannot be separated from these. As soon as you begin learning the language you begin your work.

1. Cut off. Once I was in a market place. I had just started to learn the language. I did not understand much. An old woman came up and danced in front of me. . Everyone in the market laughed long and loudly. I was very embarrassed. I went home and decided I wasn't returning to market until I learned the language. However, I knew the market was an excellent place to learn. By isolating myself I wouldn't progress. So I began to go again to market. Some months later I saw the same thing happen between two insiders at market. By this time I was able to talk more and asked about the incident. I found out that what the only lady had done was an expression of extreme thanks. Apparently, I had helped her in some way previously. I had misunderstood her. But if I had isolated myself I would not have learned.

A person can also be cut off from insiders because he does things which insiders don't like. Our sounds, actions or ideas can be very different from insider's sounds, actions and ideas. If outsiders are not prepared to control the things which cut them off from insiders, then they will remain isolated.

1. Dependent. Some people are not prepared to learn from ordinary people who know the language and culture. They depend on a teacher and just try to study. They want a teacher or someone else to do it for them. No one else can learn something for you - you have to do it for yourself.

1. The people we see ourselves as. Some people don't see themselves as outsiders. Some don't care whether they are acceptable to insiders. The way you are with insiders can affect your learning.
 - Avoiders by-pass each other and stay with their own people. He avoids the insiders he has one to work with ... so the insiders avoid him.
 - Absorbers can't cope with two cultures. So either they try to keep everything within their own culture or they try to move totally into the other culture. Some outsiders only move and work with insiders who know the outsiders' language or who act like outsiders would. They absorb a few outsiders into their culture but they will not learn the language and culture of insiders well. They will not gain a true picture.
 - Interactors. they give each other access to their worlds. This helps in changing things outsiders do from their culture that insiders find unacceptable and improving things outsiders do which insiders find acceptable. The outsider becomes at home in two cultures, he becomes bi- cultural.

1. Not knowing which language to learn. You or your organization need to study the situation carefully and decide which groups and languages you will concentrate on. This will help you to communicate more effectively.

Things that help you learn language and culture well p. 15

1. You should be independent. This means you:
 - want to learn, not just study
 - see yourself as an outsider who needs to learn the language and culture well to be acceptable to insiders
 - are an interactor who wants to go into their world and let them come into yours
 - want to work at changing things in your cultural behaviour which offend insiders and improve things you do which insiders find acceptable.

1. You should be involved. This means you:
 - learn intensively till you reach the time when you can go on learning by yourself without having special periods of time or special programmes. This may take you 9 months to a year.
 - start by listening and speaking. Reading and writing follow later

- meet regularly with many different types of insiders
- find insiders who want to help you learn and are willing to help you work at things which are not acceptable to insiders.

All of us have great potential to learn. You can combine learning and studying so that it helps you more. Try and arrange your language and culture learning so you are able to do it through being involved with people.

What helps us know how to learn ch.4, p. 17-18

1. Linguistics
2. Cultural anthropology, ethnology
3. Human geography. How people relate to the world around them and how they try to control or use it.

Understanding language ch. 5. p. 19-26

Language learning means:

1. learning to communicate through listening and understanding
2. learning to speak well, like the people of that language group. Not just memorizing hundreds of sentences
3. learning to use language better and better with more people and with more ideas.

out of simple sentences, we can build complex ones.

needs organization (syntax, grammar)

there is a way of saying things correctly, the rules of language

Begin simply, gradually learn the rules and begin to follow them.

Learn to say simple things first, put the words together to bring meaning to the person who hears

GLUE

G	Get	Get what you need.
L	Learn	Learn what you get.
U	Use	Use what you learn.
E	Evaluate	Evaluate what you use.

Glue is what you use to stick things together. When you learn language you stick things together.

You go through this glue pattern again and again and again.

Learn to look at differences in the new language

- in the way it is pronounced, the sounds of the mouth used
- look at different situations: "He chops money." is not equal to "He has chop money."
- take the complex things and break them up into their smaller bits
- if you don't understand what people say, get them to say it in other ways and then try to do the same thing yourself
- learn to say the same thing in different ways: add words, change them around, put other words in to make the meaning clear.
- use other examples to test whether you have got something right - either the meaning or the sound
- work with things that are the same (either the meaning or the sound) things that are different

• **Mistakes and what to do with them**

When you see difference in language you have to work harder. At first, you may not see the differences. You make mistakes at the differences. Making a mistake is not the end. But it is not the end. It is serious - if you don't correct it, people may not understand what you say. It takes effort to learn to say the correct things.

differences > difficulties > mistakes > correcting errors

goal, plan and resources chap 6. pages 29-38

chapter number	Time months	stages	how to get involved	what to do for independence	reasons for learning well
8	2-3	learn to survive	learn to meet, greet do simple things with people	<u>observe</u> and learn to speak basic things and ask questions	to exist in another culture, to begin to relate to people and the land
9	2-3	learn to fit in with groups	being to learn the way people are in groups	<u>participate</u> . begin to join in activities	to grow in relating
	2-3	learn to interact with people and land	begin to learn how groups interact and the rules they have	<u>compare</u> what outsiders are like with each other.	to understand the group's values and ways
	3-5	recognize issues, needs, and demands	learn the problems, needs, issues, demands and the ways of coping	<u>assess</u> your response to their patterns and issues	to share skills, knowledge and insight
	3-4	respond to issues, problems, and demands	learn where the group is going, their views of order, good and progress	<u>create</u> ways to live and work among them	to help people respond to their issues and needs

Resources - people and things we need to help us along

1. People. when you first go, insiders will know you are an outsider. Many of the insiders want to help you, but you will have to approach them in a right way and very sensitively. Remember! you are the outsider, they are the insiders. You are also a learner, not just a student. You have great potential within you to learn to communicate with these people. Some may not like it and may not want to help you, maybe they feel they are not teachers and so can't help you. Tell them you just want to learn and they can help you because they know how to talk their language.
 - general helpers
 - special friends or 'substitute' family, a man like an uncle or father, a woman like a mother or aunt, an elder brother and sister
 - language helpers, meet with you regularly to help you prepare things to say to the community. they should be able to speak a language you already understand. Very important! you will not be able to do without them
 - helpers in the community that will meet and talk with you each day
 - teachers who have some special training in language
 - people who have special knowledge about some issue
1. Things
 - like a radio broadcast in the language, or films or television
 - a cassette recorder is helpful but not necessary
 - books

putting the plan into action. ch. 7 p. 39-53

The learning circle

GLUE. You get, learn, use, evaluate, then you go and learn more things. People who are not successful at learning language and culture, usually don't get what they need. Some don't learn what they have. Others learn it, but don't use it. Sometimes people just never go over what they have done and evaluate it.

For an 8 hour day:

Get	10% of the time	1 hour early morning
Learn	30% of the time	2 hours morning
Use	50% of the time	4 hours late afternoon
Evaluate	10% of the time	1 hour late afternoon

This is an idea and gives proportion of time - but follow the community routines. When you learn intensively, you will get tired. Take a day off sometimes or completely change what you do in the day.

At times you may feel as if you are just standing still and not making progress, not hearing what people are saying nor understanding, making the same mistakes. It is important that you realize this. Get going again. Concentrate on listening. Try to guess what people are saying by watching what they do. Try using the language in news ways to talk to new people about different things.

Try not to change the order of the learning circle. Don't give any one step on the circle more attention than you should ... if you spend 5 hours getting material, you will have far too much to learn or to use and then you will get discouraged.

Get what you need

you need a helper: someone who will help you get some material and understand it, a place and a time to work together.

Something to understand and say: a text

1. A text is something you prepare with your helper. You want to talk to people as you go about and you want them to reply to what you say and help you learn more. You want to tell them what you can say. But you also want to be able to tell them when you don't understand what they are saying. With your helper, you prepare a text on what you need to be able to say or a text on a specific topic. It will have both questions and statements. You need to understand what you are saying. At first, your text will be very short and simple.

2. A helper. An ordinary person who knows the language and culture well, who wants to help you learn, and who has the time available. You may want to have two helpers. Some people pay helpers who work with them regularly, others give them gifts: learn from people in your community what is appropriate.

3. How to work with a helper. If you want your work to be harmonious and beneficial to you both of you, then:

- ◇ take time to greet him or her respectfully
- ◇ be friendly, sympathetic and treat him with respect
- ◇ speak clearly and simply
- ◇ tell your helper what it is you want to learn, your purpose
- ◇ you need to be the one in charge, but not harshly
- ◇ ask him to tell you when you make mistakes
- ◇ show him it please you when he corrects you
- ◇ try not to wander off what you are doing
- ◇ be a learner
- ◇ be willing to be adaptable.
- ◇ converse politely and respectfully

4. a place to meet. find a place where you can work without a lot of interruption or noise. maybe a room, at your helper's place, sometimes under a tree, You must be able to concentrate and not be disturbed by children.

What to do

1. Before you meet your helper. work out what it is you want to work on. prepare your topic (maybe from the situations), go over the mistakes you noticed when you evaluated last time, get your materials ready (things to write with)
2. When the helper comes or you go. Greet politely and then lead into the things you want to learn. -- give him ideas about what you want to learn. Describe the situation where you will use the language in the community.

I want to meet people later today

I want to talk to them and get them to talk to me

I want to be able to tell them that I am learning their language

What are the right things to say to them?

- Explain that you want to meet people in the community who will help you.
- explain that you want something to say about a certain topic. Tell him what is the topic
- explain that there are also some mistakes you have been making and you want his help to correct them.

Get what to say - a text

at first just get a little. language can vary a lot and you want to be able to meet many different types of people. You want to say the text *in the way an insider would*. DON'T give your helper sentences in your common language to translate into the new language. Translating can cause problems and result in your speaking like an outsider, not an insider.

- Repeat, mimic, listen, repeat, then write it down after each thing
- since you will be starting the conversation, ask your helper how someone in the community will reply. Repeat and mimic that
- Ask your helper to tell you what to say if people you talk to suddenly start saying things you don't understand or things seem out of control but you want to start talking again.
- ask your helper to give you a question you could ask people so they would than answer in a way you could understand.
- how would you finish the conversation and take leave

Understand what your helper gives you

don't expect your helper to be able to give you a word for word meaning of the text. just get the general meaning.

- ask for a free translation of the whole text
- ask for a rough translation of each of the main things or parts
- accept what the helper says. Don't argue or insult him.
- if you already know meanings, there is no need to write it down. When searching out meanings, go from the text to the translation, not the other way around.
- don't go off into other things
- learn to try saying the same thing using different words. This makes the meaning clear.
- try making another sentence the same way which has a different meaning. This helps you see if you have understood the structure.

Test to see if the text fits the situation

- simple are things too long for you to say? do you need to ask the helper to break up some things into shorter pieces?
- length. Is the whole text too long for you to remember? Do you need to shorten it?
- useful Is the text useful? Does it build from the mistakes you made yesterday? Will it bring good responses? Does it help you make friends with people?
- many times Will you be able to use this text many times when you go out?

Rewrite the text

if necessary rewrite the text in the way you want to learn it. you want to learn the sounds so you can remember them and use them in the way you hear people say them.

don't forget to mark tone - where the helper goes up and down in his voice.

begin with your own writing system that you can remember. You can fit it into their system (if they have one) later.

Repeat the text

- go through each saying a series of times with your helper
- get him to say it first, then repeat it. Do this with each sentence. Get him to correct you.
- different parts of the dialogue. He takes one part, you the other, then switch.

Note problems: areas include: the language itself, difficult sounds to pronounce, the meaning of the way it is said, the meaning of the words, the way you relate to your helper, if there are cultural differences to note.

Summary of the 'GET' stage: take time to do these things well. After you have been doing it for a while you will find that things will come more easily to you.

Learn what you get: You can spend some time learning with your helper, but he shouldn't stay too long. He has other things to do, he will get bored just repeating the same thing to you.

- To learn well, so you can speak smoothly, you must practice. p. 47