

QUICK OVERVIEW:

You are your own teacher. Real progress in the language depends entirely on you - *on your attitude and the quality of your participation* in the Practice Sessions with the Language Partner; *on your study habits and on the amount of time you spend daily* on studying the language materials.

Your Language Partner (LP) in DILS will guide you through speaking and listening practice; your LP will help you to learn to *use* the language and will give you the opportunity to absorb to the maximum extent the linguistic and cultural particularities of the language you are studying. To ensure the process is successful, you will be expected to attend all Practice Sessions and to be properly prepared for each Session.

Your Language Partner will keep a bi-weekly record of your performance in the Practice Session. You may ask the DILS Director at any time to see your record.

Evaluation. There will be a final evaluation at the end of the semester scheduled during UM Reading Days. It will consist of an approximately 20 – 30 minute oral evaluation. A language instructor from another institution who specializes in the language of you are learning will administer the final evaluation by phone or via Skype. Scheduling of the evaluation is arranged in advance. There will be no makeup finals.

Recognition of your work in DILS. Language study in DILS is noted on your transcript at the end of each semester you are in the program. In addition, you may request a letter describing your language study in DILS.

Self-evaluation. You will be asked to hand in bi-weekly reports of your language study experience. Your comments are an important part of your self-evaluation, and will help us identify and address problems or concerns.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

WORK WITH AUDIO.

Consistent work with audio and when available video materials is absolutely essential in independent language study. Twenty to thirty minutes of daily work with the audio/video materials should be considered the minimum. Do not try to concentrate the audio work into a few long sessions a week: it should be spread evenly over the entire week.

As you do your audio/video work, try to *repeat what you hear out loud*. It is difficult to learn a language to speak by listening only. Learning to speak a language requires speaking aloud. Try to duplicate as precisely as possible the utterance you hear. Remember that sentence melody, rhythm, stress, and cadence are as important as the pronunciation of individual sounds or words.

WORK WITH TEXT

Read the introduction of your textbook carefully: most authors include basic information about how the text should be used. You are responsible for studying the grammar presented in the text on your own.

WORK WITH THE LANGUAGE PARTNER

Remember that *Language Partners are not expected to function as teachers*; they do not give quizzes or exams, assign grades and give grammatical explanations. *Language Partners will expect from you mastery of the language features you study in each lesson.* Language Partners will use primarily the target language during the Practice Sessions.

Avoid asking your Language Partners for grammatical explanations and linguistic insights as much as possible. Explanations, which would have to be in English, take time away from the target language learning process. You must study the material on your own. Many of your questions will be answered as you assimilate the material and begin to speak the language. It is recommended that you acquire a basic grammar book in addition to the required study materials. (You will find suggestions of grammar books in the 'Fact Sheets' you receive at the beginning of your language program).

PRACTICE SESSION

Language training in DILS takes place in the target language. This will allow you to develop the habit of thinking in the target language rather than translating from your dominant language. The Practice Sessions with your native speaker are your most valuable opportunity to enter the world of the new language and implicitly of the new culture you are studying.

If your Language Partner seems to speak too fast for you, do not ask him or her to slow down. You need to develop your comprehension skills and train yourself to understand speech delivered at a conversational pace. If you have problems understanding your LP and have difficulty communicating during the Practice Session, review your learning strategies and reflect on what gives you the greatest difficulty. Awareness of your language study habits will help you considerably in evaluating and revising your learning strategies.

You will be expected to *use* the target language in the Practice Sessions: *be pro-active: engage in dialogues*, ask questions in the target language, do role-play; these activities will allow you to manipulate the structures of the language, and to learn to create with the language. You will eventually acquire proficiency to communicate appropriately in a broad variety of contexts. Your LP will guide you in these activities. Your LP will also be correcting your pronunciation and your sentence structure.

EVALUATION

The outside evaluator who will evaluate your language performance will be a qualified instructor of the language you are studying from another institution. Evaluators will be provided appropriate information about the ACTFL guidelines before administering the final evaluation.

The evaluator will give you professional feedback on your progress in the language of your study will inform you of the level and quality of your performance in the language and will make suggestions for further language study.

CONCLUSION

It is critical that you master all the material in the lesson before attending your Practice Session. A cursory reading of your textbook will definitely not accomplish this. In order for the language to become assimilated, you will have to practice with the audio/video material frequently, until listening to the language and speaking it become natural to you. When you can understand; when you can respond without much hesitation or prompting, you have begun to internalize the language.

The number of hours per week devoted to language practice will determine your success in assimilating the language. Proficiency is directly dependent on regularity and frequency of practice. You must devote time to your language practice on a daily basis. Only with patient and regular practice will you be able to attain your objective of spontaneous and comprehensible language use.

You are encouraged to find ways to engage with the language and its culture outside your Practice Sessions. You should locate newspapers, periodicals, music, and other artifacts; work extensively with online materials; **explore opportunities that will maximize your contact with the language.** If you have friends who speak the language; if you are aware of communities in your area where the language is spoken, try out your newly acquired skills. Seek out others who speak the language you are studying; be enterprising and start a conversation group.