

Study Hints for Language Students

Remember, learning a language is a skill. It is more like your course in driving or swimming than it is like history or math. You will not study **about** something; you will learn to **do** as you listen, imitate and repeat. You will memorize sounds and combinations of sounds that stand for things, ideas and actions. You will be asked to act out (or imagine that you are acting out) every situation.

In class, you must devote your complete attention. You cannot learn a language by yourself from a book. **At home**, you must read aloud and practice aloud the situations that you have learned in class.

Memorize what you hear through constant repetition. You can do this in class by being on your toes at every moment, not only waiting for your turn to answer, but also listening intently to what others are saying, forming your answer at the same time, and moving your lips accordingly. A question directed to another student is also a question directed to you. Don't be satisfied if you only answer *your* questions; remember that the teacher asks twenty to thirty different students multiple questions; you are expected to know the answers to all of the questions.

Imitation: You have to listen and imitate correctly. If you know the answer, that's fine, but don't sit back feeling satisfied with yourself; you still need to learn the correct pronunciation. When repeating, you must speak up. Do you get any practice by thinking about a word? No, you have to say the word. You must speak loudly and clearly so that your fellow classmates can hear and understand what you have said.

Memorization: A language is a set of habits. All of us speak our native language with complete fluency. When we entered the first grade, we already had about 50,000 hours of practice. Since we will have less than 180 hours together in class this year, you have to establish some pretty efficient habits and methods.

If a language is a set of habits, the only way to learn the language is to learn those habits. You don't learn any habits by thinking of them; you learn only through constant practice.

In your other classes, you are asked to go home and read, organize, analyze and interpret factual data. In your language class, you will be asked to **practice** the information you learn in class. Practice at home – **aloud**; practice with your classmates; seek opportunities to use what you know in class; don't be satisfied only with responding. You are expected to review and practice daily the information learned in class.

Study out loud: One way to memorize material is to read over it silently, but no matter how many times you read it, you won't be learning how the language is spoken, you would only be learning how it looks on paper. However, if you study out loud, you double your efficiency by hearing yourself; then by speaking you quadruple your efficiency because you are **doing**.

Don't fall behind: Learning a language is a highly cumulative process. It is the building on top of what you did the day before. If you don't keep up with this everyday, pretty soon you are going to try to put the building blocks on top of empty space. So, don't fall behind. When you miss a day, it's your responsibility to make it up.

Web sites for Spanish students

STARS (Realidades) <http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/OHSICS/forlang/spanish/stars/index2.htm>

STARS (En español) <http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/OHSICS/forlang/spanish/stars/index.htm>

Web sites for French students

EIFEL <http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/OHSICS/forlang/eiffel/index.htm>