**Ten Tips for Learning a New Language**

1. Understand that success in language acquisition does not occur because of intelligence, or even mostly because someone is a “good language learner”. Success in language acquisitions occurs when certain conditions, experiences and behaviors are present. Some of these are highlighted in this list.
2. Receive *comprehensible input.* This means that you can understand what you hear. The comprehension might occur because visuals or gestures are used alongside oral language. It might occur because someone is speaking slowly and clearly. It always requires an abundance of use of previously learned language, and few new words and structures.
3. Limit exposure to *incomprehensible* input. Hearing lots of language that you do not understand (such as having the TV on all day to hear the new language) is often more discouraging than it is helpful.
4. Do expose yourself to as much language as possible *at your language level.* For example, beginners can label items around the house using the new language, and program their phones with wake-up and other messages throughout the day, in the new language. Such passive exposure can support active language learning.
5. Set appropriate amounts of time for language learning, and disengage from it at other times. Do not expect language learning effort of yourself 24/7! Your brain needs a rest. A reasonable expectation for “full-time” focused language learning is 20-30 hours a week (in class time *and* all homework/practice time). Especially if you have children, it is important to maintain stable and happy home life, and this usually means using the native language in the home, and *not* spending every waking moment trying to learn or use the new language.
6. During active, focused language study, focus mainly on *using* the language. That is, you should be *listening* to and *reading* things that you can mostly understand, perhaps with a little help, or with picture references or a few translations of words. And, you should be *speaking* and *writing* at your level.
7. Frame your learning around accomplishing real tasks using language. For example, some appropriate tasks at each level might include:
   1. Beginning: creating a shopping list; introducing your family members to a new person; learning the words to a simple song; writing down directions to a new place
   2. Intermediate: Writing a recipe; telling what you did on the weekend; listening to a new song and writing down words you don’t know; engaging in phone conversations using known language (for example, creating vacation plans by phone); reading familiar Bible passages
   3. Advanced: listening to a sermon and taking notes; telling someone about your personality; sharing a difficulty and praying with someone; reading a biography
8. **Learn a little, use a lot.** Time spent actively using the language that you already know builds fluency, and increases motivation. Resist books or teachers who insist on going on to new words and topics in each lesson, and do not give you time to just enjoy using what you know, building fluency and automaticity.
9. Ensure that you continue to engage in some activities in which you feel capable and productive. This is important for maintaining your self-esteem. For example, you may lead a weekly Bible study in your native language, or participate in a committee where you can contribute expertise.
10. Understand that people progress differently in their language learning. One person may acquire oral language faster while another learns more words more quickly. One may succeed in making a certain sound while it eludes another. All strengths are valuable, so celebrate yours, rather than focusing on whatever is taking longer for you. Don’t set “native-like” as a goal, but rather “effective communication”. Imperfect language skills will *not* keep you from communicating well in the new language, if you genuinely care about the people you are serving, and approach the new language and culture with humility, as a learner.

Acquiring a language to a basic level of social communicative competence usually takes around a year, and full competence often takes 5-6 years. Give yourself a break!