
4Ts: Top Ten Tips To...

Improve Your Language Learning Skills Abroad



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The best way to learn any foreign language is simply to immerse yourself in the sounds and culture of your TL (target language). One authentic immersive environment in which you can improve your language dramatically is where the language is spoken and used on a daily basis.

To benefit fully from your experience abroad you need to make an effort to create plenty of opportunities to interact with the locals and sample the local culture.

Glossary: TL: target language, TC: target country

To study a foreign language abroad is truly a life-enriching experience, so make sure you make the most of it by putting in practice the following hints and tips. The following tips are a sure fire way to make rapid progress and improve your fluency:

1. Speak the language 24/7:

Resist the temptation to communicate in your mother tongue even with your friends, classmates or room mates. Limit your use of your mother tongue as much as possible. Order food, ask for directions and information, go shopping – basically try to conduct your day-to-day tasks in the TL. Commit yourself to communicating with the locals in the TL at all times, even when they try to switch the conversation to English. Remember they are keen to practice their English with you as much as you are keen to practice your TL!

2. Be culture shock-free!

Be ready to adapt to a different way of life. Leave your Britishness behind! Learn about the local traditions, etiquettes and courtesies. Find out more about the country by reading and purchasing an up-to-date tourist-guide before travelling abroad.

3. Get Real(ia)!

Make good use of the vast amount of authentic realia resources (i.e. real-life items) that you will be exposed to, such as magazines, newspapers, packaging, signs, notices, etc. Take photos of as many as you can. Blog about them online and explain the meaning of the script written on them. Before you go home make sure you take some with you for future study.

4. Signs, labels everywhere!

Familiarise yourself with foreign signs and notices especially the “warning” and the “not-allowed” signs. Pay attention to written language on labels and packaging of foreign products. Take a trip to the local supermarket. These places are packed with everyday products with multi-lingual packaging.



5. Speak like a local!

Get to grips with the local lingua-franca (i.e. the spoken dialect). Learn the most-commonly used words and phrases. Tune your ears to the spoken language, idioms and day-to-day expressions. Make friends quickly with the locals. Listen to the local radio and watch how they communicate on TV and movies, both verbally and through body language.

6. Be socially brave!

Make a special effort; be courageous and sociable to interact in the TL with the locals. Avoid isolating yourself in your hotel room! Step out of your comfort zone and the usual circle of your native friends and room-mates.

7. Make mistakes!

Yes, you are allowed to make *unintentional* mistakes. Don't let your fear of mistakes discourage you from engaging in meaningful social conversations. In most cases, native speakers will understand you, even if your sentences are not perfectly accurate. As long as you try, they will be happy to offer you suggestions to improve your spoken language. Remember, nothing ventured, nothing gained.

8. Tune in to the spoken word

Listen to the local radio as frequently as you can. Get yourself a portable FM radio player. Use it whilst you are "on the go". [Research](#) suggests that extensive exposure to the sound patterns of a language, even if you haven't a clue what it all means, sets up the structures in the brain required to learn the words. This will enhance your ability to recall words quickly in the long-term. Needless to say, this also perfects your pronunciation too. If Internet connection is available, take advantage of online radio.

9. What's on tonight?

Whilst abroad you will have access to a growing collection of local and satellite foreign TV. Watch them with your friends and pay attention to the body language and visual clues – have fun guessing the meaning of the dialogues or the plot of the latest soap operas!

10. Who is your tandem?

Find yourself a long-term tandem partner (i.e. language-exchange partner). Make a deal with your tandem partner. You teach them English and they teach you your TL in return. When you go home, remember to keep in touch with him/her using the wide range of online communication tools available. Use audio-visual instant messaging tools regularly to refine your speaking skills or email and social networking tools to enhance your writing skills.

Source: <http://www.e-arabic.com/top-ten-tips-to-improve-your-language-learning-skills-abroad>

