

Activity 1 - Exploring Vocabulary

In this activity, you will learn how to explore a language source through reading. You will practice the Before/During/After approach using the document “*How to Learn a Language*”. You will practise learning new *vocabulary*, but you could also learn about grammar and culture through reading.

Before

Before reading, look for clues. Do not read every word, but let your eyes pass over the text (this is called “skimming”). Look for the following information:

- What is the title? Who is the author?
- Are there any pictures or diagrams? If so, what do they show?

After you have this information, ask yourself these questions:

- What information do I expect this document to contain?
- What words do I expect this document to contain?

Next, create a question that helps you explore vocabulary in the sample:

- Can I find 7 new vocabulary words?

During

Now that you have a question to answer, you will be able to read with purpose. Read the article once to “get the gist” of the content. Then, read it again, and do the following:

- Use a highlighter, pen or pencil to mark new vocabulary words.
- Find an English speaker to describe the new words to you. If you can't find an English speaker, use a dictionary.
- Write down the definitions of your new words.

After

Do one or more of the following activities to remember your new language!

- Get some index cards and make yourself flash cards. Keep these cards in your pocket, purse, or briefcase and go over them whenever you have a few minutes.
- Write a paragraph summarizing the article, and try to use all of your new vocabulary words. After, tell someone about the article and try to use the words again.
- Use the Internet or an English speaker to learn more about your new words. Find out if the words are considered formal or informal, how to pronounce them correctly, what kinds of emotions are attached to them, and practise spelling them.

How to Learn a Language

Most people can learn most languages if they work with a logical method for a reasonable period of time. Although it is true that some people are not skilled at learning languages, there are very few of these. It is my strong opinion that most people can learn foreign languages if they do it the right way. Actually, everybody, gifted or not, with a good or bad memory, learns his mother tongue effortlessly. Of course adults learn differently (and a lot more quickly) than children, but the point is that it does not take special skills to be an efficient language learner, just an efficient method.

There are difficult languages and easier languages, but I have never heard of a language which was impossible to learn. The easiest languages are those closest to a language that you already speak. One thing is certain: people learning on their own will learn much more quickly than people taking classes or attending school.

Most people can speak a language like a native speaker, if they live in a country where they have to speak it all the time. For all the others, learning to speak a language without accent is very difficult. Very few people achieve this. It is important to set useful and realistic goals and then keep track of how you are progressing. You should realize that you will never stop learning a particular language and that there will nearly always be room for improvement in your skills. Decide to improve your language skills every time you can and never be satisfied with sufficient skills! The idea is to have an open attitude toward learning, a realization that even if you speak really well, you could improve it, learn new words or new expressions or perfect your pronunciation. Aim for excellence, and you'll get it.

In language learning there are two things that you can't do without: motivation and an intelligent method. First, you have to want to learn the language, not just wish. Setting goals can help you with this. Second, remember that many people study a language for years and still cannot carry a simple conversation. If you think I exaggerate, ask someone who studied a language at school. So the second most important thing is to work intelligently, so you don't lose time or energy. With this attitude you can and will succeed!

Adapted from: <http://how-to-learn-any-language.com/e/guide/principles.html>

Activity 2 - Exploring Grammar

In this activity, you will practise the Before/During/After approach using the document “*How to Learn a Language*” once again. This time, you will explore new *grammar*.

Before

You ’ve already explored new vocabulary in this sample. Now go through the sample again and ask yourself:

- Can I recognize all of the grammar structures in this article?

During

Now that you have a question to answer, you will be able to read with purpose:

- Use a highlighter, pen or pencil to mark grammar structures that you don ’t recognize.
- Find an English speaker to describe the meaning of the sentence, and to explain how the grammar creates that meaning. If you can ’t find an English speaker to help you, try using an English grammar website or textbook.

After

Do one or more of the following activities to remember your new grammar knowledge:

- You noticed a grammar construction when you were reading that was unfamiliar. Write a translation of the sentence in your language. Add notes to remind yourself about how the English grammar is similar to and different from the grammar in your language.
- Write some other sentences using the same grammar construction. Ask an English speaker to review them with you to see if they are grammatically correct, and to see if the meaning of the sentences is the meaning you wanted to create.
- Make a list of the situations where you might use the grammar construction naturally. Write some examples of phrases you would say in each situation.

Activity 3 - Exploring Pronunciation

In this activity, you will learn how to explore a language source through viewing. We will practice the Before/During/After approach using an online video. Search for an online video using the phrase “The Art of Schmoozing.” Once you have found a suitable video, practise exploring the language feature of pronunciation first, then culture, but you can also learn new vocabulary or grammar by watching videos.

Before

Before you watch the video, make predictions about what you will see, just as you did when reading. Look for the following information:

- What is the title of the video? What is video probably about?
- Is the video professional or amateur? Is this information reliable? Can I trust the author or source?

After you have this information, ask yourself these questions:

- What information do I expect this video to contain? What language do I expect this document to contain?

Next, create a question that helps you explore vocabulary in the sample:

- Can I find 5 new words or phrases AND learn how to pronounce them?

During

Now that you have questions to answer, you will be able to view with purpose. Watch the video a few times, and use one of the following strategies to keep you focused:

- Keep a piece of paper and pen and write down your new words or phrases. Don't worry about spelling yet; write down the words as you hear them. Find an English speaker to teach you the spelling of the words later.
- Drag the counter on the video back a few seconds and pay attention to the shape of the speaker's mouth when she says your new words. Use a mirror to check the shape of your mouth when you repeat the words after the speaker.
- If there are no new vocabulary words for you to learn, try taking a dictation of the video to see if you can hear individual words in rapid speech. Find an English speaker to check your dictation.

After

Do one or more of the following activities to practise your new language!

- Repeat your new words again and again. Watch the video again and try to speak along with the speaker.
- Start a conversation with an English speaker, and check your pronunciation. If the speaker has a hard time understanding you, ask them to pronounce the words, and try to copy their mouth shape and pronunciation.
- Use your new words to create sentences. Practise saying these sentences aloud (don't just think about saying them...actually say them!).

Activity 4 - Exploring Culture

In this activity, you will practice the Before/During/After approach using an online video . Use the same video that you found by searching “ The Art of Schmoozing”. This time, you will explore *culture*.

Before

You ’ve already explored pronunciation in this sample. Now go through the sample again and ask yourself:

- Does the information in the video teach me anything about North American culture?

During

Write down the words “small talk ” and “schmooze.” Watch the video, and write down some key words in your language that describe these ideas. If there is no word in your language that means the same thing, these ideas are probably not part of your culture, and you should focus on remembering this cultural information. If there are words in your language that mean the same thing, you should look for ways that small talk and schmoozing are different in North America.

Watch the video and ask yourself these questions:

- What is the speaker wearing, and why?
- Would she be wearing the same thing if she made this video in my country?
- Is her language formal or informal? Why did she choose that style for this situation?

After

Write a paragraph about North American culture for people from your country. Describe the concepts of small talk and schmoozing. Then, find someone from your same cultural background and ask them to read your work. Ask them if the description is clear, and encourage them to ask you questions. If the cultural information is not clear to them, or if you don’ t know the answer to their question, do more research online or with an English speaker to learn more about the cultural practice.

Create a list of places and situations where you might use this new information. Show your list to a North American person to check your work.

Activity 5 - Exploring All Four Features

In this activity, you will learn how to explore a language source through listening. We will practise the Before/ During/After approach using radio shows from the CBC Manitoba website. You can access the radio shows by following this link: <http://www.cbc.ca/manitoba/eal/>. We have practised exploring to learn all four language features in the previous activities.

This time, you will take more control over your learning. We will help guide you through the process with some reminders and tips, but go ahead and try exploring in any way you find effective.

Before you start, click on the link and choose a podcast that sounds interesting to you.

Before

Look at the description of the podcast. Remember to ask yourself:

- What information do I have about this listening sample?
- What 's it called? Who wrote it? Who was it created for?
- What information do I expect this sample to contain?
- What words and expressions do I expect to see in this sample?

Next, decide what you want to learn:

- Vocabulary: Are there 7 new vocabulary words?
- Grammar: Do I notice any new grammar constructions?
- Pronunciation: Can I understand the sample without looking at the transcript?
- Culture: Does this podcast teach me anything about when and where to use English?

During

How will I stay focused as I listen to the sample?

- Vocabulary & Grammar: Taking notes, translating
- Pronunciation: Replaying the track, dictation, repeating
- Culture: Translating words into my language, taking notes

After

What will I do to remember your new language?

- Flash cards; practice with an English speaker; writing; repeating
- Discussing the information with someone from my culture
- Other

Repeat again until you feel you 've learned as much as you can from the sample.