

Allyn: The iLEAP cycle is a system for learning language on your own. We started with “i” – identify my goal. In part 2, we examined the “L” - locate language samples. Now it’s time to explore those samples and start learning. E is for “Explore language features.”

Paul: But there are 2 important questions to answer here: #1 - How do we explore those samples? Good explorers always have a plan. So, we’re going to help you “Plan your Exploration.”

Allyn: And – #2- What exactly should we be looking for? We suggest that you “focus on 4 features”: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and culture. So, let’s start with “planning your exploration.” Learning English is a like travelling. Who goes on a trip without a making a plan? When will you go? How will you get there? What arrangements will you need to make for food and lodging? The point is – a plan gives you confidence to move forward. There is less risk of failure and the experience will be more enjoyable. Now, as a teacher, planning is an important part of my job. It helps my students become more successful. For example, when I give my students samples I always plan the lesson with 3 stages: “before”, “during” and “after.” You could follow this same pattern for yourself.

Paul: Yes, the before-during-after approach. I have a personal example. When I was 19, I went on a trip with my family to my parent’s home country. I couldn’t speak much of the language but I made it my goal to meet other young people. I heard that men greet women with a kiss on the cheek. (shrug at Allyn) I was 19....
(pause)

Anyway, I decided to ask my father to teach me some simple phrases. Before talking to him, I thought about what I already knew. I knew how to say “hello. How are you?” I imagined what others might say back to me, and I wrote down some questions. During our conversation, I paid close attention, repeated the phrases and wrote them down. After, I felt more confident and planned my next steps. So without even realizing it, I followed the before, during, after approach.

Allyn: Think about it. You probably already do this too. So let’s go over it again. Your exploration plan should have 3 parts:

Before – “What can I expect to see or hear?” and “What questions do I have?”

During – “How will I be active while reading or listening? Will I take notes? Highlight? Repeat? Ask more questions?”

After – Was my expectation correct? How will I remember? What should I explore next?

Paul: If you are still not sure about how to do this, don’t worry. We have plenty of practice activities for you, as well as a template that you can use to make it easy. We call it the Exploration Plan and it’s a page that you can put right into your language Notebook.

Allyn: Remember, you can explore the same sample many times. And each time you do, you can be looking at something different. Perhaps, the first time you go over something, you might want to simply understand the main idea...get the gist. After that, you could explore new vocabulary. Then, dive into other language features like grammar, pronunciation and culture. The same sample can be recycled over and over again. Get all you can from it.

Paul: Now, this is good place to talk about 4 familiar features of language. We introduced them in the last video. A good balance of these features will help you to reach your goal. It 's like the 4 wheels on a vehicle. If you are missing one or more of them, you will not reach your destination. Likewise, if you are trying to learn a new language, and you neglect one of these fundamentals, you will not succeed. Learning English means:

vocabulary – (knowing words)

grammar - (stringing the words together)

pronunciation - (saying the words properly)

culture – (knowing the right things to say)

Let 's take a moment to look at each of these individually. First, "Vocabulary " .

Allyn: We cannot understand, speak, read or write in any language without knowing a lot of words. This is important when learning another language. I bet you have spent a lot of time learning words.

Paul: How do you learn vocabulary? – Does it involve long lists, memorization, and vocabulary exercises? Many learners use this approach for the most frequently used words in English. However, this approach consumes a lot of effort and time.

Allyn: There is a more natural way to learn vocabulary. Do a lot of reading and listening and notice the words you don 't understand. The iLEAP cycle uses this approach. While reading, viewing or listening, you will encounter unfamiliar words. These words are right there, located in the sentences & paragraphs in front of you. So, you will have all this information surrounding the word that can help you understand its meaning.

Paul: I have a question – " what does it mean to really learn a word? " I mean, how deep should you go? Is it enough just to look it up in a dictionary for meaning or translation?

Allyn: That might be enough if you only need to understand it when you read it or hear it. But what if you want to use it in writing or in a conversation? Then knowing just the meaning of the word is not enough.

You will need to answer questions such as:

- How do I say it?
- What common phrases contain this word?
- Where can this word be used? Is it formal? Is it slang?

Paul: Again, don't worry. We have plenty of activities to help you practise knowing a word with this kind of depth. In a later video, we'll introduce you to another page for your language "Notebook" that you can use to record and learn any new word or phrase that you encounter.

Allyn: Okay, so that's vocabulary. What about grammar? Grammar is important because it provides rules for words to fit together (like a math equation) to create meaningful phrases and sentences. It allows you to express your thoughts and intentions in way that is understandable. And like with vocabulary, the iLEAP cycle helps you to learn grammar in context, as you focus on meeting your goal. You might encounter a grammar pattern that is strange and doesn't seem right to you. Go ahead and explore it! Try to figure out the rule. In later videos, we will show you a page for your Notebook that you can use to learn grammar. Also, we will teach you techniques for decoding patterns and rules in grammar.

Paul: The third feature is Pronunciation. It's very important to explore this feature if you are planning to speak to other English speakers. Poor pronunciation can often be the problem when a native speaker doesn't understand you. If you're learning English mainly through reading, then you need to know that the pronunciation often has little to do with how the word is spelled. Spelling can trip you up when trying to pronounce new words. I once had a student say to me "I think one person created written English and a different person created spoken English. And maybe they both had a little too much to drink while doing it." Not only can "spelling" influence how you pronounce words, but so can your first language. I'm not talking about your accent. Accents are not a problem. Actually, there are many different accents in the English speaking world. The problem is when there are sounds in English that don't exist in your first language.

Paul: I once heard a man deliver a business presentation that was going well until he made a major pronunciation error. In fact, I couldn't understand one of his main points. He said, "A good business owner knows his...monkey." Okay, I knew that he couldn't have said "monkey", but it sounded like that to me. It took me a few minutes to figure out that he was actually saying "market." This word was hard for him because it had sounds that didn't exist in his first language.

Allyn: That's tough.

Paul: Yeah, I spent so much time trying to figure out what he meant; I lost interest in his topic.

Allyn: So pronunciation is important and you should explore pronunciation in your samples. Make a note when the pronunciation sounds different than what you expected. In another video, we will show you a page for your Notebook that you can use to learn pronunciation.

Paul: Finally, last but not least, another feature to explore is "culture."

Allyn: Oh, this is a big one!

Paul: Yes, you can say a grammatically correct sentence, with proper use of vocabulary and perfect pronunciation. But it is the wrong thing to say. You see – vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation are the ingredients that make up the language. But then you need to use the language. How do you know when it's appropriate to use a word in one situation, but not in another? The answer – culture. Culture gives us different containers for the language. Language is poured into culture. Language will take on different shapes, depending on the occasion – depending on where we are and who we are communicating with. Like, I would call my wife “sweetheart,” but probably not my boss.

Allyn: Yeah, not a good idea. Culture influences how we think and act in specific situations. We don't even think about it. It's natural. It's normal. Actually, we call these behaviours - cultural “norms.” But, what happens when you walk into a situation with cultural norms that you don't know about? The difficult thing is that these norms are unwritten and often you learn about them by saying or doing the wrong thing. You can feel embarrassed or misunderstood. This is why it is so important to explore “culture.” It helps you know the right thing to say or do in that situation. It's like being in a movie. The actor has a script. The script tells the actor what to do and say. Now, you are the actor. Your life is the movie. You need a script for different scenes in your life. Culture gives us the script for a specific scene. But a different scene will require a different script.

Paul: For example, there are things that you would say at a funeral, that you would never say at a wedding. Things like, “I'm sorry for your loss.”

Allyn: (giggles) Or how about - “He was a good man.”

So, there you have it! Remember to explore culture in your samples. Record your observations on culture in your language Notebook. We created a page template for this as well. As you study culture, start writing down the phrases often used in the situation that you are preparing for. This is language that you can use to write your personal script.

Paul: Well, we've talked about a planning your exploration using the before/during/after approach. Then, we spent a lot of time describing how to explore 4 language features: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and culture. The learning activities that go along with this video will help you put some of these ideas into practice.

Allyn: You know, exploring language is only half the equation. It's not complete until you do something with it. So in the next phase in the iLEAP cycle – the A is for “Act” and it has you using what you learned. Is there something you want to ask me?

Paul: No...No, let's move on to the “A” – Act on what I've learned.