

Language Learning Tips for Students of Critical World Languages

Learn to be okay with mistakes

"One thing that really helped me learn Arabic was learning to be okay with mistakes. I used to be embarrassed when I mispronounced something or used the wrong verb tense, but began to see these mistakes as learning moments. So, don't be shy! Speak up and learn from mistakes". - Kirsten (Student of Arabic, French & Spanish)

"Remember that being good at something doesn't mean being perfect: you will make mistakes and people will laugh at you...but that just means you're doing it right because you took a risk and practiced using the language". - Sarah (Teacher and Student Arabic, Chinese Student)

Watch television

"What helped me reach a level of mastery in spoken Arabic was...watching lots of TV! I realized that when people talked directly to me as a non-native speaker, they were always simplifying their speech and making it easier for me to understand. Watching programs designed for native speakers helped me challenge myself to understand the way people actually talk to each other". - Sarah

"Find a good TV show, or musician in the language that you're learning and follow it/them regularly! You can pick practice picking out words that you already know and learn some new things along the way". - Alezk (Student of Arabic, Chinese & Spanish)

Speak-up

"When I was studying language really intentionally, I found myself learning new words, or how to conjugate, etc. etc. & challenging myself to just make up the most random sentences & speak them out loud. It used to make my native speaker friends laugh at the randomness of my sentences but in those moments of laughter they'd often teach me the more appropriate way to say things. It was fun". - Alekz

Make it a habit

"The most important thing is to make it part of your daily life. Find some time for it every day. Then focus on the vocabulary that matters to you, and slowly build on the words you know and connect them and recombine them in new ways with other words. The more you practice using vocabulary in context, the faster it will sink in and become second-nature". - Lokela (Student of Arabic, Chinese, German, French & Hawaiian)

"Find regular opportunities to practice what you know (even if it's responding to people who don't know the language and then telling them what you said)". - Alekz

Talk with kids

"When I was living in Japan, I volunteered at a camp for elementary school children. A lot of the announcements and instructions were about schedules and activities for kids, so it was appropriate for my level of Japanese. I had so much fun, and it boosted my confidence when I realized that I could understand most of what the camp staff was saying!" - Natasha (Student of Japanese & Hawaiian)

Follow the News

"Find a news/pop culture website that you can go to on a regular basis... you'll not only find opportunities to practice what you already know/pick up new vocabulary, but you are also likely to learn more about the culture/current issues happening in the region of the world your language is spoken". - Alekz

Listen to the Radio

"What helped me the most in learning English, and being able to speak it was listening to the Radio on the regular basis. Especially BBC news. In addition to that, I used to memorize songs and little poems that I liked". - Rachid (Arabic Teacher and Student of English, French and Chinese)

Immerse yourself

"Nothing beats living and immersing in the language directly. Stepping outside my comfort zone and trying to speak best I could was extremely important. So with confidence and immersion I think learning can really accelerate". - Jennifer (Student of Romanian and Hungarian)

Ultimately, language learning should be fun and students of foreign languages should take great pride in world language acquisition.