

**MISSION BASICS:
CULTURAL ASSIMILATION,
LANGUAGE LEARNING, DEALING
WITH CULTURE SHOCK**

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INTRODUCTION

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.” -Isaiah 61:1

“Mission Basics” is designed to help you explore concepts associated with learning a new language on the mission field, exploring a new culture, and dealing with the inevitable cultural stress that is part of the life of every missionary. People with powerful anointings from God can accomplish great things, but at the same time those who can speak the language and understand the culture they minister in will find a new level of effectiveness. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, grounded in the Word of God, and know how to acclimate to your environment, you are better able to enjoy the journey and be of benefit to others. God wants to partner with you, and He's excited that you want to partner with Him.

In the following pages we will attempt to share from our own personal experiences in the mission field and will also present concepts gleaned from Thomas and Elizabeth Sue Brewster's classes from the Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Missions, many of which can be found in two booklets by the Brewsters titled, Bonding and the Missionary Task and Language Acquisition Made Practical by Lingua House Publishers, 1976. I have not done the arduous work of citation, but instead am relying on memory and personal experience for the concepts presented herein.

We have had the privilege of training hundreds of missionary students. Typical questions from students are:

Do I have to be a great teacher?

What if I can't learn the language?”

I have never been a pastor or Christian leader. Can I still be a missionary?

Do I need a degree in missions?

I always answer these types of questions with two questions of my own. First, “Do you know the basics of the faith?” And second, “Can you share the Gospel with others?” It may be hard to imagine, but a huge percentage of Christians in the world today cannot do these two things. If you can do these two things, you are well on your way to being qualified as a missionary.

When I was pastoring in the States, my brother-in-law asked me, “Would you like to come and run one of our Bible schools in Africa?” He went on to say, “The church is a mile wide but only a quarter of an inch deep. The pastors don't even understand basic doctrine.” When he said this, I never thought that one of the basic doctrines he was describing was salvation!

For years as a missionary, I quizzed people, “How does someone go to heaven?” More times than not I got the wrong answer. “Be a good person.” “Go to church.” “Stop doing evil.” “Pray.” “Do good things for others.” I always listen for the key word, faith, and the most important name, “Jesus!” I have heard hundreds of people over the years explain how they think someone goes to heaven without even mentioning the name of Jesus. Now, this is understandable when talking to people apart from Christ who make no confession of being born again, but what about those within the Church?

This lack of understanding should not be surprising. Even in America four out of ten Protestants believe that salvation is earned by good deeds rather than a free gift through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.' If we in the West, with so many resources, are confused, imagine areas with extremely low literacy rates and almost no Christian resources!

Let me give an illustration. We held a pastoral training seminar for all our church leaders in the largest province of Mozambique. We invited all the district pastors from the province as well as their top leaders. These men are the leaders of the leaders. During the day we taught an inductive Bible study method to help them prepare biblical messages. At night we interviewed the district pastors. We asked them questions like, "How long have you been a pastor?" "What type of Bible training have you received?" "When did you become a Christian?" To this last question we seemed to get the same answer over and over. For example, one pastor answered, "I entered the Church in 1999." Others said similar things but of course used different dates. This led us to ask more questions, "How does someone go to heaven?" After interviewing eighteen district pastors, only two said, "Faith in Jesus." Many said, "Join the Church." One said, "Tithe and pray." Sixteen answers centered on doing good works and/or decreasing sin in one's life. After this experience, we changed the way we did ministry.

LOVE AND RESPECT THOSE YOU COME TO SERVE

Too much of what is done by foreigners in the name of missions is done from a position of superiority. "Let us show you how things should be done. We are the experts here to help the poor native." Missionaries come with translators or right out of language school as the scholars who are going to teach "the way of God more excellently." These attitudes and actions don't build bonding friendships where ministry happens naturally. Rather, they create a barrier that is hard to remove once in place. I have seen teams of well-meaning young people with very little construction experience ignore the local skilled labor to build a house or a church. With no sense of cooperation in working together with locals, the teams build their structure in record time. But have we shown love and respect for the people? It is essential to respect others for them to respect us. There is such a difference when we come with humility as visitors to another country and their culture. We have been on three mission fields for over fifteen years and I have probably said more than a thousand times to the people, "You are the experts. You know the language and the culture. I will never understand the language and culture as well as you. You not only know the national language, but you are experts in the heart language of your people. Help me learn! When I talk about preaching and teaching,

I always say, "God has already uniquely gifted you to communicate effectively to your people." Rather than being the expert, try being a humble learner.

It is better to say, "I need you," "We can't do it without you", than to come in as the authority. Even if you have a doctorate from a prestigious seminary in the US and lots of Bible knowledge, always come in as a learner, dependent upon those who know the culture and language. When you work, plan, and seek God together with the nationals, people respond to this kind of humility and respect. Everyone wants to feel valued.

RESPOND WITH ACTION

When David was sent by his father Jesse to visit his brothers on the battlefield, he had no idea he was going to fight a giant. When he arrived with the supplies for his brothers, he saw how fear of Goliath filled the camp. Trembling at his intimidating, taunting insults, the Israelites endured his threats day after day. Saul and his fellow Israelites had lost hope. Outraged at this sight, David must have said to himself, "Something must be done about this! This is not right!"

Now we know David had faith. God created this within him through the circumstances in his life. Previously, David had fought a lion and a bear successfully. God had allowed these two fierce enemies of the sheep to attack David's flock. Both times the Lord was with David, giving him victory over an enemy that normally would have ripped a young boy apart. David's faith and relationship with God grew through these trials, step by step. He knew his Lord personally, worshiping Him countless days on the hillsides as he tended the sheep. With this intimacy, calling and depending on God in the face of fierce opponents came naturally. He learned and saw firsthand how all things were possible with his God. If we want to have an effective ministry, we too need to have faith like David, continuing to trust in God's mighty power no matter what the obstacle.

What happened to King Saul? Why didn't he take out Goliath? King Saul was the tallest man (besides Goliath) and the leader of Israel's army. In fact, he was a head taller than all the other men. He should have been used by God to defeat this giant. But Saul trembled along with everyone else. He had started out well, in the beginning but did not continue in a loving relationship of faith and obedience with God. Because of his disobedience, God rejected him as Israel's leader. Instead, He chose David who was a "man after God's own heart."

Faith is important. Obedience is important. Of course, these two work together. However, I would like you to see an important part of this story. This part is the missing part in the lives of so many Christians. David looked, reacted in shock, and responded with action. I have found that most of those with effective ministries have this perspective. For example, let's say a young couple visits Thailand for a short-term ministry trip. They see the way young girls are bought and sold in human trafficking and say to themselves, "Something has to be done about this," and they start a ministry.

When my brother-in-law told me, "We have thousands of churches, yet the pastors do not understand basic doctrine," I said to myself, "That is horrible. I need to do something about this," and I did. I looked, I was shocked by what I saw, and I responded with action. If there is something within you that cries out when you hear about missions and the needs in the world, then ask God, "What can I do about this?" Short-term mission trips are an excellent way to get out there and see what God sees, what's breaking His heart. So often, it is in the process of "going" that God shows you what to do. Important note - it is also in the process of doing that God often shows you what you are not cut out to do as well. If you have a calling to missions, then go. Don't let anything stop you. If you are mentally and physically healthy and love Jesus, then go! But before you go to some expensive Bible school or missions training school, get out there on a short-term trip to see if this is your calling.

One of the best interns we've ever had was a young man named Ben. Not only was he the best chef we had ever met, but he was also willing to cook for us too. But cooking wasn't the only thing Ben was good at. Having a "just put me to work" attitude, Ben sought out opportunities to minister. Invited by our many churches hungry for the Word of God, Ben began teaching throughout the

district. He didn't know how to use a manual transmission, but that didn't stop Ben. I showed him, he practiced in our mango grove and then took our truck everywhere. One day he noticed a group of foreigners looking a bit lost and tired. Stopping to hear their story, he discovered this short-term missions group needed better lodging and more opportunities for ministry. They were living on dirt floors and some had fallen ill. Ben, with permission, invited them to our center where we had vacant dormitories. Half the team recuperated from malaria while the other half worked with Ben on constructing a house for a poor elderly widow. Other times Ben would visit the hospital with us, hanging mosquito nets and praying for the sick. Ben saw the needs and met them. The vast majority of long-term missionaries begin with serving on short-term missions trips. Be encouraged. Get out there. Thousands of opportunities exist. Start the car and let God drive. He will guide you!

Enjoy the journey. Continue to trust and obey as Jesus leads you into all the good works He has prepared ahead of time for you to do. His grace is sufficient and His abiding love endures forever. Remain intimately connected in Him and let His joy be your strength. Stay grounded in the Word every day. Consider ministry opportunities as a privilege-we get to partner with the Most High God in releasing life into the dying world! Hallelujah!

NOTE

1. Quote from the Barna Group: "Protection from eternal condemnation for one's sins is widely considered to be earned rather than received as a free gift from God. Half of all adults (50%) argue that anyone who 'is generally good or does enough good things for others during their life will earn a place in Heaven.'...four out of ten Protestants accept this view of salvation ensured by good deeds. Almost half of the non-evangelical born-again Christians also adopt this view, although they have prayed for the forgiveness of their sins and asked Jesus Christ to be their savior-actions which they believe were the basis of their assurance of salvation. Apparently, large numbers of the non-evangelical born-again adults believe that people have a choice of means to salvation, either the grace-alone or the salvation-through-works approaches."

<https://www.barna.org/component/content/article/5-barna-update/45-barna-update-sp-657/82-americans-draw-theological-beliefs-from-diverse-points-of-view#.V2mYnl-cHIU>.

FIVE IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES FOR NEW MISSIONARIES

Principle #1: When arriving on a new mission field, spend the first few months socializing only with locals-not fellow ex-patriots.

Driving from the airport into Naga City, Philippines, with all our suitcases piled up and our two little girls-Marissa was three years old and her sister Danielle had just turned two-on our way through Hong Kong, we hailed a jeepney and headed to the city. No one had come to the airport to meet us and no one was waiting for us in the city. In fact, we didn't know a single person in the whole region. We had never been here before and had no clue where we were going to stay. Our plan was to stay in a hotel until we could find a small house to rent. We decided not to meet with any foreigners, determined to spend the first few months socializing only with locals.

This was not our first time on the mission field. We had done the same things on our first missionary journey to Indonesia. Again, determined not to meet with any expatriates (expats-a person temporarily or permanently living outside their own country of origin), we traveled by train from Jakarta to Bandung. Speaking to people on the train, we learned and practiced our first few sentences in Indonesian: "How are you?" "My name is Brian." "I am from the United States." "We are here to learn your language and make friends." "Can you recommend a simple hotel in Bandung for us?" "This is all I can say."

By the time we arrived, we were able to communicate our need and find a nice but inexpensive hotel. Finding people willing to talk and help us turned out to be quite easy. Being a college town, we soon noticed a small parade of college students leading us around. All of them wanted to learn English and spend time with the Americans who needed help. People love to help people in need.

Principle #2: People help people in need.

Bandung, Indonesia was our first long-term mission field. We had no living quarters arranged and no other missionaries there to meet us. This is normal in our situation, as we wanted to do church planting among an unreached people group in a country that didn't grant missionary visas. So basically this made us pioneers. The first day at the hotel we began learning and practicing how to say, "We would like to rent a room for a month. Do you know of a family we could rent a room from?" Then we went outside and began talking with everyone we could. Within a few days, we found ourselves in a wonderful home. The parents asked us to call them "Mom" and "Dad"-we were quickly "family." Sometimes "Dad" would invite us to his workplace so we could practice language learning with all his co-workers. While living there, we also picked up on many aspects of their culture, family life, and local religious practices.

Before long, it was time for us to find our own place to live. Two young men from the university came to us with a list of places to rent, ranging from \$45.00 to \$110.00 per month. They had already gone to the homes and arranged the prices, fearing they would go up if they talked to a foreigner. Not having a vehicle, prices were much cheaper for us. We determined to only use public transportation and therefore didn't need a place for a car or a road to get to our new house. Most of the inexpensive homes just had footpaths between crowded residences. The house we found was perfect surrounded by the people group we wanted to minister to and at a very affordable price.

This gave us another natural way to bond with our new friends. Bottom line-the locals helped us when we were in need.

Principle #3: Live as close as psychologically possible to the same standard of living as the people you want to minister to.

If you are ministering to the extreme poor, living as they do can be difficult. If your desire is to stay in your host country long term, think about what kind of house you can handle long term. You may try a very simple home to begin with and see if you can psychologically manage it before giving a long-term commitment. Safety is usually a concern and may vary depending on whether you are single or married. We chose a very simple house in Indonesia and just cleaned it up with lots of cement patching and paint. It turned out so much better for language and culture learning being in that community. Neighbors came over all day long, every day. Brian was invited to play in the local soccer team and I was invited to play with the local women's badminton team. We were both terrible at these sports, but no one cared. They loved having us in their neighborhood. Nicer neighborhoods existed in this city, but the houses were large with wide streets and walled-in yards. Neighbors didn't visit each other and no one walked the streets. They all had cars. So though we only had 500 watts in this house, no running water, and rarely any privacy, we flourished in making friends and language learning and were able to communicate freely in eight months.

Principle #4: Take only public transportation for the first year, if possible.

Cars are "isolation chambers" locking out the rest of the world, and your goal is to learn the culture and language by speaking and making friends with as many locals as possible. Public transportation is a place to practice all that you have learned, a place to interact with locals, and a way to fit in with the community. For the first eight months in Indonesia, we used only local transportation. As missionaries in the Philippines, we used only local transportation for the first fourteen months. Early on we learned all the questions and responses for using public transport. We learned how to ask for and receive directions, types of transport, correct prices, time schedules, and trip durations. Countless times we rode along with friends and neighbors to local events or shopping trips. Our goal was to learn the local language and culture and build relationships within the local community.

Principle #5: Take only what you can carry with you.

Don't ship over all your furniture and comforts from your home country. Because we had arrived with only our suitcases, we spent the first couple of weeks learning how to buy furniture with the help of our new friends. This was a bonding experience. Buying the things your host country uses for cooking, sleeping, decorating, dressing, etc., helps you begin living and looking the way they do. The sooner you can learn to appreciate and enjoy your new culture, the sooner you will feel comfortable and less homesick.

Fitting into your community will also help you with friendships. Too often missionaries create a little foreign refuge to escape back to after making quick forays into the community. While this is understandable, we need to be careful. There is a danger when we isolate ourselves in our homes. Fill your house with items that can be bought locally. As you visit homes, see what people use to decorate their homes and copy the things you like. In this way your home becomes a comfortable and familiar environment for locals to come visit.

LEARNING THE LANGUAGE, THE FUN AND FAST WAY

Are you apprehensive about learning a new language? Do you want to learn a language but have discovered that it's not taught in any language school? Do long lists of grammar rules confuse you? Do you wonder if you will ever pronounce the new language correctly or remember all the new words? Do you want to be a missionary but question if you are smart enough to learn a new language? Fear not. It's not that hard to learn a new language. In fact, it can be fun. You don't have to be a linguist or a genius. You just need to learn the language well enough to be effective missionaries who can communicate to the people you want to minister to.

The following are some key principles that work for learning any language. We've used this method to learn three languages on three different mission fields and it works! If you are motivated and like talking to people, you can learn a new language. Language learning is not an academic process but a social one. The more you use words and sentences in conversations, the faster you learn them. We have found that if you use a word or sentence thirty or more times, it sticks in your brain. During our first few days we learned transportation and shopping texts. For example, "Where is the bus to Central Bandung? "How much is the fare?" "How much does this cost?" "Could you write down the price?"(This was helpful because we hadn't learned the numbers well yet.) Though he offered, we did not take our language helper with us. We purposely didn't want to be foreigners with a guide in tow. We wanted to be people in need, humbly asking questions.

Language learning is ministry when it is done in the community. For the first couple of months, we hung out with only nationals. Later we met with a few missionaries, but not extensively. We wanted to bond with our new host culture. As mentioned earlier, I started playing soccer in Indonesia and joined the local team. They made me the goalie. Again, I wasn't very good, but the practice and camaraderie with the teammates was priceless. I took on a local name. I was Pak Subandi. Soon everyone in our area of town knew my name. Everywhere we went on public transportation, locals would shout out from the roadside when we passed by, "Pak Subandi! Pak Subandi!" At the first official soccer game where we played against another neighborhood, I was told that an extra 1,000 people came. Everyone wanted to see the American who now lived in their "barrio" play soccer! They had never had a foreigner live in their community. Many lived on the wealthier north side of Bandung with big, gated houses, but very few lived in their crowded simpler side of town.

Every day we went out into the community and practiced what we had learned that morning. The people were so gracious and friendly. Our first sentences included, "Could you help us learn your language?"

"Could we practice talking to you for a bit?" We humbly practiced and stumbled through each day. People respond to humility. They also love to feel important. Some people think language learning is something they must get through so they can "minister." It is important to understand that when believers inter-act with others in the power of the Holy Spirit, they are ministering! Often the Church does not grow or participate in evangelism because Christians spend so little time with those outside the church. It is hard to love people when you don't spend time with them. It is hard to evangelize people you don't know. Jesus told us that, "No one covers up their lamp." That would be foolish. Rather, we put the lamp out in the middle of the room. I have so enjoyed spending time with people of different cultures. I like making friends. When they have needs, I like praying for

them. When they are sick or their friends or family are sick, it is wonderful to be able to pray for them. It is in these encounters that God ministers to people. Locals get so excited when you speak their heart language rather than the national language. They smile and laugh; some even jump up and down with excitement! It is in those times that we find out that we are more alike than different.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

1. Be Willing to Look Foolish

To be a successful language learner, you must be willing to look foolish and be okay with being laughed at. You will not pronounce everything right and you'll sound like a two-year-old just learning to talk. People will think this is funny, but just join in the fun and make friends with them. They will appreciate your effort, especially if you are trying to learn their heart language.

Of course, we couldn't understand most of the answers to our questions, but people were happy to point, accompany us personally, or write down numbers when trying to get directions or shop. Generally, everywhere, people love to give directions and use their knowledge to help others.

2. Learn a Little, Use It a Lot

Aim to learn four sentences every day. Though four sentences don't sound like much, they multiply fast. It's important to learn these sentences perfectly, being careful to keep them at normal speed with the right pronunciation, rhythm, and melody. If a word or sentence is learned incorrectly at the beginning and you use it a lot like you're supposed to, it's very hard to correct the mistake later. When you use a word or sentence thirty times or more, it usually cements in your brain. Humbly ask your listeners to please correct you if you say it wrong. Most people are embarrassed to do this, so you really must encourage them that this is okay and very much wanted. Two important sentences to learn right away are:

- a. Did I say that correctly?
- b. Please correct me if I say something wrong.

3. Find a Good Language Helper

Find someone in the community who speaks your language and the language you want to learn and "hire" them as your language helper. We find it best to never use a teacher because we don't want to be "taught" in the traditional sense. Instead, we hope to prepare ideas that can be communicated effectively in the community. Find out how much a local should be paid for helping for two hours and then make sure. Pay a fair amount, but not too much above the local economy. You will be spending a lot of time with your helper, so make sure you are compatible and enjoy each other's company. Hire a language helper for a week before making a long-term commitment to see if you are a good match.

4. What Do You Do with Your Language Helper?

a. Set a regular time for your helper to come-preferably five days a week for two hours each day. You will soon discover that you'll think you don't "need" your language helper every day because you didn't yet master everything you've already learned. But keep him/her coming, even if you just

practice together past sentences and do some drills. Staying to a regular appointed time with your language helper each day keeps you disciplined and progressing. Eventually, you'll get it! I promise. It's also not fair to your language helper to keep cancelling. You have hired that person for a job and most likely they need the money. If you must cancel, pay the person anyway.

b. Prepare what you want to learn.

Before your language helper shows up, prepare ahead of time four sentences or ideas that you want to explore and learn together. The LAMP book' can guide you, starting with essential basics for survival and progressing to hundreds of fascinating cultural themes. In the beginning you will just focus on what you need. As you talk to people, you will discover many things you wish you could say or come home with questions you need your language helper to answer the following day. Always have a small notebook handy to write these thoughts down as you walk around talking to people.

c. Get a proper translation.

Never ask for a word-for-word literal translation. For example, we would not ask Jonny, "How do you say, 'Where is the bus to Central Bandung?'" Rather, we ask him, "If I walk up to a stranger and ask him to help me find the location of the bus to Central Bandung, what would I say?" If instead you give circumstances and situations, asking for appropriate ways of making requests or responses, you will speak like a local. The better question for our language helper would therefore be, "How would you address a storekeeper? "What is the normal way to greet a stranger?"

d. Listen and mimic your helper.

The LAMP book provides several simple drills that will help you mimic pronunciation successfully. Our favorite is the "build up" drill-refer to the book for instructions on how to do this. It's quick, easy, and amazingly successful. Mimic your language helper until he/she says you are saying it right. Encourage him/her to be honest. You want to get it perfect, if possible.

e. Record your language helper saying these sentences.

At the beginning especially, you will want your helper to record the build-up drills as well as the complete sentences. If your digital recorder doesn't have a speed option, make sure your helper records both at a slower speed and normal speed. Your goal is to speak your four sentences perfectly and at normal speed. After recording, let your helper go home.

5. Memorize Your Four Sentences

With the help of your recorded sentences and build-up drills, try to memorize your four sentences. Repetition is the key to memorizing. Listen to a difficult word or sentence fifty times if necessary. If you have a friend or spouse learning with you, practice talking to each other. Use as many senses as possible-write it down, look at the written words, listen to the recording, and even act out what you are saying while speaking if possible. Make flash cards, tape words and sentences up around the house, create your own form of Rosetta Stone on your computer with pictures and recordings if possible.

6. Get Out and Talk to Thirty People Each Day

After memorizing your sentences to the best of your ability within a reasonable amount of time, get out and use these sentences with as many people as possible. You'll probably need to take along a "cheat sheet" to refer to, with your sentences written down. That's okay. Remember, you must be okay with looking a little silly. Just try to have fun making mistakes, laughing at yourself, and making lots of new friends!

You'll get responses to your sentences that you won't understand. That's normal-don't be surprised or get too frustrated. Write these down and ask your language helper what these mean the next day. That can turn into your next language text if you desire. A good sentence to learn right away is, "That's all I can say!" after you've said your four sentences. Then say "good-bye" in the appropriate way and walk away. Obviously, you won't be carrying on long conversations with people for quite a while. One of the first language learning texts outlined in the LAMP book is to get a route of listeners (preferably around thirty people) whom you can talk to each day. Going to a local market is a good place for this but be sensitive if your listener is busy with customers. Your text at the beginning would say something like the following: "I am learning the language. I will be learning a few sentences every day. Can I come by each day and practice saying these sentences to you?"

7. Learning the Culture Happens Automatically When You Learn the Language

You'll learn much about the culture as you learn the language. For instance, if the language has different ways of addressing an adult versus a younger person, it's obvious they give notable respect to their elders. Addressing men versus women may also be different. Think and ask questions about the cultural significance to the language variations. A culture gives words to what they value. If a certain topic has lots of words to describe it, you can be sure this is a high value in their culture. Contrarily, if you can't seem to find many descriptive words for a certain topic, emotion, etc., that culture most likely doesn't value it. As you learn the language with many varying topics of interest, you will be fascinated as you simultaneously learn the culture.

8. Power Sentences

Sentences that empower you to learn even more sentences are called "power sentences. "These are extremely important to learn right away. Make sure you carry a small notebook with you at all times, so you don't miss out on any opportunities throughout the day to keep on learning. Examples of power sentences:

"What is this?" "What is that?"

"How do you say ___ in ___ language?"

"What is the opposite of ___?"

"What am I doing?"

"What is he/she/they doing?"

9. Don't Pick Up a Grammar Book for Six Months

As tempting as it might be to go out and buy a grammar book (if they exist for the language you are learning), don't do it! Just wait. The time will come when a grammar book will be helpful, but not in the beginning. I know this is difficult, especially because this is how languages have been taught for centuries. I remember memorizing endless lists of declensions, conjugations, and grammatical rules in high school Spanish class, yet on a shopping excursion to Tijuana, Mexico, after two years of high school Spanish, I was unable to talk to anyone. Remember, children learn to speak long before they pick up a grammar book. It is also important to note that you will probably never sound as fluent as a seven-year-old native speaker. Odds are very good that you will most likely make more grammatical errors than a seven-year-old native speaker who has never even glanced at a grammar book.

Lists of grammar rules and complicated conjugations are a surefire way to become totally discouraged. Instead, learn complete sentences. Have fun talking to people and making friends.

Believe it or not, after about six months of full-time language learning, your brain will start noticing when something sounds right or wrong. When this natural process begins, then you can pick up a grammar book to understand the whys. If you try to learn with a grammar book first, however, you'll be too scared to just start talking; you'll be overwhelmed with too many rules.

10. How to Speed Up Comprehension

Your comprehension will increase more rapidly when you focus on active listening. It is amazing that people actually buy products that claim you can learn a language while you sleep, cook breakfast, or work claiming that you don't even have to pay attention, claiming that through some kind of miraculous osmo-sis the new language is going to enter your brain. Passively listening to audio recordings of a language you don't understand is not going to help you reach your fluency goals. What will work is actively listening to sentences you can understand.

The goal is to learn how to speak and comprehend what we read and hear. If you learn a little every day and use it a lot, you will learn how to speak in your new language. If you want to improve comprehension, then active listening can speed this up. Listening to hours of another language will not help you learn that language; however, listening to hours of a language that you can understand will help you immensely. Here is an illustration. Bob makes an audio recording of one sentence—first in his language, followed by the same sentence in the language he is learning. The sentence in English: “Birds fly high in the trees while singing a beautiful song. In Portuguese: “Os pássaros voam alto nas árvores enquanto canta uma canção bonita.” If Bob knows some Portuguese and continues to listen carefully, he can comprehend the words for birds, fly, trees, singing, and beautiful songs. As he listens to these enough times, his comprehension of the language improves. I call this “active listening to what you can understand.” There is no end to what you can listen to. It is important to note you are not learning how to speak through this process. You are just learning to comprehend what you hear.

Making these types of recordings can be very time consuming, but there are other options. If a visiting pastor speaks in your language and it is translated into the language you are learning, you can record this. Now you have sentences in your language and sentences in your new language. You can actively listen and understand but be aware that the translation may not be perfect; however, for the purposes of learning, it still can be very helpful.

11. Three Factors to Successful Language Learning

a. Accountability

First and foremost, your chance of learning a language will increase if the organization you are a part of requires you to learn the language.

Organizations that require you to be at a certain point within a specific amount of time (or you will be sent home) have the highest rate of success in in the mission field and elsewhere. For example, within one year if you cannot tell people about yourself, share the Gospel, and carry-on basic conversations in your new language, you will be sent home. These types of requirements may seem tough, but they work. However, like many things, these instructions are guidelines that can be adjusted.

If there is no formal accountability structure in place for an organization you are working for, you can create your own. Find missionaries on the field, instruct your mission board, or just choose certain friends or family from home to hold you accountable if your organization doesn't. The LAMP book gives guidelines for this if needed. Years ago, I had an amazing professor who taught language learning. His name was Thomas Brewster. Something he said has been proven true repeatedly, especially in the area of language learning. He said, "People do what you inspect, not what you expect. "If you have a person or group to be accountable to, the more details you share with them the better. Have a regular time to meet, whether in person or on Skype, perhaps every two weeks. Set some goals ahead of time. If possible, pick people who have been successful at language learning. Many people quite due to lack of motivation and discipline, but if you just keep learning something new each day and never stop, you will speak the language someday. If you are struggling to meet your goals, make it more fun by setting some rewards in place. Where there's a will, there's a way.

b. Sufficient Time

The second factor really goes along with the first-the amount of time the mission organization gives you to learn the language.

If you join a group that puts you to work upon arrival or if shortly after arrival, they expect you to "fit in" language learning, your chances of success go way down. It may seem obvious, but language learning takes time. When we went to Indonesia and then to the Philippines, we were able to learn the languages because we had no other commitments in the beginning. Learning the language and culture and spending time with the people was our only responsibility. In the Philippines, we did not start formal evangelism and church planting for fourteen months.

Whether or not an organization has an accountability structure in place and allows sufficient time to learn indicates the value an organization places on language learning. If they say, "We want you to learn the language" but then do not give you the time or hold you accountable, it probably is not a high value or priority for that organization. If you want to learn a new language, find out how successful other.

amazed how fast single people who live with a local family learn a language. The dynamics that cause this rapid learning process are obvious. Time, interaction, and need are the key factors in facilitating rapid language learning.

Important questions to ask yourself: How can I immerse myself? If I have a family, how can I set my life so I can learn somewhat like a single person who lives with a local family? While I am learning the local language and getting to know my new hosts, do I need a car? Can I do without one, at least for a while?

13. Don't Go to Language School

Like learning how to swim without a pool, learning a language outside of the community can be a frustrating process. From our observations this is especially true for families. It is difficult to get away from the kids to attend three or four hours of language school classes. When school is over, parents need to get back to their kids, back to homeschooling, back to prepare meals, etc. Without time for interaction with the locals and using what you just learned in class, most of that information

will be lost. It is only when you talk to people that a new language stick! Remember, language learning is a social process, not an intellectual activity.

On the other hand, we have seen single people excel in language school. These are the ones who lived with a local family. They did not hang out with their expat friends and coworkers. Rather, they were immersed in the community. The things they had learned in class, they used. Putting into practice what you have learned is the key to being an effective language learner. It was not that the language school helped these individuals learn so fast. It was the amount of social interaction they had with the people. We have found that a better approach than language school is to learn a three to four complete sentences each day, learn them exceptionally well, and then go out and use it. This is the opposite of most language schools where you are taught a ton of word lists, sentences, and grammar rules, but use them very little. The key motto to remember is, "Learn a little; use it a lot." Don't worry if you think this is too little. The sentences quickly multiply, and you will be conversing in no time-if you use them!

14. Learn the Heart Language

You will have a much better connection with your people if you learn their heart language. The national language in many countries is a colonial language and is only learned in school. If one doesn't go to school, he or she most likely won't speak, read, or write the national language well, and sometimes not at all. Many don't go to school for various reasons. They usually just speak their heart language to each other, at home, and among friends. Unfortunately, language schools usually don't teach heart languages. You must get out among the people to learn what is in their heart and how their language speaks their heart.

NOTE

1. Resources for Language Learning: LAMP, by Tom and Betty Sue Brewster. This stands for Language Acquisition Made Practical. It will walk you through lessons for one year of full-time language learning. LEARN, by Tom and Betty Sue Brewster. This sequel is a smaller booklet that can keep you going for another six months or so after you complete the LAMP book. We used these two books for all three languages we learned.

CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock happens on the mission field. It comes with the territory. It is normal to feel tired and frustrated when visiting or living in a foreign country. Moving in general is stressful, and it is more stressful moving to a new culture. Everything you've always known is gone and replaced with something new, which you now need to learn and adapt to. Something previously simple, like getting ready for your evening meal, can become extremely stressful because of all the unknowns. Where is the market? How do I get there on public transportation? Why is the jeepney taking so long to come? How can we possibly all fit on that jeepney? (Hanging on the sides, some on top....) What is this strange-looking food in the market? What is that smell? What are these piles of colorful spices with no names? Should I pay the amount they are asking for or should I bargain? What is a fair price? What is this money worth, anyway? How long do I have to wait till this jeepney fills up so I can go home? I've already waited an hour and it's so hot! Finally, home. Now, how do I cook this food anyway? Kids running in, "Mommy! What's for dinner?" "The power goes out; you haven't unpacked your flashlights yet. The fans stop. Darkness. Mosquitos biting. Oops-forgot to buy mosquito nets and repellent. Intense heat. Squealing kids. Exhaustion. Everyone's hungry. You feel like screaming and wonder if you've just made the biggest mistake in your life coming to this foreign land.

I've just described a typical day for a new arriving missionary family. In fact, this was one of our first days in the Philippines! Culture stress is inevitable and normal on the mission field, and it's helpful to know that up front. Even the most amazing Christians on this planet (like you) will be affected. But be encouraged. Life gets easier and better as you get "enculturated." Be patient with yourself and others, as this naturally takes time.

IMPORTANT FACTS TO REMEMBER

It is normal to experience culture shock. Remember that the shock or stress of being in another country will impact everyone differently. If culture shock affects you more than others, do not think you are weaker or less spiritual. Some jump into a new culture and experience very little stress while others can feel completely overwhelmed.

Culture shock has various symptoms. These symptoms include tiredness, anxiety, disorientation, feeling inadequate, feeling like you want to go home, unhealthy fear of touch, unhealthy fear of food, unhealthy fear of being taken advantage of, weight gain, weight loss, and desire for isolation. Note: culture shock is compounded when you feel guilty about any of the above. Do not allow guilt to compound the problem.

HOW TO COMPOUND CULTURE SHOCK FOR YEARS TO COME

Without realizing it, many on the mission field compound culture shock the entire time they are in a foreign country. They remain in isolation, going outside as little as possible. They hang out with like-minded people only, usually from their own country. They don't learn the language and they stay away from local food and customs. Rather than learning new things about the culture around them, they spend hours thinking about returning home, hanging on to utopian ideas concerning their previous culture. Some even fall into the practice of unwarranted and/or exaggerated criticisms of

the culture and people they have come to serve. Without a heart for the people and their country little can be accomplished.

WHAT IS THE CURE FOR CULTURE SHOCK?

There is no “cure” for culture shock or culture stress-but there are things that help. If you are tired - rest. If you are sleepy - sleep. Find ways to “escape.” Get alone and talk to God. Think about how good Jesus is. Walk on the beach. Exercise. Do whatever you enjoy doing that is fun for you. Say “no” to extra obligations. Say, “no” to anything extra unless it would be fun or relaxing. Politely and lovingly avoid people who drain your energy. Think of doing one thing at a time-don't worry about tomorrow. Be early-do not wait until the last minute to do things. Never allow others' lack of planning to become your emergency. Do not try to do too many tasks at once in a foreign country. You are just asking for culture stress. Remember to take it slow. Very importantly, maintain a sense of humor. Do not be too hard on yourself. Extend great grace to those around you. Even if you are fine, others may be experiencing a lot of culture stress and need your understanding and love. When people are stressed, they might get irritable and a little difficult. Bear with them in love.

LONG-TERM METHODS FOR OVERCOMING CULTURE SHOCK

Learn the language. Learn the culture and begin to understand why people do what they do. Throw away judgment and cultural comparisons-especially the idea that your culture is superior. Learn, learn, learn while trying to understand as much as possible.

Note especially how the particular culture you are in values time. Is your new culture time-oriented or event-oriented? Knowing how your new culture values time will greatly help your stress level and keep you from offending the nationals. If you're in a rural setting with the majority existing as subsistent farmers or fishermen, most likely time is not as important as events. Learn to relax when people show up “late.” In their eyes, they aren't late at all. Though frustrating for the new missionary coming from a fast-paced, time-efficient country, relax and take the process in stride when it takes days of waiting in line to register your vehicle, or the checkout lady at the grocery store wraps every item like a present, with tape and all. Take a breath when you are getting ready to go home after visiting a far-away church and ministering for hours. When they ask you to please stay for lunch and you notice a live chicken in their hands, realize this is a huge sacrifice for them. Understand that it will take two hours to prepare the meal even though you are exhausted and thinking about your three-hour journey home on the dusty, pot-holed dirt road. Smile pleasantly and reply, “Sure, I'd love to,” and then sit back and find ways to enjoy the process. The event of spending time together over a special chicken meal is much more valuable than getting home in a timely manner-no matter what reasons you have.

CONCLUSION, FINAL ENCOURAGEMENTS

The need is great for missionaries, and there are not enough missionaries! Those who love God and have a firm understanding of the Gospel can be an amazing blessing as a missionary on a foreign field. Paul was a Hebrew scholar but kept his message simple and focused on Jesus.

I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified....My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power (1 Corinthians 2:1-2;4-5).

You may not be the greatest preacher in the world. You may not be a dynamic leader, but you can be effective.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness....For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive (2 Peter 1:3,8).

Take a look and meditate on these Scriptures. Don't listen to Satan's lies-he tells everyone they are unqualified to do ministry!

Walk in the Spirit, not the flesh. Recognize your weaknesses, but don't let them stop you. Let your weaknesses lead you to a place of seeking more of God. Get into a place of desperately desiring the infill-ing of the Holy Spirit daily. The more you seek Him, the more God will respond. "Ask, and you shall receive." Jesus wants to fill you with His glory and power. God chooses the foolish to shame the wise and the weak to shame the strong, so that no one will boast before Him. He's just waiting for humble vessels who want to be filled and used!

Hold fast to the Word of God: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation-if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel (Colossians 1:22-23, emphasis added).

If you have a burning desire to minister, love Jesus, and know the fundamentals of the faith, there is a place for you on the mission field. You can make things happen. Find a need and figure out how to meet it. Start ministering and God will lead you. Hold fast to Him and enjoy the journey!