

Appendix 9 – Lost in Translation

Introduction:

One of the most valuable things you can do to boost your language learning potential while abroad is to keep a record of your progress. This assignment gives you a way to keep track of what you do every day as you use the language in both structured and unstructured settings. It will also serve as a record of your first impressions of using the language in context. It should be both interesting and valuable to record your learning as you become acquainted with the language and culture.

Assignment:

1. *Language Learning Journal*. During your time abroad, keep a journal in which you record daily entries of your progress toward learning the language. A hardcover book is the best. A loose-leaf binder would work but it's not as sturdy and may not survive your travels. See below for a recommended journal structure. The final journal will be due within two weeks of returning from abroad.
2. *Tips for Language Learning*. Reflect on the many ways you went about learning the language during your time abroad. Narrow this down to 3-5 tips for learning the language. Be succinct, creative and realistic. Your tips will be merged with those from other students to create a *Top Ten Tips* for language learning in short-term, education abroad experiences.

Journal Structure:

While there is no prescribed structure for your journal, it is important that you make daily entries. Put in as much detail as you can. Here are some highly recommended sections for how you might structure your journal.

1. *It's up to me!*

In traditional language learning situations students usually let their instructors set goals, plan and evaluate learning. If you really want to improve your language proficiency through your time abroad, it will be up to you to take charge and set your own learning goals. Doing so will help increase your motivation and the likelihood of continuing your learning upon return. So, what will you do to truly maximize your brief time abroad? Use this section of your journal to lay out your learning goals.

2. *Pardon my French!*

You'll quickly see that native speakers use slang, idioms, proverbs and a host of other expressions that are not found in a typical language textbook. As well, a regional dialect or particular speech patterns may be used in the area where you will be traveling. In this section of your journal, note these usages and have fun with it. You'll be speaking like a native in no time at all!

3. *Oops, I put my foot in it!*

Mistakes are an inseparable part of the language learning process. The only way to avoid language mistakes would be to avoid speaking and writing in the new language, and that wouldn't be so good. So, why not have fun with it! Use this section of your journal to write about your language mistakes and what reactions they created. What would have been the correct usage? Be sure to laugh at yourself along the way.

4. *Yep, that about says it all!*

Learning long lists of unrelated words can be boring and difficult. If you focus on learning words in context you're most likely to recall them when you need to use them again. Use this section of your journal to note the many new words you learn while abroad. Then try constructing sentences using these words. And remember, you're not alone. Be sure to use these new words and sentences in conversation with other students and native speakers.

5. *How are you? I'm fine, thank you, and you?*

Familiarity with the grammar of a language enables you to understand it, and also to construct your own phrases and sentences. So, how about selecting one sentence structure to practice each day while you're abroad? Use this section of your journal to note a sentence structure for each day and all the various ways you were able to use it. Write down the specific phrases you created throughout each day.

6. *Ok, let's see it!*

While abroad, you'll not just hear the language but you're going to see it all around you. Whether on advertisements in a local train, on billboards along the roadside or on packaging in the supermarket, you'll soon get familiar to seeing the language. Use this section of your journal to illustrate what you see along the way. Use photos you've taken, clippings from magazines or even add your own drawings. Note what stands out as funny, odd, strange or confusing to you and be sure to add a brief caption explaining what each entry means.

7. *Odds & Ends.*

Here's the place to note just about anything else you want regarding the language and your learning. How about recording your initial impressions of using the language in context? Maybe use this space to list the specific materials and tools you used to help you with the language, including dictionaries, textbooks, phrasebooks, online lessons, electronic translators. Maybe also write the names and contact information of those who helped you with the language while you were abroad.

Evaluation:

This two-part assignment is worth 30% of your overall grade: 25% for the *Language Learning Journal* and 5% for your *Tips for Language Learning*. The journal will be assessed on your demonstrated effort toward learning the language and the depth and breadth of your daily entries. Your tips for language learning will be assessed on their originality and realistic application to short-term, education abroad experiences.

Source:

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