



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA
CRITICAL LANGUAGES PROGRAM

Guidelines for Self-Instructional Language Courses

based upon information from the National Association of Self-Instructional Language Programs

The Critical Languages Program (CLP) courses are largely self-instructional. Therefore they employ different methods of instruction than traditional classes and are based on the guidelines of the National Association of Self-Instructional Language Programs. Understanding these guidelines, which are listed below, will help you succeed in CLP courses. These guidelines also provide a general idea of how the class meetings are conducted.

1. Students are their own teachers. Native-speaking language partners are providers of sequentially ordered dialogues and conversation.
2. Students should stay at least one lesson ahead of the language partner; a classroom session is a venue for students to drill and to practice the most recent lesson they taught themselves outside of class.
3. The most basic precept for learning/teaching another language is **Fluency Before Accuracy**. Students should learn to reproduce the new language fluently (i.e., as a flow of speech, without analysis or inordinate attention to correctness) through a series of graduated dialogues and enhanced conversations.
4. The language partner's primary task is first to drill and to practice for fluency, not accurate, native-like pronunciation. The language partner's secondary task is to drill and to practice for accuracy, but only after fluency has set in.
5. Only after a student demonstrates fluency should the language partner adjust the student's speech for correctness and accuracy. Fluency and accuracy can be accomplished in the same setting.
6. The language partner may offer occasional, minimal translation to beginning students when a student seems unduly stuck, or when the language partner has no pictures or props to which to turn. However, no translation should be provided to intermediate and advanced students.
7. Students should study the next lesson's grammatical explanations before coming to class. A conversational class should not be interrupted by grammar discussions.
8. Because students achieve grammatical insight in different ways, such insight is often a private and personal piece of reasoning. Hence, neither students nor language partners are there "to teach" one another in any traditional, discursive sense.

9. While practicing the language with the class, a language partner should randomly drill individual students so that predictability does not ever characterize the language partner's personality or the atmosphere of the instruction.
10. Toward the end of the self-instructional hour, the language partner should dedicate some time to reviewing previously studied material from a day or two before the current lesson.
11. The emphasis during class time is on orality, not literacy. Reading and writing are accomplished by the students outside of class and only quickly checked at some point during the lesson. For the most part, the student's book is always closed. (Of course, this changes at the very advanced levels when newspapers and readers are introduced into the course)
12. At the very advanced levels, readings are never translated.
13. At all instructional levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced), the language partner asks oral comprehension questions on the readings in each lesson.
14. From time to time, some written work may be done at the blackboard by one or two students, while the rest of the class carry out the same assignment at their places. In such cases, the students seated check their work against the work of the student(s) at the blackboard.
15. Homework is always assigned to ensure that students come to the next class meeting adequately prepared. This includes substantial work with the supplied audio materials.
16. The language partner follows the assigned text, and practices the targeted conversational forms.