

Learning Your Language

Rotary Youth Exchange

21 January 2012

The goal for all Rotary Youth Exchange students should be to acquire the highest possible level of language proficiency in their target language *prior* to departure.

I Elements of Language Proficiency

Fluency

The rate of speech and the use of cohesive devices to bind discourse together

Grammar

The usage of the norms of morphology (structure of words) and syntax (organization of words in sentences).

Pragmatic Competence

The ability to use various strategies to get the message across and to compensate for imperfect control of the language.

Pronunciation

The ability to reproduce features of the language such as pitch, stress and intonation.

Sociolinguistic Competence

The ability to use language appropriately in different registers in various situations within a particular culture, and to use cultural references and idioms

Vocabulary

The size of lexicon (the entire stock of words known by somebody) and adherence to norms of usage

II Measuring Language Proficiency

In the U.S. we measure proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing according to ACTFL Guidelines (the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages). This system is used in all academic settings K-12 and post-secondary.

<u>Level</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>
Novice low/mid/high	words
Intermediate low/mid/high	sentences
Advanced low/mid/high	paragraphs
Superior	full discourse

Goal for Rotary Youth Exchange students' language acquisition prior to departure: **minimum of Novice-High** especially in listening and speaking skills.

A proficiency rating of **Intermediate-High** would be necessary to meet the needs of daily life at home and school.

III Time Needed to Acquire a New Language

These groups are not all-inclusive, are approximate in nature and are intended just to give a general idea...

Group A: languages like French, German, Portuguese, Spanish
Group B: languages like Danish, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Swedish
Group C: languages like Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Thai

<u>Level</u>	<u>Group A Contact Hrs</u>	<u>Group B Contact Hrs</u>	<u>Group C Contact Hrs</u>
Novice	0-100	1-150	0-200
Intermediate	100-200	150-250	200-300
Advanced	200-350	250-400	300-450
Superior	350+	400+	450+

IV Strategies for Acquiring a New Language through Guided Instruction

- A. Group or individual instruction with a live instructor and supplementary materials
 - 1. Native or non-native speaker with superior proficiency and practical experience teaching the language.
 - 2. Instructors who use a “proficiency-based” model.
 - 3. Instructors who do not rely heavily (or at all, for that matter) on a textbook during class time.
- B. Interactive internet-based tools or CD-ROM
- C. Traditional books and tapes/CDs
- D. All of the above determined by your access to resources including teacher availability, logistics, time, cost, etc.

Assistance with organizing group classes can be done through your Country Officers. My contact information is:

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