



at

[name of university]

Learner's Handbook

Name.....

Welcome

You have just joined a special programme funded by the European Commission to help promote language learning by making university language learning resources and support available to a wider public. During this programme which will be running between May and July 2003 you will be given the opportunity to make use of language centre facilities to start learning a language from scratch or to improve a language you already know. This programme does not include formal classes so you will be mainly studying on your own, however, you will receive plenty of help in the form of printed advice (in this booklet and in the centre), contact with a language learning advisor and other language centre staff and the opportunity to work with other learners if appropriate. This programme is intended to help you get started (or restarted), to give you a taster of the richness of language learning materials available to you and ideas for further language learning options, should you wish to continue with your chosen language. We would be grateful if you would use this booklet to keep records of your progress and responses to this experience and return it to us at the end of the programme.

We would like to thank you for your participation and we hope that you will enjoy your language learning with us.

[icon?] How to use the Centre

Location: [address of Centre]

Opening times: [access times for this learner]

Conditions of use: [rules and regulations of use e.g. using items in the centre, borrowing of items, copying & copyright]

Finding your way around: [how are materials categorised, coded, located etc.]

Getting help: [staff in the centre, learner guides, technical support]

Starting Out: 10 Steps to Success

Steps one to five are to be completed with the language advisor at your initial meeting.

Step One: Describe your language learning history

a) What languages have you studied formally (e.g. in a classroom)?

b) What languages have you studied informally (e.g. by living in the country, from relatives etc.)?

c) What other cultural experiences have you had that have helped you develop an interest for a particular language?

d) What has been your most enjoyable or memorable language learning experience so far?

e) List any language qualifications you have achieved?

Step Two: Choose your level

Below is a simplified version of the Common European Framework for languages. Try to match your skills in all the languages you have some knowledge of (apart from your mother tongue) to this framework.

Level	Description	Languages
A1	Can interact in a simple way using familiar words and phrases.	
A2	Can communicate simply and carry out routine tasks e.g. buying tickets	
B1	Can understand main points of conversations and communicate simple facts, ideas and explanations.	
B2	Can understand fairly complex language if topic is familiar and interact with a degree of fluency	
C1	Can easily understand most spoken and written language, films and TV and express oneself fluently	
C2	Can understand all written and spoken language with ease and communicate complex ideas fluently.	

Step Three: Set your targets

The aim of this section is to prioritise your needs and interests.

- a) Which language/s are you interested in learning and why?

- b) What are your long-term language learning targets? What do you want to do with your chosen language/s (e.g. write emails, travel, talk on the phone, read books)?

I want to be able to

Step Four: Set realistic objectives

Think about what you can actually achieve in the time you have available to you for your learning. If you have a long-term target that will take some time and a lot of work to achieve try to set smaller achievable targets along the way.

- a) What are your targets for this project?

During this project I want to

- b) How much time are you planning to set aside (e.g. daily, weekly) to achieve your aims?

Step Five: Plan your learning

Use the grid below to help you plan your learning

No.	Target	Study plan	Deadline
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Step Six: Think about the way you learn

Think about the level you already have in the language you wish to study, the targets you have set in the previous section and the ways in which you would like to go about achieving them. It may help to consider what are your preferred ways of learning:

- **reading** books, newspapers, magazines etc
- surfing the **Internet**
- doing language learning **exercises**
- learning or **memorising** as much as I can
- **listening** to the radio, other people, lectures etc
- doing puzzles and **playing games** etc
- **watching** TV and films
- **talking** with other people
- **writing** letters, essays, poems, stories etc.
- doing **practical** or social activities eg .cookery classes, poetry group, art classes etc
- **other** ways e.g.

Step Seven: Find some language learning strategies

There are many techniques that have proven to be helpful when learning languages. Here is a selection:

General	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing	Vocabulary & Grammar
Learning chunks of language (e.g. set phrases) can help when your knowledge of grammar lets you down	Learn the essential phrases to ask the speaker to repeat or clarify what they have said	Don't worry about understanding every word. Listen for key words or phrases that you recognise to try to work out the gist. Use any other clues, such as pictures, to help you.	Don't look up every word but try to identify what the key items are in a text and mark certain words to look up at the end	For certain types of writing, e.g. letters it is easy to use find existing examples to use as a template and to learn key phrases e.g. yours sincerely	Write the words for everyday things on post-its and stick them around the house
Try to think in the language	When you are in the country try to speak the language, it is often appreciated and you will feel a great sense of achievement (even if you have to resort to English in the end!)	Using a written summary or transcript when listening to a tape or video can help you make sense of things	Go through a newspaper's headlines to work out what are the key events being reported	Identify and learn common phrases that can help to make your formal writing more authentic	Create a visual image of the objects or actions you are learning the words for.
Find other learners to work with	Talk to yourself (perhaps not in public, though)	When you are watching a film cover up the subtitles occasionally and really listen. Alternatively use the subtitles to learn vocabulary.	When reading adverts, timetables etc. use what you already 'know' about what information these generally contain to work them out.	Worry only about formality and accuracy when you need to e.g. in an email you can be informal and can get your meaning across without dotting all the 'is' or crossing all the 'ts'	Rote learning (such as you probably used to learn your times tables) can be very helpful for learning grammar and spelling rules

More tips: Fernández-Toro & Jones, Francis R, (2002) DIY Techniques for language learners, CILT, London

Step Eight: Choose the most appropriate learning materials

You will find many different types of material available in the Centre. Here is a quick guide to some of them:

Type	Format	Description	What is it good for...?	Examples
Language Course (printed)	Book and one or more of the following: audio cassettes, video, software	These courses are the staple diet of language learning particularly in the early stages (beginners, A1, A2, B1)	They are very helpful if you are studying on your own or are a beginner, as they are well-structured, systematic and graded. They provide a great deal of additional help and cultural information. It is also possible to 'dip into' a language course e.g. find a unit that contains a topic that interests you, watch the video for listening or cultural interest.	
Grammar Training	Book and/or computer software. Some may be available online	Grammar books tend to be fairly dense and comprehensive, although some do contain exercises and activities for learners. Grammar exercises on computer may take the form of short quizzes on an aspect of grammar usually with an answer key. These can be fun to do and very motivating.	Grammar books are useful at all levels and particularly for learners who like to know how the language they are learning works and who are interested in correctness. They may be more suitable for higher level learners (B1 – C2) although language courses frequently include grammar sections for learners at lower levels. Interactive quizzes are quick to do and can be a fun way to learn grammar	
Authentic Materials	These consist of anything generated in the foreign language for the speakers of that language e.g. novels, TV, films newspapers, adverts, music, websites ...	These materials were not produced for language learning and will not have been adapted for different levels of learner. They are increasingly easy to come by and contain much of interest and value to language learners. Many centres produce worksheets or transcripts to accompany authentic materials which can be a very useful aid to learning.	Authentic Materials are a great way of getting a feel for the way in which a language works in practice (not in a classroom) and can be very motivating as they are culturally rich and relate to topics likely to be of interest. They can be perceived as difficult but learners in the early stages of their language learning should not be put off using them. Materials that are rich visually (TV, film, adverts etc.) can be enjoyed with the help of subtitles and it is possible to set yourself tasks to complete when using these materials	
The Internet	Online and interactive, electronic texts, images, movies, sounds...	The worldwide web is a very rich source of language learning material some of which will be specially intended for language learning while the rest will be authentic	An accessible and often cheap source of material in foreign languages. However because the internet is pretty much a free-for-all the quality of some language teaching materials will be variable so it is advisable to use sites that have been recommended (there should be lists of these in the Centre). The internet is good for learning vocabulary, finding out more about the country where the language is spoken and practising reading skills. A great deal of audio and some video is also available.	
Email, chatrooms, MOOs etc., messaging	Electronic	There are a wide variety of ways in which you can 'talk' to other people via electronic text.	These tend to be informal and non-instructional but can be a way of meeting people who speak the language you are interested in. A great way to interact without worrying too much about 'correctness' or formality.	
Tandem partners, clubs, cultural	People	Many university language centres run a tandem learning scheme which pairs up speakers of different languages for conversation exchange. There may also be clubs or cultural	When studying largely on your own the one thing that you will find hardest to develop will be your conversational skills in the language. Finding someone to talk to in the	

Type	Format	Description	What is it good for...?	Examples
groups		groups that meet in your local area	language you are learning is an ideal way to become more confident in the language.	

Step Nine: Keep track of your progress

Below is a language learning log for you to use to keep records of what you have been doing during your visits to the Centre

Date	Your plans for this visit	Target No.	What did you do?	How did it go?	What next?

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Step Ten: Think about what have you achieved?

Name: **Date:**.....

Language(s) Studied.....

Language Centre Visited

Please comment on the following areas:

The Language

1. What do you feel you have gained from this experience in terms of your language learning?

2. What have you particularly enjoyed and why?

3. Would you say that you have made progress and in what areas?

4. Have you had any particular difficulties with the language?

5. Do you feel that you have met your targets?

6. Is there any resource that you have found particularly useful or interesting?

The Programme

7. Have you had any problems with using the Centre e.g. finding materials etc.

8. Did you feel that you have had adequate support?

9. Was there anything that you would have liked to have done but were unable to?

The Future

10. Have you gained personally from this programme e.g. greater confidence in your abilities?

11. Are you planning to continue with your language learning and in what way?

Any other comments

How would you rate:

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
The programme					
Your progress					
The Centre					
Resources					
Support					
Access Times					

