



Five College Center for the Study of World Languages

Conversation Preparation Guides

Title: Alphabet and Characters

Topic: Alphabet and Sounds

Level: Novice

Practice on Your Own

- Familiarize yourself with the alphabet/characters in the target language – the name of each letter/character, the sound, how to write it. How is the target language alphabet different from the English alphabet? Are the characters connected, written from left to right or vice versa?
- Repeat the letters/characters by name again and again to memorize them in order.
 - Listen to the audio recordings and compare your pronunciation with the recordings. Pay particular attention to sounds that do not exist in English. Watch out for any letters that look the same as English letters but have a different sound in the target language.
 - Also practice writing all the letters/characters. Say each one out loud as you write it.
- Look at words in the target language. Can you identify all the letters/characters? If the characters have different forms, do you recognize all of the variations?
 - If the language is written in a connected script, can you correctly count the number of characters in a word? Write your counting under some of the words and show it to your conversation partner.
- Take words you have learned – such as greetings – and practice spelling them out loud. Then practice writing them.
- Prepare questions for your conversation partner about difficulties with the characters. Remember to take notes as you study; otherwise you easily forget.

Practice in Conversation Session

- Be prepared to test your knowledge of the alphabet in all forms – written, spoken, comprehended.
- **Warm-up character naming practice.** Be prepared for a warm-up activity in which you practice naming letters/characters in similar ways to how you have been practicing on your own. Your conversation partner might ask you to recite the alphabet in order. She/he might also bring flashcards and have you practice the letters in random order.

- **Practice comprehending characters.** You have been practicing pronouncing the letters/characters on your own. You may not have had much chance to practice comprehending them when they are spoken to you, so this will be practiced in your conversation session. Be prepared for your conversation partner or others in your conversation group to say random letters/characters and have you write them down or point to them. If that is easy, your conversation partner may spell out whole words for you to write.
- Be prepared to read words and passages from your textbook. Your conversation partner may bring in other materials as well, such as simple advertisements in the language, to further practice reading, pronunciation, and identifying letters/characters.