



Five College Center for the Study of World Languages

Conversation Preparation Guides

Title: Vowels

Topic: Alphabet and Sounds

Level: Novice

Practice on Your Own

- How many vowel sounds are there in the target language?
- Are the vowels shown in writing or assumed? If they are written, pay attention to where the vowels are placed (before, after, above the consonants).
- Does each character correspond to one sound? In English, one letter can represent different sounds (sit vs. sight), and there are often different ways to spell the same sound (meet, meat). Is this also true in the language you are learning? Are there any characters that can be either a consonant or a vowel, like “y” in English?
- Memorize the vowel sounds in a fixed order to be able to repeat them constantly.
- Record your voice and listen to it again and again. Read each consonant of the target language with all of the vowels; for instance, ba, be, bi, bo, bu... When doing this practice, speak loudly enough to be able to hear your voice so you can see if you sound like the audio materials that you are using.
 - Pay special attention to sounds that are similar to other sounds, and to sounds that do not exist in English.
- Write down your questions as you are practicing so as not to forget them. You can ask your conversation partner to help you with the questions.

Practice in Conversation Session

- Count the vowels in the target language for your conversation partner. Note whether the order in which you should memorize the vowels is important. Check this with your conversation partner.
- First pronounce a consonant without any vowel, then pronounce it with all the vowels in the target language. Be loud and clear so that your conversation partner can clearly hear you; otherwise he/she will not be able to correct you. You should hear your own voice when you pronounce the vowels.
- Be prepared to pronounce different letters and words for your conversation partner to write down.

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- Be prepared to listen to different letters and words that your conversation partner says. This will help you to practice listening comprehension. Can you write down what you hear in the target language script?