

## **Study Tips for Language Learning: Students and Teachers**

Peter John Wanner, Ph.D.

Tohoku University, Graduate School of International Cultural Studies

This paper introduces ideas for helping develop independent study and organizational skills. Students at various levels need a certain degree of coaching on how to study successfully. This is evident in the early grades of elementary school and this support is often provided by the parents and teachers. However, this support is more limited from grades six through eight when students seem independent. However, it is at this time that help may be needed most.

The place of study can have a large impact on the learning of the student. Having a desk or table big enough to spread out books is highly preferable. However, when this is not possible, it is always possible to make due with a space on the floor or ground large enough to spread one's books out. Having essential supplies in the place of study, something to write on or record data in is preferable. If a desk or table is available, then a sturdy chair that is the right height so the arms can rest on it and so the person can sit straight up will provide good posture and increase the time of concentration on the topic of study. If not possible, students can sit on the ground and perform their studies.

Working with your students to make the most of their time is very important. In general, most people study best in the morning and are very tired in the afternoon after lunch. If we can place emphasis on areas of our studies that require greater concentration into those times we are generally more alert, we can become more efficient learners.

Productivity of an individual can be greatly affected by distractions such as the phone, e-mail, television, video games, and messaging programs. If we set aside specific times for these activities separate from our studies, it is much more likely our study time will be more productive. There are various studies that show that outside distractions interfere with the brains activity to recall information.

Developing a system of organization is also very helpful in recalling information. If folders or binders are available to organize information, these are highly recommended. Separating assignments and notes into different folders will make them easier to access when you need them such as reference materials for tests. Likewise, setting aside one place for all materials that

need to be turned in is greatly helpful.

Making a planned schedule will help a student organize their thoughts and efficiently work through all the material they are expected to learn. Students should make out a plan and follow through with it. Waiting till the last minute to complete something usually results in an assignment submission that is not well thought out or organized.

Reading and note taking strategies are very good ways to process information. First, students review material and get an idea of what it is all about. They should formulate questions on the material. Furthermore, they should focus on the questions that will help them to concentrate more on the material as they read it. Second, during the note taking, they should think about the purpose of the reading. This can be done through keeping post-its or note cards handy for questions as they arise. If they keep the themes, often the subject headings, in mind while reading a passage it helps them to concentrate on the topic. While reading, students can think of the key words that lead to questions that would guide them through the reading and attempt to answer those questions. A student should be willing to adjust their questions and thinking as they learn more. Third, after reading, students should evaluate what they have read, organize their ideas (i.e. outlines, flowcharts), and possibly create flashcards for vocabulary.

In conclusion, teaching students how to study for a test is very important. Teachers should encourage students to think of potential essay questions and outline them. Also, if a teacher can help students learn to apply the concepts it can help students learn techniques for solving problems. Likewise, active learning through highlighting notes, use of post-its, marking key textbook passages, making study cards, mapping and diagramming concepts, can greatly enhance a student's awareness of test items. The use of memory techniques; mnemonic strategies such as mind maps, acronyms, and mental pictures are also highly useful.

### **Biographical Statement**

**Doctor Peter Wanner** is an Associate Professor in the Graduate School of International Cultural Studies; Language Division; Department of Education, Tohoku University. He became the third THT Coordinator/President as of November 2009 and is very active in the programs in Vietnam and the Philippines. He is also active with Human Securities issues as the Asian Youth Forum Conference Chair.