

Unit 8

Language Acquisition Projects

Cast:

- Missionary Li Wei
- Mr. Ahmet

Scene 8.1. Missionary Li Wei in his room speaking into camera

Missionary Li Wei: Where I went there was no language school, so I had to create my own language program. In God's providence I met another missionary, a Mr. Wu, who was serving the Lord in the same city I was in.

Mr. Wu and I became friends. Not only was Mr. Wu a fine Christian with a heart for Muslim people, Mr. Wu spoke the local language very well. Unlike me, Mr. Wu had had specialized training in language learning techniques.

Mr. Wu had lots of great ideas, which he didn't mind sharing with me. If he'd still been here, I would have invited Mr. Wu to demonstrate some of his ideas himself to you. Sadly, Mr. Wu was arrested a couple of years ago for doing Christian propaganda and subsequently deported from the country. I was very sad when he left; we'd been great friends, and Mr. Wu was a great student of the language. Although he is now working in a neighboring country I don't see much of him anymore.

However, I'd like to share a very powerful language learning technique I learned from Mr. Wu. He called these techniques LAPs, short form for "Language Acquisition Projects".

Mr. Wu had a whole lot of these projects worked out. He demonstrated them with me, and I found them to be one of the most effective language learning techniques ever!

Fade and Cut

Scene 8.2. Missionary Li Wei with scissors and pen making the LAP cards

Title appearing on Screen: LAP 1: Places, Transportation, Pronouns, Time

Missionary Li Wei: To do a LAP properly, you have to prepare first.

First of all, sketch different types of buildings on small pieces of paper or small cards, like this: a house/home, a market, a post office, a school, a church, a hospital, a bank, an airport, or the pictures of whatever buildings you want to learn.

On 3-4 separate cards sketch some methods of transportation, like this: a bus, a car, a truck, a taxi, a bicycle, a train, a boat, a plane, etc.

Then, on 4 small cards sketch the pronouns: I (smiley face), we (3 smiley faces), he (stick figure), she (stick figure with skirt), they (3 stick figures).

On some other small cards sketch today (sun), yesterday (sun with arrow pointing left), tomorrow (sun with arrow pointing right), last night (moon/stars with arrow pointing left), and “day before yesterday” (2 suns with 2 arrows pointing left).

Once you have made all your cards, you are ready for your lesson with your language helper.

Cut

Scene 8.3. Missionary Li Wei and Language Helper Mr. Ahmet

Missionary Li Wei: With your language helper you do the following;

Step. 1: Learn the names of the buildings and the pronouns using the “Look and Listen” Technique with the cards, like this: (*demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 2: Learn the word “go” (You may know this already from an earlier lesson).

Step 3: Make sentences by placing a pronoun sketch on a building and ask your helper to make a sentence using “go” as in, “She is going to the market.” Repeat often and randomly. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 4: Using “Look and Listen” learn the various means of transportation. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 5: Now put together a pronoun, a transportation method, and a place. The language helper then says what it is: “We take/ride the bus to the market, etc.” (Note: check which is most natural; the verb may change depending on the means of transportation; e.g., take bus, ride a bicycle.) (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 6: Once you understand that, have your language helper make a sentence, and you put the cards together. For instance, the language helper says: “They take the taxi home” and you put the right cards in the right order. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 7: Next you can have your language helper put a combination together and make a true/false statement. You say “true/false”, depending on whether the combination of cards reflect what your language helper is saying. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 8: Lastly, learn the time cards, and then add them to the pile, like this: “Yesterday they took the taxi home” (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

In this first LAP we learned the names of different places, pronouns, modes of transportation, times, and learned to conjugate certain verbs!

LAPS are very powerful, because they focus on a little area of language that is related. They do so in a very simple way which you, the language learner control. And yet there is an element of randomness about it which prevents you from predicting what is going to happen.

Cut

Scene 8.4. Missionary Li Wei and Mr. Ahmet

Title appearing on Screen: LAP 2: Rooms, Pronouns, Activities, Tenses

Missionary Li Wei: For this LAP I have made cards with pictures of a kitchen, a bathroom, a bedroom, a living room, a dining room, an entryway, a balcony/patio and a garage. By the way, if you have access to the internet you can get pictures of almost anything you want from such sites as Google Images or Yahoo Images.

Sketch the following verbs on cards (1 per card): playing (blocks/ball), working (hammer/saw), talking (mouth/consonants), singing (mouth/notes), sleeping (prone/zzz), eating (plate/food), reading (open book), studying (book, pen, pad), & cleaning (broom).

Then get the pronoun cards and the time cards you used in LAP #1.

Now you are ready to go to work!

Step 1: Using “Look and Listen” learn the names of the rooms/pronouns. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet.*)

Step 2: Put a pronoun card in a room. The Language Helper makes a present tense statement; e.g., “I am in the kitchen.” “We are in the living room.” Use all 4 pronouns and repeat lots of times, until you’ve got it. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 3: The Language Helper makes a present tense statement; e.g., “They are in the dining room.” You put the correct pronoun in the correct room. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 4: The Language Helper puts a pronoun card in a room and makes a present tense, true or false statement; “He is in the bathroom.” You say “true/false”, and then you try to say the sentence. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 5: The Language Helper makes a statement; e.g., “He is in the bedroom.” You mimic and put the “he” card onto the “bedroom” card. Your Language Helper then asks you appropriate questions (e.g., “Who is in the bedroom?” “Where is he?” “Is he in the kitchen?”). You then point to/indicate the answer. The Language Helper then indicates as well, and states the shortest possible answer. Have your Language Helper ask the questions in a different order each time. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 6: Using the Look and Listen Technique learn the different verbs. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 7: Put a pronoun in a room, add a verb card, and attempt to make the appropriate present tense statement. “He is singing in the bathroom” or “He sings in the bathroom”. Your Language Helper restates it correctly. You mimic what your Language Helper says. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 8: Give the props to your Language Helper and make a statement. Your Language Helper then puts it together and restates the sentence correctly. You mimic. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Step 9: Get the time cards today, yesterday, tomorrow from LAP 1 and use them to learn the verb conjugations. (*Demonstrates with Mr Ahmet*)

Cut

Scene 8.5. Missionary Li Wei and Mr. Ahmet

Title appearing on screen: LAP 3: Clothing, Put on/Take off, Children

Missionary Li Wei: On 5 cards sketch pants, shirt, coat, shoes, hat. Then sketch ‘persons’: a baby, a child, a boy, and a girl. Learn the concept of “put on/take off” by putting an item of clothing on or off one of the pictures of a person. Note that the language may have several different words for the English put on and take off. Explore these concepts. You can add the time cards to conjugate the verbs. Here, let me show you (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Cut

Scene 8.6. Missionary Li Wei and Mr. Ahmet

Title appearing on screen: LAP 4: Here/There/Yonder, Demonstratives, Fruits, Plurals

Missionary Li Wei: Here is another idea. This LAP is a bit different, because it uses abstract pictures to communicate concepts. Let me illustrate what I mean.

Get a sheet of paper. Draw a large circle on the bottom of the page. That circle stands for “here”. Draw a medium size circle above it. It stands for “there”. And draw a small circle above it. It stands for “over there”, or “yonder”.

Next draw some common fruits and vegetables on cards.

Then, get 4 other cards. In the middle of the 1st card draw a large “X”. It stands for the concept “this”. On the 2nd card draw 3 large Xs (“XXX”). They stand for the concept “these”. On the 3rd card draw 1 small “x” in a corner. It stands for the concept “that”. On the 4th card draw 3 small xs in a corner “xxx”. They stand for the concept “those”.

Next begin exploring. Put an “x” on a circle and make a sentence. For instance, I put the small “x” on the large circle and learn the concept, “Put that, here”. When I put the three large Xs (“XXX” card) on the medium size circle, you learn the concept “Put those there”. Once you’ve got learned all the combinations, you start adding the fruit and vegetables. Here, I’ll put three small xs (“xxx” card) on the small circle along with this picture of some carrots. Now I’m supposed to say, “Put those carrots way over there” Let’s practice this until we’ve got it all right. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Cut

Scene 8.7. Missionary Li Wei and Mr. Ahmet

Title appearing on screen: LAP 5: Tableware, Prepositions, Locations, Descriptions

Missionary Li Wei: For this LAP, get some tableware: a knife, fork, spoon, plate, cup, table. Get the props for locations (here, there, over there) and demonstratives (this, that, these, those) from LAP 4.

In this activity you will combine the objects with the cards and incorporate the concept right, left, between, on, under, beside, and in. For instance, if you put the “XXX” card on these two knives and place them beside the fork with the “x” card on it you get, “Put these knives beside that fork”. Or, “Place these knives to the left of that fork”, etc.

As this project develops, it can become increasingly complex but should be a very valuable exercise. Don’t go through it too quickly for in certain “case rich” language, like Russian and Turkish, it will bring out the different case endings. I’ll talk more about “case” and stuff like that later. It is enough to know at this stage that in some languages words take different suffixes depending on the verb or preposition which precedes them. This LAP brings that out. Here, let’s practice it a bit... (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Scene 8.8. Missionary Li Wei and Mr. Ahmet

Title appearing on screen: LAP 6: Preparing Vegetables

Missionary Li Wei: I like this LAP, for it reminds me of when I was cooking and serving back home in my parent's restaurant! First of all, make some more vegetable cards: beets, onions, potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, squash, peppers, sweet potatoes, turnips, cucumbers, or whatever.

On 4 other cards sketch "wash" (water drops), "peel" (peeler), "cut" (knife), and "chop" (big knife).

On 3 cards sketch "cook" (small pot), "boil" (big pan), "fry" (frying pan), "bake" (oven), and "steam" (pan in pan).

Note that some languages can refer to vegetables in the plural. Check if that is also true of the language you are learning. If so, use the plural. If not, use singular.

Now practice this LAP like you did the other ones. Once you've learned this basic command forms, ("wash these carrots") you can make more complex sentences which combine the verbs and include pronouns and time cards. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Scene 8.9. Missionary Li Wei and Mr. Ahmet

Title appearing on screen: LAP 7: Foods, Actions, Indirect Object, Tenses

Missionary Li Wei: The last LAP I want to show you today also involves food. Like LAP 4 it combines normal pictures of objects with more abstract pictures to convey an idea.

On 5 cards sketch: bread, milk, soup, meat, and cheese.

On 4 cards sketch "give" (wrapped present or 2 open hands), "buy" (arrow from wallet showing money leaving), "sell" (arrow to wallet showing money coming in), "hand/pass" (one hand to another).

On 3 cards sketch:

- "past-completed" (arrow to the left with dot on the left; thus "gave, sold, bought, handed")
- "simple present" (straight line with dot in the middle; thus "give(s), sell(s), buy(s), hand(s)")
- "simple future" (arrow to the right with dot on the right; thus "will give, will sell, will buy, will hand")

Get the pronoun cards you made for LAP 1 and create different sentence combinations. Here, I'll show you how it works with Mr. Ahmet. (*Demonstrates with Mr. Ahmet*)

Scene 8:10. Things learned in this lesson

Scroll by on screen. Voiceover: Teacher Zhang Dong

- LAPS are very powerful language learning techniques.
- You only need a few pieces of paper, a pen, and some simple objects.
- But you have to think through and prepare the LAP projects carefully before your language helper shows up.
- LAPS focus on a little area of language in a very simple way which you, the language learner control. And yet there is an element of randomness about it which prevents you from predicting what is going to happen.