Society of Mentors Meeting

March 1, 2022

Theme:

This call centered on language learning and leading a language school. Guest speakers were Austin Gardner, Austin Till, and David Gardner.

Introduction: [[3:00](https://www.societyofmentors.com/products/membership/categories/2149393016/posts/2156378273?wtime=03m00s)]

Language learning is one of the most important aspects of being a missionary. If you don’t speak the language reasonably well, you are going to fail as a missionary. You have to learn the language. Austin Till took every possible road to learn Chinese even though he never went to formal language school. David Gardner learned Spanish as a child and now operates a formal language school in Peru.

Austin Till’s story of language learning: [[6:46](https://www.societyofmentors.com/products/membership/categories/2149393016/posts/2156378273?wtime=06m46s)]

He moved to China in 2010. He was working for a school under a one-year contract. However, his ultimate goal was to be able to preach in Chinese.

It is really important to learn the language. When we communicate the Gospel, it is really important to communicate the Gospel in the language of the people to whom we are preaching.

Read Acts 26:14. Paul emphasized that Jesus spoke to him in Hebrew. We know his Greek was excellent, but Jesus chose to speak to him in Hebrew, in his heart language. This is Biblical evidence that it is important to learn the language.

It is really common, at least in China, for people to try to do their ministry in English. Many are English teachers, so they start Bible studies in homes for their English students. Or they attend a government-run church where they can have a Bible study as long as it is led in English.

However, it is more of an intellectual exercise for those in attendance as they are so busy trying to process the English that is being spoken that they are not internalizing the truth of the message.

Therefore, he knew he wanted to preach the Gospel in China, and he knew he wanted to do it in their language. Not in English.

Problems with how language schools are led: [[15:45](https://www.societyofmentors.com/products/membership/categories/2149393016/posts/2156378273?wtime=15m45s)]

Just teaching through the books is not enough. Often, teachers don’t really understand how to teach/explain the language.

The Peru language school hires people who have been to college at least for a few semesters, so they are a bit more educated in the language.

There is not a seriousness to it with enough structure, expectations, or requirements.

Language school gives you the environment and structure in order for you to learn. It gives you a foundation from which to work.

It is important to have that guidance and mentorship in order to fast-track the process. Austin T. says it took him two years to be comfortable speaking Chinese with another year for others to be comfortable listening to his Chinese.

Formal language school and outside practice complement each other in order to help you learn the language.

What is the role of language school? What is the role of practice? [[21:24](https://www.societyofmentors.com/products/membership/categories/2149393016/posts/2156378273?wtime=21m24s)]

Language school provides a mentorship. It is a guide for you.
You need to get out and practice. Be self-motivated and put yourself out there and practice.
Be inquisitive. Go out and practice and put yourself in those situations where you can practice new words, phrases, situations, etc.

One problem is when you try to understand a certain tense. There are different tenses, conjugations, etc. Many times without language school, you won’t understand grammar. It will always be a crutch in the new language. You will make mistakes that native speakers will not make because you do not understand how or why it is said.

You can not disconnect culture from the language. Learning the culture is part of learning the language.

Language is best learned naturally.

Language school and practice go hand in hand.

How do language school and practice differ, and what is each one shooting for? [30:30]

Language school is very structured, safe, easy, and in a controlled environment.
Practice is not safe; it is chaotic in an uncontrolled environment. Practice is messy. It’s ok to take risks in the language. Make friends, get out there, and practice.

It is extremely easy to get comfortable in language school, which is a controlled environment. You quickly understand them, and they understand you.

You constantly need to push yourself out of your comfort zone.

What should weekly practice look like? [[41:00](https://www.societyofmentors.com/products/membership/categories/2149393016/posts/2156378273?wtime=41m00s)]

Practice should be practical. Think about the tasks you need to accomplish that day, that week, etc. Then, figure out how to say that in the language, i.e ordering food, going to the bank, getting a haircut, grocery shopping, etc.

Listening is most important.

What are some mile markers and tests to ensure I am on pace to learn the language? [[47:28](https://www.societyofmentors.com/products/membership/categories/2149393016/posts/2156378273?wtime=47m28s)]

Be very careful with how you measure yourself because language is not something you can find huge mile markers. It is a forward and backward process.

You may cross one threshold, and the next day, you move back. It fluctuates.

Find small victories. Understanding more words, having a larger vocabulary, speaking in full sentences, understanding full sentences, etc.

You are never going to stop learning the language; this is a lifelong endeavor. Be constantly learning.

What should the schedule of a language learner look like, especially with a family? [[53:00](https://www.societyofmentors.com/products/membership/categories/2149393016/posts/2156378273?wtime=53m00s)]

40 hours/week can easily be accomplished.

20 hours of class: Language school Monday-Friday, 9-1
20 hours of practice

* Church services: Sunday school, morning, evening, midweek. Arrive early, stay late.
* Lunch with nationals
* Attend sports and youth activities
* Watch T.V. in the language
* Language school should be fun. It is not academic; it is social; it is time with people.
* Take advantage of who you are: your differences; your whiteness; your Americanness.
* People love to teach you about their country, city, culture, etc. If you try, it is not difficult to make friends as a foreigner.
* Never do anything alone. Don’t be shy to reach out to people to hang out, get food, get coffee, spend time together.
* Have them explain their culture, games, etc. Have fun with it.
* Don’t let language school be a burden. Let it be fun.
* Don’t let your American sensibilities cause you to get your feelings hurt.
* Don’t be afraid to be needy, ask for help, etc. People help needy people.
* Wives should learn the language, even with their responsibilities to their family.

How do we use time in church services and other activities to learn more about language and practice? [[1:07:10](https://www.societyofmentors.com/products/membership/categories/2149393016/posts/2156378273?wtime=01h07m10s)]

* Use your Bible and the church hymnal to learn Biblical words
* Take notes during services, preaching.
* Sit with a national, even if you are married.
* Learn a prayer that you can repeat.
* Memorize verses
* During language school, you are not going to church to be fed; you are going to learn.

How do you continue to progress in the language after language school is over? [[1:13:38](https://www.societyofmentors.com/products/membership/categories/2149393016/posts/2156378273?wtime=01h13m38s)]

* It is important to constantly have the attitude that there is more to learn and maintain a curiosity towards the language.
* Be constantly learning.
* Make it fun.
* Be surrounded by people.
* Read your Bible.
* Memorize two Bible verses a week.
* Take notes during church services.
* Read other books; newspapers in the language.
* Watch the news for 15-20 minutes.
* Watch a program in the language. Not something dubbed in the language.
* Always look for what you don’t understand. Not for what you do understand.
* Put yourself in uncomfortable positions in order to grow and learn more.
* Change phone settings to the national language.
* When you study for messages, don’t use English Bible.

Do you find that grammar issues and speaking like a foreigner will hurt your church ministry because people don’t want to hear you speak/preach? [[1:23:34](https://www.societyofmentors.com/products/membership/categories/2149393016/posts/2156378273?wtime=01h23m34s)]

100% yes.

Take into consideration that the message that we have is the most important message in the world: the message of the gospel.

So if we are cluttering that message with the way we speak because of a lack of effort or practice, then we are doing a major disservice to the Gospel.

Preaching and public speaking is the height of language learning.

Grammar issues and speaking like a foreigner destroys your preaching. You need to know slang, understand how they speak, watch the people as they have a way of interacting.

You will never be as good as them. Learn to think like them.

Jesus became so Jewish that every thought he was a normal Jew.
Jesus spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus in Hebrew.

Be with people. Find someone who will correct you and teach you how they say things.

Have fun with it. Don’t make it work. When you are enjoying it, it will be easier.