LANGUAGE EXCHANGE

MATES
AT UQ
Program summary:
Language Exchange Mates provides an opportunity for students to learn, develop, or maintain non-native languages. Mates@UQ matches participants in pairs or small groups to help one another improve their target languages.

Due to the nature of the matching process, not all students are fortunate enough to be placed in a group. As a student who has successfully been matched we expect that you will value this opportunity and participate in a consistent and reliable manner.

Before you meet your group:
If you are new to your target language, it would be a good idea to prepare a few key phrases prior to meeting your exchange partner(s). This will allow you to fast track your study by learning new words and sentences in your own time and then use your group time to put your new language skills into practice. There are many free websites and iPhone apps that you can download to get started. Here is an example of a free website:

BBC Languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Portuguese, Chinese and 33 other languages)
www.bbc.co.uk/languages/

If you are not new to your target language it might be a good idea to self-assess your current ability and consider areas in which you need to improve. For example it may help your partner(s) to know you want to focus on a particular area such as vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, fluency or local slang and idioms. There are a range of free tests available online which may help you discover any potential shortfalls in your language ability. Here are some examples:

University of Cambridge English Test
www.cambridgeesol.org/test-your-english/index.php/z

English Proficiency Level Test
www.englishtag.com/tests/level_test.asp

ESL Language Studies Abroad
(English, German, Italian, Spanish, French, Chinese, Russian, Arabic)
www.esl-languages.com/en/study-abroad/adults/online-tests/index.htm

Japanese Proficiency Level Test
www.transparent.com/learn-japanese/proficiency-test.html
Planning your meetings:
The first step is to select a mutually agreeable time and place to meet.

It is important that your meeting spot is easily accessible by all members. Consider a public area and ensure directions are given to the group. Your meeting spot could be a coffee shop in the city, a public park on the weekend or any of the major campuses. For the majority of participants, the most convenient place to meet with me on the St Lucia campus. Here are a few examples that have worked well in the past:

- The Tennis Club - UQ Sport Tennis Courts
- Darwin’s Cafe - Building 94
- The Alumni Court
- Level 3 Forgan Smith Tower, Building 1
- Schonell Theatre
- Pizza Cafe or the food court.

Meeting activities:
The next thing you will need to do is introduce yourself and tell the group a bit about your life experiences and background. It would also be a good idea to let the group know your current level of language ability, your past experience with that language/culture and why you have chosen to learn your new language.

In your first meeting, you could discuss a few topics of interest which you can then build on during the program. You could even agree to set your topics a few weeks in advance so everyone can study some background languages in that area and prepare for the group discussion. A good way to ensure your meeting flows easily is to each find a news article, story, chart or map that is focussed on your weekly topic.

Potential topics for your meetings:
- Basic greetings, travel and shopping phrases
- Family and pets
- International travel and holidays
- History, culture and traditions
- Places you have visited in QLD/Australia.
Language Skills

You may also want to focus on a particular area of language within your chosen topics. For example, you may want to learn basic sentences to help you travel and shop or you may want to learn the different verbs associated with sports (swim, run, catch, etc.). Below are some areas of language you may want to consider covering (however, please note, these are based on English and may need to be adjusted for your language):

Grammar:
- Verb tenses (e.g. present simple, present, continuous, present perfect, past simple, past continuous, past perfect, future simple, future continuous, future perfect)
- Modals (e.g. could, should, must, might, may, ought, have to)
- Conditionals (e.g. if I..., I would...; I wish...)
- Determiners: articles (e.g. the, an, a), demonstratives (e.g. this, that), possessives (e.g. my, your, their), and quantifiers (e.g. many, some, any, few, several)
- Relative clauses (e.g. who, which, that)
- Comparatives (e.g. more beautiful, richer) and superlatives (e.g. the most beautiful, the richest)
- Conjunctions: coordinating (e.g. and, but, for, yet, so, or, nor) subordinating (e.g. although, because, since, unless, if when, because), and correlative (e.g. both...and..., either...or..., whether...or..., not only...but also...)
- Prepositions (e.g. at, in, on, under, over, though, past, across)
- Contractions (e.g. I'm, you're, we're, they're, hadn't).

Vocabulary:
- Verbs (action words e.g. run)
- Nouns (the name of a person, place, thing or event e.g. school)
- Adjectives (words that describe nouns e.g. small school)
- Adverbs (words that describe how a verb is/was done e.g. slowly ran)
- Slang (words which are not a part of the official language e.g. yobbo, bangers and mash, rellies, arvo)
- Idioms (sentences which have a non-literal meaning e.g. kick the bucket, piece of cake, apple of my eye).

Pronunciation:
- Minimal pairs (pairs of sounds which are commonly confused): practice using ‘Ship or Sheep’ www.shiporsheep.com (click on the sound to hear each pair pronounced).
Language Exchange Mates

Group Guidelines

There are a couple of conditions that you will need to keep in mind when communicating with your group to avoid any members becoming isolated or left out. The below processes have been set in place to ensure the equality of all group members and in respect of the fact that not all students are fortunate enough to be matched with a viable group.

- Language Exchange Mates is a group activity. When contacting your group be sure to contact ALL group members and not just one member from the list (if applicable).
- A group member must complete the group report online after each meeting.
- Students are responsible for managing their own groups and ensuring the group is concentrating equally on both languages.
- You must select a meeting time that is agreeable with the whole group.
- It is important to communicate efficiently with your entire group. If you are not able to make a particular meeting or change your contact details, let your group know in advance.
- You must all agree on the duration and frequency of your group meetings. We recommend once a week for one hour until the end of the semester.
- Once matches are made, registrations for the semester will close and it will not be possible to change groups unless there are special circumstances to be taken into consideration.

If you have any concerns please contact Mates@UQ. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in an unsatisfactory experience for group members. Any serious transgressions and/or student misconduct will be dealt with through UQ’s policy and procedures.

Get Started!

We wish you all the best with your experience in Language Exchange Mates. It is our hope that everyone involved will greatly benefit from this experience and this program opens you up to exciting new programs, cultures, and people.

Remember to check out what Mates@UQ events are coming up this week!
Events Calendar & Registrations: uq.edu.au/student-services/new2uq/mates-events
Language Exchange Mates FAQ’S

What is Language Exchange Mates?
Language Exchange Mates has been established to enhance the English conversational skills for our international students as well as to enable authentic speaking opportunities for students who may be enrolled in language courses or going on exchange at UQ. The purpose of Language Exchange Mates is to improve the conversational skills for participants and not for academic purposes. Students who need assistance with English or another language for academic purposes should contact ICTE or the school / faculty they are based in. Participants are strongly encouraged to meet for approximately one hour per week.

What are the most popular languages for language exchange?
Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, and Cantonese are the most popular. There are some limited opportunities to exchange European languages.

What are the benefits of Language Exchange Mates?
You have the opportunity to increase your foreign language skills, as well as find out local sayings and customs that you will never find in text books. You will also get the satisfaction of helping someone else whilst promoting your home country. Lasting friendships have also been made through the program.

How much time would I spend speaking my second language?
We suggest that you spend 50% of the time speaking each language during your weekly one-hour session. As time goes on your conversational skills and confidence will begin to improve. Try to speak in your second language as much as you can and eventually you will reach the 50% mark.

What sort of things do language exchange partners / groups usually talk about?
There are many different conversation topics. The most popular ones are travel, culture, shopping, careers, study, hobbies, music, and expressions.

How do I meet my partner / group?
All participants will be provided with the details of their partner / group names, country of origin, language, and email address. Participants must make first contact via email to organise an appropriate time and place to organise a meeting. There are no rules on where you meet, but it is recommended to meet on campus in a familiar setting.

What if there is a week that I cannot meet my partner / group?
You should let them know and make alternative arrangements. Some students use Facebook to get in contact with their group / partner when they cannot meet in person.

What if I am unhappy with my partner / group, they don’t return emails or they are too busy to meet me?
Please contact mates@uq.edu.au and alternative arrangements may be made.
mates@uq.edu.au               uq.edu.au/student-services/matesuq               FB/matesatuq

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