

## **Suggestions to Teacher Ed Students in French/German/Spanish as You Work to Obtain an Advanced Low Rating on the OPI:**

1. Narrate and describe in all major time frames—past, present and future.
  - Review the formation and uses of past tenses, especially the preterite and the imperfect. (French students should review irregular past participles.)
  - Review irregular stems to form the simple future tense in French also.
  
2. Talk in paragraph length discourse.
  - Add details to provide longer responses.
  - Use conjunctions to combine and link sentences (and, or, but, because...) + simple relative clauses (e.g., My friend *who has a car* often drives me to the grocery store. The meal *which we prepared together* last Sunday evening was delicious.)
  - Connect the flow of the narration or description by using “first, next, then, therefore,” etc.
  
3. Perform a role play situation which deals with an unexpected complication.
  - Practice by talking to yourself in the target language whenever possible. Since you won’t always know the vocabulary you need, you will practice using circumlocution to get your idea across in another way.
  - Be able to ask as well as answer questions during the role play.
  
4. Some other suggestions to improve your oral proficiency:
  - Participate fully in your foreign language classes. Force yourself to talk, especially if you’re shy or a perfectionist who doesn’t want to make mistakes. Forcing yourself to express your ideas in the target language—knowing that you will certainly make some errors—is essential to improving your speaking ability.
  - Attend foreign language conversation hours to discuss a variety of topics, including current events. Force yourself to talk, if necessary (see above).
  - Read a newspaper or listen to the news in French/German/Spanish via the Internet.
  - Participate in activities available through the ISU International House or the Foreign Language Living Center in Atkin-Colby.
  - Watch FL films (at Normal Theatre or on cable networks or from video stores). It is often possible to watch an American movie on DVD and listen to the soundtrack in another language. Later retell the story to practice narrating in the past tense, adding details and using connectors to link ideas/events of your narration.
  - Describe a character in a film or novel and give lots of details to practice vocabulary.

- Give your opinion on a topic currently in the news and justify your point of view (using lots of detail so you're talking in paragraph length discourse).
- Make an agreement with other students that you won't speak English during a study abroad program.
- Register to take the OPI as soon as possible after returning from a study abroad experience. Since you spent an extended period of time immersed in the language and culture, your speaking skills should therefore be strong when you take the OPI.

While these practices will improve your oral proficiency skills, there is no substitution for extended immersion experiences in the target language. There is no guarantee that doing all of these will result in an Advanced Low score on the OPI. It is essential that you do everything you can to improve your oral proficiency skills during the study abroad experience(s).