

### What is a Language Coach?

The language coach may go by any one of several titles, such as facilitator, coordinator, supervisor, advisor, consultant, or even program director. **Usually a coach is someone from the learner's organization or a similar organization whose role is to assist learners in developing and implementing a plan for language and culture learning.** We use the term *language coach* because we think of a coach as one who works personally with learners to help them acquire the language and culture more successfully so that they can work and minister more effectively.

Becoming a good language coach is a multifaceted process—a process that involves discovering how to apply *abilities you already have* to help people learn a new language and culture and acquiring *some new knowledge and skills* that will allow you to help those in your care to learn more quickly, more effectively and with less frustration.

### What is the Role of a Language Coach?

While the responsibilities of a language coach may vary considerably, coaches are most effective when they have the basic knowledge and skills that enable them to become strong advocates for the learners, someone the learners can turn to for support and well-informed advice. Such a coach is one who...

- understands the process of language and culture learning
- understands learner variables related to language and culture learning
- understands effective strategies to help learners develop second language and culture proficiency
- understands how to deal with special challenges (e.g., mothers with young children, older learners, those with low aptitude or extreme anxiety, those learning two or more languages)
- understands how to deal with mismatches in learning styles and teaching styles
- keeps in close touch with learners, offering encouragement and advice
- helps new learners deal with culture shock, stress and fatigue
- helps learners stay motivated for long-term success
- helps learners set reasonable goals
- provides overall learning plan or helps learner work this out
- tailors learning plan and procedures to individual abilities, needs and circumstances
- helps learners integrate learning from a teacher or tutor with learning from the community
- suggests resources and new ideas
- helps solve problems and keep the learners on task
- helps learners to break free from language learning plateaus
- helps learners to become increasingly self-directed
- holds learners accountable
- reviews progress with learners and helps them plan for continued learning
- administers or oversees assessments
- carries out organizational policies and procedures, and helps shape policies and procedures
- provides feedback to field leaders and other administrators
- helps learners make transition from full-time learning to part-time learning to ministry
- encourages learners to become lifelong language and culture learners
- helps learners achieve a higher level of proficiency than they dreamed possible

Becoming an effective coach—one who can truly help learners gain the proficiency they need in their new languages and cultures—is an ongoing process. However, as you take even a few steps in developing your coaching skills, you will find that you can make a significant difference in the success of your learners, which will make a difference in the effectiveness of their ministries. Be assured that there are many resources to help you develop the expertise you need.

## How can you Become a More Effective Coach?

Becoming a more effective coach is a process that involves experiences such as

- reflecting on your own second language and culture learning
- gleaning insights from others who have gone through the learning process
- sharing ideas with other coaches
- studying materials and other resources written for language and culture learners
- reading articles and books written especially for language coaches
- attending a Language Coach Workshop, other workshop or conference for language coaches

Many new coaches find a workshop or conference the ideal place to begin to develop their coaching expertise. From that point, they can more easily continue to hone their skills through use of other resources.

## Selected Resources for Coaches

Institute for Cross-Cultural Training (ICCT). **Language Coach Workshops** (<http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/icct/>). These one-week workshops address coaching responsibilities and tasks such as those listed on page 1. They are designed especially for those who are new to language coaching or need help with areas such as program development and learner assessment. The 2005 Learner Assessment workshops will have very little overlap in content with the 2004 workshops on Program Development. Chiang Mai, Thailand (Feb. 27 - Mar. 4, 2005), Budapest, Hungary (Mar. 7 - 12, 2005), Wheaton, IL (June 19 - 24, 2005), Cochabamba, Bolivia (Oct. 30 - Nov. 4, 2005—tentative dates).

Dickerson, Lonna J., compiler. 2004. **Resources for Language Coaches** (version 4.2) (<http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/icct/>). This CD-ROM (given out at the Language Coach Workshops) has more than 4000 pages of articles, learning materials, bibliographies, lists of Web sites and other information related to coaching on-field language and culture learners. Updated at least two times each year.

Dickerson, Lonna J., compiler. 2004. **Resources for Second Language and Culture Learners** (version 2.3) (<http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/icct/>). This CD-ROM (given out at the Language Coach Workshops and in the ICCT pre-field SLA summer program) has more than 1500 pages of articles, learning materials, bibliographies, lists of Web sites and other information for on-field language and culture learners. Updated at least two times each year.

**International Congress on Language Learning**, Colorado Springs, held every three years (<http://www.mti.org/>). This congress is usually attended by more than 100 coaches, administrators, language teachers and pre-field trainers of Christian workers who plan to serve overseas. It is a rich resource for learning from a variety of speakers as well as networking with other coaches.

Dickerson, Lonna J., ed. 2001. **Proceedings from the International Congress on Language Learning** (<http://www.mti.org/cdroms.htm>). This CD-ROM contains almost 600 pages of articles first presented as papers at the 1993, 1995 and 1998 International Congress on Language Learning. All papers address the needs of language coaches.

SIL International. **LinguaLinks Language Learning Library** (<http://www.ethnologue.com/lingualinks.asp>). Written especially for self-directed language learners, this CD-ROM program is also a valuable resource for coaches.

**Language Impact Web Site** (<http://www.languageimpact.com>). This Web site for language learners also contains a number of articles and good ideas for coaches.