

Tips to learning to speak another language:

1. Speak at least once a day to a national in conversation.
2. Go to the market, hang around, ask questions, ie... what do you call this?
3. Bring paper and write down the answers. The locals will ask you questions also, try to answer them writing down the question and then going home to put together the most suitable answer. Chances are you will be asked the same question again at some point.
4. Learn the “small talk.” The people in Thailand tend to use the same questions for small talk: Where do you live? How long have you been in Thailand? How old are you? What country do you come from? Where do you work? How much money do you make? For your kids: How old are you? What is your name? Can you speak Thai? What grade are you in? Where do you go to school?
5. Speak to them about the subject you are learning about in your language lessons.
6. Talk with your neighbors, the vendors who stop by, go get stuff at the corner store where you'll have to speak in that language.

7. Talk with your house helpers, nanny etc.. This helped me when I first came to Thailand. I had never spoken Thai and my house helper did not know a word of English so we did a lot of signs at first, but I learned Thai because I had to learn.
8. At work or church sit with someone who doesn't know any English and try to have a conversation.
9. Go visit the national people in their homes and environment. Sit and talk and ask questions. Hang out with them.
10. Limit your time with English speaking friends especially for the first six months and try not to read or listen to English.
11. Learn the songs (especially the worship songs sung in church). Sit down with someone and have them slowly read the song aloud. You write down the phonetics in English and sing it back to them. Sing it till you know it by heart. Sing the worship songs to the Lord at home on your own.
12. Listen carefully and repeat what people say.
13. Speak slowly and if the language is a tonal one as in Thai, you must sing the tones. Make your own marking system to remember the tones. If your pronunciation is correct, but your tone is off, people will still have a hard time understanding you. But if your tone is right and is in context, even if the pronunciation is not quite right, the people usually understand. The tone is of utmost importance.

14. Don't feel intimidated, the national people are usually very patient and helpful. We always received encouragement from them as they tend to think it is wonderful that you are trying to learn their language.
15. Make it fun. Think of the language as a code you are trying to break. It is an adventure. You will be discovering new words all your life, so enjoy it.
16. Laugh at yourself. You will probably make millions of mistakes through the years. Accept it. They will enjoy you even if you make mistakes and they will love to laugh. If you can laugh they will love you for it.
17. Smile. When in doubt, smile. If you don't know what to say, smile. If you are so angry you could burst, smile. If you are trying to talk and they don't understand, smile. The best thing to do in Thailand is smile. That will remedy everything!