

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Below is a selection of common strategies that take part in a language learning process.

Strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information.

Strategies vary a lot from context to context, from individual to individual. There are always several ways to achieve a particular end, and each of us chooses the most suitable for both the situation and one's own personality (or learning style).

When you read this list of learning strategies you will notice that some of them may have developed naturally, whereas others may still be rather unfamiliar to you. Then ask yourself,

- *Am I abusing one particular strategy while I could be exploring others?*
- *How could I adopt a novel strategy that seems to be helpful in a variety of situations?*

A) Find your own way.

Discover what ways of learning work best for you. For example, how do you best learn vocabulary items?

Discover other ways of learning from other learners in the class. Use all senses to learn in as independent a way as you can.

B) Organise information about language.

Develop ways to organise what you have learned, through making notes and charts, grouping items and displaying them for easy reference.

C) Be creative.

Experiment with different ways of creating and using language, for example with new ways of using words, playing with different arrangements of sounds and structures, inventing imaginative texts and playing language games.

D) Make your own opportunities.

Learn language actively by performing tasks in class, for example by interacting with fellow learners and the teacher, asking questions, listening regularly to the language, reading different kinds of texts and practising writing.

E) Learn to live with uncertainty.

You can't always rely on certain and safe answers.

Can you work things out with the help of resources, for example using dictionaries or grammar books?

Can you understand the general gist of texts without understanding every language item in them?

F) Use mnemonics.

Find quick ways of recalling what you have learned, for example through rhymes, word associations, word classes, particular contexts of occurrence, experiences and personal memories.

G) Make errors work.

Have you learned to live with errors?

Can you prevent errors from blocking your participation in tasks?

Do you often ask for error correction and help? Are you learning from your own errors?

You must realise the relative gravity of errors: the way they vary according to channel and text-type.

H) Use your linguistic knowledge.

Make comparisons with what you know about language from your own mother tongue.

Build on what you have already learned in the new language, both in terms of formal rules and conventions for language use.

I) Let the context help you.

Do you realise the relationships that exist between words, sounds, and structures?

Can you guess and infer meanings from the surrounding context and from your background knowledge and out-of-class experience?

J) Learn to make intelligent guesses.

Have you developed your capacity to work out meanings? Can you focus on the main parts of the message and relate them to the overall text and context?

Do you make guesses on the basis of probabilities of occurrence and meaning, and try to work from what is relevant to the text and task in hand?

K) Learn formalised routines.

Learn routines and whole phrases. Idioms, proverbs, routinised expressions, sound sequences, dialogue extracts, are all examples of this, as are ways of expressing a variety of interpersonal functions.

L) Learn production techniques.

Do not be so concerned with accuracy that you do not develop the capacity to be fluent.

When you are short of words in a conversation, do you use your paraphrasing ability?

Are you willing to ask for help?

Do you use gestures and other devices to keep on talking?

M) Use different styles of speech and writing.

Differentiate between styles of speech and writing, both productively and "receptively".

Find ways to transfer your mother tongue experience of such variation to the new language.