

Study Skills

Dr. Bendahmane Messaouda

Mohammed Khider University of Biskra
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages
Department of English Language



Course: Study Skills

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Instructor: Dr. Messaouda BENDAHMANE

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Learning Strategies

Objectives of the Lesson: By the end of this lecture, learners will be able to:

- Understand the meaning of the language learning strategies
- Identify their learning strategies
- Differentiate between the different learning strategies
- Evaluate the appropriateness of learning strategies they use.

Introduction

EFL students come to their classes with their own learning strategies. Most of these strategies are learnt through their schooling years either by being taught how to do activities or simply by watching other people. Because the use of strategies may be influenced by others, students may not know the best strategies that suit their learning abilities. Learning strategies are very personal; so what works for one person may not work for another person.

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1. Definition

Language learning strategies are the behaviours, techniques, operations and methods used by the learners to comprehend and process new information in order to enhance their learning. They are “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990, p. 8).

2. Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies (LLS) have been classified by many scholars. In this lesson, the focus is put on Oxford’s model (1990) which is one of the most comprehensive classifications of learning strategies.

Main group	Strategy groups	Sub-groups
Direct	Memory	Creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, employing action
	Cognitive	Practising, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, creating structures for input and output
	Compensate	Guessing intelligently, overcoming limitations in speaking and writing
Indirect	Meta-cognitive	Centering your learning, arranging and planning your learning, evaluating your learning
	Affective	Lowering your anxiety, encouraging yourself, taking your emotional temperature
	Social	Asking questions, cooperating with others, empathizing with others

2.1. Direct Strategies

A-Memory strategies: are techniques used to remember more effectively, to retrieve and transfer information needed for future language use. Memorization helps students to store in memory important information gathered from their learning. When the information is needed for use in the future, these strategies help the student to get the information back.

B-Cognitive Strategies: involve learner's interaction and manipulating what is to be learned. Examples include replaying a word or a phrase mentally to 'listen' to it again, outlining and summarizing what has been learned from reading or listening and using key words. Cognitive strategies enable the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways, e.g., through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, reorganizing information to develop stronger schemas (knowledge structures), practicing in naturalistic settings, and practicing structures and sounds formally.

C- Compensatory Strategies: help the learner make up for missing knowledge. (e.g., guessing from the context in listening and reading; using synonyms and “talking around” the missing word to aid speaking and writing; and strictly for speaking, using gestures or pause words such as um, uh, er, ah, like, okay, right, and you know.) Compensatory strategies can be used for speaking and writing.

2.2. Indirect Strategies

A. Metacognitive Strategies: are used to plan, monitor and evaluate a learning task. Examples of metacognitive strategies include arranging the conditions that help one learn, setting long and short term goals and checking one's comprehension during listening or reading. Metacognitive strategies (e.g., identifying one's own learning style preferences and needs, planning for an L2 task, gathering and organizing materials, arranging a study

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space and a schedule, monitoring mistakes, and evaluating task success, and evaluating the success of any type of learning strategy) are employed for managing the learning process overall.

B. Affective Strategies: The other category is Affective strategies where learners, interact with other persons or use affective (emotional) control to assist learning. Examples include creating situations to practice the target language with others, using self-task, where one thinks positively and talks oneself through a difficult task and cooperating or working with others to share information, obtain feedback and complete a task.

C. Social Strategies: help the learner work with others and understand the target culture as well as the language. (e.g., asking questions to get verification, asking for clarification of a confusing point, asking for help in doing a language task, talking with a native-speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms).

Exercise

- What is the most effective learning strategy?
- How learning strategies affect language learning styles?