

Learning Strategies: Definitions and Examples

Metacognitive Strategies

Strategy	Purpose	Context	Student Strategy	Example
Plan/ Organize	Students make a plan of what they need to do and organize their thoughts and activities in order to tackle a complex task step-by-step. This preparation helps them complete more intricate tasks than would otherwise be possible.	Plan/Organize is helpful before starting any large task that can be broken down into smaller parts to make it more manageable. It is an especially important strategy for target language writing tasks.	Before Beginning a task: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set goals. • Plan the task or content sequence. • Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies). • Preview a text. 	A student wants to write a thank you letter to his teacher for tutoring him after school. He has lots of ideas about what to write, but he is not sure how to put them in order. He jots the ideas down on some index cards and organizes them (trying out different orders, eliminating less important ideas, etc.) before copying them onto clean paper.
Monitor/ Identify Problems	Students question whether an idea makes sense in order to check the clarity of their understanding or expression in the target language. Students are aware of how well a task is progressing and notice when comprehension breaks down.	Monitor is important for any task.	While working on a task: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your progress on the task. • Check your comprehension as you use the language. Do you understand? If not, what is the problem? • Check your production as you use the language. Are you making sense? If not, what is the problem? 	If a student asks how to divide three in half and the teacher tells her, “Yes, you may get a drink from the water fountain,” the student who is monitoring would realize that her question did not communicate her intended meaning!
Evaluate	Judging for themselves how well they learned material or performed on a task helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses so they can do even better the next time. Assessing how well a strategy works for them helps students decide which strategies they prefer to use on particular tasks.	Evaluate can help students after completing a task.	After completing a task: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess how well you have accomplished the learning task. • Assess how well you have used learning strategies. • Decide how effective the strategies were. • Identify changes you will make the next time you have a similar task to do. 	A student who finds writing in the target language difficult thinks about what makes it hard for her. She knows she is good at communication but makes a lot of mistakes in grammar. She decides to pay more attention to grammar in the future. In art class, a student uses Use Selective Attention to listen closely to directions while the teacher explains how to make a paper boat. She tries to do it herself but does not succeed. She decides to look at the teacher’s book which has illustrations of the process. She tells her teacher that Access Information Sources worked better for her on this task than Use Selective Attention.
Manage your own learning	This strategy is central to problem solving. Students reflect on their own learning styles and strategies. They regulate their own learning conditions to maximize achieving their goals. Students determine how they learn best, they arrange conditions to help themselves learn, they focus attention on the task, and they seek opportunities for practice in the target language. Manage also refers to the self-regulation of feelings and motivation. Independent learners must have a sense of how to manage their own learning.	Manage Your Own Learning is an important part of problem solving on any task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine how you learn best. • Arrange conditions that help you learn. • Seek opportunities for practice. • Focus your attention to the task. 	A grade six immersion French student is writing a science report of homework on the effects of pollution in the U.S. She decides that she will do her paper in her room where it is quiet because otherwise she could be distracted. She is not very interested in the topic, but her goal is to do well in science this year, so she motivates herself to do the task by reminding herself that she has done well so far, and that this topic is really very important. She does her research on the Web, and makes sure to do a search in French as well as English so that she will have exposure to the vocabulary and concepts she needs to write her paper in the target language. After working hard on the paper and doing a good job, she rewards herself with a break to call friends.

Learning Strategies: Definitions and Examples

Metacognitive Strategies