

# **Facilitating Autonomous Learning (OR Helping Students Become More Independent Language Learners)**

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# Getting Started

SO... Is it REALLY the teacher's job to help students learn independently?

# Getting Started

YES... *it is our job!*

Taking charge of one's own learning and being strategic simply helps people learn MORE & learn BETTER

... and it is the teacher's job to help our students learn more, and better

# Please Do Now:

- What makes someone a good language learner?
  - Their teacher?
  - The person's intelligence?
  - Something else?

# Objectives

- Identify a number of traits or qualities that make someone a good language learner.
- Identify a variety of things you (the teacher) or your students (with their teacher's help) can do to become more independent and effective language learners

# Good language learners:

- Have language learning ability (aptitude)
  - Memorizing/learning ability
  - Communicating ability
- Are persistent and keep on going (may be more important)
- Are strategic about their learning
- Have a good attitude about learning
- Have a real need to communicate
- Look for opportunities to use the language

# Good Strategists are Better Language Learners

## Why? Evidence?

- Strategy-based instruction makes a difference in students' ability to perform language tasks
- Students need to be the ones who make the choices about which strategy to use
- Students able to make independent decisions will be more effective language learners
- Language learners able to use wide variety of learning strategies show more improvement

# Types of Language Learning Strategies:

- Cognitive Strategies--Repeating, summarizing, guessing the meaning of words, using imagery to remember something
- Affective/Social Strategies--managing one's emotions when learning, decreasing stress, studying with friends to make learning more enjoyable
- Metacognitive Strategies--higher-level strategies used to oversee & regulate language learning--planning, prioritizing, setting goals, self-management

# What Should Teachers Do?

- Should teachers teach strategies directly or indirectly? Why?

# What Teachers Can Do

In Class--teach students to be strategic:

- Make “being strategic” a class topic and common goal
  - Ask questions about strategies that worked for them:
    - What did you do to help yourself remember those new words?
    - Who has a new tip for finding the main idea when you read a passage?
    - How did you figure out what was going to happen next?
    - What helps you listen and remember?
  - Compare what works for different people
  - Learn from each others’ strategies
  - Talk about how to be more strategic
  - Use mnemonics

# In Class--more strategies:

- Focus students' attention on different ways of using language:
    - Write a dialogue 3 different ways--as if speaking to 3 different people (notice how your language changes)
    - Ask students to explain their own grammar rules
    - In reading, notice how language is used by the author
    - Have students write down 3 other words with similar meanings
  - Teach a few simple social strategies for keeping a conversation going:
    - Nice day.
    - Yes, it's hot.*
    - Yes, but not too hot.
    - Right.*
    - The bus is late...
    - Sure is.*
- Some possible expressions:**
- “(That’s) Right” “Sure”
  - “Okay”
  - “No problem”
  - “See you later”

# In Class--even more strategies:

- Teach simple techniques for checking understanding:
  - “Echoing”: Repeating what a person just said, changing the words to fit
    - Well, I need to get going...
    - Oh, you need to get going?
  - Summarizing: “Let me see if I have understood. You say you...”

# For Independent Learning--start gently:

- Help students find their own way
  - Develop an Independent Learning Notebook of things they need to work on:
    - Personal Goals & Objectives
    - Personal lists of words/vocabulary to learn
    - Chart showing their progress in learning
  - Let students choose some things for themselves--books, topics, etc.
- Errors are your friends--make errors work for them
  - Personal list of grammatical forms that give them trouble
- Keep it interesting and fun--keep it going

# For Independent Learning--Set up specific tasks:

- Start from the textbook--add independent tasks
- Give communicative assignments:
  - Using technology--video, cell phones, the Internet
  - Communicating with English speakers
- Assign a “Marco Polo” project:
  - Go out and explore, do something on your own-->
  - Come back and tell about it

# YOU--With a partner

- Brainstorm strategies you have already used or that you have just thought of for each of the categories just presented:

Different people focus on:

- 1: Speaking
- 2: Listening
- 3: Reading
- 4: Writing
- 5: Vocabulary Development
- 6: Pronunciation

# Bringing It All Together

Volunteers report back:

- What are 2-3 ways YOU can **directly** teach students to be more strategic?
- What are 2-3 ways YOU can help students be more independent?

# Objectives Revisited

- So--What are some traits or qualities that make someone a good language learner?
- Which of these would *you* like to develop next? Why?
- What is one strategy you would like to try to teach next week to help your students become better language learners?

# Metacognitive Review

- What new strategy did you learn from someone else today?
- Did we use any strategies in this workshop today?

# Thank You!

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