Language Strategy Use Survey*

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The following is a survey of strategies that you may use frequently or perhaps not at all in your efforts to learn or enhance your language skills. These strategies are discussed and illustrated in the language portion of this Student Self-Access Manual.

See if you can identify the strategies you actually tend to use both in learning material for the first time (for example, sounds, words or phrases, and structures) and those strategies that you have not used or use only rarely. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. It is simply an opportunity for you to see what kind of a language learner and language user you are.

The statements in our Language Strategy Use Survey are organized into clusters that match the sections in the language strategy material found in the Student Self-Access Manual – in the order they appear. Read the description of the strategies in each category and for each strategy, mark in the left column in the space provided your use or non-use of each strategy:

1. I use this strategy and find it useful.
2. I have tried this strategy, but welcome learning more about it.
3. I have never tried this strategy.

You may wish to pay particular attention to those sections of the manual that deal with strategies that you would like to be more familiar with – you can find the pages covering specific strategies or groups of strategies in the table of contents.


Listening Strategy Use

Strategies I use to increase my exposure to the new language:

1. I regularly attend out-of-class events where the new language is spoken.
2. I make an ongoing effort to listen to talk shows on the radio, watch TV shows, or go see movies in the new language.

3. If I am in a restaurant or store where the staff speak the target language, I usually ask questions in it so I can practice listening to native-speaker talk.

4. If I encounter people in public having a conversation in the target language, I generally listen in to see if I can get the gist of what they are saying.

Strategies I use to become more familiar with the sounds in the new language:

5. I keep practicing all the sounds in the new language until I am comfortable with them.

6. I am constantly looking for associations between the sound of a word or phrase in the new language with the sound of a familiar word.

7. I do my best to imitate the way native speakers talk.

8. I generally make an effort to remember unfamiliar sounds I hear, and ask a native speaker later.

Strategies I use for better understanding the new language in conversation:

Before I listen to the language:

9. I sometimes decide to pay special attention to specific language aspects — for example, the way the speaker pronounces certain sounds.

10. I often prepare myself by predicting what the other person is going to say based on what has been said so far.

11. I sometimes prepare for a guest lecture or special talk I will hear in the target language by reading up on it beforehand.

When I listen in the language:

12. I usually listen for those key words that seem to carry the bulk of the meaning.

13. I listen for word and sentence stress to see what natives emphasize when they speak.

14. I pay attention to where pauses tend to come and how long they last.

15. I pay attention to the rise and fall of speech by native speakers — the music of it.

16. I practice “skim listening” by paying attention to some parts and ignoring others.

17. I make every effort to understand what I have heard without translating it word-for-word into my native language.

18. I generally pay attention to the context of what is being said.

19. I listen for specific details to see whether I can understand them.
If I do not understand some or most of what someone says in the language:

20. I may well ask the speaker to repeat if the message isn’t clear to me.
21. I ask the speaker to slow down if I think s/he is speaking too fast for me.
22. I usually ask for clarification if I haven’t understood it the first time around.
23. I use the speaker’s tone of voice as a clue to meaning.
24. I make educated guesses and inferences about the topic based on what has already been said.
25. I usually draw on my general background knowledge in an effort to get the main idea.
26. I look to the speaker’s gestures and general body language as clues to meaning.

Vocabulary Strategy Use

To memorize new words:

27. I often pay attention to the structure of part of the word or all of it.
28. I often analyze words to identify the meaning of a part or several parts of them.
29. I group the words according to the part of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives).
30. I tend to associate the sound of the new word with the sound of a familiar word.
31. I sometimes use rhyming to remember new words.
32. I often make a mental image of new words whose meaning can be depicted.
33. I sometimes learn a new word by listing it along with other words related to it by topic.
34. I almost always write the new word in a meaningful sentence.
35. I may well practice new action verbs by acting them out.
36. I have a system for using flash cards to learn new words.

In order to review vocabulary:

37. I go over new words often at first to make sure I know them.
38. I go back periodically to refresh my memory of words I learned earlier.

In order to recall vocabulary:

39. I remind myself of a word meaning by first thinking of meaningful parts of the word (e.g., the prefix or the suffix).
40. I will usually make an effort to remember the situation where I heard or saw the word, and if written, may even remember the page or sign it was written on.
41. I sometimes visualize the spelling of the new word in my mind.

**As a way of making use of new vocabulary:**

42. I use words just learned in order to see if they work for me.
43. I use familiar words in different combinations to make new sentences.
44. I make a real effort to use idiomatic expressions in the new language.

**Speaking Strategy Use**

**In order to practice for speaking:**

45. I may well say new expressions repeatedly to myself in order to practice them.
46. I am likely to practice new grammatical structures in different situations to check out my confidence level with the structures.
47. I ask myself how a native speaker might say something and I attempt to practice saying it that way.

**In order to engage in conversations:**

48. I regularly seek out people with whom I can speak the new language.
49. I initiate conversations in the new language as often as I can.
50. I frequently direct the conversation to topics for which I know vocabulary.
51. I tend to plan out in advance what I want to say.
52. I frequently ask questions as a way to be sure I am involved in conversation.
53. I anticipate what the other person is going to say based on what has been said so far.
54. I usually avoid topics I don’t have language for.
55. I often look to others to correct my errors in speaking and welcome the feedback.
56. I frequently use expressions that call for both language and cultural knowledge, such as requesting, apologizing, or complaining in the target language.
57. If I don’t know how to perform culturally-based language expressions such as apologizing, I sometimes ask natives what they do.

**When I can’t think of a word or expression:**

58. I often ask the person I’m talking with to help me out.
59. I will look for a different way to express the idea; for example, I use a synonym or describe the idea or object I want to talk about.

60. I use words from my native language, but I add vowels or consonants so that they seem like words in the target language.

61. On occasion I may make up new words if I do not know the right ones.

62. Whenever necessary I use gestures as a way of conveying my meaning.

63. I am likely to switch back to my own language momentarily if I know my conversation partner can understand what I am saying.

Reading Strategy Use

With regard to reading habits in the target language:

64. I make it a point to read extensively in the target language.

65. I often read for pleasure in the target language.

66. I make a real effort to find reading material that is at or near my level.

As basic reading strategies:

67. I often plan how I am going to read a text, monitor to see how my reading is going, and then check to see how much of it I understood.

68. I first skim an academic text to get the main idea and then go back and read it more carefully.

69. I will usually read a story or dialogue several times until I can understand it.

70. I often look for how the text is organized and pay attention to headings and subheadings.

71. It is common for me to make ongoing summaries either in my mind or in the margins of the text.

72. I usually make predictions as to what will appear next.

When I encounter words and structures I do not understand:

73. I usually guess the approximate meaning by using clues from the surrounding context.

74. I generally use a dictionary so that I can get a detailed sense of what individual words mean.

Writing Strategy Use

As basic writing strategies:

75. I usually practice writing the alphabet of the new language.
76. I plan how I am going to write an academic essay, monitor to see how my writing is going, and then check to see how well I wrote what I wanted to.

77. I often make an effort to write different kinds of texts in the target language (e.g., personal notes, messages, letters, and course papers).

78. I frequently take class notes in the new language.

While I am writing an essay:

79. When I cannot think of the correct expression to write, I usually find a different way to express the idea; for example, I use a synonym or describe the idea.

80. I am likely to review what I have already written before continuing to write new material in an essay.

81. It is common for me to use reference materials such as a glossary, a dictionary, or a thesaurus to help me find or verify words in the target language.

82. I postpone editing my writing until I have gotten my ideas down.

Once I have written a draft essay:

83. I often revise the essay once or twice to improve the language and content.

84. I usually look for ways to get feedback from others, such as having a native writer put the text in his / her own words, and then I compare it to my original version.

Strategic Use of Translation

In order to enhance language learning and use:

85. I often plan out what I want to say or write in my native language and then translate it into the target language.

86. I tend to translate when reading in order to keep my train of thought and basically make the text more comprehensible to me.

87. While I am listening to someone, I often translate parts of what they have said into my own language to help store the concepts in my mind.

To work directly in the target language as much as possible:

88. I make every effort to put my native language out of my mind and think only in the target language.

89. I do all I can to understand what I have heard or read without translating it word-for-word into my own language.
90. I am cautious about transferring words or concepts directly from my language to the target language.

Now go back and review the items that you marked either “2” or “3” to see which strategies you would like to learn more about and perhaps include more fully in your language learning and language use activities. You are encouraged to access those pages of the Manual that deal with the strategies in which you indicated an interest.