

METACOGNITIVE MODEL OF STRATEGIC LEARNING

This chapter presents a metacognitive model of learning that learners use to work through a language task. The model organizes learning strategies according to the metacognitive processes of planning, monitoring, problem solving, and evaluating. Information on how, when, and why to use each strategy is given so that teachers can make instruction explicit, thus enabling students to reflect on and exercise control over their learning.

Instructional Objectives

This chapter will help you to:

- Provide a rationale for the strategies model.
- Show how each process works in coordination to assist learning.
- Define and give examples of individual language learning strategies.
- Present strategies that frequently work in combination.

The Metacognitive Model

Organizing Strategies into Four Processes

Learning strategies research has revealed a wealth of information on the types of strategies students use to learn. Over one hundred strategies have been identified by different language learning strategies researchers (Rubin, 1981; Stern, 1975; Wenden, 1987b; Oxford, 1986; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Chamot & Kupper, 1989; O'Malley, Chamot, Stevener-Manzanares, Kupper, & Russo, 1985a; Charnot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, Carbonaro, & Robbins 1993; Charnot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, & Robbins, 1996; Cohen, 1990; Rost & Ross, 1991). Chapter 9 provides an overview of the research on learning strategies. The practitioner is faced with the challenge of how to interpret and use this information in the classroom. The Metacognitive Model of Strategic Learning organizes learning strategies in such a way that they become manageable and helpful to students and teachers. It outlines the processes effective learners use to work through any challenging language learning task and describes ways to transfer strategy use to other subject areas, as well as to real-life situations. By using this model to guide instruction, the language teacher will provide students with a powerful approach that can help them throughout their lives.

The Metacognitive Model of Strategic Learning is based on extensive research on learning strategies in which data were collected on the strategy use of effective foreign and second language learners ranging from elementary through university level. (See Charnot & Kupper, 1989; Charnot et al., 1993; Charnot et al., 1996; O'Malley & Charnot, 1990; O'Malley et al., 1985a.) Learning strategies were chosen for inclusion in the model based on their usefulness and applicability to a broad range of learning tasks. Students can use these strategies for all of the modalities—reading, listening, writing, and speaking—as well as for the retention of vocabulary and content information. These are the strategies used by good learners; all have been successfully incorporated by teachers into second language instruction.

The Model consists of four metacognitive processes:

- Planning
- Monitoring
- Problem solving
- Evaluating

Students work through each of these processes for any challenging learning task. For example, in a typical classroom task, such as an

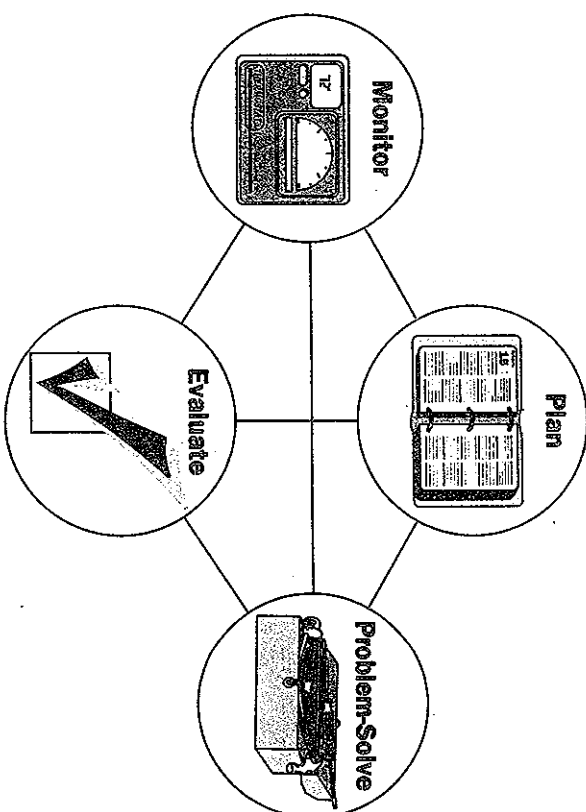
interactive speaking interview of a classmate's leisure time activities, the good learner might begin **planning** by thinking about various activities in which people often engage in their free time. She continues **planning** by narrowing her focus to those activities for which she knows vocabulary in the target language. Depending on the extent of her knowledge, she may decide to gather additional vocabulary by asking her teacher, looking at her notes, or checking a dictionary. She thinks about how to formulate questions in the target language, and she anticipates the types of responses she may get to her questions. She then writes down her questions and/or some key vocabulary pertinent to her topics. She reminds herself of language features such as pronunciation and intonation. After she begins her interview, she **monitors** herself by listening to herself speak, watching the interviewee's face, and listening to the interviewee's answers to make sure her questions are clear and that the interviewee understands. She asks for clarification when she does not understand a response (**problem solving**). This good learner repeats the interviewee's main points to make sure she understands, and she gives feedback to show she is paying attention. After the interview is finished, she evaluates by reflecting on her use of language and any new words or phrases she acquired. She may think about whether she opened and closed the interview in appropriate ways. Finally, she makes written or mental notes of what she might do differently the next time to improve her performance. In this example, the student used all four processes to successfully complete the assignment. Her strategic behavior helped her prepare for the task, actually do the task, resolve difficulties and overcome her lack of information, and reflect on her performance.

Many of us use these processes every day. As teachers, we work through them for every lesson we plan, implement, and evaluate. However, many times we do not think consciously about why we use them. Without explicit implementation of the model, students will not be able to exercise control over their learning because they will not know how, why, or when to engage in specific strategic behaviors. Without this knowledge, they also will not be able to transfer strategies from one task to the next. By teaching the model explicitly, teachers can have an impact on students' learning beyond the language taught in their classrooms.

The Recursive Nature of the Model

The four strategic processes are not strictly sequential but may be used as necessary depending on the demands of the task and the interaction between the task and the learner. Figure 2.1 illustrates the

FIGURE 2.1
Metacognitive Model of Strategic Learning



recursive nature of the model. For instance, when a student begins reading a story in the target language, he **plans** by setting his goals or thinking about what he wants to get out of the story and making predictions about the story based on the title and his prior knowledge of the topic. Then he moves on to the **monitoring** process and, as he reads, checks whether the story is making sense. However, as he reads he decides that, based on new information in the story, he needs to go back and revise some of his plans. He may decide to change his predictions, bring in new background knowledge, or even change goals. He continues reading and then decides to stop and **evaluate** himself after completing only the first part of the story. If he feels he

As a teacher, are you aware of your own use of any or all of these metacognitive processes? Gather some examples to share with your students as you present the model to them.

did not understand an important phrase or idea, he may need to go to the problem-solving process. In other words, he is using each process as it is needed during the task, although not necessarily sequentially.

EXAMPLE

When explaining the recursive nature of the model to students, you may use the analogy of the writing process. You begin by brainstorming ideas and then writing the first draft. While writing, you may decide that you need to generate more ideas and examples, so you go back to the beginning process. You then revise what you have written based on feedback and your evaluation of your work. Finally, you work through the recursive process until you are satisfied that what you have written is good.

Individual Strategies in the Metacognitive Model of Strategic Learning

This section presents individual strategies according to each of the four processes, as well as strategies for remembering information. Each strategy description contains the metacognitive components necessary for explicit strategy instruction: a definition of the strategy, an example of how the strategy can be used, and an explanation of why and when the strategy is useful. Although a strategy is grouped according to the process in which it most often occurs, it may be used in more than one process depending on the task and how the strategy is applied. Figure 2.2 on pages 15–17 provides a summary of the strategies.

Planning Strategies

Planning is a crucial first step toward becoming a self-regulated learner. The graphic of a calendar planner has been chosen to represent the planning process because planning for a learning task is similar to how people plan, organize, and schedule events daily, weekly, or monthly. Planning strategies help people develop and use forethought. They encourage thinking so that the learner reflects before beginning a task rather than diving into the activity unprepared and with little thought as to what will happen. During the planning process, good learners think about how they are going to approach and carry out the task. They set

Can you think of an instance when you could have completed a task more successfully if you had planned more thoroughly for it?

FIGURE 2.2

Learning Strategies				
STRATEGY	DEFINITION	OTHER POSSIBLE TERMS	METACOGNITIVE PROCESSES	
Set Goals	Develop personal objectives; identify the purpose of the task	Determine destination, Establish purpose, Plan objectives	Planning	
Directed Attention	Decide in advance to focus on particular tasks and ignore distractions	Pay attention	Planning, Monitoring, Problem-Solving, Evaluating	
Activate Background Knowledge	Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task	Use what you know, Elaborate on prior knowledge	Planning, Monitoring, Problem-Solving, Evaluating	
Predict	Anticipate information to prepare and give direction for the task	Anticipate, Guess outcome	Planning	
Organizational Planning	Plan the task and content sequence	Outline, Brainstorm, Priority list	Planning	
Self-Management	Arrange for conditions that help you learn	Know yourself, Plan how to study	Planning	
Ask if it Makes Sense	Check understanding and production to keep track of progress and identify problems	Monitor comprehension and production, Self-monitor	Monitoring	
Selectively Attend	Focus on key words, phrases, and ideas	Scan, Find specific information	Planning, Monitoring	
Deduction/Induction	Consciously apply learned or self-developed rules	Use a rule, Make a rule	Monitoring	

©1999, Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

FIGURE 2.2 (cont.)

STRATEGY	DEFINITION	OTHER POSSIBLE TERMS	METACOGNITIVE PROCESSES
Personalize/Contextualize	Relate information to personal experiences	Relate information to your experiences	Monitoring, Remembering information
Take Notes	Write down important words and concepts	T List, Semantic webs, Idea maps, Flow charts, Outlines	Planning, Monitoring, Problem-solving, Evaluating
Use Imagery	Create an image to represent information	Visualization, Mental picture, Draw a picture	Planning, Monitoring, Problem-solving, Evaluating, Remembering information
Manipulate/Act Out	Handle tangible objects, role-play, and pantomime	Pantomime, Use objects, Role-play	Monitoring, Evaluating, Remembering information
Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)	Reduce anxiety by reminding self of progress, resources available, goals	Positive thinking, Build confidence	Planning, Monitoring, Problem-solving, Evaluating
Cooperate	Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback	Work together, Peer coaching	Planning, Monitoring, Problem-solving, Evaluating, Remembering information
Inference	Make guesses based on previous knowledge	Logical guessing, Use context clues	Problem-solving
Substitute	Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words	Paraphrase, Circumlocute	Problem-solving
Ask Questions to Clarify	Ask for explanation, verification, and examples; Pose questions to self	Questioning	Planning, Monitoring, Problem-solving, Evaluating

©1999, Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

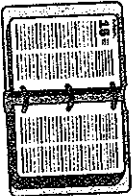
FIGURE 2.2 (cont.)

STRATEGY	DEFINITION	OTHER POSSIBLE TERMS	METACOGNITIVE PROCESSES
Use Resources	Use reference materials about the language and subject matter	Look it up	Problem-solving
Verify Predictions and Guesses	Check whether your predictions/guesses are correct	Verification	Evaluating
Summarize	Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information	Make a summary	Evaluating
Check Goals	Decide whether goal was met	Keep a learning log, Reflect on progress	Evaluating
Evaluate Yourself	Judge how well you learned the material/did on the task	Self-evaluate, Self-assess, Check yourself	Evaluating, Remembering information
Evaluate Your Strategies	Judge how you applied strategies and the effectiveness of strategies	Learning reflections, Assessing techniques	Evaluating
Imagine with Keyword	Create a visual and personal association between meaning and sound	Keyword Imagery method	Remembering information
Group/Classify	Relate or classify words according to attributes	Ordering, Categorizing, Labelling material	Remembering information
Transfer/ Cognates	Use previously acquired linguistic knowledge: Recognize words that are similar in other known languages		Monitoring, Problem-solving, Remembering information

©1999 Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

goals by thinking of their objectives for the task, and they come up with a plan of strategies to help them through the task so that they will meet those objectives. They decide to focus their attention on the task and to ignore distractions. Good learners think of what they already know about the task and the related topic and then predict what they might need to do based on this information.

Although planning always starts at the beginning, the process can be revisited throughout the task if one needs to rethink plans to get back on track. Following are descriptions of some of the most powerful planning strategies.



Planning Strategy 1

SET GOALS

(What is my goal for this task? What do I want to be able to do?)

DEFINITION: Goal setting involves understanding the task and deciding what you should get out of it.

EXAMPLE: If you are going to see a video of a reporter interviewing people about a social issue, your goal might be to understand each person's opinion.

WHY: Identifying your purpose gives you direction and allows you to plan appropriate and effective strategies.

WHEN: For all types of tasks

Planning Strategy 2

DIRECTED ATTENTION

(How can I focus my attention? How can I ignore distractions?)

DEFINITION: Directed attention involves making a conscious decision to focus all of your attention on the task at hand by ignoring mental, physical, and environmental distractions.

EXAMPLE: In your ESL class, you are reading a science text about magnetism. It is a beautiful day, and the birds are singing outside. You cannot wait until class is over so you can go outside and play soccer. You consciously tell yourself that you are going to focus on the science text for now and that you will think about soccer after class.

WHY: Focusing your attention is the first step in taking control of your learning. If you cannot control your focus of attention, little learning can take place. Directed attention helps you increase your level of concentration, a skill that can be transferred to other tasks.

WHEN: Whenever you are working on a challenging task; whenever you feel your attention wandering

Planning Strategy 3

ACTIVATE BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

(What do I already know about this?)

DEFINITION: Activating background knowledge helps bring to mind information that you know about the topic, the world, and the language to help you do the task.

EXAMPLE: If you are asked to read a fairy tale in the target language, think about what you know about typical characters, settings, and plots used in fairy tales.

WHY: Thinking about what you already know helps you get ready for the task by familiarizing yourself with it. By having in mind what you already know, you'll find it easier to understand and learn new information by relating it to your background knowledge.

WHEN: Whenever you know what the topic is and you have adequate knowledge of the topic or of related information; whenever new information comes up in the task

Planning Strategy 4

PREDICT

(What do I think will happen?)

DEFINITION: Predicting involves thinking of the kinds of words, phrases, and information that you can expect to encounter based on your background knowledge and/or on information you encounter during the task.

EXAMPLE: If you want to buy a concert ticket, think about what you will need to say to the cashier. For example, you will want to know how to ask about dates, times, and prices in the target language.

WHY: Anticipating information gives you direction for doing the task because you will be attuned to certain types of information.

WHEN: When you have knowledge of the topic; when new information is presented that allows you to refine or modify previous predictions or make new predictions



Keep in mind that due to cultural differences, predictions based on knowledge of your own culture may not always be accurate or appropriate for the target culture.

Planning Strategy 5

ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING

(What might I need to do? How can I plan for the task?)

DEFINITION: Organizational planning involves planning how you can accomplish the learning task, generating content in sequence, and brainstorming words, phrases, and information to use in the task.

EXAMPLE: When you are writing a story, develop a plan for the organizational sequence of the content. For instance, what will be in the beginning, middle, and end of the story? Think about the words and phrases you will need in your story.

WHY: Developing a plan before beginning the task gives you direction for the task and helps make sure that you will complete the task. Planning can also help reduce your anxiety by building your confidence through knowing what it is you have to do. By organizing and thinking beforehand, you will already have certain ideas, words, and phrases that you can use in the task.

WHEN: For all types of tasks

Planning Strategy 6

SELF-MANAGEMENT

(How can I best accomplish this task? What do I know best?)

DEFINITION: Self-management involves seeking or arranging the conditions that help you learn and focusing on what you know, including language structures, topics, and personal experiences.

EXAMPLE: If you are going to talk about pastimes, you may choose not to mention rollerblading because you do not know how to say it. Instead, you might focus on soccer, for which you know the target vocabulary.

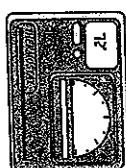
WHY: Focusing on what you know helps ensure that you will understand and be understood. Understanding the conditions in which you learn will help you perform to the best of your abilities.

WHEN: For any task

Monitoring Strategies

How conscientious are you about monitoring your progress as you work through a task? Do you consistently monitor the effectiveness of your teaching strategies and lessons?

While monitoring, students should think about where their focus of concentration needs to be at any given time and then consciously focus their attention on a specific aspect of the task. Learners monitor their comprehension and production by thinking about whether they are understanding when reading or listening or if they are making sense when writing or speaking. Learners also think about how the information they are receiving or producing fits in with their knowledge of the world based on their own experiences. They rely on their knowledge of the rules of language to make decisions about the language they are processing. If the task has a visual component, they may imagine a picture or think of a relevant situation to help them understand and produce language. When good students feel frustrated or overwhelmed, they give themselves encouragement by thinking about their learning tools, that is, their strategies. They use social skills to work with and learn from others while completing the task. The following monitoring strategies help students regulate their learning.



Monitoring Strategy 1

ASK IF IT MAKES SENSE

(Do I understand this? Am I making sense?)

DEFINITION: This strategy involves checking your understanding by asking yourself, "Is this making sense to me?" or checking your clarity by asking yourself, "Am I making sense?"

EXAMPLE: As you are reading a story, periodically ask yourself if you understand what's happening. If you're telling a friend a humorous story and she doesn't laugh, she might have misunderstood you.

WHY: Asking yourself if everything makes sense helps you to keep track of how you're doing and to identify problems.

WHEN: For all types of tasks, especially more challenging ones

Monitoring Strategy 2

SELECTIVELY ATTEND

(What parts should I pay most attention to? Is this information important?)

DEFINITION: Selective attention involves choosing to focus on specific aspects of language or situational details that will help you perform the task.

EXAMPLE: If you have to read a train schedule to get to your destination, you might choose to focus on finding departure times and platform numbers.

WHY: Deciding to focus on specific information makes it easier to identify the critical information for your goal because you can give it full concentration and ignore distractions. You can also choose to focus on information you know to help you understand and communicate better.

Focusing on information you don't know can help you pinpoint problems and expand your learning.

WHEN: Useful for a variety of tasks, especially if your goal requires you to understand or give specific information

Monitoring Strategy 3

DEDUCTION/INDUCTION

(Which rules can I apply to help me in this situation?)

DEFINITION: Deduction and induction involve your applying or figuring out rules about language, including grammar, phonology, and morphology.

EXAMPLE: When you are reading, you look at the ends of words to identify which ones are verbs in order to note the tense of speech.

WHY: Using your knowledge of language rules helps you comprehend and produce the language accurately. Deduction increases your self-reliance because you can monitor your performance based on information you have about the language. Feelings of self-reliance can lead to increased confidence in your learning abilities.

WHEN: Whenever you need to apply rules in order to understand and produce language and you have knowledge of the necessary rules

Monitoring Strategy 4

PERSONALIZE/CONTEXTUALIZE

(How does this fit with my experiences? How does this fit in with the real world?)

DEFINITION: Personalizing or contextualizing involves comparing the message to your background knowledge to see if it makes sense.

EXAMPLE: As you are reading a cooking recipe, think about your own culinary experiences to help you understand and figure out ingredients and the sequence of the steps.

WHY: Checking language input and output against what you know helps you ensure that it makes sense. Connecting information to your experiences makes it more meaningful to you and thus more memorable.

WHEN: For all tasks, however, be aware that cultural differences may exist; also useful for remembering

Monitoring Strategy 5

TAKE NOTES

(What important information can I write down?)

DEFINITION: Taking notes involves your writing down key words and concepts in abbreviated verbal, graphic, or numerical form.

EXAMPLE: You are reading a dense text about computers. You know you have to understand the text because you will have a quiz on the information. You take notes by making a T list, in which you jot down the main ideas and supporting details of each paragraph.

WHY: You can refer back to notes at any time. Writing down important information in a format such as a T list, semantic web, or outline can help you remember and understand better because you are establishing additional mental links that organize the information.

WHEN: Whenever you need to remember or refer back to information, whenever information is complex; whenever written notes can help you perform the task

Main idea

Supporting Details

Monitoring Strategy 6

USE IMAGERY

(Can I imagine a situation or draw a picture that will help me understand?)

DEFINITION: Using imagery involves creating an image that helps you represent information.

EXAMPLE: If you read a story that involves a change of seasons, your "mental movie" could depict changing scenery. When writing in the target language about your first trip to a city, play back images of the trip in your mind.

WHY: Forming pictures is a way to check if the information makes sense; you can watch for inconsistencies in your "mental movie." Mental links with images also help you remember the information.

WHEN: Whenever the content lends itself to vivid visual images; also useful for remembering

Monitoring Strategy 7

MANIPULATE/ACT OUT

(Can I use real objects or act out the situation to help me do this?)

DEFINITION: This strategy involves your manipulating tangible objects, role-playing, or pantomiming the situation to contextualize language.

EXAMPLE: If you are practicing phrases regarding health, you could role-play a visit to a doctor's office.

WHY: Objects and actions help you create mental links with information and these links help you learn and remember.

WHEN: Whenever available; easiest for concrete concepts and situations; can make abstract concepts more concrete; also useful for remembering

Monitoring Strategy 8

TALK YOURSELF THROUGH IT (SELF-TALK)

(I can do this! What strategies can I use to help me?)

DEFINITION: Self-talk involves making positive statements such as "I can do it" to help yourself get through challenging tasks.

EXAMPLE: If you're reading a scientific article in the target language, you could tell yourself, "Don't give up on this!" or "It's okay that I don't understand the whole thing."

WHY: Reassuring yourself while doing difficult tasks may enable you to do more than you thought you could because even if you can't do the task perfectly, you can probably do some of it.

WHEN: For all types of challenging tasks; helpful if you tend to get nervous when speaking in the target language or when taking a test

Monitoring Strategy 9

COOPERATE

(How can I work with others to do this?)

DEFINITION: Cooperation involves your working with classmates to complete tasks and/or to give and receive feedback.

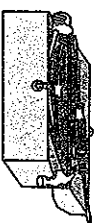
EXAMPLE: If you have to give a speech in class, practice with a peer, who will ask questions that he or she thinks the teacher or other students might ask.

WHY: Working with other people gives you a chance to share your strengths so that you all can do a better job.

WHEN: When classmates are available or the task requires group work; whenever you need feedback; also useful for remembering

Problem-Solving Strategies

When good students have difficulty at any time during a task, they choose a strategy from the problem-solving process. For instance, if they do not know the meaning of a word, they make an educated guess based on all available information. If they do not know how to say something, they think of another way to say it or they say something different. They use any resource available to them to solve the problem, whether it comes from within themselves, through reference materials, or from another person. The strategies included in the problem-solving process range from solving problems autonomously by making a guess based on the context to looking up information in a dictionary. Students who actively and appropriately engage in problem solving are more successful at learning tasks.



Problem-Solving Strategy 1

INFERENCE

(Can I guess what this might mean?)

DEFINITION: Inferring involves guessing the meaning of unfamiliar language based on what you know, the content, the language, and other contextual clues (for example, nonverbal cues and pictures).

EXAMPLE: You are reading a dialogue about school, and you repeatedly see the word meaning "to study," which is not familiar to you. Based on your knowledge of the language, you figure out that this word is probably a verb. Many of the words in close proximity to the unknown word are cognates such as mathematics, literature, biology, and music. Based on this information, you make a guess that the word must mean "to study."

WHY: Often, the information you need to solve problems is already available if you just look at other parts of the task and at your own resources. Drawing inferences can help you quickly solve problems yourself without having to go to another person or to reference materials.

WHEN: When something doesn't make sense to you; when necessary context is available

Evaluate your own problem-solving skills and strategies by reflecting on a recent task that you had some difficulty completing. Were you able to identify what your problems were? How did you resolve them?

Problem-Solving Strategy 2

SUBSTITUTE

(How else can I say this? Is there another word that might fit?)

DEFINITION: This strategy involves substituting known words or phrases when you do not know or cannot remember a specific word or phrase.

EXAMPLE: You have lost your contact lens in the sink. You do not know how to say contact lens in the target language. You could describe it by saying that it is a small, round, plastic thing that you put in your eye to help you see.

WHY: Substituting allows you to quickly solve a problem so that you can keep communication going because it is difficult to know every word in the target language and constant use of a dictionary can impede and slow down communication. Substituting also helps you to communicate correctly because you are relying on language that you know.

WHEN: When you do not know how to say something; when you know another way to communicate what you want to say

Problem-Solving Strategy 3

ASK QUESTIONS TO CLARIFY

(What help do I need? Who can I ask? How should I ask?)

DEFINITION: Clarifying involves your asking for explanation, verification, rephrasing, or examples.

EXAMPLE: If your teacher says an unfamiliar word, such as *alberici*, when you're studying professions, you could figure out the meaning by asking questions such as "Does the person work in the city or country? Is it an indoor job or outdoor job?" Specific questions like this can give you the information needed to figure out the word's meaning without your just asking, "What does that mean?"

WHY: Pinpointing and communicating your problems by asking specific questions can help you solve comprehension and communication problems.

WHEN: Whenever something important doesn't make sense to you or you don't know how to say something and others who can help you are available

Problem-Solving Strategy 4

USE RESOURCES

(What information do I need? Where can I find more information about this?)

DEFINITION: This strategy involves your using reference materials such as dictionaries, textbooks, computer programs, CD-ROMs, and the Internet.

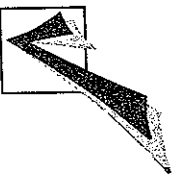
EXAMPLE: If you get confused when reading a novel and you notice an unfamiliar verb structure, you could look in your textbook index to locate information on the structure.

WHY: Looking up unfamiliar information in a reference source can help you solve complex problems, especially if no one is available to help you.

WHEN: When something crucial doesn't make sense to you or you don't know how to say something that is crucial to your message

Evaluating Strategies

After completing part or all of a task, good learners reflect on how well it went. This process allows them to see if they carried out their plans and to check how well strategies helped. Strategic students assess whether they met their goals for the task and if they did not, why they didn't meet those goals and what they can do differently next time. They evaluate the appropriateness of their predictions and guesses. If those were not correct, good learners think of how they can learn to make better ones next time. Regardless of whether the self-evaluation is positive or negative, it is important for students to learn from it so they can make improvements on the next task.



Evaluating Strategy 1

VERIFY PREDICTIONS AND GUESSES

(Were my predictions and guesses right? Why or why not?)

DEFINITION: This strategy involves checking whether your predictions and expectations were met while you carried out the task.

EXAMPLE: If you predicted that you might hear words for temperature, precipitation, sunny, or cold in a weather report, think about which of these words you actually heard.

WHY: Evaluating the appropriateness of your predictions and expectations helps you decide how well you've related your background knowledge to new information. It also reinforces your understanding of the information.

WHEN: After getting new information about a prediction or after completing the task

How do you assess whether a lesson you taught was successful? What methods do you use to evaluate your own performance as an instructor?

Evaluating Strategy 2

SUMMARIZE

(What is the gist of this? What is the main idea?)

DEFINITION: Summarizing involves your creating a mental, oral, or written summary of information.

EXAMPLE: If you watch a television program in the target language, you could periodically think about the gist or main points of the program to see if you really understand it.

WHY: Restating the gist of the message helps you decide how well you understood. It also reinforces your learning of that message.

WHEN: Whenever you want to check your understanding or communication

Evaluating Strategy 3

CHECK GOALS

(Did I meet my goal?)

DEFINITION: This strategy involves deciding whether you met your goal for the task.

EXAMPLE: If you are writing a letter to an e-mail pal, reread it to see if it communicates the information you wanted to share.

WHY: Asking yourself, "Did I accomplish what I set out to do?" should help you decide whether you need to go back and rephrase, add

additional information, reread a text, or ask for more information.

WHEN: At the end of a task or whenever you aren't sure how well you're meeting your goal

Evaluating Strategy 4

EVALUATE YOURSELF

(How well did I do?)

DEFINITION: Evaluating yourself involves checking how well you understood or used the language in the task.

EXAMPLE: If you're reading a newspaper article for class, you could mentally give yourself a grade that represents how well you understood it.

WHY: Self-evaluating helps you identify your strengths and weaknesses so that you can do better next time.

WHEN: At the end of a task or whenever you aren't sure how well you're using or understanding the language; also useful for remembering

Evaluating Strategy 5

EVALUATE YOUR STRATEGIES

(Did I choose good strategies? What could I do differently next time?)

DEFINITION: Evaluating your strategies involves judging how well you applied the strategies to the task, judging how effective and appropriate your strategies were for that particular task, identifying why a strategy was helpful or not-so-helpful for the task, comparing the usefulness of various strategies on the same task, and thinking about better strategies you could have used.

EXAMPLE: If you made predictions based on your knowledge of Japanese foods, but you still didn't understand a restaurant video, think about why predicting didn't help. Maybe your knowledge of Japanese foods is more limited than you thought, and your predictions were incorrect. You could also think about other strategies that would be more helpful, such as paying attention to names that are given to specific dishes shown in the next restaurant video.

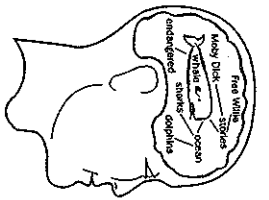
WHY: Assessing strategies use helps you decide when certain strategies work best so you can choose appropriate strategies in the future.

WHEN: For all types of tasks

Strategies for Remembering Vocabulary and Other Information

In addition to comprehending and producing information, students must learn to use grammar and the sound system and to remember information related to social and cultural behaviors, subject matter, and vocabulary. Students often mention the use of repetition to learn language, for example, "I keep going over the same word over and over again until it sticks." While repeated exposure to materials will increase students' chance of remembering information, the sheer volume of material in language acquisition indicates that more efficient strategies may be necessary. The strategies suggested here help students to learn and remember information for a long period of time by building bridges in the learner's mind. Information is retained and connected in the brain through mental links or pathways that are mapped onto an individual's existing schemata. If the links are numerous and personally meaningful, the information is easier to memorize and recall later. Making meaningful associations with new words and phrases can make vocabulary acquisition more effective and efficient.

What are your favorite strategies for remembering information? Share these with your students.



Remembering Strategy 1

IMAGINE WITH KEYWORD
(I use the keyword imagery method to remember vocabulary.)

DEFINITION:

Step 1: Think of a "keyword" that sounds like the new word, and imagine it as a picture.
Step 2: Think of a picture that describes the meaning of the new word or information.

Step 3: Link the pictures together mentally. Crazy-linking pictures are easy to remember.

Example: Spanish word: *pato* Definition: duck Keyword/image: a

cooking pot

Interactive image: a duck wearing a cooking pot on its head

WHY: Using the keyword method creates a visual and personal association between meaning and sound. These mental links help you to remember the vocabulary item.

WHEN: Whenever you can think of an appropriate keyword that sounds like the target word and you can imagine pictures that represent the keyword and target word

Remembering Strategy 2

GROUP/CLASSIFY

(I create categories.)

DEFINITION: Grouping involves your creating categories by relating or classifying words according to attributes.

EXAMPLE: If the word means "sun," think of words that are associated with it, such as hot, suntan, and beach. When learning new vocabulary words, try grouping them into categories that are meaningful to you.

WHY: Grouping vocabulary creates mental links between words. These links help you recall related words.
WHEN: Whenever you are trying to remember a set of words that are somehow related or that can be categorized into meaningful groups

Remembering Strategy 3

TRANSFER/COGNATES

(I use my knowledge of this language or other languages. I use cognates from English or other languages.)

DEFINITION: This strategy involves using what you already know about language (prefixes, suffixes, and roots; verbs, nouns) to help you recognize and remember new words. It also involves recognizing words in the target language that are similar to words in English or other languages that you know and thinking about how the meanings are related (cognates).

EXAMPLE: The Spanish word *teléfono* is a cognate for telephone. The English word *baseball* is a cognate in many other languages. The words sound alike.

WHY: Focusing on word forms helps you deductively figure out and remember meaning. Learning cognates (words that sound similar in different languages) is an easy and quick way to increase your vocabulary.

WHEN: When you recognize the meaning of a word or know a rule that applies

Strategy Combinations

Learning strategies in action are complex behaviors that rarely occur as single instances. Normally we use strategies in combinations to complete a task. The following quotations were obtained from students through think-aloud interviews in which students verbalized their thoughts while working on a language task. They illustrate how many strategies can be used in a short amount of time. In the first example, a high school student studying Russian is reading in Russian the following sentence: "Larissa and Vadim study at the technical institute in the evenings."

"First I am going to look for words, root words, that I know of... right there is the root word of 'to study' and then 'institute.' I sounded it out in my head, and it sounds the same as in English and Spanish, so I put it together. That word kind of looks like 'in the evening' so I put it together, they probably study at the institute in



Cognates are words that have obvious parallels to words in your native language, when the words have similar meanings. Beware of "false cognates." If the meanings aren't related, making a wrong connection could just confuse you.

the evening. That word right there also kind of looks like 'technical' in English, so I am guessing that that means the institute has something to do with technology."

The student begins by using *selective attention* to look for known root words. Then he uses *deduction* to construct the meaning of the word "study" by looking at its morphological root. The strategies *deduction* and *cognates* allow him to get the meaning of the word for institute. He *verifies* this guess through his knowledge of Spanish. He again uses *deduction* to identify the word for "evening" and *cognates* to identify the technology. He puts the whole thing together by *summarizing* to see if the sentence makes sense to him. Thus, for trying to figure out one sentence, this highly effective student has used six different strategies for a total of eight strategy applications. He was able to successfully read the sentence by using a combination of strategies. He would not have been as successful had he relied on only one or two strategies.

Strategies are often more powerful when they are used in appropriate combinations. In the following example, a student is reading a dialogue. She uses her *background knowledge* to make an *inference*. However, she goes a step further by *verifying* her initial guess. Based on additional information in the text, she revises her *inference* and *verifies* her new guess. This time her *verification* reinforces her *inference*.

"It looks like a list of something because of the dashes—that's how I do lists, but now it looks like a dialogue because they ask a question and then they name a list of foods and it seems like a response to a question. So I decide that it's a dialogue."

By using three strategies together—*background knowledge*, *inferencing*, and *verifying*—the student is able to accurately understand the text. None of these strategies in isolation would have been as effective as the three in combination. *Activating background knowledge*, *predicting*, and *verifying* are also usually used in combination. Teachers should be aware that although students will normally make predictions based on their *background knowledge*, they rarely *verify* predictions or inferences. Taking that final evaluative step of *verification* enables students to see whether their guesses were accurate. If they were accurate, then they can feel confident in their understanding. If guesses were not accurate, then students need to revise and to think about why their guesses were not correct so that they can make better guesses next time.

Goal setting and goal checking are two strategies that should always be used together. If learners set goals, they need to check whether they

met their goals; otherwise, there is no point in setting goals. Evaluating progress towards their goals can give learners confidence if progress is being made. When students are not meeting their goals, then they may need to reflect on their plans and their actions for reaching their goals.

Assessing strategies use is one evaluation strategy that should be used with every strategy. Reflecting on how a strategy has worked can help students evaluate the usefulness of the strategy. Students need to think about whether the strategy was effective for the given task so that they will know how and when they can transfer the strategy to another task.

The problem-solving strategies are often used in combination as a series of steps that learners can work through when faced with a challenging task. When the learner encounters a problem, she first attempts to solve it herself by using *inferencing*, in which she relies on her knowledge and information provided in the task. If she is unable to solve the problem or she wants to *verify* her inference, she can ask a question of someone whom she feels would be a good, reliable source of knowledge about the problem area. If no one is available, she can then *access reference materials* and look up answers to her questions. Used in combination, these three strategies can help learners solve many problems.

This section presented some common strategies combinations. However, other combinations are possible. Task requirements and learner characteristics determine which strategies should be used and in which combination.

Conclusion

Many strategies are used in language learning. This chapter organized numerous strategies into a metacognitive model with four processes: *planning*, *monitoring*, *problem solving*, and *evaluating*. Teachers should teach the model to their students so that students understand the four processes. (See Chapter 5 for ideas on how to present the model to students.) However, teachers should be selective and thoughtful when choosing which strategies to teach their students. Teaching too many strategies at one time will overwhelm and confuse students. Conversely, teaching too few strategies may bore students by not challenging their intellects. Teachers should look at their instructional materials to determine which strategies to teach and when to introduce the strategies in the curriculum. More information on how to teach strategies through an instructional framework is presented in the next chapter.