

## Language Learning Strategies

**In order to become independent learners, students need to develop the necessary skills to lead their own learning and become resilient linguists. These skills will include planning, analysing and evaluating ways of learning; being able to communicate; ways to practise the language; strategies to support memorisation; and the ability to apply their prior knowledge. Advice for students includes:**

### **a) Patterns within the language**

- Each language has its own word classes. The main ones are verb, noun, adjective, adverb, pronoun, determiner, preposition and conjunction. Make sure that you know key ones from your chosen language. Note that a word can belong to more than one class, for example, fit is a noun – a fit – a verb – they fit – or an adjective – he is fit
- Many languages will have simple agreements, singular and plural
- Languages may have different writing systems
- Text in different languages can have the same conventions of style and layout, or they may be quite different
- Conventions of politeness can be different in distinct languages, for example, the use of tu and vous in French
- You will need to work out the typical conventions of word order in your language, for example, the verb at the end of the phrase in German and Turkish.

### **b) Memorising**

One of the challenges facing you when learning a language is how best to remember not only words and phrases but also the rules that allow you to make these words and phrases into meaningful communication. Here are some strategies for you to try:

- Think about how you learn best then use your favourite techniques to help you to record work, for example, design your own vocabulary book with visual clues or using the first letter; use a computer to store vocabulary; or write on individual index cards
- Stick post-it notes with key vocabulary around your room
- Review essential structures to music, especially music with 60-70 beats a minute to help fix things in your long term memory
- Learn songs in the new language, especially those with catchy tunes or known melodies
- Play games which require movement or physical responses. Games can be engaging, facilitate the necessary repetition of language and develop confidence and fluency
- When you come across a new word, devise an action to go with it which you carry out each time you come across the new word

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- Say words to a rhythm or beat them out e.g. on a drum
- Identify what new things you want to learn in a new project plus recall things that you already know which will be useful to you
- Use mental association to help you link new words to already known ones. Relate new phrases to already known languages such as English
- Memorise and recite a short text or poem or rule
- Listen and respond with gestures to simple stories, rhymes and songs
- Look, say, cover, write, check
- Put things into a verse and make them rhyme
- Visualisation – place the information into your visual memory by making it bright, colourful, moving and big
- Draw a memory map using strong visuals, patterning and key words
- Highlighter pens can be used to highlight key words so that they stand out or use different colours for different words, for example, verbs and nouns
- Attach some new knowledge to a place or a face that you know well. In recalling the face or place, the information accompanies it
- Write your own mnemonic to remember a specific string of words.

#### **c) Comparing languages**

- Talk to those who know other languages about differences and similarities
- Look at the positioning of the adjective in relation to the noun; the position of the verb in a sentence; what masculine and feminine mean; the type of script used
- Do not be afraid to use English as a key source of language awareness work
- Notice the different conventions of politeness.

#### **d) Clues and context**

- Apply your knowledge of rules when building sentences
- Look for visual clues and things like headings and sub headings to help you with understanding a written text
- Highlight cognates and near cognates in a text. The term “cognate” is commonly used to denote words which are identical or very close to their English equivalent in spelling and meaning, for example, *important* in English and French
- However, be careful of a “false friend” – a word which looks like a word in another language but does not mean the same thing, for example, the French *un coin* does not mean a coin in English
- Use your knowledge of the sentence pattern to build your own sentences
- When listening, identify first a few key words. Keep calm and do not expect to understand everything. Look for clues such as body language, gesture and mouth shape
- Try to find out what the Big Picture is about a piece of text so that you know the context in which the language is set.

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**e) Using tools**

- Learn how to use a dictionary and a glossary as well as the internet to research things
- Take care when using Google translate – do not blindly accept what they come up with. Understand that words will not always have a direct equivalent in the language
- Take advantage of the expertise around you – whether it be your peers or mentors
- Use authentic texts – these are most up-to-date on the internet
- Listen to a variety of native speakers to help you develop accuracy in your pronunciation and intonation.

**f) Reading aloud**

- Read aloud familiar words, making the links between phonemes, rhymes and spellings
- Read aloud unknown words by applying rules of the sound/spelling system.

**g) Planning ahead**

- Plan and prepare – analyse what needs to be done to carry out a task, draw up your own project plan
- Integrate new language into previously learnt language
- Use words or phrases learnt in one context in a different one.