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Contributions of study skills to language learning

Título: Contributions of study skills to language learning.. **Target**: Educación secundaria. **Asignatura**: Lengua extranjera. **Autor**: Patricia Gamarro Gutierrez, Licenciada en Filología Inglesa.

The main purpose of this writing is to provide language learners with different approaches to learning .In order to do so , attention is focused on learners and skills .On the one hand , we should focus on the skills that learners have or will acquire ,and how those skills are converted into successful resources for the future .On the other hand , we underline the fact that learners need to know how they can exploit their abilities and which ones are the best for them .

Firstly , we help learners to provide a profile of themselves according to their approaches to learning. In this way , students describe themselves and became aware of the type of learners they are .It is really useful to provide students with a list of strategies for language learning .Their task is ticking the appropriate box according to how useful they consider these strategies to be .By completing this task , we make students learn about the main profiles that are characterized by the use of different strategies .

Chart for language learning skills

Tick the appropriate box : 4 very useful , 3 useful ,2 not useful ,1 undecided .

	1	2	3	4
Asking other learners for information				
Memorizing list of words				
Taking opportunities to practice in class				
Listen attentively				
Seeking feedback from the teacher				
Avoiding grammatical analysis				
Self-correcting while you speak				
Using other learners as models				
Using aids to memory				
Using the context to guess a meaning				
Helping other learners				
Writing down new words to help your memory				
Avoiding to think in your mother tongue				
Copying what the teacher writes on the board				
Seeking feedback from other learners				
Writing down words to help your pronunciation				
Repeating and practicing orally				
Using translation to understand new language				

Chart for general study skills

Tick the appropriate box : 4 very useful , 3 useful ,2 not useful ,1 undecided .

	1	2	3	4
Questioning the information presented				
Learning to take some initiatives on my own				
Being able to learn important information				
Organizing my own time in order to meet deadlines				
Taking part in problem –solving activities				
Mastering reading efficiently				
Listening efficiently				
Developing better levels of perception				
Developing better levels of thinking				
Developing my own strategies to approach tasks				
Developing better levels of understanding				
Using my existing knowledge to understand new concepts and solving new problems .				
Being able to do what the tutor asks me to do				
Working very hard at something I found difficult at first.				

Passive learners use strategies like, avoiding the use of unfamiliar grammatical structures , being afraid to make mistakes ,taking low risk and avoiding grammatical analysis among others.

Active learners boast of confidence , determination and commitment. This type of learners take advantage of strategies like practicing language inside and outside the classroom ,being willing to make mistakes ,asking for explanations if unsure , consulting the dictionary , working on understanding patterns and using context to guess meaning.

Successful language learners are characterized by internal and external motivation , responsibility , ability to manage time .Their profile can be described by means of strategies like taking part in problem –solving activities ; learning to take some initiatives of their own ;learning more about subjects studied ; working very hard at something learners find difficult at first; questioning the information presented ;practicing language outside class ; self-correcting while they speak ; asking the teacher for explanations and new words ;trying to understand the underlying pattern of new language ; seeking feedback from the teacher and from the learners ;writing down new words to help their memory or avoiding to think in their mother tongue among others .

Secondly , learners ´main problem is having so little time and so much to do .This is why learners should practice strategies to manage time to their advantage .These strategies consist of organizing time and themselves looking at circumstances , eliminating time wasters , checking the working environment that suits them best and carrying out a task analysis .So they can organize time avoiding so much stress .

As far as time management is concerned ,we propose to make students invest some time in semester planning and weekly timetables. By elaborating a timetable , learners get advantages like setting a balance between study and social life , fitting study to personality , knowing themselves and saving time among others .Tutors can provide students with weekly and semester planners as examples to create their own ones.

Semester planner

WEEK 1	Introduction to the course , register and meet new people
WEEK 2	Organize how I am going to manage time in order to cope with all the subjects
WEEK 3	Study all the subjects
WEEK 4	Focus on the subject every day and look for information to do coursework
WEEK 5	Look for bibliography in order to make the study of difficult topics easier and make outlines for coursework of every subject.
WEEK 6	Reading week
WEEK 7	Ask teachers about doubts that have arisen when reading all the topics studied .
WEEK 8	Study all the subjects ,paying much more attention to the more difficult subject and do coursework.
WEEK 9	Study all the subjects ,paying much more attention to the more difficult subjects and do the coursework.
WEEK 10	Once I have studied all the subjects , I have no doubts and I have looked for information and I make outlines for every subject in order to make revision easier.
WEEK 11	I keep studying and making outlines.
WEEK 12	I make sure I understand everything that has been explained in class and revise coursework
WEEK 13	Revision week.

Why is task analysis so important? Task analysis plays an important role in the development of time management strategies .Successful language learners are able to accomplish given tasks according to different steps. This task analysis consists of matching curriculum components and the capabilities of students .The main capabilities are vocabulary learning , reading , note taking , writing , listening and speaking .

It is also interesting to highlight the importance of organization in the learning process .Students can start understanding the importance organization skills by asking themselves questions such as Where are your notes ? Can you find a piece of work you did last week ? Do you have no workspace and is there any clear spot on it ? .The following step can be comparing their organization with their friends .Learners should learn about the best way of organizing notes and eliminating time wasters .Important information is kept in reasonable order and things are revised .Phone calls , tv and socializing , contacting people and locating resources are time wasters when learners are trying to study and complete tasks by managing time and avoiding stress .

Another useful and interesting strategy is organizing tasks according to three trays and a bin .The first tray contains urgent and important thing to do .The second tray includes urgent but not important tasks to do if they can .In the third tray , there are important but not urgent tasks that they have to start before those tasks become urgent .

Moreover , we can propose students to answer a list of questions about their working environment such as At what time of the day do you study best?; How long can you concentrate before you need a break ?; Where do you study best?; Do I study better under pressure ? ; Do you work better alone or with others ?.Teachers should use the answers to these questions to make students fit their study to their personality .

Summing up , communication skills , interpersonal social skills , organizational skills, problem analysis and solution ,teamwork , adaptability and technical approach are important skills that should be developed by students .These skills have to be exploited together with strategies for organizing time like making lists and ticking off tasks done ,differentiating between weak and strong subjects and changing subjects every 50 minutes .The development of useful skills and time management strategies give rise to successful language learners .   ●

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