Learning strategies: bridging the gap between competence and process

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"Knowing what to do when you don't know what to do"
Unless you know everything, what you need is to think.
Competence ...

... and process
The curriculum iceberg

explicit

implicit

"process"
Can recognise significant points in straightforward newspaper articles on familiar subjects.

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<th>A1</th>
<th>A2</th>
<th>B1</th>
<th>B2</th>
<th>C1</th>
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Example of descriptor
(Reading, B1 level)

Common European Framework
competence

performance 1

performance 2

performance 3

performance 4
performance
Strategies

- read headings and subheadings
- look out for key words
- consider print features like **bold**, *italics*
- look at the photographs and read the captions
- read the beginning of each paragraph
Strategies

- plan length and time needed
- choose an appropriate strategy (e.g., skimming)
- monitor comprehension while reading
- evaluate result and strategies used

metacognitive
Strategies

- ask for help if possible
- control distractions
- manage anxiety and stress
- reward oneself for results

socio-affective motivational
Strategies

deduce meaning of unfamiliar words

fill in gaps in comprehension with "temporary" guesses

look for external resources

compensation
performance

strategies

learning processes

styles, intelligences, aptitudes
global, random, intuitive
analytic, sequential, systematic
visual verbal
visual non-verbal
impulsive, risk-taking
performance
strategies
learning
processes
styles, intelligences, aptitudes
beliefs, attitudes, motivation
There are various ways to read a text

You don't need to understand every single word

You have to take reasonable risks

You need to tolerate ambiguity
performance

strategies

learning processes

styles, intelligences, aptitudes

beliefs, attitudes, motivation
“I took a course in speed reading, learning to read straight down the middle of the page, and was able to read War and Peace in twenty minutes. It’s about Russia.”

Woody Allen
LISTENING TASK # 1
Listen to some telephone conversations. For each conversation try to understand why the person is calling and what the main message is.

BEFORE LISTENING: SUGGESTED GUIDELINES
First listening: Don’t try to understand everything! Try to understand only
• Who’s calling? A man or a woman? A friend, a relative, a person in authority?
• Is the person who is called at home?
• If s/he isn’t, does the caller leave a message?
Second listening: try to understand the reason for each call.
Third listening: try to understand the main message.
**AFTER LISTENING**

Complete this grid. Then discuss it with your friends and your teacher.

Did you use the suggested guidelines? If you did, did they help you with the task?

What was easy in each of the three listening stages? What was difficult? Why?

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<th>This was easy</th>
<th>This was difficult</th>
<th>Why?</th>
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<td>1º listening</td>
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<td>3º listening</td>
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LISTENING TASK #2

Listen to three short conversations in which Simon and Julie express some personal opinions. For each conversation try to understand

a) what they are talking about;

b) if their opinions are positive or negative;

c) what more specific comments they make.
**BEFORE LISTENING**

Read what these students do when they listen to conversations in an English class. Do you do the same? What seems most useful to you? Tick √ your choices, then compare them with a classmate.

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**Do you do the same?**

- [ ] I try to understand every single word.
- [ ] I read the task instructions carefully to check what exactly I have to understand.
- [ ] I immediately get anxious and think I won’t understand anything.
- [ ] I pay attention to the different tones of voice and background noises.
- [ ] I get stuck if I miss something.
- [ ] I carry on listening and try to put together the bits that I understand.

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**What seems most useful to you?**

- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
AFTER LISTENING
Discuss with your classmates and your teacher.

- Did you have problems in this task? What caused them?
- How did you cope with the problems? What helped you?
LISTENING TO A DIALOGUE

Problems

Strategies
Strategy education: The 4E approach

$E = \text{explicit}$

$E = \text{experiential}$

$E = \text{embedded}$

$E = \text{evaluative}$
Strategy education: The 4E approach

Explicit
\( E = \text{explicit} \)

strategies

beliefs

attitudes
Strategy education: The 4E approach

Embedded
task difficulty  learner's skill level
Strategy education: The 4E approach

Experiential
experience

reflection
Strategy education: The 4E approach

Evaluative
Is this strategy good for me?

Is it appropriate for this task?
Direct strategy activation

Strategy discovery
Direct strategy activation

- suggest - do not not impose
- make support readily available
- provide examples and models before task execution
- have students evaluate strategies just after task completion
Strategy discovery

Before the task ...
elicit expectations, beliefs, attitudes, habits, anxieties ...

After the task ...
elicit strategies, together with the problems that triggered their use
a strategic metacognitive approach

- promote learning strategies so that learners can
  - experiment with and self-assess a variety of strategies
  - grow in awareness, flexibility and self-regulation

learner empowerment
Learner empowerment

Not just a result in terms of linguistic and communicative competence, but also in terms of learning process - increasing self-efficacy, self-esteem, and expectations of success.
Now I know the rules of the game. I can try harder, play better and maybe win.
A big Thank you! from Italy

Learning Paths

www.learningpaths.org

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