

# Effective strategies for learning second language

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**Abstract:** Nowadays, it is widely acknowledged that learning strategies have become one of the main factors that help students to learn a second or foreign language successfully. Also, this article mainly describes effective strategies for learning second language.

**Key words:** Effective strategies, second language, grammatical, communicative, cognitive, self-planning,

Individuals whose findings continually remind educators of the power of designing, adapting, or applying effective teaching methods in order to promote the use or creation of learning strategies that pave the way for learners to take charge of their own development in language learning and consequently increase their autonomous learning. In light of these researchers, this paper is aimed at defining learning strategies in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and at analyzing L2 approaches—Grammatical, Communicative, and Cognitive—to identify which of these approaches guide teachers in applying appropriate methods that promote the use of learning strategies in the process of SLA. It also discusses the effectiveness of the Biography Driven Instruction (BDI) model proposed. Finally, a more practical part follows with an explanation on how four strategies were used successfully in the classroom. This part draws on classroom experience from working as an English language teacher with fifth year secondary school students (16 years old) in a co-ed public school in Ecuador. In general, this school had a class size of about 42 students who received EFL instruction five hours per week. Most of the studies cited here were conducted in settings of English as a second or foreign language (ESL or EFL); therefore, the term “L2” will be considered in this paper to refer to either EFL or ESL classrooms.

## Approaches and Models to L2 Instruction

Among the main approaches to second language instruction emphasized are the grammatical approach, communicative approach, or cognitive approach. These L2 approaches will be discussed in detail below to identify which of these approaches allow educators to employ effective methods that promote strategies and tools in the classroom. Grammatical Approach Earlier research has shown that this historical approach emerged two centuries ago with the purpose of teaching Greek and Latin, whose instruction viewed language learning as a mental discipline. This teacher-centered approach is mainly focused on teaching L2 grammar structures. The main methods used in this approach are as follows: Grammar Translation (e.g., focus on reading, writing, grammar, and translation into the First Language (L1). Research reveals several strategies that learners can choose when they are learning a second language. In general, drills, rote memorization, dialogue memorization, repetition, and kinetics are learning strategies associated with the grammatical approach.

## Communicative Approach

This contemporary approach, which communicative, grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic) which are nurtured through authentic materials, activities, and strategies in order to enable students to have a meaningful acquisition of L2 language. The main methods used in this approach are as follows: Oxford documented 62 strategies which were classified into six categories: cognitive (e.g., reasoning, analysis, summarizing); metacognitive (e.g., self-planning, arranging, evaluating);

memory-related (e.g., grouping, associating, and using imagery); compensatory (e.g., guessing, switching to L1); affective (e.g., using music, laughter, meditation); and social (e.g., becoming aware of other points of view). Cognitive Approach

The cognitive approach emerged from new understanding of cognitive psychological view of learning process. This new learner-centered paradigm had its “origins in the 1980s and 1990s research on learning functions, memory, and cognition”. The crucial component of this approach is to promote the use of learning strategies in the classroom. The main method used in this approach is known as Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) which is focused on cognitive development in L1 and L2, prior knowledge, and explicit instruction in learning strategies. The main method used in this approach is known as Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) which is focused on cognitive development in L1 and L2, prior knowledge, and explicit instruction in learning strategies. Cognitive strategies include manipulation mental and physical of the material to be learned. Such strategies are known as resources in the hands, which can be applied for learning a second language through resourcing, repetition, grouping, deduction, imagery, auditory representation, elaboration, transfer, keyword method, inferencing, note taking, and summarizing. Metacognitive strategies involve tactics that enable L2 students to have the control of their own learning.

### **Learning Strategies Put Into Practice**

For the purposes of this paper, I will give more attention only to four BDI learning strategies, which were adapted in order to make them work for my students and my curriculum which was purposefully aligned with the communicative approach. In fact, my instruction was based on BDI model and I employed differing methods, Such as Natural Way, Suggestopedia, Integrated Content-Based, etc., which were chosen according to my students’ needs. In addition, I was motivated to design new strategies (e.g., Tourist Passport, Handmade Power Point, and Newspaper). In this practical part, I will be dealing with the four selected learning strategies and how they were applied by my EFL students. Each strategy made the students’ learning process visible throughout the before, during, and after phases of the class.

#### **Foldables**

This learning strategy asks students to scaffold the language topics step by step.

#### **Aim**

Students develop any vocabulary or grammar topic through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It can be used as a study tool.

#### **Materials**

At least four pieces of paper of different colors per student (depending on the number of words/concepts to be practiced)—stapler—markers/colored pencils—pens/pencils.

#### **Procedure**

Activation or brainstorming time. Ask students to create the Foldables by following some instructions. First, take the four colored papers and form eight layers with an inch of space between each color. Then, fold the paper stack in half pressing until create a crease with several flaps. Finally, staple at the crease. Once the students have created the Foldable and ask them to divide it into three equal columns on each flap. Write on the top of the Foldable “My ideas, what I learned, and my examples”, as shown in Figure 1. Then, the preselected vocabulary words are written on the top side of each flap. Have students individually write or draw whatever comes to their minds regarding the words in the column “My ideas”. After that, place the students in small groups and motivate them to share their ideas with peers.

**In conclusion**, one of the main goals of language education, especially in this century, is to create people far more motivated, engaged, and independent that take the responsibility for their own

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development in language learning; as a result, they are able to become autonomous learners. To do so, L2 educators are motivated to explicitly weave learning strategies into their curriculum.

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