**What is a learning strategy and what is a learning tool?**

**Learning strategy**

Learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more effective and more transferable to new situations.

A strategy needs to:

1. involve choice, that is, there are several strategies to choose from.

2. be complex, that is, there are several steps to learn.

3. require knowledge and benefit from training.

4. increase the efficiency of language learning and language use.

**Learning tool**

A learning tool is a device or implement used to study something in particular (e.g. vocabulary). You use tools to reach your goal in the different strategies. In order to use them in a strategy you need to analyze the tools: what goal and need can be responded to through this tool.

**(Learning method)**

We prefer not to use this terminology, because it could lead to confusion. In some articles method is used as a synonym for strategy and in others it refers to tool.

**What are successful AVL strategies?**

There is no such thing as a successful vocabulary learning strategy, but you can choose between the strategies mentioned below:

1. **How to choose your words?**

Some key insights:

The best criterion for target word selection is frequency of occurrence. Words occur less frequently beyond the band of 5000 words and learners should concentrate on the technical vocabulary they need for specific topics.

Once a learner reaches a proficiency level where appropriateness of usage becomes a major concern, then mastery of multiword units (compound words, phrasal verbs, fixed phrases, idioms, proverbs) becomes essential to producing native like language.

What can you do?

• Use frequency lists

• Select simple cognates, idioms and every day expressions

• Use a dictionary (bilingual or monolingual)

1. **How to discover a new word’s meaning?**

Some key insights:

Learning stems and affixes is one of the key strategies more advanced learners should adapt in order to handle low-frequency vocabulary.

What can you do?

• Analyze any available picture or gesture

• Guess meaning from textual context

• Use a dictionary (bilingual or monolingual)

1. **How to integrate new words?**

Some key insights:

Word pairs have often been criticized for not giving words in context. However, there seems to be no reason why learners should not get their initial introduction to new words on their own time via word pair homework. Teachers should then consolidate and enrich this initial knowledge with contextualized practice in subsequent classroom sessions.

Teaching similar words together (synonyms, antonyms, …) in the first instance can lead to learner confusion. Students learn the word forms and the meanings, but can get confused about what goes with which (cross-association). A way to avoid this confusion is to teach/learn the most frequent or useful word of a pair first and introduce its partner(s) only after it is well established.

What can you do?

• Use semantic maps

• Use the keyword method

• Associate a new word with its already known synonyms and antonyms

1. **How to consolidate new words?**

Some key insights:

5 to 16 or more repetitions are required for a word to be learned.

Learners should rehearse new material soon after the initial meeting (5-10 minutes later, 24 hours later) and then at gradually increasing intervals (one week later, one month later, six months later).

Intermediate and advanced students should develop strategies to tackle low frequency vocabulary (learning stems and affixes, guessing from context and mnemonic techniques).

What can you do?

• Written repetition

• Keep a vocabulary notebook

• Post note cards on physical objects

1. **How to fully master words?**

Words are only likely to be fully mastered through **extensive exposure** to the target word **in many contexts**. Therefore all students can benefit from a judicious blend of intentional (1-4) and incidental learning (5). One key to facilitating incidental learning is to maximize the exposure to the target language.

**Speaking**

What can you do?

• Maximize the use of the target language in the classroom

• Use group work with interactive discussions

• Interact with native-speakers

**Reading**

Some key insights:

For beginners, graded readers are a good way to start. The jump from graded readers to authentic texts can sometimes be a large one. A good way of easing this transition is with narrow reading: reading numerous texts on the same topic. Once students have a foundations of reading skills, the best way to increase language input is through extensive reading

What can you do?

• read newspapers

• Use the internet (look up your hobby, …)

• Interact with native-speakers

**Listening**

What can you do?

• Watch videos and movies in your new language

• Explore using your IPod, MP3, CD in the language in your car, and at moments when you are waiting or walking or biking, etc.

• Learn the words to popular songs and sing along!

 **What kind of strategies are important for AVL?**

The strategies below help the learning process internally, i.e. which support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language.

1. **Metacognitive strategies**

These strategies involve a conscious overview of the learning process and making decisions about planning, monitoring, or evaluating the best ways to study.

Examples:

• Use spaced word practice (expanding rehearsal)

• Test oneself with word tests

• Continue to study word over time

1. **Affective strategies**

They help to regulate emotions, motivations, and attitudes.

Examples:

• Learn to have fun while you are learning

• Learn to value not to fear your mistakes

• Have a clear motivation

1. **Social strategies**

These strategies help students learn through interaction with others.

Examples:

• Study with a friend, in a group

• Make use of online communities (facebook, google+, …)

• Meet with a native speaker

1. **Cognitive strategies**

These strategies are mental processes or procedures for accomplishing a particular cognitive goal (e.g. writing an essay).

Examples:

• Brainstorm

• Structure

• Analyze

• Memorize