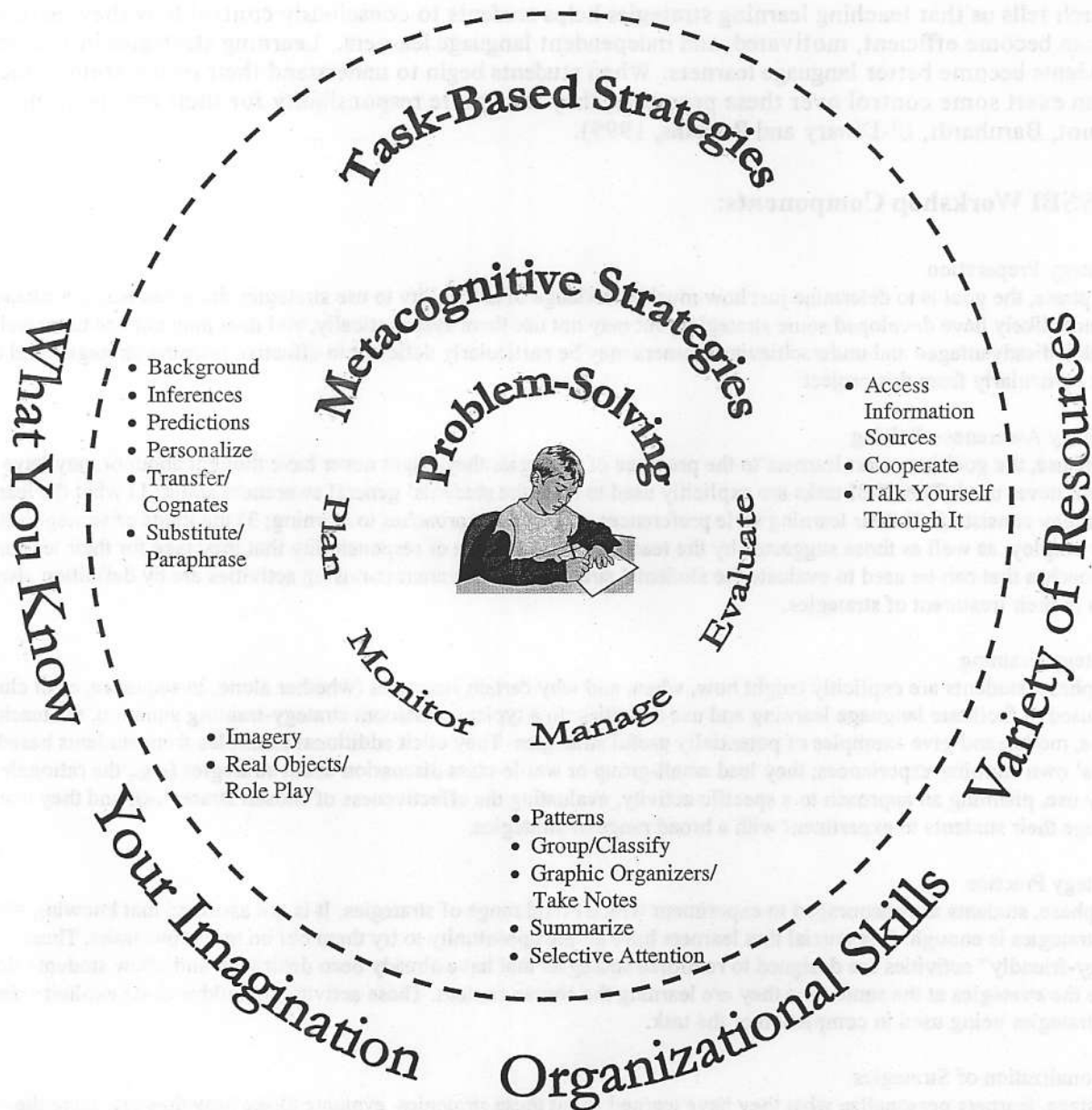


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**Figure 1: Applying Language Learning Strategies**



## What are Learning Strategies?

Learning strategies are the thoughts and actions we engage in, consciously or not, to learn new information. Many learning tasks are accomplished using a number of different learning strategies, sometimes simultaneously and sometimes in sequence. Examples: metacognitive strategies (organize/plan, set goals) task-based strategies (using background knowledge, making inferences/predictions, use of cognates, imagery, role playing, grouping, classifying, graphic organizers, summarizing, accessing information resources, self talk, etc.).

## Why are they important to explicitly teach?

*"Overt strategy training is essential in the language classroom. Language learners are often frightened by the new language, its many complex structures, and its tens of thousands of words and expressions. They often do not know how to approach the subject in either a cognitive or an emotional sense. Language learning is not like learning mathematics or biology or typing; it requires an understanding of the nature of language and the process of language learning, including useful techniques or strategies."*

Rebecca L. Oxford, The Univ. of Alabama

Research tells us that teaching learning strategies helps students to consciously control how they learn so that they can become efficient, motivated, and independent language learners. Learning strategies instruction helps all students become better language learners. When students begin to understand their own learning processes and can exert some control over these processes, they take more responsibility for their own learning. (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary and Robbins, 1999).

## The SSBI Workshop Components:

### 1. Strategy Preparation

In this phase, the goal is to determine just how much knowledge of and ability to use strategies the given learners already have. They most likely have developed some strategies, but may not use them systematically, and they may not use them well. It is likely that disadvantaged and underachieving learners may be particularly deficient in effective learning strategies and can thus benefit particularly from this project.

### 2. Strategy Awareness-Raising

In this phase, the goal is to alert learners to the presence of strategies they might never have thought about or may have thought about but never used. The SSBI tasks are explicitly used to raise the students' general awareness about: 1) what the learning process may consist of; 2) their learning style preferences or general approaches to learning; 3) the kinds of strategies that they already employ, as well as those suggested by the teacher; 4) the amount of responsibility that they take for their learning; and, 5) approaches that can be used to evaluate the students' strategy use. Awareness-raising activities are by definition always explicit in their treatment of strategies.

### 3. Strategy Training

In this phase, students are explicitly taught how, when, and why certain strategies (whether alone, in sequence, or in clusters) can be used to facilitate language learning and use activities. In a typical classroom strategy-training situation, the teachers describe, model, and give examples of potentially useful strategies. They elicit additional examples from students based on the students' own learning experiences; they lead small-group or whole-class discussion about strategies (e.g., the rationale behind strategy use, planning an approach to a specific activity, evaluating the effectiveness of chosen strategies); and they can encourage their students to experiment with a broad range of strategies.

### 4. Strategy Practice

In this phase, students are encouraged to experiment with a broad range of strategies. It is not assumed that knowing about given strategies is enough. It is crucial that learners have ample opportunity to try them out on numerous tasks. These "strategy-friendly" activities are designed to reinforce strategies that have already been dealt with and allow students time to practice the strategies at the same time they are learning the course content. These activities should include explicit references to the strategies being used in completion of the task.

### 5. Personalization of Strategies

In this stage, learners personalize what they have learned about these strategies, evaluate to see how they are using the strategies, and then look to ways that they can transfer the use of these strategies to other contexts.

In SSBI, it is the teachers' role to see that strategies are integrated into everyday class materials and are both explicitly and implicitly embedded into the language task to provide for contextualized strategy practice.