

Study Skills

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Preface

Embarking on higher education is a new experience for most of the university students. And whenever we are faced with a new situation, we tend to fall back on our old experiences and habits and make use of what we already know. However, in many instances, our old habits may prove inefficient, and this is exactly the case for most of university students: Their previous training is not suitable for dealing adequately with their college studies and assignments. The result is disappointment and frustration.

The teaching of **'Study Skills'** has developed from the realization that many university students fall short of their potentials, because they do not know how to set about the task of studying. Most of the students are poor readers: They read slowly and their comprehension is less than perfect; they do not know how to use a dictionary, and resort mainly to bilingual sources for solving their lexical problems, and they do not know how to take notes and how to deduce important information from books or lectures.

The result is that students spend countless hours plodding through the books when a fraction of the time allocated can do the job. And worst of all is the consequence of their higher education experience: Inefficiency in performing their future jobs and a perpetuation of their ineffective study practices by transmission to future generations.

The problem of ineffective study habits becomes more pronounced when it is entangled with language problems. Linguistic problems add to the complexity of the task faced by the students and if remedial and compensatory strategies are not introduced, the students may feel alienated and inadequate. The introduction of **'Study Skills'** courses in the curriculum is due to an awareness of such problems and a response to the students' needs.

There are a number of books available in the market dealing with the concept of **'Study Skills'**. 'However, there are two major problems related to the use of

such books. First, they are not written specifically for Iranian university students, and their design reflects the needs of international students, whose needs in many cases are different from ours. Second, most of these books are not based on sound theoretical backgrounds, and just reflect the experiences or intuitions of their writers.

The present book tries to overcome such shortcomings. The writers have tried to keep the needs of Iranian EFL learners in mind, and the content of the book relies heavily on research done on ‘learning strategies’ and their utility in the acquisition of foreign languages.

The main objective of the present book is to make our students independent learners. If life-long education is to be a feature of our developing society, then our higher education must be concerned with training young people with a disposition to carry on learning. Another objective of the book and one closely related to the first, is developing a positive attitude toward learning, and especially foreign language learning, in the students.

To attain these objectives, we have tried to design the book in such a way that it allows for maximum practice and transfer. We believe that **Study Skills** is not a simple subject within the curriculum to be presented in isolation. Learning to learn is not only part of the curriculum in its own right, but it is also a powerful aid to improving the effectiveness of the rest of the curriculum.

We have not looked at **Study Skills** as another content course. **Study Skills**, in our view, acts as a useful device that will assist the students in their higher education and beyond.

The main objective of the course is transfer. All the activities and exercises are designed so that they encourage transfer to other subjects and courses. And to bring about transfer, all the exercises and activities must be taught in a meaningful, relevant manner.

We discourage any subject-like approach to the use of the book. Students should not be asked to memorize the concepts introduced. Professors and instructors must aim at the application of what is taught.

We advise the professors and instructors to turn their first session of ‘**Study Skills**’ class into a discussion session. If we accept the statement that the aim of the

course is learning to learn, then it will be a valuable practice to let the students discover their study habits and beliefs. The essential value of such discussions of study habits is to raise the students awareness of methods of learning and eventually to lead them to a conscious development of their own learning strategies.

We originally planned the book in eight chapters. However, extensive consultations and discussions with ‘**Study Skills**’ instructors and professors convinced us that it is impossible to go beyond seven chapters during the class hours devoted to the course. So, we reduced the number of chapters to seven.

Chapter one deals with the basic requirements of a successful study practice, such as suitable physical conditions and planning. Chapter two tries to teach the students how to make an efficient use of English to English dictionaries. Chapter three is concerned with word formation processes and ample examples and exercises are provided to make sure that what is taught can be transferred to other contexts. Chapter four deals with reading, and attempts to improve the students’ reading rates and comprehension. Chapter five teaches the students how to take good notes. Chapter six deals with using the college library and the last chapter provides the students with some practical tips on how to study and prepare for examinations.

In line with the practical nature of the course and our belief regarding the applicability of the materials covered, chapters one and seven do not have any exercises. It is because the application of the ideas presented in these two chapters needs time and any classroom exercise would have made the suggestions offered in these two chapters sound artificial. The rest of the chapters, however, all contain exercises.

No human artifact is perfect, and the present book is not an exception. We would be pleased to receive comments and suggestions from our colleagues regarding the content or the organization of the book. Useful suggestions will certainly be accommodated in the later revisions.

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