

16 Habits of Mind

Fostering Successful Language Learning

How can the Habits of Mind help foster language learning?

The Habits of Mind framework, a series of 16 problem-solving strategies, can help an individual throughout life. Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick have been promoting the Habits of Mind through books, articles, seminars and online venues. *Developing Habits of Mind in Elementary Schools* and *Developing Habits of Mind in Secondary Schools* by Karen Boyes and Graham Watts provide expert strategies for implementing the Habits of Mind in student learning. The 16 dispositions, developed over the course of several years, serve as a support system that can help motivate both students and educators within language studies and assist them with self-actualisation.



By connecting languages with Habits of Mind, we can see that they are perfectly in step with our main goal as language educators: to promote successful language learning in our students. At all levels of language instruction, students and their instructors can embrace the 16 Habits of Mind. Thus, the Habits have implications for beginning, intermediate, pre-advanced and advanced levels. Students in grades K-12 as well as undergraduate, graduate and adult learners can benefit from the dispositions. From FLES students to doctoral students undertaking their dissertations, the Habits of a Mind invite students to solve problems and innovate with instructor assistance.

Two main questions are at the essence of Habits of Mind:

- How can Habits of Mind foster successful language learning?
- How is using Habits of Mind applicable to learning languages as well as other subjects and for solving life problems?

Languages Tied to the 16 Habits of Mind

The following chart presents the 16 Habits of Mind with examples of how they foster successful language learning. This represents only a fraction of possibilities with the numerous themes, vocabulary, structures and content that come up on a daily basis in our language classes. The Habits of Mind can clearly be utilised when learning and mastering languages and I invite teachers to share these Habits with their students. Language educators can post the Habits of Mind in their classrooms, share them on a handout or have a digital version available on line.

1) Persisting	Practice over and over to learn the vocabulary, verb conjugations, noun declensions and pronunciation of the target language. Try to think in the target language and speak even when you are unsure. Learn by continuous practice and persistence.
2) Managing Impulsivity	Study vocabulary, structures and pronunciation of target language to improve your knowledge base. Focus on the intonation patterns of the target language.
3) Listening with Understanding and Empathy	Listen to the teacher and classmates as they speak in the target language and embrace their contribution to your language learning. Appreciate what others have to say.
4) Thinking Flexibly	When writing an essay in the target language, think of your options of how to best present your thoughts when doing a project. Brainstorm with one or more classmates to explore the possibilities.
5) Thinking About Thinking (Metacognition)	Keep a journal about your language learning experiences with comments about what you have learned in the language, about the culture, and insights about the language learning process.
6) Striving for Accuracy	Check over a quiz, test or essay before submitting it. Self-monitor your speaking and writing in the language.
7) Questioning and Posing Problems	Ask questions in the language and ask questions about the language. Both are important in language learning.

8) Applying Past Knowledge to New Situations	After learning a new structure, figure out how to use it in your own speaking and writing to create novel sentences and ideas.
9) Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision	Rehearse in your mind before speaking in the language. Revise and rewrite essays and written assignments before submitting them for a grade. Practice a speech before presenting it to the class.
10) Gathering Data Through all Senses	Take in the target language and culture through all your senses. Imagine the spelling of words as you hear them, focus on the sounds and intonation of the language through hearing or picture what it is like to be in a country that speaks the target language. When watching a travel segment, what are the smells coming from the restaurants, cafes and shops? What does the weather feel like? Imagine that you are touching the architecture, countryside, flora, and fauna. What do the foods in the target culture taste like?
11) Creating, Imagining, Innovating	Come up with another way to say or write something in the target language. Be creative in projects that you are assigned giving them your own personal twist.
12) Responding with Wonderment and Awe	Take a virtual visit to the target culture on the Internet or by watching a video or documentary. Appreciate the geography, architecture, clothing, colors and foods. Take pleasure in the local music, dance and visual art that you see. Embrace and revere cultural customs unique to the target culture.
13) Taking Responsible Risks	Try food from the target culture. Learn new facts about a country that speaks the target language.
14) Finding Humor	Take note of errors in usage while learning the target language and mistranslations that may be humorous. Realise that through these errors, you become more proficient and experienced in the target language. Learn jokes in the target language as well as double entendres or double meanings. This skill will improve your linguistic ability level.
15) Thinking Interdependently	Fully participate in class whether it is a whole class, group or partner activity. Collaborate with classmates to enhance your language learning.
16) Remaining Open to Continuous Learning	Place yourself in situations to continue learning the target language and culture such as a day trip where you can use the language, foreign travel or watching a TV show or film in the target language. Read fiction and non-fiction works in the target language and realise what you can learn from reading. Learn songs in the target language and internalise them until you can sing them by heart.

Remind students that through Habits of Mind, they can be active language learners and build their knowledge and proficiency. Students cannot rely on looking up every word or structure that they need to communicate in the language. They must commit themselves to memorising language to be truly proficient.

Specific learning scenarios can be enhanced by using Habits of Mind. Some examples include studying a poem, short story or novel and see which Habits of Mind spring out from the pages. A group or individual project whereby students create a menu in the target language can undoubtedly benefit from giving the project a Habits of Mind focus. Watching a travel segment or a target language film can definitely get a brand new focus by using the Habits of Mind. Creative language educators can think of countless ways to bring the Habits of Mind dispositions into lessons, units and projects.

Summary

Habits of Mind has impacted the way we approach a number of school subjects. The 16 Habits can be fostered in numerous ways to learn and master languages. The Habits of Mind can help bring language study to the forefront in student learning while simultaneously reinforcing the 16 thought-provoking Habits of Mind. Students can also use the Habits in their other subjects and their lives as new challenges arise. 



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