



## Language Learning Strategies: a Study of Learners Perceptions

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### Abstract

This study aims at exploring and analyzing how three seventh graders at Normal School in Chiquinquirá Boyacá perceive the use of language learning strategies. The Activities applied to this group were focused on grammar, speaking, vocabulary and listening based on theories about memory strategies in charge of creating mental linkages, Cognitive strategies like analyzing, Affective strategies related to feelings students have towards language learning and Social strategies that facilitate interaction (Liu, 2010). Data was collected through interviews, observation and a survey; the findings showed that students had a preference for the activities that involved visual aids and group work, as well as the common use of the memory strategies, especially when they were evaluated.

**Key words:** learning strategies, learner attitudes.

### Resumen

El siguiente estudio pretende explorar y analizar como tres estudiantes de séptimo grado de la Escuela Normal de Chiquinquirá-Boyacá perciben las Estrategias de Aprendizaje. Las actividades aplicadas a dicho grupo se enfocaron en gramática, habla, vocabulario y escucha basados en teorías sobre las estrategias de aprendizaje Cognitivas como el análisis, Afectivas relacionados con los sentimientos que los estudiantes tienen hacia el aprendizaje de la lengua y las Estrategias Sociales que facilitan la interacción. Los datos se recogieron mediante entrevistas, observaciones y una encuesta; los resultados mostraron que este grupo de estudiantes prefieren actividades que involucren ayudas visuales y trabajo en equipo, así como las estrategias de memoria, especialmente cuando van a ser evaluados.

**Palabras clave:** estrategias de Aprendizaje, actitudes de los estudiantes.

## Introduction

Learning strategies are tools used when people learn a second language; the challenge is to know how to implement these strategies in the classroom context. Teacher and students must be aware that a learning process is the disposition to apply learning strategies complemented with different activities (like making associations with previous knowledge, using the dictionary, inferring terms and so on) that learners can use to improve on language skills and facilitate their own process on learning a second language, a change that involves teacher's role, students' role and even parents' role in order to raise more awareness to the learning process.

The present study attempts to help an EFL community to use language-learning strategies that facilitate students' learning. The reader will find some main definitions towards strategies as well as internal and external factors that shape the way students select and use strategies for learning a language and the state of art around this important issue on learning.

## Language Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages during learning (Weinstein and Mayer cited as O'Malley, 1990). Rubin cited as O'Malley (1990), Oxford (2003), O'Malley & Chamot (1990) and Macaro (2006) state that language learning strategies are mental processes. Language learning strategies are behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directive and enjoyable (Oxford cited

by Liu, 2010). Learning strategies are decisions to facilitate learning or get clear information, to empower the level of students, to get them many different options to direct their learning. O'Malley and Chamot, cited by Grenfell (1999), conceive strategies as the special thoughts and behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information; while Oxford (1993) says that are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. When Oxford mentions this factor, it is said that learners who are aware of the use of strategies and have a successful learning can enhance process of autonomy. Little, cited by Liu (2010), argues for a direct approach that unifies the Oxford's concept that is consciousness rising in which strategies should invite learners to engage reflectively in task planning, execution and assessment. Learner uses strategies to improve learning process that a learner follows when he has the ability to expand on more strategies, when he has the ability to apply more strategies he begins to gradually make own judgments and carry on self-evaluation processes, those aspects imply to have awareness of own learning and being autonomous to do tasks.

The classification on learning strategies proposed by Oxford cited by Liu (2010) makes a distinction between direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies involve direct learning and are categorized into: memory, cognitive and compensation strategies.

Memory strategies refer to create mental linkages and employing actions, entering information into long-term memory and

retrieving that information at the moment of communicating with others.

Cognitive strategies are in charge of analyzing, and reasoning, for O'Malley (1993) these strategies involve the manipulation of the material to be learned such as repetition, grouping, deduction, translation, producing messages and some others.

A classification proposed by Weinstein and Mayer, cited by O'Malley (1993) as follows:

1. Rehearsal or repeating the name of objects (vocabulary taught)
2. Organization is the classification of words according to their terminology
3. Inference or guessing meanings of words
4. Summarizing like making diagrams.
5. Imaginary is the capacity of creating mental images about a topic.
6. Deduction
7. Transfer or using information to develop another task
8. Elaboration or integrating information to do tasks.

Compensation strategies are used in guessing unknown words while listening, reading and writing. These strategies are more used when students want to communicate and recall knowledge they have.

The indirect strategies contain metacognitive, affective and social ones.

The metacognitive strategies help learners to regulate their learning through planning, arranging, focusing and evaluating their own process. O'malley & Chamot (1993) argue

that in this kind of Strategies the learner pays selective attention when listening to a conversation, he also monitors or comprehends the received information and evaluate his own production. O'malley & Chamot (1993) state that affective strategies are related to feelings and motivations towards language learning.

Social strategies facilitate interaction with others while they ask questions between them and cooperate with others. All strategies proposed by Oxford (2003), play an important role in second language learning, but the communicative ones as Oxford, cited by Liu (2010), are crucial to improve the student's level and live language in a natural way in which they help each other to build up their speaking. Social strategies proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1993) these strategies along with the affective ones involve interacting with a person like:

1. Questioning for clarification: ask for explanation
2. Cooperation: peer feedback or check a language task
3. Self-talk: use mental techniques to reduce anxiety
4. Self-reinforcement

### **Learning Strategies an Overview**

Literature on learning strategies was first introduced by Rubin in 1975 with the cognitive psychology theory that suggested "a good language learner" has much to teach us about learning strategies (O'Malley and Chamot, 1993, p. 98). After that O'Malley (1999) divided them in cognitive, metacognitive and social. Then Rebecca

Oxford (1986) and Andrew Cohen (1981) cited by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) developed main issues on this topic.

The research on strategies about cognitive psychology contemplates learning through the active manipulation of information or generative processing. In recent research, studies involving learning strategies claim that vocabulary is very effectively retained by the use of key word strategy; there is a visual repetition of vocabulary when learners reinforce words with the help of doing orally or written exercises and practicing with others (Macaro, 2006). When a learner uses a combination of strategies like visual imaginary, memorize vocabulary, purposeful socialization, or seeking the opportunity to speak with someone is the key to success in second language (Macaro, 2006).

Carol Griffiths and Judy M. Parr (2001) studied language-learning strategies. This research looks at strategies in practice of a study applied to speakers of other languages in New Zealand where they wanted to discover the kinds of strategies learners used. They collected data through a survey with sixty items in which were included memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies. They proposed eight strategy groups related to interaction with others, vocabulary, reading, toleration of ambiguity, language systems, management of feelings, management of learning and using available resources (Griffiths & Parr, 2001).

The strategy related to interaction with others, language systems, vocabulary and management of feelings are involved with the present research. They mention that

vocabulary is a very important element in students' learning since many difficulties in productive and receptive language use result from inadequate vocabulary. In language system they give more importance to grammar but not as strict as it seems but a way to build up interaction in the second language, a strategy that appears common for this kind of learners. The last classification is the management of feelings where there is an affective filter that can affect positively or negatively the learning process of a student.

The present study monitors the model proposed by Chamot's, cited by Liu (2010), in which strategies are modeled in each lesson, as follows:

1. Preparation: Teacher identifies students' current learning strategies, such as recalling for prior knowledge, previewing key vocabulary.
2. Presentation: In this stage teacher models and explain new strategy and how they can use it, such as making inference, pay selective attention and note taking.
3. Practice: Teacher encourages students to use independent strategy to check their language production in an oral or written task.
4. Evaluation: Students evaluate their own strategy used, determining the effectiveness of their own learning.
5. Assessment: Teacher assesses students asking about the perceptions towards the use of the strategy.

When the teacher explains students what kind of strategies exist and the activities learners can perform, he can help them to identify the more successful ones and carry

on processes of permanent learning. In this sense, the uses of preparation, presentation, practice, evaluation and assessment get to know how gradually students are getting involved with learning strategies and how they get to know their perceptions like in the assessment stage.

Cassidy (2004) states that learning styles are the preferred way in which an individual approaches a task or learning a situation. Gallego (1999) argues that people perceive and acquire knowledge in a different way. In that sense, people have different ways of thinking and different conceptions of seeing the world likewise different attitudes towards learning. The way they prefer to learn it is a stable process of the individual and influenced by internal factors like motivation. When people have different preferences on learning these certain cognitive strategies help them to provide meaning to the new information (Gallego, 1999).

Oxford cited as Pei-Shi (2012) claims that learning styles and learning strategies are the main factors helping to determine how language learners learn a second language. Pei-Shi (2012) argues that learning strategies are internal traits of learners while learning styles are external skills used in a conscious or unconscious way. Furthermore, learning styles are important factors influencing strategy use (Li cited by Pei Shi, 2012).

Affective factors like motivation also influence on language learning strategies as Kumaravadivelu(2009) claims, affective factors are the individual learner's disposition to learn. The most important are motivation and attitudes; motivation is the

force that moves us to do something. According to Ryan (2000), motivation is hardly a unitary phenomenon. A student could be motivated to learn a new set of skills because he or she understands their potential utility or value because learning the skills will yield a good grade and the privileges a good grade affords and fits an individual phenomenon.

In addition to personal beliefs towards a subject, there are some external forces that influence students' language learning like the pedagogical objectives, the environmental factors, attitudes and in the majority of cases the classroom activities. Kumaravadivelu (2009) says that the pedagogic factor; the role of the materials used shape how learners and the learning situation activates positive or negative attitudes in the learner. The pedagogical shapes foster students' learning has an effect on motivation and allow students to use learning strategies.

Student's attitudes influence on the desire of using learning strategies as Chamot et al. (1999), point that learners are more effective towards learning strategies when they take control of their own learning and cultural backgrounds contribute with this belief. Cultural backgrounds are related to the preference of using learning strategies depending on the context in which they are immersed; sometimes they tend to memorize things because the place imposes these behaviors. Furthermore, students take responsibility for their own learning when the causes of their success or failure can be the consequences of effective or ineffective strategies (Chamot, 1999). The teacher also plays the role of collaborators, he/ she

nurtures and encourages students' beliefs so students can experience success in the use of strategies. With the implementation of strategies and in the stage of evaluating them, it is a good opportunity to open up a space where students evaluate how pertinent was each strategy for each one of them. Another significant factor is to allow them to share their feelings and emotions; some important affective factors crucial on learning that motivate students and make them to expand on the use of more strategies. Thus also imply students' self-knowledge of weaknesses and strengths they have in language and can also reflect on how learning is similar in other subjects.

## Method

The methodological design of the current study is action research, this kind of research aims to create better teaching practices and how to improve what learners are doing, in order to make them better and how they influence others to do the same thing (McNiff, 2010). During this practice I monitored 4 classes along May 2013, in which students got familiar with the use of learning strategies while they were studying vocabulary, listening and English grammar. This study sought to identify students' perceptions on the use of learning strategies in the second language.

Data was gathered from three unstructured interviews at the end of each session and the estimated time for each one was labeled at the end of each extract. The interviews were transcribed, translated into English and some of them were analyzed and compared with theoretical constructs, in order to determine learners' feelings towards the

methodology used in classes according to the model proposed by O'Malley, Chamot and Oxford (1990).

Another method was a survey aimed to determine the strategies students used more in the subjects they take in school, as well as learning English (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

The researcher also took into account class observation that enrich more about the use of learner's strategies during the classes, like interactions, note taking, inference and summarizing.

## Research Participants

This research project was applied to a three female students of seventh grade in Normal School in Chiquinquirá Boyacá, the participants are 14, 13 and 15. They belong to a middle social status but live in urban areas. They attend two-hour English classes in a week. The participants were selected during an observation carried out to this class their low scores and low level they had in English Language as well as motivation they showed to learn. According to an observation done to the whole class, these participants showed they like to work on activities such as making mimics, competitions and games. I used some qualities to refer the participants and to refer exactly to each one of them in the data analysis as: THE HELPER, THE ADMINISTRATOR AND THE INSECURE. THE HELPER is the one that cooperated with their peers when they do not know a word. The other participant is very enthusiastic. THE ADMINISTRATOR showed to organize time better to fulfill the

activities proposed during the sessions. THE INSECURE showed less self-confident during the recorded classes.

### Research Question And Objectives

This research work proposes to find out what learning strategies' preferences do students reflect, with the aim of implementing some language learning strategies in a group of students from Normal School in Chiquiquira and determine their perceptions towards them.

### Findings And Discussion

According to the material recorded in classes "The helper" enjoyed learning English. She enjoyed cooperating with others when they have problems on pronunciation. She was the person that looked for the unknown words in the dictionary and participated in the session making questions or asking to clarify doubts. The following extract made part of the observation done to the first class where the main topic was related to "animals", there students also practiced information questions and reinforced vocabulary involving the mentioned topic and the class duration was 60 minutes and the recorded part was 10 minutes. In this extract the helper practiced the grammar structures with her peers and cooperated with others at the moment of asking and replying, she showed preference for social strategies during the interaction with her partners while practicing grammar.

#### Excerpt 1:

1. *Helper:*            *What is this?*

2. *Students:*        *This is a cat*  
 3. *Student 1:*       *How do you say Pato?*  
 4. *Helper:*            *pack*  
 5. *Partners:*         *pack*  
 6. *Helper:*            *uhm, no duck*

*(May 10<sup>th</sup> 60 min)*

In the line extract four, she mentioned "pack" instead of "duck" associating this word with a similar one in Spanish while their partners reproduced the same mistake, although there was a self - correction by helper.

The helper showed preference for social strategies. O'Malley (1990), states that social strategies aim at creating opportunities to practice language and responding positively. The helper and her partners emphasized on the pronunciation of words and using translation to recall vocabulary in English, this aspect must be seen a positive element that fosters learning because for most students it was useful to have as basis his/her mother tongue to learn a second language. In this part of the class "the helper" took the role of teacher, leading their partners to internalize vocabulary. This excerpt reflected how students interacted with the cognitive stage because these learners were instructed on how to do the task and then immediately performed this task by themselves; this stage was performed by a conscious form and the knowledge acquired was generally from speaking while learners were practicing vocabulary and grammar rules when they were learning to speak the language (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990).

With the use of visual resources students got familiar with topics and vocabulary and

these advantages helped learners who had visual styles to manipulate information. The students' errors were normally related to pronunciation and those were a sign of learning aspect and sometimes were the result or fossilizing; retaining that in memory for some time without any feedback, or sometimes are unconscious acts (product of anxiety) that he/she can correct with the help of social strategies and a good feedback.

In this excerpt Helper used the cognitive strategy proposed by Weinstein and Mayer cited as O'Malley (1993) learners use inference or guess meanings of words. Kumaravadivelu (2009) argues that in inferences help learners to work on hypotheses. This aspect is perceived as something positive in the learning process because it was seen that "the helper" corrected herself as a matter of learning.

The following extract reflected some students' thoughts that complement the first observation of the class related to animals.

**Excerpt 2:** This extract was taken from the interview in the first class about "animals", the "helper" said she enjoyed the activity related to visual materials as follows:

Teacher: T

Student: S

1. T: ¿Cuál estrategia te ayudó a comprender los temas y porque?

**[which strategy did you helped to learn better and why?]**

2. S: pues a mí me gusto primero la visual porque vimos los animalitos los podemos diferenciar, usted nos explicó cómo se

escribían, como se escuchaban, como se pronunciaban.

**[I liked the visual one because we saw little animals we can differentiate them, you explained us the writing and the pronunciation]**

3. S: "La otra también fue cuando nos pusiste a hacernos preguntas con la gente y a nosotros mismas respondernos y hacer como animales cuando nos puso en el computador los sonidos y nosotras los tuvimos que hacer".

**[the other one when you asked for making questions and its answers between us and we had to make the animal sounds with the help of the computer]**

4. T: ¿Que tan importante son para ti las estrategias de aprendizaje en una lengua extranjera?

**[How important are learning strategies in learning a language?]**

5. S: pues yo pienso que a uno le ayudan a comprender mejor los temas y es más fácil para estudiar y para que a uno le guste la materia.

**[I think that they helped me to understand the topics better and it is easier to study and in order to the subject like me].**

(May 10, 5':23")

The helper said that she learnt during the first activity related to animals, she knew some new vocabulary, writing, they reinforced on pronunciation and the visual resources used in this activity helped them to retain more, she also felt motivated in a

class when she saw images. The helper said that asking questions were important too and learning strategies helped her to retain information better and strategies are needed to determine motivation in a subject.

In this second extract, with the use of visual resources students got familiar with topics and vocabulary and these advantages helped learners who have visual styles to manipulate information. The helper used cognitive strategies that involve the manipulation of the material to be learned such as repetition (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). This repetition was successful for her and her classmates when it is accompanied by visual images. Those aspects related to feelings and motivations towards language learning, make students participate freely and increase oral interaction with the target language.

Helper argued in the line extract number three that social strategies facilitated learning because there was interaction and cooperation with others because they could ask questions with her peers (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). The teacher may foster social strategies in all classes because they help learners to interact, use language, construct meaning, and evaluate learning between them and being critical about what they have learnt. In this sense O'Malley (1990) affirms that teacher may model interpersonal goals in teaching settings, emphasizing on respect others' opinion and respect turns, in that sense language can be used to accomplish mutual comprehension and the ways in which meaning is conveyed.

The Helper reaffirmed value for affective strategies in the turn number four when she

said that using strategies were helpful to understand information and that facilitated learning for her; in this part, a factor I consider important is when she perceived an intrinsic value of learning strategies, because she experienced a sense of internalizing knowledge. Another aspect she pointed was a sign of motivation; an internal aspect to determine success or feeling that a subject was pleasing for learners, because affective factors like motivation also influenced on language learning strategies as Kumaravadivelu (2009) claims.

As this second extract showed, the helper claimed to feel more identified during the first class interview, with the use of cognitive, social and affective strategies.

In the following excerpt, with respect to the final survey, the helper provided information related to the received classes.

**Excerpt 3:** The following extract was taken from the final survey, applied at the end of all conducted sessions in May. Along the interview the survey helped to support the preference for cognitive strategies during learning the second language like memorization as follows:

Q: question      A: student's answer

1. Q: ¿Qué estrategia utilizas cuando estudias inglés?

***[Which strategy do you take into account when you study English?]***

2. A: Her answer was "Repetición and memorization"

***[repetition and memorization]***

"Porque asi no se nos olvida lo que

aprendimos y cuando memorizo aprendo el tema”

***[because we do not forget what we learnt when I memorize I learn better]***

3. Q: ¿Sientes motivación por estudiar cuando los profesores utilizan estrategias de aprendizaje?

***[Do you feel motivated to study a subject when teachers use learning strategies in their classes?]***

4. A: Sí, Por ejemplo en Inglés no nos muestran imágenes y cuando no estoy motivada no me gusta la materia

***[Yes, for example English because teacher does not show us images and when I am not motivated I do not like the subject]***

5. Q: Durante las sesiones de Inglés que recibiste ¿Qué estrategias te ayudaron a comprender mejor las temáticas? ¿Por qué?

***[During the English sessions you received ¿which strategies did you help to learn better? ¿Why?]***

6. A: A mí me gustó más la de los animales allí aprendimos mucho con los animales y la de los objetos de la cocina.

***[I liked the activity related to animals there we learnt a lot in relation to animals and kitchen objects]***

7. Q: ¿En qué estrategias te gustaría trabajar, para comprender mucho más la lengua Inglesa?

***[In which strategies would you like to work on to learn better the English language]***

8. A: En la de los temas repetidos  
***[ In the repeated topics]***

(May 31 st, 15 )

In this extract “the helper” argued she used repetition and memorization, she felt motivation when teachers used visual images in their classes and she would like to study English with the repeated topics.

The helper preferred to use the cognitive strategies in the case of the turn number two when she was asked about the strategies she used to study English. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) argue that cognitive strategies involve the manipulation of the material to be learned such as repetition. This strategy was presented in the survey when learners studied for an English exam but there was a more showed preference on memory strategies at the moment of studying. Although this role of memorizing things is not always a guarantee that a student is using information for communicative purposes, it is more related to fulfill a learning task. The lines six and eight from this same extract also showed that helper preferred to use cognitive strategies in the case of animals and cooking elements’ classes because they practiced aspects like rehearsal or repeating the name of objects, making inferences or guessing meanings of words and the transfer of information to develop a task (Weinstein and Mayer cited by O’Malley, 1993), and in the line eight from this same extract that helper argued to expand more on the repeated topics to learn more about English, showing more preference for cognitive strategies.

In the line extract number four, the helper got a perception towards affective strategies; she reaffirmed her preference as a visual learner and therefore the activities used by a teacher activated positive or negative attitudes on the learner and have an effect on the use of learning strategies (Kumaravadivelu, 2009). In the analysis of extract three, in relation to the survey, the helper argued to use more cognitive and affective strategies for learning.

In the analyzed excerpts, the helper showed more preference for cognitive, social, memory and affective strategies on learning the second language and less preference for metacognitive strategies. These strategies were only explored in the class evaluation part where they began to think about their own learning process by means of the use of strategies to facilitate language learning.

Along with the helper, the administrator was analyzed relating some extracts with the observations, interviews and the survey. The second learner analyzed was the administrator, during the classes conducted I could notice this learner was analytic and when she did not know a topic was the person that recalled her memory to provide the answer, she took into account the distribution of time at the moment of doing an activity. She felt comfortable in activities that involve images because in that way she made associations and reinforced the topic. She showed more preference in the use of cognitive strategies.

**Excerpt 4:** The following extract made part of the interview done first class where the main topic was related to “animals”, there students also practiced information

questions and reinforced vocabulary involving the mentioned topic and the duration of interview was 5 minutes.

1. *T: ¿Cuál estrategia te gusto más y por qué?*  
**[Which strategy did you like the most and why?]**

2. *S: A mí me gustó la de las acciones que tú nos diste, los nombres de los animales y con lo visual*  
**[I liked the activity related to the actions that you taught and the animals' name and the images]**

3. *T: ¿Qué opinas de las estrategias de aprendizaje?*  
**[What do you think about learning strategies?]**

4. *S: son de ayuda para los que tenemos un nivel bajo en Inglés porque nos ayuda a mejorar, por ejemplo en lo escrito como la gramática.*  
**[Those are helpful for the students that have a low level in English because they help us to be better for example in the written part, in grammar]**

*(May 10 th, 5')*

In this extract “the administrator” liked the use of visual images like the helper, the helper enjoyed working in the second language by means of visual aids.

In the extract four line two, the administrator showed preference for cognitive strategies because her visual style and learning was determined by the pedagogical materials used by teacher in her classes that can

determine the use of learning strategies (Kumaravadivelu, 2009). In this case the administrator took advantage of her visual style to maximize her learning on vocabulary about animals, which was combined with the name of the animals or written part that confirmed her visual style, but this style is more marked for her to learn the language.

She also pointed that learning strategies were useful for her and she perceived an intrinsic value of strategies when she argued that strategies helped her to improve grammar. She also confirmed that she was less proficient in the language, there she was doing own judgments of her learning process that reflected the existence of a problem and evaluated her level in the language, an aspect of metacognitive strategies. O'malley & Chamot(1993) argue that in this kind of strategies the learner monitors or comprehends the received information and evaluates his own production. During this class the administrator used cognitive and metacognitive strategies in the first class interview.

The following excerpt was part of the interview for the third class where students studied vocabulary related to kitchen objects and the demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these, those).

**Extract 5:** In this third class the administrator showed her thoughts related to the session involving vocabulary and grammar, the estimated time for the interview was 10 minutes.

1. *T:* ¿Cómo te sentiste en la actividad de clase?

**[How did you feel in the activity?]**

2. *S:* Me gusto arto lo de los objetos y aprendí más con la comunicación en grupo y me gustó también la del test.

**[I liked a lot the activity related to the objects and I learnt more with the communicative in group and I liked the test]**

3. *T:* ¿Por qué te gustaron las comunicativas y la evaluación?

**[Why did you like the communicative ones and the test?]**

4. *S:* Porque allí aprendimos y practicamos lo visto anteriormente es decir reforzamos.

**[Because there we learnt and practice what we studied I mean we reinforce]**

(May 24 th, 10´)

The administrator argued that she liked the activity related to the kitchen elements and that she learnt inside group works because there she reinforced the topics.

In line two extract five, the administrator coincided in the use of cognitive strategies when the rehearsal of vocabulary related to cooking elements helped her to internalize knowledge and she was aware of reinforcement to bring positive results on her learning process. O'Malley & Chamot cited by Gómez & Matos (2008) establish a relationship between the practice and repetition with memory, which it becomes into a first sign of learning a new language.

At this stage the administrator took responsibility for her own learning and

recognized that effective strategies bring success for learning a language (Chamot, 1999).

This student also learnt with social strategies because it was a space to practice and reinforce the topic. In the use of social strategies learners improved their level and lived language in a natural way. Communication strategies are the means, which learners have at their disposal to make sense in face-to-face exchanges and cope with breakdowns in communication like common understanding and pronunciation (Grenfell & Harris, 1999).

In this third class related to cooking elements the administrator showed like for cognitive and communication strategies.

The next extract was taken from the survey in which the administrator provided in more detail the preference in the use of strategies.

**Extract 6:**

1. Q: ¿Qué estrategias utilizas más en el momento de estudiar inglés? ¿por qué?  
**[Which strategies do you use more when you study English? Why?]**
2. A: *tomar apuntes, Porque después repaso y me aprendo lo que voy escribiendo*  
**[Taking notes because I review and I memorize what I am writing]**
3. Q: ¿ Durante las sesiones de Inglés que recibiste ¿Qué estrategias te ayudaron a comprender mejor las temáticas? ¿Por qué?  
**[During the English sessions you received which strategies helped you**

**to understand the topics better?]**

4. A: Las comunicativas porque se puede preguntar y nos explica bien  
**[the communicative ones because I can ask and partners explain well]**
5. Q: ¿En qué estrategias te gustaría trabajar, para comprender mucho más la lengua?  
**[On which strategies would you like to work more in order to learn much more on the language?]**
6. A: *En las comunicativas porque nos ayuda a estudiar en grupo y nos ayuda mucho a integrarnos en grupo.*  
**[In the communicative ones because they help us to study in groups and get involved on it]**
7. Q: Cuándo estudias para una evaluación de Inglés, ¿Cual estrategia utilizas?  
**[When you study for an English test, which strategy do you use?]**
8. A: Hacer resúmenes, Porque me gusta y para aprender más  
**[I summarize because I like and I learn more]**

*(May 31 st, 15')*

This final data showed the administrator preferred taking notes at the moment of studying for a lesson instead of asking to clarify things, evaluating her own process and using circumlocution as the strategies she used more on learning. She argued that she always took notes in order to memorize what she wrote; she preferred read and re-read so that knowledge stayed in her

memory, instead of analyzing, summarizing and deducing.

The administrator showed a preference for cognitive and memory strategies at the moment of studying English, she referred in line two, that taking notes and memorizing topics was a way that information entered into long-term memory and retrieved that information at the moment of communicating with others. The administrator and the helper had the same source of studying that was memorization.

Another strategy preference was the use of social strategies to build knowledge with the help of her peers, which was positive because it showed students commitment with learning and be more independent to build their own learning. When she referred to social strategies as a way to learn with the help of their partners to feel more confident and free to ask questions, in this sense a student could be more motivated to learn a new set of skills because he or she understood their potential utility or value, that is why she wanted to continue working on social strategies.

In the observation done administrator also used the cognitive strategy, note taking during the practice of the grammar structure in the first session while she heard the animals' name, she recalled her memory and tended to over generalize vocabulary, and making associations like in the case of "monk" to refer a monkey, here she coincided again in the use of cognitive strategies with the information collected in the survey and interviews.

So far the administrator showed more preference for cognitive strategies related to note taking, memorization, visual images and rehearsal; with more predominance for memorization and rehearsal. The social strategies relating to asking questions in order to reinforce topics was less common as well as the metacognitive strategies in which the administrator made own judgments of her English level.

The last participant to analyze was the insecure the following data showed the strategies that were successful for her in language learning.

In the classes observation, the "insecure" interacted with others, listened and believed on her classmates, when she did not know a word she recalled from memory although showed less confidence than the other two students.

**Extract 7:** This extract was taken from the interview in the first class about "animals", this interview was conducted on May and lasted 10 minutes.

1. *T: ¿Cuál estrategia te gusto más y porque?*  
**[Which strategy did you like more and why?]**
2. *S: cuando nos dio las imágenes de los animales y nosotros decíamos que animales eran, el nombre de los animales y el color de los animales.*  
**[when you taught the animals, the name and their color]**
3. *T: ¿Qué aprendiste con esta actividad?*  
**[What did you learn with the activity?]**

4. *S: aprendí los nombres de los animales y a hablar en ingles*  
**[I learnt the animals and how to teach in English]**

(May 10<sup>th</sup>- 10')

The selected strategies for “the insecure” were the repetition to internalize knowledge, preference for visual images and social strategies.

In line number two extract seven the insecure coincided again with the other two learners in relation to the preference for cognitive strategies. The insecure said she liked the activity involving visual images, the rehearsal of vocabulary with the help of sounds and the interaction with others, this last element was significant for her to the fact that the class about animals integrated tasks and functioned on her to improve her English level. This factor can make awareness in the use of strategies and have a successful learning (Oxford, 1993).

The line number four of the same extract showed that the insecure made own judgments of her level when she said “*I learnt the name of animals and how to speak in English*” Lan (2005) argues that, research shows that EFL (English foreign language) strategy use was significantly related to learners’ motivation, attitudes, and beliefs about language learning and towards learning strategy use. The insecure felt that learning strategies helped her to speak the language thus can have a positive attitude on her learning and motivation he has towards language.

The next extract makes part of the interview done to the insecure, in the third class about “cooking elements”.

**Extract 8:** This extract was taken from the interview and was conducted on May and lasted 5 minutes.

1. *T: ¿Cómo te sentiste en la actividad?*  
**[How did you feel in the activity?]**

2. *S: A mí me gustó pegarle los nombres a los objetos, mirar a que palabra pertenecía a cada objeto me sentí bien con la comunicativa y con el listening regular porque no entiendo casi y con el test bien porque ya habíamos repasado anteriormente y ya sabíamos lo que pertenecía a cada objeto.*

**[I liked to paste the name of the objects to the objects, to look which word belonged to the corresponding object I felt good with the communicative and with the listening regular because I understand little and with the test good because we already review on that and we already know the name to the object]**

(May 24<sup>th</sup>- 5': 04)

In relation to the previous and the following extract “the insecure” showed preference for word associations, rehearsal and communicative strategies. She pointed that she did not feel good with listening exercises.

In relation to the insecure answer she enjoyed the activity of matching names with the corresponding object; the insecure reaffirmed her visual style, he also enjoyed guessing and relating words with previous

knowledge a characteristic of cognitive strategies. The insecure also showed a preference to social strategies as the other two participants, because by working in groups they can cooperate with others and promote self-reinforcement.

The activity related to listening was difficult to this learner because she had some problems identifying key words; this is the selective attention on metacognitive strategies and I consider a continuous process that provides teachers with tools to expand on listening strategies to articulate them with visual styles.

The insecure recognized that cognitive and communicative strategies were successful for her during the third class survey.

In the following extract, the insecure showed her thoughts related to the last class in which she studied food.

**Extract 9:** In the activity related to food and countable nouns she argued she liked mixing up activities and tests that involved the same vocabulary studied in class:

1. T: *¿Cuál actividad te gusto más de la clase de hoy?*

***[which activity did you like for today's class?]***

2. S: *A mí me gusto la de las fichas que uno miraba que comida era y también aprendí el vocabulario de la comida y también me gusto el test que uno completa los cuadros, y mirando como se decía y como se escribían los alimentos y la evaluación me gusto porque reforzamos y así se nos queda grabado en la mente.*

***[I liked the activity related to cards in which I looked them what was the food, I learnt with vocabulary of food and I like the test to complete with some spaces and looking how was the pronunciation and writing of the food. I liked the evaluation because we reinforce and in that way the information stays long in our minds]***

*(May 31<sup>st</sup>- 7':03)*

The insecure affirmed she liked activities related to inference names with objects and reinforcement of vocabulary.

The insecure liked to use cognitive strategies to study the language thanks to inference and rehearsal vocabulary related to food, in this activity the learners mixed the name of the food with the correct object using their previous knowledge to make inferences. She recognized that she learnt these words related to food (countable and non-countable nouns), which was a positive aspect that nurtures her low level in the language. She also pointed that activities involving vocabulary studied for her and used in new tasks (practice grammar and the test) functioned on her to understand the topic, here she perceived a value of strategies to improve learning.

This learner needed more time to learn because she needed to internalize information the fact that she believed she was not a good learner made her process to take more time than others who process information faster.

In this extract number nine the insecure used cognitive to infer and rehearsal vocabulary.

The next extract made part of the answers provided by the insecure at the end of the four sessions received, in the survey.

**Extract 10:**

1. Q: *Cuándo estudias para una evaluación de Inglés, prefieres “memorizar, estudiar con otros, verificar vocabulario o hacer resúmenes.*

***[when you study for an English test do you prefer to memorize, to study with others, to verify vocabulary or summarize? ]***

2. S: *Memorizar. Primero memorizo para hacer la evaluación bien*

***[memorizing. First I memorize in order to evaluation can be good ]***

3. Q: *Durante las 3 sesiones de Inglés que recibiste fuera de tu salón de clase, ¿Qué estrategias te ayudaron a comprender mejor las temáticas? ¿Por qué?*

***[During the 3 sessions taken in English, Which strategies did you help to understand better?]***

4. S: *A mí me gusto la de los animales porque aprendí algunos animales que no distinguía en Inglés*

***[I liked the strategy related to the animals because I did not know some animals in English]***

5. *¿En qué estrategias te gustaría trabajar, para comprender mucho más la lengua Inglesa?*

***[On which strategies would you like to work on to understand the language better?]***

6. *En las cognitivas. Porque uno entiende*

*más con imágenes.*

***[In the cognitive ones. Because I understand better with images]***

(May 31<sup>st</sup>- 15´:00)

The insecure said she liked to work with cognitive strategies in relation to visual material to study vocabulary and memory strategies to have better results on exams.

This learner showed preference for cognitive and memory strategies to internalize knowledge, something that happened to the other two participants. In the line two of this extract, insecure coincided with the other two participants in the preference for memory strategies to study for an English exam Abhakorn (2008) argues that learners match strategies to their own learning style and personality and to the demands of the task in the context of cultural influences. The insecure used this method; she perceived that a strategy functioned on her and her learning style to have good results.

An issue I perceived is that role of the tests is also a tool to allow students to make associations; when tests aim that mixing images with the corresponding name in which they recall vocabulary studied in class. Another aspect is relevant to consider is how useful the memorization is good or bad for language learners and how competent students are when they face communicative situations. When a language learner acquires language, the role of memorization is needed at the moment of increasing vocabulary.

In the last sessions I could notice how these group of learners of Normal School were

more aware of the use of strategies and their learning process they got more familiarized with the terminology of learning strategies, for example in the firsts class they associated the communicative strategies with the commutative; an expression used in mathematics.

This specific group felt more identified with the use of cognitive strategies on memorization and rehearsal, instead of studying with other people, verifying vocabulary and summarizing. This aspect is related to selection in O'Malley et al. (1990) word's, the learners focus on specific information of interest in the environment, and transfer that information into working memory. They also felt that social strategies helped them to cooperate with others and clarify things during learning English language. They also showed certain characteristics of metacognitive strategies on evaluating their own process, and they showed aspects of attitudes to learning and motivation when they receive a good feedback in the classes and visual materials to facilitate learning. Although the use of strategies on learning a language is from vital importance, we cannot deny that many factors influence on their use, like the learners' background, personality, age sex and so. It is an unending process that begins in classroom and requires student's desire.

## Conclusions

In order to answer the research question the model cited in Liu' work about preparation, presentation, practice, evaluation and assessment were helpful to make students internalize knowledge and make them aware of the role of learning strategies for learning

a language. Data showed that students got familiar with cognitive and social strategies, which involve images and repetition, strategies on working in a cooperative way with mates, to make clarifications and learn more.

In the survey students prefer to memorize topics when they have a test instead of studying with other people, verifying vocabulary and summarizing. This aspect of memory can be internalized when teacher reinforces material learnt and make connections with the previous information and the recent one. They also apply self-evaluation to control knowledge and enjoy working on groups to clarify doubts. Self-evaluation makes student monitors his own learning and allows them to improve in the strategies they are using and expand to other strategies successful for them.

In the applied interviews, students showed more interest on the cognitive strategies that involved repetition. A common factor found in the learners is that they have visual styles on learning; this factor was found in the activity related to the animal drawings. Another common strategy found was the social one, in which they learnt more because they could cooperate and evaluate between them.

In the implementation of language learning strategies, classroom is perceived as one important space to model, use and better understanding of them, where teacher acts as a collaborator and who provides conditions in the student's success on learning. Nevertheless, students' beliefs towards language learning strategies play a substantial role in the preparation, practice

and evaluation of strategies to enrich their learning and teaching practices. For the teacher, working with strategies in a second language, brings a possibility to demystify the use of translation and encapsulating the foreign language in an isolated context avoiding that students interacts with both languages to make connections and facilitate learning.

It is important to expose students to learning strategies in order to clarify how these can be applied to tasks. This will contribute to facilitate learning, enhance, consciousness of their process, which involve a great sense of commitment, responsibility and autonomy where students approach the learning process efficiently. Having a wide range of learning strategies available to them and knowing how and why to apply those strategies, they intuitively, continuously, and almost unconsciously monitor what they are doing towards mastery of content. Other students however, approach learning with few of these valuable tools. (Protheroe, 2002) Some students can use strategies so quickly and there are others who do not, in this sense, teachers and students must continue with the natural process of learning and do it in the best way, the key factor is first to get familiar with strategies and apply them as required.

Students' Affective factors influence the use of learning strategies towards a subject, learners prefer watching images to understand better and make the class more dynamic. The role of materials must provide a set of opportunities for students to locate themselves in the activities related to their learning styles, an initial fact in the implementation of language learning

strategies and finally with the expansion of new strategies.

When a learner has a particular sense of lack of optimism, sometimes she does not believe on her knowledge and abilities. In this point teachers can play an important role inside class not only fostering knowledge but also allowing students to believe in themselves, showing them how smart students are and how successful they can be when they know themselves and the way they learn better, the activities used in classroom must also be designed to take into account cognitive strategies that allow students to internalize knowledge but by means of differencing, rehearsal, attention to detail and monitoring.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The implementation of learning strategies into the language-learning curriculum plays a substantial role in learning contexts. For this reason, it is crucial for teachers to plan their classes based on these tools and look at learning as a complete set of tools not in an isolated way, to allow students to get some awareness, clarity about all existing strategies for specific needs and make them conscious of these processes.

Teachers should also take into account the role of teaching materials as related to students' learning styles as well as including conversational activities that allow students to cooperate between them and enhance self-evaluation processes. Cassidy (2004) states that learning styles are a way in which a learner approaches to learning a situation. The implications for teaching are that language learners need to explore different

learning strategies, experimenting and evaluating, and eventually choosing their own set of effective strategies. (Chamot, 2005)

An important factor to consider is that students' voices need to be heard to monitor student's learning and help them to change methods on memorization for meaningful interactions and uses of language in a natural way to enhance more successful learners.

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