THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG STRATEGY USE, SELF-EFFICACY, AND

LANGUAGE ABILITY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

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Olive N. Gahungu

This study investigated the interrelationships among language learning strategy use, self-efficacy, and language ability. The study participants were thirty-seven college students studying French at a midwestern, medium-size, university. The students' use of language learning strategies was a measured through a forty-item questionnaire that was an adaptation of Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Their self-efficacy was also measured through a forty-item questionnaire in which they expressed their levels of certainty that they could perform learning tasks at desired levels of proficiency. Their language ability in French was measured through a cloze test. Qualitative data were also obtained from open-ended questions, interviews with the participants and their instructor, as well as class observations.

The results of the study revealed the existence of positive and significant relationships among the three variables. It was also found that the majority of the participants did not have a clear rationale for studying French, but had undertaken its study to fulfill programmatic requirements, which affected their strategic behavior. Recommendations for second language students, programs, and instructors were suggested to help students achieve higher communicative competence.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationships among language learning strategy use, self-efficacy, and language ability in a foreign language environment at Chicago State University. This chapter contains (1) the background of the problem, (2) the purpose of the study, (3) the statement of the problem, (4) the definitions of important terms, abbreviations and acronyms used, (5) the delimitations of the study, (6) the limitations of the study, (7) the significance of the study, and (8) a summary of the chapter.

Background of the Problem

Most language teaching approaches, such as the cognitive approach, the comprehension-based approach, the direct approach, and the situational approach, lack an emphasis on learner autonomy, feelings, and attitudes (Celce-Murcia, 2001). They view language teaching as an enterprise where the teachers' role is to provide learners with the knowledge and skills they think students need and to assess whether the learners have met the expectations. The students' role is to learn the material taught to them, and, during assessment, to demonstrate what they know. These two roles seem very simplified. Effective teachers ought to look for and find ways to motivate their students, encourage them, teach them learning skills, and also teach them ways to continue learning outside the classroom and away from the teacher (Rubin & Thompson, 1994; Wenden, 1991). It is necessary for teachers to help students learn to recognize their emotional temperature and lower their affective filter when it is interfering with learning

(Krashen & Terrell, 1983; De Serres & LaFontaine, 2005; Oya, Manalo & Greenwood, 2004).

The theory of an affective filter states that successful second or foreign language learning depends on the learners' feelings and attitudes. A negative attitude acts as a filter, and prevents the learner from making use of input, thus limiting success in language learning (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1996; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). In an effort to make the language learning experience as successful as possible, language practitioners have to look for concrete ways to assist their students to learn more effectively by empowering them to take responsibility and to manage their own learning. Successful language learners have acquired the skills necessary to enhance learning and to develop autonomy and a sense of personal agency.

What kind of input, environment, motivation, and learner characteristics are associated with higher levels of language learning? This is a very important question that includes language learning strategies and self-efficacy, two constructs that have been received different levels of attention in the research in second language acquisition. Teachers and other language practitioners are increasingly aware of the existence of learning strategies and self-efficacy. But the extent to which these two constructs might play a role in foreign language learning has not been fully investigated. In fact, they have been either unknown, ignored, or neglected by many language teaching approaches. Second and foreign languages have been taught through at least nine approaches (the grammar-translation approach, the direct approach, the reading approach, the situational approach, the cognitive approach, the affective-humanistic approach, the comprehension-based approach, and the communicative approach, as discussed by Celce-Murcia (1991;

2001). A close examination of these language teaching approaches, as discussed in detail in the second chapter, reveals that only the affective-humanistic approach accorded much value to such factors as teachers' and students' feelings, learning environment and class atmosphere, peer interaction and support (Oxford, 1990; Brown, 1994).

There is still a need to improve teaching by focusing on how learners conduct learning tasks in second language acquisition (Rivers, 2001; Mondada, 2005; Noels, 2005). Although language instructors carry much responsibility, this study stemmed from the belief that much of the success in language learning rests with individual students and their ability to take advantage of every opportunity to learn. Regardless of the approach with which they are taught, effective learners are active, self-directed, and engaged in learning. They take charge of their own learning; they have acquired the skills, tools, and attitudes necessary to overcome most learning and communication difficulties.

What does the use of these skills, or learning strategies, entail in terms of the beliefs that these learners hold in relation to their abilities as language learners? Do they feel that they are up to the task? Beliefs about a person's ability to accomplish tasks satisfactorily are known as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997a; Schunk, 2001). This construct is further discussed in chapter two. One would conclude, just by common sense, that if one possesses the tools to accomplish a task, one should believe that he could perform the task to desired levels. However, common sense lacks proof and research is needed to either confirm or disconfirm this assumption. No known research has ever been conducted to investigate any association between strategy use and self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is an aspect of social cognitive theory, which is an approach to understanding human cognition, motivation, and emotion. This theory assumes that

people possess the ability to reflect and regulate their actions and to shape their environment rather than merely react to it. High levels of self-efficacy have been associated with high levels of achievement in different domains. In the field of second and foreign language acquisition, self-efficacy is still underexplored. The role, if any, it may play in language learning has not been definitely determined. A few studies, as referenced in the second chapter, have found a relationship between students' self-efficacy ratings and a measure of language ability in a language skill. One study (Templin, 1999) found that, on an English test, high efficacy students obtained significantly higher grades than low efficacy students. Another study (Anstrom, 2000) concluded that students studying different languages experienced different levels of self-efficacy. There are still unknown or partially explored areas in terms of second language acquisition, language learning strategies, and self-efficacy. In studies that have confirmed the existence of a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and one measure of language ability, researchers analyzed scores from a test of one skill, such as the written portion of the TOEFL and correlated them to scores obtained on a self-efficacy scale. There is a need for studies that would test integrated skills and analyze how the scores obtained on those tests relate to strategy use and self-efficacy.

<div align="center">Purpose of the Study</div>

The purpose of this study was to investigate the interrelationships among language learning strategy use, self-efficacy, and language ability in a university foreign language setting. The study was set to test two theories. First, a number of language learning theorists (Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991; Thompson & Rubin, 1993; Rubin &

Thompson, 1994; McDonough, 1995) have assumed that the use of language learning strategies is associated with high levels of language ability. Second, social cognitive theorists (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1997a; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 1996; Maddux & Meier, 1995; McCombs, 2001; Schunk, 1996; Zimmerman, Bonner, & Kovack, 1996) posit that high levels of self-efficacy in a specific domain lead to high achievement in that domain.

Although several studies have investigated the relationship between strategy use and language ability (Cohen, Weaver & Li, 1996; Thompson & Rubin, 1993; Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999; O'Malley, 1987), some studies are replicated in different environments and research continues, sometimes finding a significant relationship and at other times failing to find one. In this study, the researcher planned to add to the body of existing knowledge concerning the association between strategies and language ability. Few studies have considered the relationship between self-efficacy and language ability, and even fewer researchers have explored any relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy. Therefore, there is still a need for more studies to contribute to the understanding of the role played by these constructs in foreign language learning.

Statement of the Problem

What are the interrelationships among the use of language learning strategies, self-efficacy, and language ability?

Research Questions and Related Alternative Hypotheses

1. What is the relationship between strategy use and language ability?

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive relationship between strategy use and language ability.

2. What is the relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy?

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy.

3. What is the relationship between self-efficacy and language ability?

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and language ability.

Definition of Terms, Abbreviations and Acronyms Used

Affective filter hypothesis: one of Krashen's five central hypotheses concerning his theory of second language acquisition. "The affective filter is an imaginary barrier which prevents learners from using input which is available in the environment" (Lightbown & Spada, 1995, p. 28). The word affect refers to such concepts as learner needs, motives, attitudes, and emotional state. A learner who is experiencing a negative state of mind (such as boredom, anger, anxiety) will screen out input, thus making it unavailable for acquisition.

CSU: Chicago State University, a university on the south side of the city of Chicago.

EFL: English as a Foreign Language. The role of English in countries where it is taught in schools as a subject without being used as the language of instruction in that country's educational system nor as a language of daily communication in government, business, industry, etc, within that country (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1996).

ESL: English as a Second Language. Sometimes also known as ESOL or English for Speakers Of Other Languages. The role of English for immigrants and other minority groups in countries where English is spoken. Such groups may use their native languages at home and among friends, but have to use English at work and school. An ESL or ESOL program is therefore a program for teaching English to speakers of other languages in countries where English is the dominant language (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1996). Thus, a second language environment occurs when a language is learnt inside its natural or cultural setting by individuals who speak another language as their mother tongue.

L1: Mother tongue, native or first language, the language people acquire in their early childhood as it is spoken in their families. Sometimes it is also the language of the country where they live, but it could also be a minority language that a child acquires because his family, as a member of a minority group, speaks that language (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1996).

L2: Second language, target language, or the language that an individual is learning in addition to his first language and any other languages he might know or might be learning.

Language ability: language achievement as a result of learning that language (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1996).

Language learning strategy: ways in which learners try to work out the meanings and uses of words, rules of grammar, the use of language skills, and other aspects of the language they are learning (Oxford, 1990).

Language skill: the mode in which language is used. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are known as the four language skills (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1996).

Motivation: It is defined by Richards, Platt and Platt (1996) as the factors that determine a person's desire to do something. In second language acquisition**,** two different types of motivation are often distinguished. The first type is instrumental motivation, in which individuals learn a second language for its usefulness as an "instrument" in the learner's future goals, such as travel, career, or education. The second type of motivation is integrative motivation where the learner learns a second or foreign language in order to communicate effectively and develop some degree of closeness with the culture associated with the target language.

Self-efficacy: Bandura (1997a) defined it as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p.3).

SILL: Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, designed by Oxford (1990).

SLA: Second Language Acquisition, the process of developing some level of proficiency in a second or foreign language. Some use it to refer to second language learning, but Krashen and Terrell (1983) make a clear distinction between these two concepts. They argue that language acquisition is a subconscious process during which the individual "picks" up the language and acquires implicit knowledge about it. Language learning, on the other hand, is conscious, and the learner develops explicit knowledge about the language.

Social cognitive theory: according to Maddux (1995), it is an approach to understanding human cognition, action, motivation, and emotion that posits that individuals are capable of regulating and reflecting on themselves and that they play an active role in the shaping of their environments rather than being passive reactors to them.

Target language: a language that an individual is learning. It could be his second, third, or fourth, depending on how many languages he already knows.

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language.

Delimitations

This study was carried out with participants enrolled in the French program of Chicago State University (CSU), a medium size university located on the south side of Chicago, Illinois. The CSU campus is located in an area set by 95th Street to the north and 99th street to the south, Martin Luther King Drive to the west and Cottage Grove Avenue to the east. According to the CSU fact book, this university is largely attended by students who reside in zip codes that are in the vicinity of the campus, an area that is predominantly inhabited by low income African Americans. Enrollment statistics from Fall 2001, the latest available, indicate that 74 percent of the university's students are female and 26 percent are male. As many as 89 percent are African Americans; 6 percent are Hispanics, only 3 percent are white; and 2 percent represent other racial groups. In addition, this study was conducted in the academic year 2004-2005. Students enrolled in the French program at CSU in the period during which this research was conducted had specific characteristics that set them apart from other French learners in other programs, locations, and periods. Therefore, the findings and results may not necessarily generalize to other subpopulations or locations.

Limitations

Both direct and indirect methods of collecting data on language learning strategies are useful but present some limitations. This study used a survey where students rated themselves, which is an indirect method of gathering data on strategies used by second language learners. Whereas surveys reveal what language learners believe they do, they cannot uncover what the learners actually do. Surveys are taken at a time remote from the language task, a fact that may raise some skepticism as to their claim to truth. Therefore, data obtained from the questionnaire on strategy use was substantiated with additional evidence from interviews with students and their instructor, and class observations. Self-efficacy, being an internal attribute, is difficult to isolate and study exhaustively by means of some objective instrument. Survey items used to measure it may touch on some other constructs, such as motivation and self-esteem, which are often confused with self-efficacy. One potential problem with research where participants rate themselves is the extent to which individuals can objectively rate themselves, especially in a subjective area such as self-efficacy. Some participants may inflate or underestimate their strategy use or their self-efficacy levels.

Assumptions

The researcher made the following assumptions in conducting this study:

1. Evidence of validity and reliability of the data collection instruments was provided.

2. The instrument to measure language learning strategy use was an adaptation of the SILL that was created by Oxford (1990) and has been used in several studies around the world.

3. The instrument to measure self-efficacy levels was an adaptation of a survey created by Albert Bandura, who is an authority in self-efficacy (Maddux, 1995; Schunk, 1995, 1996).

4. The students' language ability was measured through a cloze procedure. Cloze tests have been found to correlate highly with other measures of overall language proficiency (Bachman, 1985; Steinman, 2002).

5. The participants possessed the knowledge, ability and willingness to answer the survey items, to take the language ability test and participate in a focus group interview.

Significance of the Study

The knowledge of the relationships among attitudinal factors such as self-efficacy, language learning strategy use and language ability requires additional research. This study provided more insights into the constructs that may be associated with the development of second and foreign language ability. The participants of the study will gain a deeper understanding of the role of strategies and attitude as they go through the often-challenging task of learning a language in their adult age.

Second and foreign language teachers will know the extent to which it may be necessary to incorporate strategy training into their programs and help their students develop a positive attitude towards their language learning experience. Although this study made no claims of generalizability, other second and foreign language programs, teachers, and learners may recognize similarities between the participants of this study and their own students and take into consideration its findings and recommendations.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the interrelationships among strategy use, self-efficacy, and language ability, in a group of learners of French as a foreign language at Chicago State University, a small-sized public university on the south side of the City of Chicago. This introductory chapter presented the background of the problem, which was followed by the purpose of the study and problem statement with three research questions and related hypotheses. Major terms, abbreviations and acronyms that might appear in this study were defined as well as the delimitations that might result from the type of students attending Chicago State University. Finally, the limitations, assumptions, and the significance of the study were presented. In the next chapter, the concepts of language learning strategies and self-efficacy are discussed in detail, and prior research related to these two constructs is reviewed.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Two constructs, language learning strategies and self-efficacy, are the subjects of this review of the literature. Strategies for language learning and use have been the subject of growing attention, especially in the areas of second and foreign language learning and teaching (Oxford, 1990; Bialystok, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wenden, 1991; Rubin & Thompson, 1994; McDonough, 1995; Cohen et al, 1996; Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999). A large part of the literature focuses on the use of strategies to manage the learning experience and handle difficulties that occur when second language learners have a meaning to receive or transmit but lack the necessary linguistic resources to encode or decode the message. The use of language learning strategies may be closely related to some attitudinal factors, one of which is self-efficacy. The construct of self-efficacy is a topic that has gained much attention in education, starting and continuing with Bandura's publications (Bandura, 1977; 1996, 1997a). Self-efficacy has been defined as a judgment of one's ability to perform a task within a specific domain (Bandura, 1997a). The first part of this literature review is an analysis of language learning strategies; the second one is a discussion of self-efficacy.

Traditional second language teaching was conducted in a much simpler way than required by student characteristics. Tarone and Yule (1995) contended that the teacher followed a textbook and provided students with the knowledge s/he thought they needed. The students' task was to learn the material and, during assessment, to demonstrate what they knew. If a student obtained a low grade, it was a sign of low intelligence, laziness, or

truancy. In the following section, a critical analysis of second language teaching approaches is offered.

Overview of Language Teaching Approaches

Celce-Murcia (1991) summarized the history of second and foreign language learning from the medieval period to the 20th century. Before this century, language teaching was organized around two types of approaches. One approach favored using the language through speaking and understanding; and the other focused on analyzing the language or understanding grammatical rules. During the Classical Greek and Medieval Latin periods, the emphasis in second language teaching was placed on teaching people to use the target languages, especially since Greek and Latin were *lingua franca* in Europe. The educated European elite could speak, read and write either Greek or Latin. During the Renaissance period, the formal study of Greek and Latin grammars became popular, owing in part to the invention of the printing press that made mass production of books possible. During the 17th century, European vernaculars gained more prestige and utility, and people found it necessary to learn languages from other regions or countries. Language study focused on utility rather than analysis.

One of the most famous language teachers and methodologists of this period is Jan Comenius. Some of the techniques that he proposed included the use of imitation instead of rules to teach a language, having students repeat after the teacher, using a limited vocabulary in the initial stages of language learning, having students practice reading and speaking, and teaching language through pictures to make it meaningful. Comenius' ideas held ground till the beginning of the 19th century when the analytical

grammar-translation became firmly established as an approach for teaching not only Latin but modern languages as well.

During the 20th century, language teachers have taught according to nine approaches: (1) the grammar-translation approach, (2) The direct approach, (3) the reading approach, (4) the audiolingual approach, (5) the situational approach, (6) the cognitive approach, (7) the affective-humanistic approach, (8) the comprehension-based approach, and (9) the communicative approach. In the following section, each of these approaches is described and critiqued in terms of its ability to advance student language learning on their journey to becoming bilingual.

The Grammar-Translation Approach

The grammar-translation approach grew out of the approaches used to teach classical languages. Instruction was given in the students' native language and there was little use of the target language. Heavy emphasis was placed on morphology; students had to read difficult classical texts and to translate sentences from the target language into their mother tongues (Thompson, 1991; Liming, 2001). The shortcomings of this approach are that its users ignored oral, aural, and writing skills. Although reading was emphasized, the texts assigned to the students for reading were taken from classical literature, were often too difficult, and had very little in common with the type of language used in daily communication. The teacher did not have to be fluent in the target language. The usual result of this approach was the students' inability to use the target language to communicate even after a number of years of study. Brown (1994) explained that little effort was given to teaching oral use of languages because languages were not

learned primarily to acquire oral and aural skills, but for the sake of being scholarly or to gain reading proficiency in a foreign language.

The Direct Approach

Teachers using the direct approach totally avoided using the students' first language. In fact, the teacher did not need to know his students' mother tongue. Lessons often began with a dialogue in modern conversational style. Grammar and culture were taught inductively. Teachers had to be native speakers or command near-native fluency of the language they were teaching. The direct approach was invented as a reaction to the failure of the grammar-translation method to produce learners who could communicate in the target language. According to Brown (1994), the direct approach focused on "active oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation between first and second languages, and little or no analysis of grammatical rules (p. 44). However, it became impracticable because very few teachers, especially in the United States of America, knew foreign languages well enough to teach them according to the direct approach. In addition, the dialogues used in lessons were scripts that could significantly differ from what one would encounter in real communication events. For example, students learning English as a Foreign Language under the direct approach, including the author of this study, were often made to memorize and act dialogues similar to the following:

Ann: Good morning.

Peter: Good morning.

Ann: What is your name?

Peter: My name is Peter. What is your name?

Ann: My name is Ann.

Peter: How do you do?

Ann: How do you do?

(Ann and Peter shake hands).

When the learner had to speak with somebody more proficient than him or a native speaker, s/he expected the conversation to proceed like the one he had memorized. Real life conversations are not preplanned and do not follow a script. More often than not, the conversation took a different turn and the student didn't know what to say. In addition, it is impossible to know all the speech acts in which the learners will use their second language, and draft dialogues for them. In the dialogue above, the speakers are introducing themselves to each other. In another one, the learner might be asking for directions, speaking to his doctor, ordering a meal, or making a request.

Celce-Murcia (1991) noted that in the 1930's, few people traveled abroad in countries where the foreign language was spoken, and speaking was not viewed as a very useful skill to possess. Reading was considered to be more useful than listening since learners had very few opportunities to speak their L2 but could find printed material to read.

The Reading Approach

In reaction to the direct approach, the reading approach was invented because reading was viewed as the most usable skill since not too many people could either travel to the country where their second language was used, or find other individuals with whom they could communicate in their L2. In the reading approach, reading comprehension was the only skill that was emphasized (Brown, 1994). Grammar was

taught to the extent that it aided in reading comprehension. Translation from L1 into L2 and vice versa was largely used, and the teacher did not have to command a good oral proficiency of L2. Vocabulary was controlled at first and limited to the most frequently encountered and useful items. The criticism directed against the reading approach centers around its lack of emphasis on the speaking and listening skills, and its limited attention to writing, which was mostly used during sentence translation.

The Audiolingual Approach

In similarity to the direct approach, lessons began with a dialogue. Proponents of audiolingualism assumed that language is habit formation, which explains their extensive use of mimicry and memorization and great effort was taken to prevent errors. Error avoidance was somewhat achieved through repetitive drills and manipulation of language with little regard to meaning or context. Grammatical structures were taught inductively and in sequence, and students were expected to listen and speak first before they could read and write. Vocabulary was seriously limited in the initial stages. During speaking activities, special attention was paid to pronunciation. Teachers had to be proficient in the language aspects that they were teaching since activities and materials were carefully planned and controlled.

The audiolingual approach was totally behaviorist. According to Brown (1994), the audiolingual approach grew out of a behavioristic theory of language in which first language acquisition was "viewed as consisting of rote practice, habit formation, …, reinforcement, conditioning, …, stimulus and response" (p. 50). Proponents of the audiolingual approach assumed that the processes of SLA involves the same constructs as

those involved in first language acquisition. A stimulus was sent by the teacher by initiating a question or setting up a drill and the students produced a reaction by responding (preferably correctly) to the teacher's question.

Language and communication are more sophisticated than a stimulus – reaction succession. They involve the transmission, the reception, interpretation, and understanding of meaningful messages sent by means of vocabulary items the meaning of which students may or may not totally know. Unfortunately, audiolingualism severely limited vocabulary. It also focused very much on form to the detriment of function. The manipulation of language without regard to meaning and context was a missed opportunity for the learner to use vocabulary items in meaningful contexts and to use the target language in meaningful ways. It is no surprise that students often failed to use their L2 in real life communication events.

The Situational Approach

In the situational approach, the speaking skill was of primary importance. Language materials were first practiced orally. Reading and writing were delayed until an oral base of the grammatical form or vocabulary had been established. Teachers made sure that only the essential or most necessary vocabulary items were presented. Proponents of this approach emphasized accuracy in both pronunciation and grammar, the ability to respond quickly and accurately in speech situations, and automatic control of basic structures and sentence patterns (Lingualinks, available online on http://www.sil.org.lingualinks). Grammar structures were presented from simple to

complex. New vocabulary and grammatical items were taught situationally with titles

such as "At the restaurant," "At the doctor's office," "At the airport," "At the bank," etc.

The situational approach assumed that all language learners had the same learning

needs or were learning an L2 for the same reasons. For example, students could role-play

conversations between a traveler and a customs officer, learn vocabulary associated with

air travel although very few of them hoped of ever flying. Students could spend time

learning vocabulary that they were not likely to use. In addition, the situations the

students learned about were taken out of context and students learned dialogues from

books and did not experience practicing their L2 in authentic situations. Similarly to the

direct approach, only the target language could be used during instruction, thus limiting

student input especially during the first stages of L2 learning when students have not yet

acquired sufficient vocabulary and grammar to express themselves in the target language,

which could also raise student anxiety (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

The Cognitive Approach

Contrary to the audiolingual approach that viewed language as habit formation,

the cognitive approach viewed language as rule acquisition. Grammar had to be taught,

although it could be taught either deductively or inductively. Pronunciation was de-

emphasized, with the understanding that a native-like pronunciation was an unrealistic

expectation and was impossible to achieve. All language skills were accorded great

importance; so was vocabulary development. Errors were viewed as part of the learning

process that could be used constructively as an indication of the students' learning needs.

For the first time, language instruction was often individualized and learners were viewed

as responsible for their own learning. The teacher was expected to have both a good general proficiency and the ability to analyze L2 (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

The cognitive approach presented the advantage of emphasizing all language skills and vocabulary, as well as individualizing learning and putting responsibility on the learner. This approach was based on the assumption that language learning involves active mental processes, rather than mere habit formation. It gave importance to the learner's active participation (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1996). However, a lot of attention to form could overshadow communicative activities and leave the students with a limited ability to use their L2 to communicate. The learning approaches that have been discussed above all lacked considerations of the learners' affect. The next approach purported to correct this lack of considerations of students' dispositions.

The Affective-Humanistic Approach

The affective-humanistic approach brought affective considerations to language learning. Learning a second or foreign language was seen as an act of self-realization. The student, the teacher and their feelings were owed respect. Teachers paid special attention to the following factors in an effort to reduce the learners' affective filter. First, the learning environment was supposed to be pleasant; class atmosphere was even viewed to be more important than course material or teaching methods. Second, peer support and interaction were needed for learning; as a consequence, instruction included much pair work and small group activities the purpose of which was communication that is meaningful to the learner (Celce-Murcia, 1991). The affective-humanistic approach shifted the teacher's role from that of deliverer of instruction and knowledge to that of a

facilitator and a counselor. The teacher was supposed to be proficient in the students' L1 as well as L2 since translation was heavily used in the initial stages of L2 instruction, but was gradually phased out as students developed L2 proficiency.

Some of the important principles underlying the affective-humanistic approach are: the development of human values, growth in self-awareness and in the understanding of others, sensitivity to human feelings and emotions, and active involvement in learning and in the way learning takes place (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1996).

The affective-humanistic approach presented a number of strengths. First, by creating a pleasant learning environment, teachers were able to make students feel at ease and to reduce anxiety. Second, by engaging students in communication that was meaningful to the learners, teachers were likely to increase students' interest, motivation and engagement in classroom activities. Third, through pair and group activities, learners had the opportunity to seek or offer support and assistance to each other; they learned to negotiate meaning and to repair communication breakdowns when they occurred. This is the realm of language learning and communication strategies. Fourth, this approach took into consideration the feelings of the learner, such as anxiety and efficacy. The teacher and the learners were to be respected as individuals regardless of their position on the socioeconomic ladder or the status of the language they were learning.

There seems, however, to be a lack of attention to form. Larsen-Freeman (1991) states that focusing on form is necessary because it is not enough to be able to pass across a message; the message has to be in a correct form. Lack of attention to grammar may lead to the fossilization of errors (Brown, 1994). Tarone and Yule (1995) echoed the same concern. They explained that one of the major disadvantages of language learning

experiences that primarily focus on communicative purposes is the lack of attention to grammatical accuracy. They continued to say that this situation often results in learners who are relatively fluent or successful in communicating messages, but consistently produce grammatically or phonologically inaccurate forms of language.

The Comprehension-Based Approach

Methodologists who favor the comprehension-based approach believe that second or foreign language acquisition happens in the same way as first language acquisition. Listening comprehension is considered the most important and basic skill that will allow the other three language skills to grow spontaneously, provided the conditions are right. Students start by listening to meaningful utterances and responding nonverbally. Thus, production is delayed and learners are not asked to speak until they feel ready to do so. They also are able to comprehend material that is more difficult than what they can produce (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1996). Learners develop more proficiency by receiving meaningful input that is a step beyond their present level of competence. Rules of grammar are taught only to the extent that they help students monitor their production; but they are not believed to lead to spontaneous use of L2. Error correction is avoided on the grounds that it may be unnecessary and counterproductive. Teachers should be native speakers, and if they are not, audio and videotapes and other authentic material must be used in order to provide the student with appropriate and authentic input (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Richards, Platt & Platt, 1996).

Krashen's natural approach might have evolved from the comprehension-based approach because he made a distinction between acquisition and learning. For him,

acquisition is a subconscious process, during which the learner "picks up" the language and acquires implicit knowledge about it. Learning, on the other hand, is conscious, and the learner develops explicit knowledge about the language. Formal teaching helps in learning, but does not play an important role in acquisition (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). The natural approach focused on acquisition rather than learning. Its proponents claimed that acquisition happens when learners understand messages in the target language or receive comprehensible input, also known as *i + 1*. Krashen and Terrell's natural approach rests on four principles. First, they posit that comprehension precedes production. The second principle is that production is allowed to emerge in stages. Third, the goal of any language learning enterprise should be communication. Fourth, classroom activities should aim at lowering the students' affective filter. Similarly to the comprehension-based approach, in the natural approach, error correction is seen as unnecessary and counterproductive.

The Communicative Approach

The communicative approach was developed through the work of anthropological linguists who viewed language as primarily a system for communication (Celce-Murcia, 1996). Therefore, the goal of teaching a language is to develop the learner's ability to communicate in that language and any language course should include not only linguistic structures, but also semantic notions and social functions. Because of the emphasis on communication, instruction is often centered around group and pair work in which students transfer and negotiate meaning often in situations where one or several members lack pieces of information that another member knows. To develop the students' ability

to use the target language in various social contexts, teachers may engage students in role-play and dramatization. The four language skills are accorded equal importance and integrated from the beginning. Teachers who adhere to the communicative approach collect and use authentic materials in order to create situations and language demands that are as close to real life as possible. Similarly to the affective-humanistic approach, the teacher is a facilitator of communication. To be able to fulfill this role, he must be able to use the target language fluently and appropriately in various situations.

According to Brown (1994), four characteristics differentiate the communicative approach from other approaches. First, classroom goals are focused on all components of communicative competence. Second, language teaching techniques must engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of the target language for meaningful purposes. Third, fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary concepts underlying communication, and often, fluency is awarded more importance than accuracy to keep learners meaningfully engaged in authentic communication. Fourth, students have to use the target language, receptively and productively, in nonrehearsed contexts (Brown, 1994).

Today language teachers rely on different approaches, methods, techniques and materials to teach second and foreign languages. Language learning theorists and researchers continue to investigate the role played by different factors in order to understand which environment most increases language ability. There is an intricate web of variables that may affect how and why one learns or fails to learn a second language. Several concepts are at stake that academic courses, in and of themselves, may be inadequate training grounds for the successful learning of a second or foreign language

(Brown, 1994). Progress in technology has provided new learning opportunities through the creation of language laboratories and CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). Through the use of media resources, students can virtually visit the country where their target language is used and learn about some elements of its culture. More attention is directed towards learner characteristics and the needs of the language learner play a more important role in the design of a second language course. A number of factors, such as intelligence, aptitude, personality, age, learning styles, strategies, learning environment, motivation and attitudes are investigated in the role they may play in second language learning.

Proponents of the approaches discussed above organized teaching material in various syllabi. Celce-Murcia (1991) maintained that the grammar-translation approach, the direct approach, the audiolingual approach and some methods following the comprehension-based approach employed a structural syllabus. McDonough and Shaw (1995) defined a structural syllabus as one that is organized according to grammatical structures, such as inflections and constructions that the teacher is expected to teach. The reading approach followed a text-based syllabus and the language course was organized around texts and semantic items without much consideration to grammar. The situational approach followed a syllabus that fulfilled two objectives: to specify the various situations for instruction (example: at the airport), together with the grammatical structures and vocabulary items one might need to interact in those situations. Advocates of the communicative approach favored a communicative syllabus in which real life tasks and authentic materials are used to design the language course. Proponents of the affective-humanistic approach followed a syllabus generated by the learners since they

were the ones to decide what they wanted to learn and what they wanted to do with the new language.

In conclusion, it is evident that the first five approaches emerged in reaction to the impracticalities or inadequacies of earlier approaches. In contrast, the four most recent (cognitive, affective-humanistic, comprehension-based and communicative approaches) are not totally incompatible or in conflict with each other. As Celce-Murcia (1991) stated,

It is not impossible to conceive of an integrated approach which would include attention to rule formation, affect, comprehension, and communication and which would view the learner as someone who thinks, feels, understands, and has something to say. In fact, many teachers would find such an approach, if well conceived and well integrated, to be very attractive (pp. 8-9).

The learner can be thought of as someone who can take charge of his own learning, can solve learning problems; and can be aware of his attitude and feelings towards the language learning situation. In recent years, the recognition that the learner has needs in the affective domain has resulted in the identification of some factors that are claimed to influence the language learning process. The presence or absence of concepts such as motivation, learning strategies, self-confidence and other attitudinal factors, such as self-efficacy feelings, are believed to make a difference between a successful and a less successful language learner.

McDonough and Shaw (1995) expressed the need to look at concrete possibilities for helping learners to learn more effectively by making them aware of their language learning needs and the potential ways those needs could be satisfied. Are learners aware of

all the resources available to them, do they know how to exploit the environment outside the classroom, what skills do they possess to deal with the emotional side of language learning? What can be learned from successful language learners? Nunan (1991) interviewed an EFL teacher about what she felt her role was. Her answer encapsulates what the author thought was the feeling of a growing number of practitioners. She stated,

> as a teacher I see my role as being twofold. One is, yes, I am teaching the language, but I feel my other very important role is to assist learners to take a growing responsibility for the management of their own learning. Within our programme, learners are with us for only a relatively – a short time, and we have to prepare them so that their learning can continue outside, for the length of their course (p. 185).

This teacher is referring to the importance and usefulness of language learning strategies, which are the subject of the next section.

Language Learning Strategies

Since the beginning of the last decade, language learning strategies have gained more attention from language specialists who agree that in second and foreign language learning, it is important to teach students about language learning strategies and how to use them since this knowledge promotes autonomy. Given the limited amount of time students spend with the teacher, and since students cannot learn everything they need to know from classroom instruction, it is important that they become equipped with the tools necessary to be in charge of their own learning and continue learning even outside the classroom and away from the teacher (Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991; Thompson &

Rubin, 1993). In this first part of the literature review, language learning strategies were defined and their features described. Their classification, as well as their application to the four language skills and vocabulary, were reviewed. The analysis ended with a discussion of the effect of language learning strategies use on language ability and methods used by researchers to identify strategies that language learners use.

Definition of Language Learning Strategies

A number of second language theorists have defined language learning strategies in different ways. Richards, Platt and Platt (1996) defined language learning strategy as a way in which learners attempt to work out the meanings and uses of words, the rules of grammar, and other aspects of language. Oxford (1990) defined learning strategies as "steps taken by students to enhance their learning" (p. 1). To explain the meaning of learning strategies further, Oxford (1990) went back to the Greek etymology of the word "strategy." She stated that in ancient Greek, *strategia* meant generalship or the art of war and it involved the management of troops and ships in a planned campaign. She added that another word related to strategy is tactics, which are tools to achieve the success of strategies. However, these two terms share some characteristics such as conscious manipulation and work toward a predetermined goal.

In education, learning strategies are viewed as "operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information …. Learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p. 8). She explained that they are important for language learning since students who use

them become more active, more involved and self-directed, which are features important in the development of communicative competence. For Wenden (1991), learning strategies are "mental steps or operations that learners use to learn a new language and regulate their efforts to do so. They are one type of learner training content that should be included in plans to promote learner autonomy" (p. 18). Cohen, Weaver, and Li (1996) viewed language learning strategies as those "steps or actions selected by learners to improve the learning of a foreign language, the use of a foreign language, or both" (p. 3). Their definition includes steps that are intended for language learning, and others that may lead to language learning, but which do not include learning as the primary goal. When language learners use strategies, they do so with the goal of helping themselves increase their knowledge of the language they are learning. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) explained language learning strategies as attempts to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence or general techniques for functioning effectively in the target language.

Features of Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies are used by language learners with the broad goal of improving their communicative competence. Oxford (1990) listed twelve features of language learning strategies. They (1) contribute to the main goal that the learner has for learning a second language, (2) allow learners to become more self-directed, (3) expand the role of teachers, (4) are problem-oriented, (5) are specific actions taken by the learner, (6) involve several aspects of the learner, not just cognition. In addition, they (7) support learning both directly and indirectly, (8) are not always observable but (9) are often

conscious. Finally, they (10) can be taught, (11) are flexible, and (12) are influenced by a number of factors.

Language learners use language learning strategies with the broad goal of improving their communicative competence. Learning strategies help learners take part in realistic or authentic interactions with other learners or native speakers. These authentic interactions stimulate the development of communicative competence. Some strategies help learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their progress towards their desired goal. Other strategies help learners adopt and maintain certain attitudes to keep themselves involved in the language learning process. Yet others provide the learner with increased interaction with speakers of the target language. A number of other strategies are useful for understanding, storage, and recall of new information and these functions are very important for achieving any level of communicative competence. More specifically, cognitive strategies such as imagery, memory strategies, or rehearsal develop vocabulary and strengthen grammatical competence or accuracy. Social strategies, such as frequent contact with native speakers and cooperation with other learners, increase sociolinguistic competence. Several kinds of strategies, such as asking questions, rehearsing, and use of contextual clues, enhance discourse competence. Last, some strategies such as using synonyms or gestures and guessing the meaning of words form the basis of strategic competence.

According to Wenden (1991), some language learning strategies can be observed. An observable behavior often accompanies the learner's mental activity; for example when a language learner uses gestures or asks an interlocutor to repeat what was just said. However, there are strategies such as inferring and comparing which cannot be observed.

Cognitive strategies may be used consciously if the learner has clearly identified the problem; they can also become automatized. Wenden (1991) added that strategies are subject to change; ineffective ones can be rejected or changed, new ones can be learned, and effective ones can be adapted to new situations. Strategies are also problem oriented. Learners use them when they have a language problem to solve, a task to accomplish, or a goal to achieve.

Other features of language learning strategies that were identified by Oxford (1990) include the fact that strategies have an action basis. They are specific actions undertaken by the learners in order to enhance their learning. These actions or behaviors are influenced by the learner's characteristics such as personality and learning style. Language learning strategies involve functions that go beyond mere cognition. They also include metacognitive behavior, such as monitoring one's learning, as well as affective and social strategies. Another feature of language learning strategies can be found in the reason why they are used. They support learning either directly or indirectly. Some learning strategies, such as memorization or imagery, involve direct learning or use of the new language. Other strategies, such as metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, contribute indirectly to learning; however, the learner is not directly engaged in a learning task. Another feature of language learning strategies is teachability, as Oxford (1990) claimed. She stated that learning strategies could be taught and modified, which makes strategy training an important aspect of language teaching and expands the role of the language teacher. Oxford (1989), Green and Oxford (1995), Bialystok (1990), Wenden (1991), Rubin (1993), O'Malley (1987), and Chamot (1998) also supported the claim that

language learning strategies are teachable and language learners should be trained to use them.

Classification of Language Learning Strategies

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) classify language learning strategies in three categories depending on the level or the type of processing involved. The first category is composed of metacognitive strategies. They are higher order skills that include planning, monitoring, or evaluating the success of a learning task. Language learners using metacognitive strategies may for example apply selective attention to some aspects of a learning activity; they may plan and organize a learning or communication activity; they may monitor their production while it is occurring or evaluate their comprehension or performance after completion of an activity.

The second category in O'Malley and Chamot's classification is composed of cognitive strategies. They operate directly on incoming information to make it more manageable or easier to learn. Learners may also revert to them during production to compensate for insufficient linguistic knowledge. Language learners use cognitive strategies for instance when they repeat or rehearse words or expressions that they have heard, when they choose to use other additional resources such as reference books to enhance their learning, or when they guess the meaning of a word because its spelling or pronunciation is similar to that of another word in their first language. Another instance of a cognitive strategy is grouping in which learners classify words according to a specific criterion.

The third category is what O'Malley and Chamot (1990) referred to as social/affective strategies. They involve interaction with other individuals (such as native speakers of the target language or peer learners) and some type of control over the affective side of language learning. This category includes seeking out the cooperation of peers to accomplish an activity or learning task, requests for assistance from teachers, more proficient learners or native speakers, self-encouragement and reducing anxiety about a task. Learners who purposefully put themselves in situations where they have to communicate or experience the target language are using a social strategy. On the other hand, a learner who talks himself into trying hard language tasks, or takes steps to lower his anxiety, is using affective strategies.

As Table 1 shows, authors do not completely agree on a classification of language learning strategies. O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) classification is different from Wenden's (1991) that distinguishes between two broad categories of language learning strategies: cognitive and self-management strategies. She claims that cognitive strategies are mental steps or operations that are used by learners to process linguistic and sociolinguistic content and assist the learners during the four stages of information processing: (1) selecting information from incoming data; (2) comprehending it; (3) storing it in either short- or long-term memory; and (4) retrieving it. Individuals receive more information or input from the environment than they can attend to. Therefore, it is important that learners select the information they wish to process, and selective attention is a strategy that can help them decide to what aspect of input they will pay most attention.

Table 1

Summary of Classification of Language Learning Strategies by Author

Author	Category	Sub-Category	Practice
O'Malley & Chamot (1990)	Metacognitive		
	Cognitive		
	Social/Affective		
Oxford (1990)	Direct	Memory	
		Cognitive	
		Compensation	
	Indirect	Metacognitive	
		Affective	
		Social	
Wenden	Cognitive	Selection	
		Compensation	
		Storage	
		Retrieval	Formal Practice
			Functional Practice
	Self-Management or Metacognitive	Planning	
		Monitoring	
		Evaluating	

Once input has been attended to and received, the individual has to comprehend it

and store it. First, the receiver of information has to keep the information in short-term

memory or it will quickly disappear (Wenden, 1991). That is when strategies such as

rehearsal come into play. In language learning, rehearsal was defined by Chamot (1987)

as imitation of a language model, including overt or silent repetition. After information

has been received, the next step is to comprehend it, a step during which the information

or material is manipulated or transformed in order to be understood. This manipulation of

material can be done through several strategies that fall under the umbrella of elaboration.

When language learners use elaboration strategies, they may for instance identify

patterns, make associations, or relate the new information to their prior knowledge.

Integrating new information into already existing schemata makes it easier to store in

long-term memory. Memorization strategies such as mnemonics, use of mechanical means such as flash cards, organizing items, all aid in the process of storing new information.

Information that has been attended to, comprehended and stored has to be retrieved when the person needs to use it. Wenden (1991) claimed that automatic retrieval of information necessary for a particular communication task is evidence that acquisition has happened, or that the language item in question has been fully learned. She continued to say that practice strategies could facilitate the development of automatic retrieval. She identified two kinds of practice strategies. First, formal practice strategies, such as repeating, rehearsing, imitating, consciously applying rules or using new words in sentences, are used to recall items for focused practice. Second, functional practice strategies, such as listening to the radio or watching television in the target language, or speaking to a native speaker of the target language, are used when learners use the language to communicate, and thus progressively develop automaticity or faster retrieval.

The second broad category in Wenden's (1991) classification of strategies is self-management strategies. She stated that in cognitive psychology, these strategies are referred to as metacognitive strategies or regulatory skills, and as self-directed learning in methodological literature. They are used by language learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning. Planning often precedes the performance of a learning task. For instance, language learners may decide on their learning objectives and the means to achieve them. They may also decide to attend to a learning task and eliminate possible distractors. Some learners may even identify which conditions help them learn and then create or arrange for those conditions to be present. Planning may also happen during the

performance of the learning task (planning in action), such as when learners modify their objectives or the means to attain them, based on information obtained from monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring happens during the act of learning. Monitoring as a learning strategy differs from what Krashen and Terrell (1983) referred to as the monitor hypothesis, which is one of the five hypotheses of the natural approach. In this sense, the second language learners use their learned competence or the explicit knowledge gained through grammar study to edit their production. When using monitoring as a metacognitive strategy, learners oversee their own language learning and ask themselves how they are doing, whether they are proceeding without problems or running into hurdles. Having identified a problem, they take steps to eliminate it, using cognitive or affective means. Monitoring results in statements of self-assessment about the progress (or lack thereof) made during learning or communication. Evaluating, on the other hand, results in judgments of the outcome of a particular attempt to learn or use a strategy. Learners focus on the result of a learning task and the means by which that result was achieved.

Oxford (1990) has suggested a classification of language learning strategies which is different from that proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Wenden (1991). She distinguishes between two broad categories that she calls direct strategies and indirect strategies. Each category is further divided in three subcategories, thus creating a total of six groups. Direct strategies are composed of memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies include metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. As she listed all the strategies that fall under each of the six groups, she created a complex and detailed system of language learning strategies.

Direct strategies, she explained, are used for dealing with the target language or working with the new language in specific tasks or situations. Direct strategies include memory strategies for remembering and retrieving information, cognitive strategies for understanding and performing or producing the target language, and compensation strategies for using the language despite insufficient knowledge. Indirect strategies, on the other hand, are used for the general management of learning. They are made up of metacognitive strategies used to coordinate the learning process, affective strategies to regulate emotions, and social strategies that help students learn with others (whether peer language learners or native speakers). Oxford (1990) also stated that the six groups interact and support each other, although they are used for different purposes.

Another type of strategies that researchers often discuss in the literature on strategies is communication strategies. This group differs from language learning strategies because the focus is on getting a message across in the target language despite insufficient knowledge of the necessary linguistic items (Bialystok, 1990; Cohen, Weaver & Li, 1996). These include strategies such as translation, paraphrase, use of gestures, asking an interlocutor for the right word, word coinage, and others. The classification of language learning strategies and the terminology used to refer to specific groups of strategies varies by author.

However, most authors agree that there are strategies that learners use to deal directly with the language (cognitive, direct, compensation strategies) and others that are used to manage the learning (metacognitive, affective, social, self-management strategies). Table 2 shows a proposed classification of language learning strategies. This classification takes into consideration the points of agreement among O'Malley and

Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990), and Wenden (1991). They all agree that certain strategies

are used by learners to process linguistic material, and others are used to manage the

learning process.

The proposed classification also takes into account points of disagreement among

the three authors. O'Malley and Chamot group social and affective strategies in the same

category; however, these are used for different purposes; the former for cooperation with

other individuals, and the latter for dealing with the affective or emotional side of

language learning.

Table 2
A Proposed Classification of Language Learning Strategies

Categories	Direct	Indirect		
Subcategories	Cognitive	Metacognitive	Social	Affective
Use	To manipulate information, make it more manageable, easier to process or learn.	To plan, organize, monitor, and evaluate language learning.	To cooperate with peers, native or more proficient speakers of the target language; to request assistance.	To encourage oneself, reduce anxiety, lower the affective filter.
Examples	Repeating, association, elaboration, grouping, use of flash cards, using contexts, cognates, reference materials, graphic organizers, gestures; taking notes, reading for pleasure, thinking in L2.	Deciding on learning objectives, setting aside study time, collecting resources, eliminating potential distracters, selective attention, self-assessment, noticing and learning from one's errors.	Putting oneself in situations where one has to experience the target language, seeking assistance from peers or more proficient speakers, participating in study or conversation groups.	Self-encouragement, relaxing, listening to one's body, taking a deep breath, rewarding oneself, talking with others about one's feelings and attitudes, maintaining a language learning diary.

Wenden's classification lacks social and affective strategies although she describes how English learners whom she interviewed cooperated with native speakers and encouraged themselves to take responsibility for their own learning. Oxford's (1990) direct strategies include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. However, since cognitive strategies are used to process linguistic material, one would believe that memory and compensation strategies are also cognitive. Thus, the proposed classification is composed of four categories: cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies. In this classification, cognitive strategies involve identifying, retaining, storing, and retrieving words, phrases, rules of grammar, and other aspects of the target language. Metacognitive strategies deal with planning, monitoring, assessing progress (or lack thereof) and evaluation of language learning activities and language use.

Affective strategies regulate emotions, motivation, and attitudes. Learners use them to reduce anxiety, encourage themselves, and overcome fears, nervousness, and any past failures. They can also use them to reward themselves for successful completion of a learning task or fulfillment of a goal. Social strategies are actions take by learners so as to seek support or interact with other learners or more proficient speakers of the target language

Applying Language Learning Strategies to the Four Language Skills

In the following section, a number of language learning strategies are individually discussed as they apply to a specific language skill or multiple language skills. Since there is a large number of strategies, only a few have been selected to be included in this discussion.

Applying Direct Strategies to the Four Language Skills

Both direct and indirect strategies (to use Oxford's 1990 classification) can be used with the four language skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing. However, some specific strategies are better used with certain language skills. For example, grouping is useful for listening and reading. It involves grouping what has been read or heard in meaningful categories following a certain criterion such as word category or semantic features. Another strategy that is often used for listening and reading is association or elaboration. A memory strategy, it involves relating new information to already known concepts. Association strengthens comprehension and makes new material easy to remember. According to Oxford (1990), associations make meaning to the language learner, although they might appear meaningless to someone else.

Another strategy that is useful for listening and reading is imagery. It helps learners remember what they heard or read by creating a mental image. For instance, an English learner might try to remember the phrase "run out of sugar" by using a mental image of somebody running out of the house to go buy sugar because he has no more. A French learner may remember the word "montagne" (mountain) by making mental images of the first time he heard that word from a tour guide. Several learners often make mental images of where a written item is located in their notebook. This strategy is useful for remembering written items. Other learners may draw pictures in their notebook next to a word or expression and those pictures will assist them when it is time to remember what that word means.

Several other strategies are useful for listening and reading. When using semantic mapping, for example, learners may create maps or diagrams of semantically related concepts. It is also known that language learners often focus on key words while listening and reading and pay little attention to words that play a minor role in a sentence. A number of learners use mechanical techniques to assist themselves in remembering what has been read or heard. The use of flashcards is quite common and they are mostly used to learn vocabulary. Learners can also refer to their flashcards when they are writing. Oxford (1990) stated that some learners write new expressions in full sentences on flashcards or notebooks, thus contextualizing the new expression and getting writing practice. Some learners may tape record spoken language or words and use the tape to learn pronunciation or to practice saying certain idiomatic expressions. A strategy that can be used for all four language skills is placing new words in context. While listening or reading, language students use new words in sentences so as to learn and remember their meaning; they may use the context (rather than the dictionary or asking somebody else) to determine the meaning of a word or expression they do not know.

Second and foreign language learners may rely on similarities between words in the target language and those in their native language or other languages that they know. Words that are from different languages but share some similarities are called cognates. A French native speaker learning Spanish (or vice versa) is likely to notice the similarity between the Spanish "guerra" and the French "guerre". A native speaker of Swahili learning English or French is not likely to miss the similarity between the Swahili "familiya" and the "English family" or the French "famille". The similarity between the

English "nocturnal" and the French "nocturne" is so obvious that it wouldn't be missed by a native speaker of either language who is learning the other.

Some direct strategies are useful for multiple language skills. This is the case for memory strategies; they are used to retrieve target language items quickly for immediate use in communication involving any of the four language skills. It is also the case for several cognitive strategies. Repeating is one of those strategies and can be used in several creative ways to assist the learner in different learning and communication acts. For example, a language learner who watches the weather report every day in the target language will become familiar with weather-related terms. Reading a text more than once (and sometimes for different purposes) helps readers understand it better than they would in one reading (Oxford, 1990). Repetition can also involve saying or writing something several times in an attempt to automatize it. Sometimes it involves writing repeatedly in order to improve one's writing skills, or going through one's draft more than once in order to improve or amend it. Imitation of native speakers or more proficient speakers of the target language is a technique often used for both speaking and writing. When they imitate native speakers, language learners "can improve their pronunciation, use of structures, vocabulary, idioms, intonation, gestures, and style" (Oxford, 1990, p. 71).

Using resources such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, grammar books or other printed material is another strategy to which language learners can resort. They can use them to find out the meaning of what was heard or read or to produce written or spoken messages in the target language. Although these resources cannot be used during speaking, they can be used to prepare for a speaking activity. Early in language learning, second and foreign language learners refer to bilingual dictionaries for their translation

from their native language to the target language or vice versa. Translation is another

strategy that Oxford (1990) lists among those that are used for multiple language skills.

Through translation, learners use their native language as a basis for

understanding what they read or hear in the target language. They can also rely on their

native language to produce messages in the target language. However, Oxford (1990)

cautioned against verbatim translation because it can provide the wrong interpretation of

messages received. The other disadvantage of translation is that it sometimes

considerably slows learners down because they have to go back and forth between two

languages.

Applying Indirect Strategies to the Four Language Skills

The following section discusses how some metacognitive, affective, and social

strategies are applied to the four language skills. As was mentioned in the previous

section, given the large number of indirect strategies, only a small number will be

discussed. Indirect strategies are those that the learner uses to manage himself and the

learning process. They indirectly support the learning process "through focusing,

planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation

and empathy" (Oxford, 1990, p. 151). To this list of means through which indirect

strategies support language learning, monitoring should be added because it allows the

learners to know how they are progressing.

A metacognitive strategy that Oxford (1990) discussed is paying attention, which

Wenden (1991) called focusing. This strategy works in two ways. First, learners can

decide to pay attention to the task at hand and eliminate all potential distractors. Second,

learners may decide in advance to pay selective attention to particular details. The first

mode of attention is called directed and the second, selective. Both of them are important

for listening. For example, while listening to a recording in the new language, learners

may consciously decide to concentrate all their attention to the recording rather than

divide their attention among several activities. They may also decide to listen for specific

information contained in the recording, such as the attributes of a certain character

described in the recording. While reading, a language learner can direct his attention to

certain morphological formations and look for patterns. Paying attention is especially

necessary in activities that engage the learner in a spoken exchange with an interlocutor.

Participation in such activities requires full attention to the context and content of the

exchange, and sometimes learners decide to pay special attention to certain aspects of the

new language, such as pronunciation. Writing in a second language also requires

attention. A second language learner trying to write an essay in his second language may

decide to concentrate on the writing and eliminate all interruptions; at the same time, he

may also decide to pay special attention to using the right vocabulary and correct

grammar.

Another important metacognitive strategy is organization. Oxford (1990) said that

it includes a number of tools, such as creating a physical environment conducive to

learning, maintaining a notebook and sometimes a journal, and scheduling. Ilse and

Laszlo, two English learners whom Wenden (1991) interviewed and whom she considers

expert language learners, often scheduled visits to museums and other public places

where they would listen to or interact with English speakers. Laszlo sought the company

of American friends as often as possible after work. These two learners organized

themselves and found time for out-of-class learning, which is necessary in a second language learning enterprise. A well-organized language learning notebook is a tool of great importance. Organization is a metacognitive strategy that is useful for all four language skills.

Setting goals and objectives is another important strategy because learners without any objectives do not know "where they are going and might never get there" (Oxford, 1990, p. 157). For the listening skill, a learner might have a goal of being able to listen to and understand what native speakers say in everyday conversations. An example of a listening objective might be that a certain language learner wants to be able to follow the weather forecast on the radio or television and dress accordingly. An example of a reading goal might be that a second language student wants to develop the ability to read professional publications in an area of interest. A speaking goal might be to have enough oral fluency to travel alone in places where the target language is spoken, whereas a speaking objective might be simply to hold a short conversation with other learners. Writing goals are often evident in students who are developing a second language to use it in an academic setting. Given the number of essays and papers they will have to write once they start higher education, their writing goal is to be able to search for information and write acceptable papers at the college level.

From time to time, learners look at the progress of (or lack thereof) their language learning and determine where progress is being made and where they are encountering difficulties. This metacognitive strategy is known as self-monitoring (Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991). By determining the cause of their problems, learners can also figure the

solution (or look for assistance) and in the process understand more about how the new language works. This strategy is useful for all language skills.

The second group of indirect strategies is composed of affective strategies. Learners rely on them to lower their anxiety, to encourage themselves, and to deal with their emotions or feelings. Anxiety-lowering strategies include such activities as relaxation, deep breathing, meditation, using soothing music and laughter. To encourage themselves, learners make positive statements about themselves; they take wise risks, and sometimes reward themselves for satisfactory work in language learning. Strategies for dealing with feelings and emotions include paying attention to physical sensations or "listening to one's body" and taking appropriate measures if necessary. Another affective strategy is writing a language learning diary or journal as narratives of the students' feelings, attitudes, and perceptions about the language learning experience. These diaries can be kept privately or shared with classmates if the students wish to do so (Oxford, 1990).

Most indirect strategies are applied to all the four language skills. For example, asking for clarification or verification is applied to the listening and reading skills. It involves asking more proficient speakers to clarify, repeat, explain or paraphrase what was heard or read, although learners at the same proficiency level can obtain support from one another. While speaking and writing, learners can ask one another or more proficient speakers for correction (Rubin & Thompson, 1994), which Laszlo did when in the company of American friends (Wenden, 1991). In this book, Wenden reports the interviews she conducted with two adult English learners. Laszlo was an immigrant from Hungary, where he had started studying English on his own. He began to work when he

arrived in the United States. At the time of the interview, he was taking formal courses in English. The second interviewee was Ilse who, after graduating from high school in Austria, spent more than a year living and traveling in the United States. During these interviews, these two English learners discussed with the interviewer the strategies they had used and how they thought those strategies had been useful to them. One of the strategies they mentioned was asking native speakers for correction. Oxford (1990), Wenden (1991), and Rubin and Thompson (1994) encourage language learners to cooperate with peers, a strategy in which learners make a concerted effort to work in a group on an activity with a common goal. These authors also stated that learners ought to cooperate with more proficient users of the target language. Cooperation with peers or more proficient speakers can be applied to all language skills.

Strategies for Vocabulary Development

Surveying what second language learners do to facilitate their lexical acquisition seems a fundamental step in order to understand the importance of issues such as direct vocabulary learning techniques, the role of the context, and the effectiveness of various learning strategies (Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999). Surveys also provide researchers with a description of the strategic behavior that language learners adopt in order to facilitate the acquisition of new vocabulary.

Sanaoui (1995) conducted an exploratory study of 50 beginning and adult advanced ESL learners in a predominantly Anglophone city in Canada. This exploratory study was followed by four case studies of ESL learners, then eight case studies of "French as a Second Language" learners. The participants of the exploratory study were

enrolled in a 6-week vocabulary course in an intensive ESL program. During the entire

duration of the course, participants were asked to monitor and document daily the

approaches they took to learn vocabulary, and to report and discuss their approaches with

other participants during sharing sessions held once weekly. After the sharing sessions,

the researcher categorized the 50 participants in two categories. First, there was a group

of English learners who approached the task of vocabulary in a structured fashion. The

second group consisted of learners who did not appear to have any structured or

organized way of approaching vocabulary learning. The findings showed that the

participants who followed a structured approach used the same strategies to learn

vocabulary. They set specific goals for themselves, kept records of new words from class

material, and reviewed those records frequently. Learners in the second group seemed not

to take any of these steps or did so to a minimal extent. The exploratory study did not

investigate whether the two groups of ESL learners achieved different levels of

vocabulary knowledge.

This exploratory study was followed by case studies of four ESL learners who

had not participated in the previous inquiry. Four volunteer participants, enrolled in a

subsequent session of the vocabulary course mentioned above, were asked to keep daily

written records of what they did in order to learn vocabulary. They were also asked to

keep records of words they were learning and the mnemonics they used to retain those

words. At the end of each week, the daily notes were collected and used as the basis of an

interview during which the participants were asked to elaborate on the records they had

written. After six weeks, analysis of the written records and data from the interviews

revealed the specific behaviors adopted by the learners to learn vocabulary. Three of

them set criteria for selecting vocabulary items to be learned from all vocabulary items that had been encountered in a lesson or day. They concentrated on learning words that they thought would be useful in daily conversations. They reported writing new words they had encountered from written material such as their textbooks or reading classes and ignored those encountered from oral discourse. These language students also devoted time to independent study and engaged in self-initiated learning activities such as writing letters in the target language and using newly learned words in the letter, looking up words in a dictionary that the learners had encountered during the day, underlining new words while reading for pleasure and later searching for their meanings in a dictionary.

In addition, these learners kept written records of new words they had encountered in class or during independent activities away from the classroom. These records were kept in notebooks but organized differently. Some students listed lexical items followed by a translation in the native language or synonyms. One of the three students went further and transferred his new words from a notebook to an address book, thus creating for himself a personal dictionary that he also color-coded. These three learners reviewed their records by reading and rereading them to themselves, asking peers to quiz them, or posting word lists on the walls of their apartments for review. They practiced using these words in conversations and discussions with their peers as well as interactions with native speakers or while preparing for class assignments.

The fourth participant's behavior contrasted with those reported by the previous three. Her written and oral records revealed that she spent little time on independent study, rarely reviewed or practiced new words, and even discarded or misplaced

vocabulary materials received from her teacher during class. She had no specific goals for vocabulary learning.

A second set of case studies was conducted with eight learners of French as a Foreign Language in the same predominantly Anglophone town in Canada. They were enrolled in a French conversation course. The students were asked to monitor and document what they did in order to learn vocabulary, including the mnemonics they used to help themselves remember new words. Weekly interviews were also held during which the participants elaborated on their written records.

After five weeks of records and interviews, analysis of the data obtained revealed the eight participants fell in two groups. Three of the participants displayed behaviors similar to those reported by the three subjects in the ESL case studies above. Specifically, they engaged in independent learning activities that included listening to audiotapes even when they were engaged in other activities such as running or driving, listening to news on the radio, songs and mysteries, playing computer games in French, watching videotapes of French lessons offered by a French television channel, participating in French-only evenings, and talking to themselves in French. These three French learners also engaged in self-study activities during which they performed translations, cloze exercises and drills. One of them reported writing new words because it helped him remember not just the meaning but also the spelling. Another one was carrying out a manual activity and had instructions for use in both English and French. Because she was a French learner, she deliberately chose to use the French instructions, wrote herself notes to look up the meanings of new words and checked these meanings as soon as she had a chance, or asked the teacher in the next class.

In addition to writing new words, this group of learners reported using other mnemonic procedures. One of them was immediate repetition in which they repeated the word mentally or aloud several times after encountering it. Sometimes they also repeated the new words later, either silently or loudly, several times, and tried to use them in sentences on their own or during conversations. They had accumulated extensive records of words they were learning; one even had them tape recorded. The second group was made of four students. Although they wrote down new vocabulary items because it helped them remember them, they did not review them or did so minimally. They relied on classroom activities for vocabulary practice.

The last student was similar to participants from both groups. Like those in the first group, she actively sought out opportunities to encounter new words outside of class; but unlike participants in the first group and similarly to participants in the second group, she did not do much with the vocabulary she encountered. Again, it was not determined whether the learners in these groups achieved different levels of vocabulary knowledge.

Vocabulary learning strategies were also investigated by Lawson and Hogben (1996). Fifteen university students of Italian in Australia were observed through think-aloud exercises as they attempted to learn the meaning of new Italian words. The participants were asked to learn 12 unknown Italian nouns, presented to them embedded in a sentence, thus providing a context. Analysis of the transcribed think-aloud interviews showed that repetition was the most frequently discussed technique (although the number of students who used it is not specified). Repetition was performed in five different ways, some of which have also been identified by Sanoui (1995). First, the Italian learners made use of the information on words related to the target word by reading them out at least

once to help themselves learn the new word. Second, some learners in this group practiced simple rehearsal, a strategy in which the student repeats the word, with or without repeating its meaning. Third, some students wrote the target word and its meaning. Fourth, cumulative rehearsal was done by some students. This is a practice during which the learner repeats the word and its meaning and also returns to previously learned words and rehearses them in a sequence. The fifth way in which repetition was done was in the form of testing, a strategy in which the students test themselves on their knowledge of the meaning of certain words. All fifteen students reported using some type of repetition, which appeared in the interviews a total of 359 times.

Three learners in Sanoui (1995) said that they used contextual associations by connecting a word to the particular situation in which they first encountered that word or an event they experienced in the past. Linguistic associations were often used to determine the meaning of new words if the learner could notice some morphological similarity between a new word and one he already knew. Finally, the participants in this study reported talking about new words with someone else and creating mental images. Similar findings were reported in Lawson and Hogben (1996). They report that their participants analyzed their new word features in an attempt to find out its meaning and commit it to memory. Some of these students commented on the spelling of the word, and sometimes actually spelled it out. Other students made observations related to the grammar of the word, such as categorizing it as a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb. Others used the morphology of the word, or some knowledge of its prefixes or suffixes. These word features analyses were reported 25 times. These Italian learners sometimes linked

the sound of their target word to that of an English word or another Italian word that they already knew, hoping that if two words sound similar, they have related meanings.

Lawson and Hogben (1996) also reported that their participants resorted to some type of elaboration, and distinguished between simple and complex elaboration. Students who used simple elaboration translated into English the sentence that contained their target word, thus giving themselves an idea as to the possible meaning of the new word. A few students used what Lawson and Hogben called simple use of context, a strategy that Oxford (1990), Wenden (1991), and Rubin and Thompson (1994) called guessing. Simple elaboration was reported 125 times, as opposed to complex elaboration, which was reported 77 times. Finally, the Italian learners resorted to "complex use of context" where they made an attempt to derive the meaning of the new word by using the meaning of other words in the sentence. Sometimes they also paraphrased the sentence containing the new word, thus identifying its synonym. Last, they tried other kinds of mnemonics such as imagery or association. After the participants were tested on recall of the 12 nouns, a Spearman rank correlation coefficient between frequency of use of the various strategies and the recall score was computed. This coefficient reached significance ($p<$ .05) for simple analysis, appearance similarity, sound link, paraphrase, and mnemonics.

The Effect of Language Learning Strategies on Language Ability

Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1999) studied 47 ESL learners and 43 EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners and their strategy use. They also looked at the relationship between strategy use and the level of linguistic achievement. Data was collected through a questionnaire designed to survey students' approaches to vocabulary

learning, a set of vocabulary tests, and a cloze test to measure general language proficiency. An ANOVA test for strategy use in ESL and EFL groups revealed significant differences between the two groups, thus indicating that the setting or learning environment may be a factor in the choice of strategies for language learners. Further ANOVA tests also indicated that frequent and elaborate strategy use was associated with higher levels of achievement for both groups. They concluded that spending time on vocabulary study and seeking out opportunities to use and practice the target language outside the classroom were associated with higher learning outcomes for both ESL and EFL students.

Wenden (1991) theorizes that language learners who use strategies are more successful learners than those who do not use them. Although she does not cite any literature to support this claim, she continues to write, "They have acquired learning strategies, the knowledge about learning, and attitudes that enables them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher" (p. 15). Given this, language learners who use strategies should achieve a higher communicative competence than those who do not use them on a regular basis. This hypothesis was the main point of Thompson and Rubin (1993) whose research on students of Russian as a foreign language was intended to show that strategy instruction and use improve listening comprehension. In this experimental research, the experimental group (N = 24) was trained in the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies that the authors thought to be useful for the listening skill. The control group (N = 12) received strategy instruction, but no training. On a posttest of listening comprehension during which students watched a video and answered comprehension questions, the

experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group. Therefore, strategies stimulate the development of communicative competence. The difference between an expert language learner and an unsuccessful one is not only in the amount of language material they can learn, but also in the ways they can regulate their own learning, and the extent to which they can become autonomous learners.

Autonomy in language learning is built on language learning strategies (Wenden, 1991). The same author had the goal of convincing language teachers and learners about the usefulness of language learning strategies. To do so, she directly quoted two students of English, Ilse and Laszlo, whom she considered expert language learners. Ilse's use of strategies helped her improve her speaking skill. For example, she talked to herself in English; she visited public places to listen to native English speakers; and she purposefully put herself in situations where she had to speak English. To identify strategies that Ilse and Laszlo used, Wenden (1991) interviewed these two English learners about their English learning experience. Other researchers have used a variety of data collection procedures to identify strategies second language learners use.

Collecting Data about Strategies Language Learners Use

To identify the strategies that language learners use, researchers collect data through direct and indirect methods (McDonough, 1995). In direct methods, learners are asked to give an account of what they were paying attention to or what they observed about themselves while performing a language learning activity. Direct methods typically include keeping diaries, verbal reports, and interviews. In indirect methods, the learners are asked to agree or disagree with certain proposals concerning some statements of

strategic behavior. Indirect methods include questionnaires, discourse analysis, and checking inventories such as Oxford's (1990) strategy inventory for language learning (SILL). Since its creation, the SILL has been extensively used as a data collection instrument in second language learning investigations in several countries. Green and Oxford (1995) noted that by 1995, the SILL had been used as the key instrument in more than 40 studies, including 12 dissertations and theses. These had involved approximately 8,000 students around the world. The same authors report that the reliability (Cronbach alpha for internal consistency) of various forms of the SILL is .93 - .98, depending largely on whether the students take the SILL in their own language or in the target language.

Both direct and indirect methods of data collection are useful but they also have limitations. Whereas they can reveal what language learners believe they do, they cannot reveal what they actually do. Direct methods such as verbal reports can provide valuable information about aspects to which the learner is paying attention during a language learning task, but they do not reveal strategies to which the learner is not paying attention. Second, the act of reporting on one's behavior while it is happening, i.e., actually making the verbal report while engaged in the performance of a language skill or learning task, may alter the performance of the task (McDonough, 1995). Reporting on an activity while performing it presents a combined cognitive load for the participants, and it may be a load too heavy for them to handle, especially if they are reporting in their second language. This difficulty is not encountered by survey and questionnaire methods, because they are not simultaneous with the activity under scrutiny. They are often taken at a time remote from the language task. However, this fact raises skepticism about their

claim to truth. McDonough (1995) suggests substantiating data from verbal reports by comparison with other evidence, such as measures of a certain language skills or class observations.

Case study methodology has also been used in several studies pertaining to second language learning (Sanaoui, 1995; Wenden, 1991; Lawson & Hogben, 1996; Bull & Ma, 2001; Huang & Shanmao, 1996; Carson & Longhini, 2002). Case study research was defined by Stake (1995) as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). For Johnson and Christensen (2004), a case is a bounded system. Yin (1994) proposes a more extensive definition of case study research that, according to him, is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). The research object in a case study is often a program, an entity, a person, or a group of people. The researcher investigates the object of the case study in depth using a variety of data gathering methods to produce evidence that leads to an understanding of the case and answers the research question(s). Johnson and Christensen (2004) recommend taking an eclectic approach and using any data that will help the researcher and the reader understand the case and answer the research questions. Tools to collect data can include surveys, interviews, documentation review, observation, and even collection of physical artifacts. These methods of data collection produce quantitative data as well as qualitative data.

This first part of the literature review presented a discussion of language learning strategies. They were defined as steps taken by language learners to make the language

learning experience easier. Their features were also discussed and include the fact that they contribute to the main goal of communicative competence; they are problem oriented; they can be observed and may be automatized, may be taught; and they have an action basis. Language learning strategies were also classified in two major categories, direct and indirect. Their application to the four language skills and vocabulary was reviewed along with specific examples. The literature reviewed suggests the existence of an effect of language learning strategies on language ability. Finally, data collection methods that researchers use to identify strategies used by learners were reviewed. It was suggested that researchers use more than one collection instrument to overcome the shortcomings that may be presented by the use of a single method. The practice of collecting from several sources is known as triangulation and it allows researchers to corroborate data by using various data sources to confirm each other (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2007). Triangulation is also one of the ways to enhance the internal validity of a research study and to reduce bias from the participants or the researcher. Johnson and Christensen (2004) distinguish several types of triangulation, two of which are methods triangulation and data triangulation. Both of them enhance the internal validity of a study. Method triangulation involves using different research approaches (such as correlational, experimental, or ethnography) and different methods of data collection (such as questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, or observations). Data triangulation, on the other hand, involves using multiple sources of data using a single research approach. The next part is an analysis of self-efficacy and a review of literature related to this construct.

Self-Efficacy

The construct of self-efficacy was introduced by Bandura (1977) with the

publication of the article *Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change,*

and the book *Social Learning Theory*. Social learning theory views human action or

behavior as being determined by an interplay of the situation, the person's behavior, his

cognitions and emotions. One of Bandura's interests is concerned with ways in which

individuals regulate their own motivation, thought patterns, affective states and behavior

through beliefs of personal and collective efficacy. He stresses the effect of one's

perceived abilities on one's behavior (Time line of Bandura's life, available online at

http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/bantimeline.html). He has published nine

books and several articles on social cognitive theory and self-efficacy. He is currently

David Starr Jordan Professor of Social Science in Psychology at Stanford University. In

addition to his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, he has received several awards and honorary

degrees from numerous universities around the world.

Definition of Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1997a) defines self-efficacy as referring to self-perceptions or beliefs of

capability to learn or perform tasks at designated levels. A few other authors have

attempted to define self-efficacy, but they all paraphrase and refer to Bandura's

definition. McCombs (2001, citing Bandura, 1991) explained self-efficacy judgments in

reference to the learner's judgment of his or her competency for successful task

completion. Schunk (2001) acknowledged that self-efficacy is a construct in Bandura's

theory of human functioning and defined it as "beliefs about one's capabilities to learn or

perform behaviors at designated levels" (p. 126). Pintrich and Schunk (1996) quote another of Bandura's (1986) definitions that self-efficacy refers to people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (p. 88). Huang and Shanmao (1996) define self-efficacy expectations as "the beliefs about one's ability to perform a given task or behavior successfully" (p. 3).

Individuals' beliefs about their efficacy in a specific domain will increase their motivation and lead them to set higher goals for themselves and work hard to reach them. This behavior is likely to make individuals autonomous learners who can manage their own learning and continue learning even outside the classroom. Bandura (1997a) maintains that self-efficacy affects students' aspirations, their level of interest in academic work and accomplishments, and how well they prepare themselves for future careers. He identified two major types of self-efficacy. The first one is related to achievement in specific subject areas such as language or science. The second one is self-efficacy related to self-regulated learning and refers to the extent to which an individual feels successful on tasks that generalize across academic domains.

This section consists of four main sections. In the first section, self-efficacy theory and its applications in various fields are discussed. In the second section, the role of self-efficacy in education and instruction is considered and factors affecting self-efficacy as well as strategies to enhance it are described. In the third section, self-efficacy is discussed as it applies to second and foreign language learning. The fourth section is a short discussion of methods that researchers use to assess self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy Theory

For Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara and Pastorelli (1996), self-efficacy theory is one aspect of social cognitive theory. The latter is an approach to understanding human cognition, action, motivation, and emotion. Social cognitive theory assumes that people are capable of reflecting on their own actions and regulate them and that they can shape their environments instead of just passively reacting to them. Social cognitive theory also assumes that most human behavior is purposive or goal-oriented and is guided by forethought. It also assumes a metacognitive activity, which implies that people are self-reflective and capable of analyzing their own behavior and experiences. They are also capable of self-regulation and thus exercise direct control over their behavior by selecting or controlling conditions in their environment.

Self-efficacy was originally defined by Bandura (1977) as a specific type of expectancy concerned with a person's beliefs in his or her ability to perform a certain action or set of behaviors required to produce an outcome. Bandura (1989) later expanded the definition above to include more characteristics, which are discussed in the following section. In Bandura (1989), self-efficacy is viewed as people's beliefs about their abilities to exercise control over events that are likely to affect their lives, and their beliefs in their capabilities to put together the motivation, cognitive resources, and other action needed to control task demands. From this definition, one can understand that self-efficacy is not about the skills individuals possess to accomplish a task, but with judgments of what individuals can do with whatever skills they have. Efficacy is not a fixed ability that individuals have or don't have in their repertoire of behaviors; rather, it is "a generative

capability in which cognitive, social, emotional and behavioral subskills must be organized and effectively orchestrated to serve innumerable purposes" Bandura (1997a, pp. 36-37). He continues to say that there is a difference, known as the performance learning distinction, between possessing a skill and being able to use it or to integrate it into an appropriate course of action in order to use it well in difficult circumstances. High self-efficacy beliefs have a generative capability since they produce goal-oriented actions on the part of the learners; they make learners invest more effort in pursuit of goals, and they make them more resilient in the face of difficulties.

There are some other constructs that have fuzzy boundaries or seem to constitute a conceptual overlap with self-efficacy. One such construct is self-esteem. The main difference between self-esteem and self-efficacy is that self-esteem is a personal trait; self-efficacy is not (Maddux, 1995). Self-efficacy applies to specific fields or even subfields of human behavior. A person can have low self-esteem, but have high levels of self-efficacy in a field such as drawing, sports, or learning languages. He can also have high self-esteem and feel inefficacious in math and science. What self-efficacy and self-esteem have in common is that they are both assessments. The main difference between them is that the former is the assessment of capability, and the latter is the assessment of self-worth (Epstein & Morling, 1995). What a person thinks he is capable of accomplishing is different from what he thinks he is worth. Bandura (1997a) wrote that "individuals may judge themselves hopelessly inefficacious in a given activity without suffering any loss of self-esteem whatsoever, because they do not invest their self-worth in that activity" (p. 11). This means that there is no fixed relationship between beliefs about one's abilities and whether one likes or dislikes oneself. People, however, tend to

invest more effort and capabilities in activities that give them a good sense of self-worth (Bandura, 1996).

Another construct that has fuzzy boundaries with self-efficacy is confidence. Bandura (1997a, p. 382) explains that confidence is "a nondescript term that refers to strength of belief but does not necessarily specify what the certainty is about". A person can be confident that he will fail (or succeed) in science. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's power to achieve certain levels of performance. Confidence does not involve the person's power or ability to perform at a certain level.

Students with a low sense of self-efficacy for accomplishing a task are very likely to avoid it. Those with a high sense of self-efficacy believe they are capable of accomplishing the task and are ready to participate in it. In case of difficulties, they work harder and longer than their low self-efficacy peers. This is why Hackett and Betz (1992) maintain that self-efficacy beliefs interact with affective, motivational, personal goal setting, as well as other cognitive processes. However, it is important to emphasize the fact that self-efficacy is domain specific. Nobody possesses a general sense of self-efficacy, which means that self-efficacy is not a contextless disposition. A high sense of self-efficacy in one domain does not necessarily imply high self-efficacy in another domain. That is why measures of self-efficacy must specify the domains of action and must reflect task difficulty or task demands within those domains. The ways in which self-efficacy varies is summarized in what Maddux (1995, p. 9) calls "Dimensions of self-efficacy" and what Bandura (1997a, p. 42) refers to as "Self-efficacy scales."

Dimensions of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy expectancies vary along three dimensions: magnitude (Bandura, 1997a) called it level, generality, and strength.

Magnitude or level: Magnitude or level of self-efficacy refers to the number of steps of increasing difficulty that a person feels he/she is capable of performing. Bandura (1997a) explains that the perceived personal efficacy may consist of performing simple tasks, extend to moderately difficult tasks, or include very hard tasks. The perceived capability for a given person is measured against levels or magnitudes of task demands that represent different degrees of challenge or obstacles to successful performance. For example, second language learners may say that they can hold basic conversations with other learners of similar proficiency level. They may, however, admit that they would not be able to converse with a native speaker.

Generality of self-efficacy: Generality of self-efficacy refers to the extent to which success or failure experiences influence self-efficacy expectancies in similar situations or contexts. For example, second language learners who manage to interact in class using their second language may extend that efficacy to other contexts in which they haven't been successful yet, such as initiating conversations with native speakers on campus. They may also extend their feelings of self-efficacy to other domains such as reading a certain amount of literature, making telephone calls, or visiting public places where the second language is spoken. Generality can vary according to the degree of similarity of activities, ways in which the capabilities are expressed, the features of the situations, and the personal characteristics of the person who is judging his efficacy. People have self-efficacy beliefs in different domains, and "within the network of efficacy beliefs, some

are of greater import than others. The most fundamental self-beliefs are those around which people structure their lives" (Bandura, 1997a, p.43).

Strength: Strength of self-efficacy refers to "the resoluteness of a people's convictions that they can perform the behavior in question" (Maddux, 1995, p. 9). For example, two adult language learners may believe themselves capable of ordering food in a restaurant where their second language is used, but one of them may believe in his ability with more conviction and confidence than the other. Strength of efficacy beliefs is related to resilience or persistence in the face of challenges, frustrations, pain, and other obstacles to performance. Obstacles worsen weak efficacy beliefs; however, people with strong beliefs will persevere in their efforts despite difficulties, frustrating circumstances or other obstacles.

What Produces One's Sense Of Self-Efficacy?

There is lack of research that charts the development of individual's self-efficacy from birth to adulthood. In the following section, Bandura's (1997a) analysis of the development of self-efficacy is summarized. He stated that a person is born without any sense of self. This sense of self is socially constructed through contact with the child's environment. It is also through this contact and interaction with his immediate environment that children develop the concept of personal agency because they realize that they can make things happen; their actions can produce outcomes. However, as Bandura (1997a) continues to explain, the simple production of effects or outcomes is not sufficient for the development of personal efficacy. "Those actions must be perceived as part of oneself and one must recognize that one is the agent of those actions" (p.167). The

family, in its important position of immediate environment for young children, can foster a sense of self-efficacy in its children by being responsive to the infants' communicative behavior and creating opportunities for efficacious actions and providing an enriching environment that allows for exploration and create opportunities for the child to be causative. The initial efficacy experiences are centered in the family. Bandura cited studies by Ainsworth and Bell (1974), Ruddy and Bornstein (1982), and Yarrow, Rubenstein and Pedersen (1975) showing that families that provide such an environment that allows their young children varied mastery experiences have children who are relatively advanced in their social, linguistic and cognitive development. Family members and caregivers who create opportunities for mastery experiences help the children to build trust, competencies, and a sense of personal efficacy. Language also provides children with means to reflect on their experiences and on what others tell them about their abilities.

As the growing children's social environment expands, their appraisals of their own capabilities are partly shaped by the efficacy appraisals of others (parents, siblings, care givers, peers, etc). During sibling and peer interactions, social comparison processes come into play. As children move into larger communities (mostly classmates and other age mates), their efficacy experiences change. As several activities, including schooling, are age-graded, peers who are competent provide models of thinking and behavior. Since children select friends who share similar interests and values, this selective peer association promotes self-efficacy in directions of mutual interests, while other potential directions are left underdeveloped. Efficacy evaluations developed in sibling and peer comparisons affect evaluations of personal capabilities later in life.

In modern societies where schooling is a major part of children's lives, the school functions as the primary setting for the cultivation and validation of cognitive abilities. Their knowledge and skills are developed, tested, and compared to those of others. As children develop and improve their cognitive skills, they also develop and increase their sense of intellectual efficacy. It should be said, though, that certain school and instructional practices promote feelings of inefficacy rather than self-efficacy.

For adolescents, social relations become more important than ever before, and both family support and supportive peers promote a sense of social efficacy. Adolescence is also a period when individuals start thinking about the roles they will fulfill in society as adults. Adulthood brings several self-efficacy concerns because adults have to contend with societal norms, the varied roles associated with adulthood, and socioeconomic constraints and opportunity structures. Individuals who enter adulthood poorly equipped with skills and doubting their capabilities find several aspects of their lives difficult.

The preceding four paragraphs briefly presented Bandura's ideas about the development of self-efficacy from birth to adulthood. There is a lack of research-based literature about the development of self-efficacy and there might be a few questions that have remained unanswered. For example, it is not known whether individuals who have evolved in the same environments experience the same efficacy levels and in the same areas. What is the role of personal factors in self-efficacy perceptions? More research is needed to confirm or disconfirm Bandura's ideas; most of the literature he cited was published between the 1950's and 1980's.

Applications of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy theory can be applied in many fields of human action, especially those that require a certain amount of personal control and mastery. For example, Maddux and Meier (1995) have shown that low self-efficacy expectancies are an important feature of depression, anxiety, specific fears, substance abuse and addictions. They assert that self-regulation is the most important cognitive capacity in human adaptation; thus, its intensive use in various treatments or counseling programs. Individuals who feel efficacious in a domain are capable of setting challenging goals, planning, and self-regulating in the pursuit of those goals.

Self-efficacy theory can be applied to several areas of human action. Perceived self-efficacy, or one's beliefs in one's capabilities, influence human functioning in several ways (Bandura, 1997b). At the cognitive level, people with high self-efficacy have high aspirations, set challenging goals for themselves, and commit themselves to achieving them. They visualize successful results and do not dwell on personal deficiencies or on what might go wrong. At the motivational level, people with high self-efficacy have stronger motivation because they believe they can attain their goals or adjust them based on their progress. "Self-efficacy beliefs determine the goals people set for themselves, how much effort they expend, how long they persevere, and how resilient they are in the face of failures and setbacks" (Bandura, 1997b, p. 1). At the affective level, efficacy beliefs regulate emotional states. People who lack self-efficacy are likely to magnify risks or threats, whereas those who have high self-efficacy know they can manage difficulties. The latter group lowers their anxiety and stress by acting on the stressful environment, while the former do not. Stressful environments are encountered in

several activities in the course of human life; for example, athletics, health, addictions, and education, in which language learning and teaching are included.

Bandura (1997a) explains that in athletics, skills are acquired in a number of successive phases that start with a cognitive representation of the skills being learned. This representation is acquired through watching proficient models. During athletic events, the athlete faces unpredictable and uncertain situations. To successfully deal with these situations requires a high level of cognitive self-regulation and self-efficacy. To improve performance of an athletic skill, some training programs use computerized self-modeling of the subject's best performance (Bandura, 1997a). In other programs, the athletes watch models performing the same skill. Through tremendous amounts of time spent on practice, athletes routinize or automatize their skills, which in turn increase their sense of efficacy.

Thought control is another domain where self-efficacy beliefs play an important part. Bandura (1997a) explains that self-efficacy in thought control determines performance. To successfully complete any difficult skill, people must ignore all distractions and eliminate disruptive negative thinking, put prior mistakes behind them, and completely concentrate on the activity at hand. Individuals with low self-efficacy may doubt themselves at this stage and perform poorly.

Self-efficacy theory is also applied to health sciences to treat patients who suffer from medical conditions that require a change in the patients' behavior to be cured. Successful and permanent change of behavior requires a lot of effort and determination, which in turn are enhanced by strong self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulation. Mosier (1997) offers seven suggestions for improving patients' self-efficacy: (1) breaking

complex tasks into smaller manageable components, (2) arranging tasks into an ascending series with easier tasks first, (3) providing continuous encouragement, (4) crediting success to the subjects' own work and ability, (5) charting progress over the course of the change process, (6) treating lapses as opportunities to look at the reasons for the lapses, and (7) providing experience through modeling. These suggestions can be useful not only in health, but also in education.

Self-Efficacy, Education and Instruction

This section reviews the role of self-efficacy in education and how personal and environmental factors affect self-efficacy. The influence of self-efficacy on a number of other constructs, such as motivation, achievement, and learning are also discussed, as well as strategies for enhancing self-efficacy. The section ends by considering whether self-efficacy can be taught, and the role of the teacher.

Factors Affecting Self-Efficacy

A number of factors, such as goal setting, information processing, models, encouragement, feedback and rewards, are known to affect self-efficacy and potentially increase it.

Goal setting: Goal setting is an important cognitive process affecting achievement outcomes. Students who have a goal may feel a sense of efficacy to attain that goal and work hard to achieve it (Schunk, 1995). They engage in activities that will produce progress towards that goal, such as paying attention during instruction, rehearsing or practicing outside of the classroom, and trying harder. The benefits of setting a goal

depend on three factors: the proximity of the goal, its specificity, and its difficulty (Schunk, 1995). Proximal goals enhance performance better than distant goals because learners can easily assess their progress, experience success early, and thus feel efficacious. Learners can also assess their performance easily if the goal is specific and involves measurable behavior. Pursuing easy goals is effective at the beginning of instruction to build basic skills, but as instruction progresses, pursuing more difficult goals is beneficial because it informs learners about their abilities. Goals that students set for themselves may enhance commitment more than goals that are set for them by someone else. Schunk (1995) found that goals that students set for themselves promote self-efficacy during his study of 247 learning disabled six graders learning subtraction. Those who set their own goals had the highest self-efficacy and skill acquisition, next came those whose goal had been set by another person, and last, those who had no goal.

Information processing: Learners who think they have great difficulty understanding the academic material are likely to have low self-efficacy for learning that material, and those who feel capable of understanding the material should have a high sense of efficacy (Schunk, 1995). Students with high self-efficacy beliefs work harder on tasks that they believe produce learning, and in so doing, they get information on how well they are doing. Knowing that they are processing the information very well enhances their self-efficacy and motivation. Little progress does not necessarily lower self-efficacy and motivation, but may lead learners to rethink their learning methods. Schunk (1995) also maintains that strategy instruction raises self-efficacy because strategies help students process academic material. If learners know strategies to deal with difficult material, they feel capable of learning it.

Models: Learners may acquire self-efficacy from observing peers. Similar peers offer a good basis for comparison and observing them successfully perform a task raises efficacy. On the other hand, watching a peer fail will lower it (Bandura et al, 1996). Observing peer models increases efficacy to a greater extent than teacher models or persuasion (Schunk, 1995). According to Bandura (1997a), self-modeling, which occurs when individuals watch replays of themselves performing tasks at their best, raises beliefs of personal efficacy and potentially improves performance. On the other hand, self-modeling of deficiencies has no gain for the individuals involved. Deficiencies are often the subject of teacher-student interaction during feedback, which, together with encouragement, are other factors affecting self-efficacy.

Encouragement and feedback: Teachers and parents who encourage students and persuade them that they "can do it" or offer them positive feedback after performance of a task increase the students' self-efficacy levels (Schunk, 1996). During feedback, linking success to the students' efforts sustains motivation and increases self-efficacy. Offering performance feedback is equally beneficial to the students. Performance feedback is feedback that is given to the students while they are still working on a task. If it indicates that learners are making progress, it raises self-efficacy, motivation, and achievement, especially if the learners cannot assess their progress on their own (Schunk, 1995).

Verbal persuasion was used by Jackson (2002) in his study of 123 students enrolled in an introduction to psychology course. The participants completed a 10-item measure of self-efficacy and then an exam in psychology. The scores of this exam were used to group the students in three categories of below average, average, and above average. Two weeks after the exam, the students were asked to send to their instructor an

e-mail containing their name and their class personal identification number. Students within each grade group who e-mailed the instructor received a reply containing either an efficacy-enhancing message or a neutral reply, as determined by random assignment. The efficacy-enhancing message emphasized the student's past success in the class, mentioned that other students similar to him had successfully completed the class in the past; encouraged the students to work hard and to stay focused. It concluded by providing tips for stress-reduction and encouraging the students to contact the instructor if they needed help. Two weeks after these e-mails were sent, students again completed the measure of self-efficacy and took a second exam in psychology. Self-efficacy beliefs for this group of students were significantly related to the grades on the introductory psychology course exams. They were also affected by the instructor's efficacy-enhancing e-mails because there was a significant difference between the scores obtained the first time and those obtained the second time that the self-efficacy measure was administered.

Rewards also work in the same way as encouragement and positive feedback. They are motivating because anticipation of desirable outcomes motivates the students to work. A reward is also a way of congratulating students on a job well done; therefore, it gives them information that they are doing well, thus increasing their self-efficacy.

Socio-economic status (SES): this factor has been found to affect self-efficacy in several fields. In their study of 102 low SES and 164 regular Chinese college students, Tong and Song (2004) found that low socioeconomic-status students scored significantly lower than their high socioeconomic-status peers on general self-efficacy. They concluded that socioeconomic status had an important effect on general self-efficacy.

Porr, Drummond, and Richter (2005) found that low-income mothers exhibited low self-efficacy in health literacy and recommended increasing their health literacy knowledge in order to empower them to care better for the health of their families. Another study by Boardman and Robert (2000) found associations between socioeconomic status and perceptions of self-efficacy.

Culture and self-perceptions: DeAngelis (2003) observed that people tend to overestimate their abilities for self-serving purposes. Studies by Dunning, Johnson, Ehrlinger,and Kruger (2003); and Ehrlinger and Dunning (2003) revealed that individuals often fail to recognize their incompetence, thus inflating their abilities. To investigate self-efficacy beliefs across cultural groups, Klassen (2004) reviewed 20 articles collected over the course of 25 years. The common finding in the 20 articles was that self-efficacy beliefs were higher for participants from western, individualist cultures than for participants from Asian, collectivist environments.

In their study of career self-efficacy and perceived racism among African American adolescents, Rollins and Valdez (2006) found that participants who viewed themselves as being victims of racism also experienced low career task self-efficacy. In contrast, having a positive attitude about one's ethnic minority status, having parents in a higher SES, and being a female were associated with higher levels of career self-efficacy. A similar study by Nesdale and Pinter (2000) examined variables that might predict the self-efficacy and job-seeking activities of unemployed youth from diverse cultural backgrounds. The results revealed two major predictors of self-efficacy and job-seeking. The first one was the extent to which the youth felt accepted by the mainstream culture, and the second predictor was the difference between the dominant culture and the

participants' cultural background. Given the above factors that are likely to increase self-efficacy, what can educators and parents do to enhance the self-efficacy of students?

Strategies for Enhancing Self-Efficacy

When students are experiencing a low and ineffective sense of control, there are a number of strategies used to build efficacy beliefs. Maddux and Lewis (1995) suggest integrating several sources of self-efficacy information. One strategy for enhancing self-efficacy is verbal persuasion during which individuals are encouraged to overcome their fears and take small risks that may lead to small success. Another strategy is the use of vicarious and imaginal experiences. Maddux and Lewis (1995) define vicarious experiences as observations of live or taped models engaged in behaviors that the client fears or thinks he is not able to perform. They define imaginal experiences as sessions in which the subjects imagine or visualize themselves engaged in a feared behavior or overcoming difficulties, such as second language learners having to give a talk to a group of native speakers. Enactive experiences are similar to vicarious experiences but differ from them in that they involve the students actually performing the task, or practicing, on their own or with guidance.

Another strategy for enhancing self-efficacy, controlling physiological and emotional states, was suggested by Schunk (1996). Some physiological and emotional reactions indicate that students feel unsure about their ability to successfully complete a task. Some of those reactions are an increased heart rate, sweating, nervousness, a look of helplessness and anxiety. Therefore, increasing self-efficacy means reducing emotional arousal, especially anxiety during attempts to perform a task. Some of the most common

strategies for reducing emotional and physiological arousal are relaxation, breathing techniques, and meditation (Maddux & Lewis, 1995). Given the factors that affect self-efficacy and the strategies for increasing it, can students be taught to believe they can have control over learning tasks and feel efficacious?

Can Self-Efficacy Be Taught?

Bandura (1997a) has listed a number of reasons why he believes that teachers can teach self-efficacy. His reasons evolve around the idea that schools have all the tools and favorable circumstances or teachable moments to continually influence the self-efficacy perceptions of students in a positive way. He argues that the time that students spend in school is crucial to the development and validation of their cognitive abilities. With the mastery of skills or acquisition of knowledge comes a sense of intellectual efficacy. In school, students' knowledge and skills are constantly tested, evaluated, and compared to those of peers or other groups. A number of factors to enhance self-efficacy are present in schools. There is peer modeling, teacher modeling and comparison with the performance of other students; there are ample opportunities for teachers' feedback and encouragement, as well as parental involvement. Briefly, schools can be agencies for cultivating self-efficacy among students. Teachers, in particular, can take specific steps, as recommended in the next paragraph, to increase self-efficacy among their students.

Recommendations for Teachers

Pintrich and Schunk (1996) have listed eight recommendations to which teachers could refer in an effort to increase their students' sense of efficacy and achievement.

- Make it clear that students are competent enough to learn the material being taught. Encouraging students should then start before, not after, they have experienced difficulties. Second language teachers might, for example, tell their adult second language learners that they possess the intellectual abilities necessary to learn the second language. After all, they mastered their native language with much less cognitive abilities and at a much younger age. Jackson (2002) sent e-mail messages to a class of introductory psychology students. One group received an efficacy-enhancing message; the other received a neutral message. Those who received an efficacy-enhancing message outperformed the other group on a psychology exam.

- Point out how the learning will be useful in students' lives. By relating the material to students' lives and making them know that they already use the concept in their daily lives, teachers make the students see that they already know something about what they are going to learn; therefore, it should not be difficult. They feel efficacious about learning it. Telling second language learners that as soon as they are able to read and write certain material they will be able to apply for certain jobs makes them set goals and work hard to achieve them.

- Teach students learning strategies and show them how their performance has improved as a result of strategy use. In her case studies of two ESL learners Wenden (1991) has shown that in second language learning, strategy knowledge and use improves motivation, autonomy, and a sense of self-efficacy because learners know how to handle difficulties. In Cohen, Weaver and Li (1996), an experimental research conducted with 55 university students learning French

showed that the experimental group, who had received explicit strategy training,

were rated higher than the control group by their examiners on grammatical

accuracy and vocabulary during a speaking task. The strategy instruction received

by the experimental group had focused on planning ahead, monitoring one's

speech, and reflecting on one's performance.

- Present content in ways students understand and tailor instructional presentations

   to individual differences in learning. Learners have different learning styles and it

   is helpful for each student that the teacher presents the material in as many forms

   as possible so that he or she can appeal to all the learning and cognitive styles

   present in the classroom.

- Have students work towards learning goals. Informing students about the goals of

   a learning task involves the students in the learning process and gives them

   responsibility for their own learning and allows them to assess their own progress

   towards accomplishment of the goal. By achieving the goal, they will credit

   themselves for the success and feel more efficacious. During his study of 247

   learning disabled six graders learning subtraction, Schunk (1995) found that

   students who set goals for themselves had the highest self-efficacy and achieved

   the highest skill acquisition. Next came those whose goals had been set by

   another person, and last, those who had no goal at all.

- Ensure that attributional feedback is provided. The teacher telling the students that

   they succeeded because of their own efforts is proving to them that they have

   what it takes to succeed.

- Provide feedback on progress in learning and link rewards with progress. It is desirable to divide an important goal into multiple proximal subgoals and reward students on each subgoal completed. Linking rewards with progress gives them the idea that they are progressing well and makes them feel efficacious.

- Use models that build self-efficacy and enhance motivation. Having one of the students model how to ask for a favor in his second language sends his classmates the message that they, too, can do it. Modeling by similar peers increases self-efficacy, but self-modeling was found to be more effective than peer-modeling in an experimental research that Starek and McCullagh (1999) conducted with 10 adults learning to swim. Those who watched a 3-minute videotape of themselves performing certain swimming tasks correctly were already swimming better than the peer-modeling group by the fourth lesson.

This list of ideas that teachers can use to build student efficacy is important, but not exhaustive. Many teachers could contribute their original ideas and insights about what they do to increase their students' sense of self-efficacy. The next section analyzes self-efficacy as it applies to second language learning.

Self-Efficacy and Second Language Learning

Self-efficacy theory has been seldom applied in the field of second language acquisition, and even less so in foreign language learning. It is only recently in the late 1990's that a small number of studies were conducted regarding the potential role of self-efficacy in learning other languages.

Huang and Shanmao (1996) studied four ESL students from a seventh-level reading and writing class in a university Intensive English Program and found a relationship between the students' self-efficacy ratings and their scores on the reading and writing sections of their TOEFL. Templin (1999) studied a group of 74 Japanese students learning English as a foreign language. The participants were grouped in two categories, one for low-efficacy students, and another one for high-efficacy ones. A T-test was computed on the grades obtained by the two groups in their English course. The T-test showed a significant difference between the grades of the low-efficacy group and those of the high-efficacy group. Templin, Guile and Okuma (2001) wanted to know whether a self-efficacy course would raise the English ability of 293 Japanese college freshmen enrolled in an English I course. They developed an English test and a self-efficacy questionnaire in Japanese. A self-efficacy pre-questionnaire and an English writing and speaking pretest were administered before the self-efficacy instruction started. The students received self-efficacy instruction for a full semester. At the end of this instruction, a self-efficacy post-questionnaire was administered as well as an English writing and speaking posttest. The scores on the self-efficacy post-questionnaire were significantly higher than those on the self-efficacy pre-questionnaire. The researchers concluded this difference was the result of the self-efficacy instruction. The scores on the writing and speaking posttest were significantly higher than those on the pretest. The researchers concluded that this difference was the result of the increase in self-efficacy. What they did not mention is the effect of the English instruction. Since the participants were enrolled in an English course, some type of growth on the students' English ability

should be expected after a semester, unless one can explain that the English course produced no effect at all.

Anstrom (2000) investigated the relationship between the use of language learning strategies and self-efficacy rating. Her subjects were high school students enrolled in various foreign languages in Australia. Twenty one of them were learning Chinese 1, 15 were enrolled in German 1; there were 49 students in Japanese 1, 27 in Russian 1, and 23 students in Spanish 1, for a total number of 135 participants. Two questionnaires were developed to elicit the students' perceptions of their strategy use and sense of self-efficacy. Analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires revealed that there was a positive and significant correlation between strategy use and self-efficacy. Across languages, students who reported a greater frequency of strategy use also perceived themselves as efficacious learners. When the data were analyzed for each language, correlations between the two sets of questionnaires were positive and significant, except for Spanish, where the correlation coefficient r was .18 and did not reach a significance level. There is no explanation as to why the correlation between the two questionnaires was insignificant among Spanish learners. The author recommends promoting strategy use as a way to increase students' self-efficacy.

Although self-efficacy theory is not widely researched as it applies to second and foreign language learning, the few published studies seem to agree that high self-efficacy corresponds to high achievement in a second language. This statement implies that teaching self-efficacy can raise students' achievement in a second language. The next section discusses assessment of self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy Assessment

The strength of self-efficacy beliefs can be measured on a scale. Several methods to assess self-efficacy are used by different researchers. Bandura (1997a) designed a scale where the subjects are presented with items describing some task demands, and are asked to rate the strength of their beliefs in their ability to perform those activities. The wording of the items includes the phrase "can do" instead of "will do" because "can" is a judgment of ability, and "will" is an expression of intention. The subjects are asked to record their self-efficacy strength on a 100-point scale that ranges in 10-unit intervals. The lowest number is 0, meaning that the subject is sure he cannot perform the task; there are intermediate degrees of efficacy, such as 50, meaning that the subject is moderately certain he can accomplish the task; and finally there is complete or absolute assurance, represented on the scale by 100, which means that the subject is completely certain he can succeed in performing the task. A similar 10-unit interval is used by Anstrom (2000).

Another method was designed by Zimmerman, Bonner and Kovach (1996). They designed this model, not for researchers, but for learners themselves so that they may be able to assess their own self-efficacy because they believe that "asking students to rate their self-efficacy after studying increases self-monitoring during study session and awareness of which goals were actually accomplished" (p.14). In the model they designed, students are asked to estimate the score they will obtain on an upcoming test, and then to rate their self-efficacy at being able to obtain at least that score on a scale with three points standing for "not very sure", "quite sure", and "absolutely sure". Efficacy scales do not include negative numbers because a judgment of total inability is represented by 0 and has no lower gradations.

Most studies use a variation of Bandura's (1997a) model to build their own data collection instruments, depending on their field of interest. The Buros Institute of Mental Measurements (online at http://buros.unl.edu/buros/jsp/search.jsp) has not reviewed Bandura's instrument, but it has reviewed a few other self-efficacy surveys such as the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale, Drug-taking Confidence Scale, and Mathematics Self-Efficacy Scale. The similarity among many data collection instruments is that they are all Likert-scale questions in which the statement contains an expression of certainty (e.g., how sure are you or I know), and an expression of ability (e.g., I can, you can, you could or I am able), followed by a task or a behavior (e.g., to read a text and retell the story in Spanish). Then the participants indicate how certain they are that they can accomplish that task by choosing a number corresponding to their degree of certainty.

One potential problem of self-efficacy, which might also bring about concerns of validity, is the extent to which individuals can objectively rate their own abilities. According to DeAngelis (2003), "knowing thyself isn't easy" and people have a tendency to overrate their abilities, especially in the Western world. She added that there are certain reasons why it is hard for people to know themselves, especially in a subjective area like intelligence. People tend to perceive their competence in self-serving ways.

This second part of the literature review consisted of an analysis of self-efficacy theory, its application in some areas of human action, education and instruction, and second language learning. It was stated that self-efficacy plays an important role in any of those two fields. Strategies to enhance self-efficacy and recommendations for teachers to help their students build self-efficacy were also listed. Finally, methods that researchers use to assess self-efficacy were described. It was found that most researchers use Likert-

scale questionnaires to collect data on their participants' self-efficacy levels. Rule and Griesemer (1996) caution researchers that certain survey items often touch on some of the other constructs, such as motivation and self-esteem, that are often confused with self-efficacy.

Conclusion

This review focused on two constructs, language learning strategies and self-efficacy. Language learning strategies are viewed as tools that language learners use to enhance their own learning. They can also be defined as steps that language learners take to solve learning problems they encounter while engaged in a language learning task. Students who use language learning strategies are said to be more autonomous, more self-regulated and prepared to achieve a higher language ability than those who use them occasionally. Self-efficacy is viewed as self-perceptions or beliefs of capability to learn or perform tasks at designated levels. Individuals' positive beliefs about their efficacy in a specific domain leads them to set higher goals and work hard to reach them. Working hard will in turn positively affect their performance. People with high self-efficacy outperform those with low self-efficacy. Both language learning strategies use and high levels of self-efficacy are associated with higher performance on learning tasks. Whether these two constructs relate to each other has not yet been fully investigated. In the next chapter, the methodology of this research project is presented.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was quantitative in nature, using a correlational design. The researcher used self-administered surveys, a cloze test, interviews and class observations to collect the data. This chapter contains (1) a restatement of the problem, (2) the research design and procedures, (3) research methodology, (4) population and sample, (5) instrumentation, (6) data collection procedures, (7) materials and equipment, (8) data analysis procedures, and (9), a chapter summary.

Restatement of the Problem

What are the interrelationships among the use of language learning strategies, self-efficacy, and language ability?

Research Questions and Related Alternative Hypotheses

1. What is the relationship between strategy use and language ability?

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive relationship between strategy use and language ability.

2. What is the relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy?

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy.

3. What is the relationship between self-efficacy and language ability?

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and language ability.

The subsequent research design and procedures paradigm in Table 3 is a visual depiction of the entire research process. It contains the main building blocks of this research project. The problem statement and 3 related research questions are listed first, followed by the population and sample, the data collection procedures with corresponding pilot and alpha tests, instrumentation, data analysis, findings, discussion, recommendations, and implications. The section entitled "Research Design and Procedures" is a more detailed explanation of the content of the chart.

Research Design and Procedures

This mixed methods research study used quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to investigate the interrelationships among language learning strategies, self-efficacy, and language ability. Data from two surveys and a French cloze test were obtained from CSU French students. In addition, some qualitative data were collected through interviews and class observations in order to corroborate the quantitative evidence.

Three correlations were computed to analyze the quantitative data and the qualitative data were organized in descriptive tables and summaries. Finally, the researcher identified the findings of the study, drew conclusions, and suggested recommendations for practice and future research. This investigation ended with a discussion of the implications of the study.

Table 3
Research Design and Procedures Paradigm

Problem Statement

What Are the Relationships Among Language Learning Strategy Use, Self-efficacy, and Language Ability?

3 Research Questions

Relationship between strategy use and language ability.	Relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy	Relationship between self-efficacy and language ability.

Population and sample

37 CSU French students	CSU French instructor

Data Collection

strategy use - self-efficacy surveys	French cloze test	2 interview protocols	Class observation rubric

Alpha Test

Beta Test

Instrumentation and data analysis

-Instruments: 1 Likert-scale survey, 1 cloze test, 2 interview protocols, 1 observation rubric.
- Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the 3 variables.
-Interview answers and class observations summarized.

**Findings
Discussion
Recommendations
Implications**

Research Methodology

This research project was primarily a correlational study. In correlational investigations, researchers study relationships among two or more quantitative variables and make predictions based on an understanding of those relationships (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The researcher did not carry out experiments or manipulate data in any way; rather, data were gathered through self-rating surveys and a test administered to a single group of students. In addition to quantitative data, qualitative data were collected through interviews and class observations in an effort to triangulate data and remedy for the over- or underestimations that often occur when research participants rate themselves. These data were collected after the Institutional Review Boards from Northern Arizona University and Chicago State University had approved the study and signed the informed consent form.

Population and Sample

This study was conducted with students enrolled in Intermediate French II at Chicago State University, a medium-sized university located on the south side of the city of Chicago in the state of Illinois. This campus is located in an area set by 95th Street to the north and 99th Street to the south, Martin Luther King Drive to the west and Cottage Grove Avenue to the east, in the 60628 zip code. This university is largely attended by students who reside in zip codes that are in the vicinity of the campus. Intermediate French I and Intermediate French II are the highest French courses offered at CSU.

Instrumentation

Quantitative data were collected through two surveys and a cloze test. The two surveys, in which students rated themselves, were used to collect data on strategy use and self-efficacy. The strategy use survey consisted of 40 items with corresponding 6-point Likert-scale response options. This survey was adapted from Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). A certain behavior was stated and followed by 6 numbers, each one corresponding to the extent to which the respondent believed the statement applied to her or him. An example is "I read in French for pleasure," followed by 0 (corresponding to never) 1 2 3 4 5 (corresponding to always). The participants were asked to circle one number that best represented the degree to which the corresponding statement applied to them. The strategy use survey, an adaptation of Oxford's (1990) SILL, is a widely used instrument. Since its creation, the SILL has been extensively used as a data collection instrument in second language learning investigations in several countries. Green and Oxford (1995) noted that, by 1995, the SILL had been used as the key instrument in more than 40 studies, including 12 dissertations and theses. These studies involved approximately 8,000 students around the world. The same authors reported that the reliability (Cronbach alpha for internal consistency) of various forms of the SILL ranges between .93 and .98, depending largely on whether the students took the SILL in their own language or in the language they were learning. Except for the cloze test, all other instruments of data collection in this study were written in English, the participants' own language.

The self-efficacy construct was operationalized through scores obtained on another 40-item, 6-point Likert-scale questionnaire. An example is "I am sure I can use

French outside the classroom", followed by the same 6 numbers as in the example of the preceding instrument. These two scales have a 0 point corresponding to "never" or total lack of occurrence of that behavior. The Likert scale being a 6-point scale, there was no balancing or neutral point.

To further assess the reliability of the language learning strategy survey, and that of the self-efficacy survey, a Kuder-Richardson 21 reliability coefficient was computed. Gay and Airasian (2003) noted that the K-R 21 formula is an alternative of the Cronbach's alpha method, which is used to assess the internal consistency of many affective instruments, such as Likert scales, where numbers are used to represent the response choices. The K-R 21 is the method of choice because it is more easily computed and requires less time than the Cronbach's alpha.

In addition to being subjected to the K-R 21 test of internal consistency, these surveys were examined by three expert judge reviewers who provided feedback as to the content and face validity of these two surveys. They also provided feedback as to the strengths and the shortcomings or weaknesses of the instruments, and suggested recommendations for improvement. These three judges were selected because of their educational background and professional experience. All three have spoken French since they were about six years old. They have learned and taught second languages in secondary school and university settings. In addition to these characteristics, the first reviewer is a professor of educational research. The second reviewer is a former high school French teacher and now professor of research. The third reviewer is a former high school French teacher; she has also taught ESL in college, and currently she is a professor of Linguistics.

Finally, they were pilot-tested on a group of French learners at another university in the Chicago area, with a student population similar to that of Chicago State University. This two-part Likert-scale questionnaire is referenced in Appendix B. Items 1 to 40 measure language learning strategy use, and items 41 to 80 measure the participants' self-efficacy.

The participants' language ability was measured through scores obtained on a French cloze test. The text is a conversation between an American college student looking for an apartment and a job in a French city and the people helping him. The text is free from any professional language or jargon thus avoiding any type of bias. The title and the first paragraph of the text were left intact to establish the context. Starting from the second paragraph, every seventh word or so were deleted, and the participants' role was to fill in the blanks that the researcher had created. The cloze test contained a total number of 60 blanks. Participants' answers were accepted if they were spelt correctly (including accents), were grammatically accurate, and the sentences in which they appeared were meaningful in the general context of the whole text. Synonyms were to be accepted as long as the three conditions listed above were met. This cloze test was reviewed by the three expert judges mentioned above; it was also pilot-tested on a group of university French learners similar to the participants of the study. This pilot-test helped the researcher to determine the adequate amount of time necessary for the participants to complete the cloze test. The cloze test is referenced in Appendix E.

Qualitative data were gathered from a focus group interview with students, an interview with their instructor, and classroom observations. The purpose of the focus group interview was twofold. First, it served as a tool to obtain additional information

about students' use of language learning strategies and their feelings about their own abilities as French learners. Specifically, students were asked questions that led them to discuss the steps they took in order to receive information, make sense of it or understand it, store it, and retrieve it. They were also asked to discuss how they managed themselves as well as their resources. Second, the focus group interview served as a means to further investigate students' beliefs about their own abilities to learn French. Participants were asked questions to find out the extent to which they had that "I-know-I can-do-it" attitude and how they regulated their own learning. The focus group interview protocol is referenced in Appendix C.

The last interview was conducted with the French instructor, and its purpose was to establish the truthfulness of the students' self-ratings and their answers to the focus group interview. The interview with the instructor was tape-recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Its protocol is referenced in AppendixF.

Finally, the researcher observed students as they carried on different learning activities during classroom instruction. These observations provided more insight in the students' strategic behavior while faced with French learning tasks. A class observation rubric is referenced in Appendix D. Both interview protocols and observation rubric were submitted to the expert judges for review and feedback.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained permission from the French instructor to visit her class, explain the study to the students, and ask them for their consent to participate in the study. Those who signed the informed consent were then handed the strategy use and

self-efficacy survey, which they filled out and returned to the researcher immediately. Later, the participants were invited to meet with the researcher in a room where the focus group interview was held. The interview was tape recorded to allow for transcription and close analysis. The focus group interview was followed by three classroom observations. The researcher conducted the observations without participating in any of the activities being conducted in the classroom. Rather, she had an observation rubric in hand and took notes of any relevant information in regards to the ways students were able to or failed to use language learning strategies. The cloze test was taken in one sitting in a room where all the participants met with the researcher. Students were given copies of the cloze test and a pencil; they were told that they had thirty minutes to complete the test.

The last step in the data collection process was an interview with the instructor. This interview was to confirm or disconfirm what students had shared about their use of strategies and their self-efficacy beliefs. This interview was conducted in the instructor's office; it was also tape recorded to allow for transcription and further analysis. Collecting and managing both the quantitative and the qualitative data required paper and pencils, a tape recorder, tapes, batteries, and a writing pad.

Data Analysis Procedures

This research project used both quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures.

Quantitative procedures: This study falls under the classification of correlational research. Gay and Airasian (2000) explained that the purpose of correlational research is to determine the existence of relationships between variables. They added that in

correlational research, "two (or more) scores are obtained for each member of the sample, one score for each variable of interest, and the paired scores are then correlated" (p. 323).

Three Pearson *r* correlations were computed on the data obtained from the two-part Likert-scale questionnaire and the cloze test in order to determine the existence of relationships among language learning strategies, self-efficacy, and language ability. The Type I (Alpha) error rate was set at .05. The strengths of those relationships were expressed in correlation coefficients, which were reported in a matrix of bivariate Pearson correlations, similar to the following:

Table 4
Matrix of Bivariate Correlations

Variables	Language Learning Strategies	Self-Efficacy	Language Ability
Language Learning Strategies (items 1-40 in Appendix B)			
Self-Efficacy (items 41-80 in Appendix B)	Pearson *r* at $p \leq .05$		
Language Ability (scores obtained on cloze test)	Pearson *r* at $p \leq .05$	Pearson *r* at $p \leq .05$	

Qualitative procedures: Qualitative data consisted of tape-recorded and transcribed interviews with the students and the instructor, as well as notes from the classroom observations. The data from the interviews were organized in descriptive tables and the notes from classroom observations were summarized. Specifically, the tables displayed strategies students reported using while engaged in French learning tasks such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and learning vocabulary. The summary was a compilation of the researcher's notes during class observations, and students' perceptions of themselves as French learners.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodology of a research study that investigated the relationships among language learning strategy use, self-efficacy, and language ability. It consisted of an introduction, a restatement of the problem with research questions and corresponding alternative hypotheses. The chapter also provided a step-by-step explanation of the research design and procedures, which was summarized in a research design and procedures chart.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, data collected to investigate the relationships among strategy use, self-efficacy, and language ability are presented and summarized. The results are organized in three major sections corresponding to the research questions that the study was designed to answer. In the first research question, the investigator sought to assess relationships between language learning strategy use and language ability. In the second research question, the study looked for the existence of a relationship between self-efficacy and language ability. In the third and last question, the researcher studied relationships between language learning strategy use and self-efficacy.

Study Participants

The participants' characteristics are summarized below in Table 5. The participants of this study were thirty-seven (37) college students learning French at Chicago State University (CSU). They had reached the intermediate level of proficiency. Twenty four (24) of the participants were female and thirteen (13) were male. The racial distribution of the participants was heavily skewed towards African Americans who made up twenty eight (28) of the participants; only five (5) were white; there was only one (1) Hispanic student, and the remaining three (3) were from other ethnic backgrounds. Their mean age was 24.8 years old, ranging from 18 to 64 years. They had been studying French for a period ranging from one to seven years (including high

school), with a mean of 3 years of French study. This gender and ethnic make up of the study participants is similar to the overall population of students attending Chicago State University (CSU).

Table 5
Characteristics of Study Participants

Ethnic Background	Gender		Age		Years of French Study		Total
	Female	Male	Average	Range	Average	Range	
African American	19	9	24.7	18 - 64	2.9	1 - 6	28
Caucasian	3	2	23.8	19 - 35	3.8	1 - 7	5
Hispanic	0	1	22(N/A)*	N/A*	1(N/A)*	N/A*	1
Other	2	1	30	19 - 41	2	1 - 3	3
Total	24	13	24.8	18 - 64	3	1 - 7	37

* Averages and ranges not applicable because there was only one Hispanic participant.

According to the CSU Fact Book (CSU, 2002), this university is largely attended by students who reside within a 15-mile radius of the campus, an area that is predominantly inhabited by African Americans. Statistics from the Fact Book indicate that 72 percent of the university's students are female and 28 percent are male. As many as 89 percent are African Americans; 6 percent are Hispanics; only 3 percent are white, and 2 percent represent other racial groups. In addition to the 37 students, their French instructor was interviewed, a focus group interview was conducted with the students, and three class observations were carried out. The results from the interviews and class observations were grouped in categories.

Beta Test and Pilot Study

The study was conducted through five instruments of data collection: an 80-item Likert-scale survey to measure the participants' use of language learning strategies and their self-efficacy levels, a cloze test with 60 blanks to measure the students' language ability in French, a focus group interview with the students, an interview with the instructor, and class observations. All five instruments underwent a Beta test with three expert judges. Their comments, suggestions, and changes made to the instruments as a result of the Beta test are reported in Appendix G. The survey and cloze test were piloted with French learners of the same proficiency level at another university in the Chicago area, whose students' characteristics are similar to those of CSU. The changes made to the survey as a result of the pilot study are reported in Appendix F. After piloting the cloze test, it was determined that the participants would need thirty minutes to complete it.

The investigator obtained permission from the French instructor to visit her French intermediate I and intermediate II classes and explain the project to the students. A total of 37 (100 %) students agreed to participate in the study. They were handed the language learning and self-efficacy survey, asked to fill it out as completely as they could, and return it to the investigator before leaving the room. All 37 surveys (100 %) were completed and returned. A split-half test of internal consistency was computed on the strategy use and self-efficacy survey, and the coefficients were .94 and .97, respectively.

Second, the participants were invited to meet in a room on campus for a focus group interview. Although only twelve students attended, the interview was carried on as

planned. However, those who did not attend were again invited to meet with the

investigator on a separate day in a room on campus. Thus, a second focus group

interview was conducted with a group of fifteen students. The total number of students

who attended the focus group interviews was 27 (73 % of all participants). Third, the

researcher agreed with the instructor on a date and time when the investigator would visit

the class again to administer the cloze test. Thirty-five students (95 %) completed and

returned the test before leaving the room. Finally, the investigator conducted an interview

with the instructor and three classroom observations. The quantitative data thus obtained

were entered on a Microsoft Excel 2003 spreadsheet and analyzed using the Microsoft

Excel Data Analysis Toolpak. It is a supplemental program of Microsoft Excel that can

perform several statistical analysis functions. The results are reported below to answer

the three research questions. The qualitative data were summarized and grouped in

categories.

Results

The intercorrelations among language learning strategy use, self-efficacy, and

language ability are summarized in Table 6 below.

Table 6
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations: Strategy Use, Self-efficacy,
and Language Ability (N=37)

	Strategy Use	Self-Efficacy	Language Ability
Strategy Use	1		
Self-Efficacy	0.63*	1	
Language Ability	0.56*	0.83*	1
M	2.16	2.36	48.97
SD	0.58	0.56	6.69

*p<0.05

Research question 1. What is the relationship between strategy use and language ability?

Hypothesis 1: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between strategy use and language ability.

Data obtained from the strategy use survey (items 1 to 40) and the cloze test were used to answer this question. A split-half test of internal consistency was computed on the strategy use survey, and the coefficient of reliability was .94. Oxford (1990) stated that the reliability of the SILL, of which the strategy use survey used in this study is an adaptation, has a reliability coefficient between .93 and .97 depending on whether the participants take it in their native language or in their L2. Students' ability in French was measured through a 60-item cloze test. After being completed by the participants, the test was scored by two independent scorers and the interrater reliability was .98. For each student, the mean of the two scores obtained from both scorers was used in the computations. Students' self-reports of the extent to which they used language learning strategies during their French learning experience were linked to their ability level in French. There was a statistically significant positive correlation ($r=.56$, $p <.05$) between scores obtained on the strategy use scale and scores obtained on the French cloze test.

2. What is the relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy?

Hypothesis 2: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy.

Data obtained from the strategy use survey (items 1 – 40) and the self-efficacy survey (items 41 – 80) were used to answer the second research question. A split-half reliability test for internal consistency was also computed on the self-efficacy survey, and

the coefficient of reliability was .96. Thirty-seven students filled out the eighty – item survey which, as mentioned above, comprised both the strategy use and the self-efficacy survey. A Pearson correlation was computed on the scores obtained on both of these surveys, and the results show a strong association between the participants' strategy use and the extent to which they felt capable of accomplishing language tasks successfully. There was a statistically significant positive correlation ($r=.63$, $p<.05$) between scores obtained on the strategy use scale and those obtained on the self-efficacy scale.

3. What is the relationship between self-efficacy and language ability?

Hypothesis 3: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and language ability.

Data from the self-efficacy survey and those from the cloze test were used to answer this question. A Pearson correlation was computed on scores obtained on the self-efficacy scale and those obtained on the cloze test. The results showed a very strong association between the two sets of scores. There was a statistically significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and language ability ($r=.83$, $p<.05$). The coefficients of correlation found above, though they have different magnitudes, confirm the hypotheses that there are statistically significant positive relationships among strategy use, self-efficacy, and language ability. In the following section, qualitative data obtained from interviews and class observations are grouped and summarized.

At the end of the survey, participants were asked some demographic information such as racial background, age, gender, how long they had been studying French including high school, and why they were learning French. From the answers provided by

the participants, it appears that the majority of the students do not have a specific reason

to invest time, energy and funds into studying French. Table 7 presents students'

responses grouped in the three categories: (1) those with a specific purpose for studying

French, (2) those with a nonspecific reason, and (3) those without a response and / or a

reason.

Table 7
Reasons and Frequencies* Why Participants Were Learning French

Specific Reasons	Vague Reasons	No answer or No Reason
▪ I plan to travel to France (2). ▪ I would like to live in Sénégal (1). ▪ I plan to teach it (1) ▪ tutor others learning it (1). ▪ want to teach it to my ▪ children (1) ▪ research study in France (1). ▪ My family members speak it (1). ▪ I came from Europe and going back (1) ▪ My major uses a lot of terms of French origin (1). ▪ Minoring in French (1). ▪ Work for the United Nations in AIDS programs in Africa (1). ▪ I'll have my own business and languages are helpful (1). ▪ Personal pleasure (1).	▪ Vacation / travel to France and other French speaking countries** (13). ▪ Communicate with others who speak it (9). ▪ Career, job, work after graduation** (7). ▪ It's impressive to know another language (2). ▪ General knowledge (1). ▪ For graduate school (1). ▪ To complete language requirements for my program (1).	▪ No answer (2). ▪ I do not know if I ever will use it (2). ▪ I wanted to study Spanish but all sections were full (2). ▪ Probably never in the ▪ outside world (1). ▪ I'm not sure how or when I will use it in the future (1). ▪ What can you do with French around here if you are not going to become a French teacher? (1) ▪ Playing around with my family members and I say things to them in French because they do not know it (1).

*Some reasons were cited by more than one participant and some participants listed more than one reason. Numbers in brackets represent how many times a reason was cited.
**Some participants' statements were preceded by words and phrases such as "Hopefully", "If I ever", "If I were to travel", "I may have a chance to", "Maybe".

The open-ended question "What will you use the French you will have learned

for" was answered by 35 out of 37 participants (95 %). Many participants listed more

than one possible uses for their new language in the future. Thus, a total of 59 reasons for learning French were generated. Participants' responses fall into three major categories: (1) those that show a clear, specific purpose for undertaking the study of French (15 responses out of 59, or 25 %), (2) those with a vague, nonspecific purpose (34 responses out of 59, or 58 %) and (3) those without a reason and/or a response (10 responses, or 17 %). Two students did not provide a response, and it is not clear whether they did not answer the question because they did not have a reason for studying French, or because they simply chose not address the question.

<div align="center">Focus Group Interview</div>

During the focus group interview, participants were asked to discuss ways in which they approach specific learning tasks and how they solve problems they encounter while engaged in those learning activities. In Table 8, students' responses are grouped by task and by language learning strategy category. During the focus interview, participants also listed what they consider to be problems they encounter during their French learning experience. They mentioned pronunciation, speaking, writing, grammar, and explained that these four language tasks were the most difficult because of their differences with English. Reading was not mentioned.

In the self-efficacy questionnaire (items 41 to 80 in Appendix B), activities that involve pronunciation and speaking received average ratings ranging from 1.9 to 2.6. Students thought grammar was especially difficult because they could not always have a rule on which to rely (such as the case of gender), and when there was a rule, too many exceptions caused them confusion. Participants added that the French language is

characterized by a large number of minute, but very important elements, such as accents and verb inflections. This feeling matches the students' level of self-efficacy in grammar. Item 68 in the self-efficacy questionnaire (I'm sure I can conjugate most verbs in French) was rated 2.1, and item 69 (I know I can master French grammar) was rated 2.4.

The second problem that was mentioned was the lack of French speakers on campus as well as in the community at large. Only two of the participants had visited French restaurants in town, and they noted that those restaurants were too expensive and out of the range of a student's budget. Seven students (26 % of interview participants) had family members, friends or coworkers who knew some French and could offer assistance. The next problem they discussed was the lack of resources and material for listening or reading. Outside of the classroom, they listened to or read material they found on the wide world web, but they added that most of this material proved to be too difficult for them as it was written for an audience with a higher proficiency level than theirs.

In addition, the participants complained about the lack of time. The majority of students held full-time employment and had to balance work, a full load of university courses, and family responsibilities. Students reported lacking time to devote to activities, such as going to the language laboratory, or participating in study groups, that would improve their knowledge of the target language. Those who tried to cooperate with classmates outside of the classroom often found that their different work and class schedules prevented them from meeting.

Students also reported feeling anxious and nervous, especially when engaged in activities that required them to speak. Listening to themselves speak and hearing that

their pronunciation differed from their instructor's (or other voices they had heard pronouncing French words) made them self-conscious, and the knowledge of how little they knew, as well as the enormity of the task ahead of them, discouraged them. All 27 students who participated in the focus group interview agreed that speaking is the hardest learning task. Several students talked about the embarrassment and the fear of "sounding wrong", which prevented them from volunteering answers and even asking questions.

Asked if they believed they were good language learners, the participants answered positively. In fact, item 79 of the questionnaire (Appendix B) stated "I believe I'm a good language learner". That item received an average rating of 2.6, with 20 out of 37 participants rating it 3 or higher. They were sure that they had what it takes to master their target language, if only they had sufficient time, and resources. Their responses here agree with their rating of item 75 of the questionnaire (I'm sure I can learn more French than I know now) and item 80 (I strongly believe that, given enough time, I can achieve at least near-native fluency in French), which were respectively rated 3.4 and 3.

On several occasions, they referred to their Spanish learning counterparts, whose language environment has become very close to a second language rather than a foreign language environment. According to the participants, students of Spanish in the Chicago area enjoy an abundance of opportunities to hear and interact with native or more proficient Spanish speakers, whether on campus or around town. The steps the participants took as possible solutions to those problems discussed above are grouped in Table 8.

Table 8
Language Learning Strategies that Students Report Using and Frequencies
(Numbers in brackets represent the number of student who reported using that strategy)

Language Tasks	Direct Strategies	Indirect Strategies		
	Cognitive	Metacognitive	Social	Affective
Listening	▪ Practice by listening to French songs on the internet, or on MP3 (1). ▪ Watch TV shows in French (2). ▪ Ask interlocutor to slow down or repeat (3). ▪ Ask interlocutor what that means (2).	▪ Searching the internet (5). ▪ Downloading French songs (1). ▪ Going to a French restaurant (2). ▪ Getting pen pal (1). ▪ Finding time to go to the lab (27). ▪ Study before a test (27). ▪ Study whenever I can get a few free minutes (1).	▪ My roommate is from a French speaking country and she helps me tremendously (1).	▪ Encourage myself to raise my hand and answer questions in class and participate (1). ▪ Remind myself that I am a student, not a native speaker, and that I'm not going to be perfect in a year or two (1).
Speaking	▪ Practice in the lab. (all 27, class requirement). ▪ Practice in restaurants where French is spoken (2). ▪ Use gestures (5). ▪ Draw (3). ▪ Say a word in English and the other person will say it in French (5).	▪ Take another semester of French (2).	▪ My coworkers to help me (1). ▪ Help from family and friends (3). ▪ Classmates on the phone (4).	▪ Tell myself I'm doing well; mistakes are normal for people learning a language they don't hear everyday outside (1). ▪ Remind myself I'm still learning; I won't be very fluent overnight (1). ▪ Take deep breath before speaking in class, especially when I'm next (3).

Language Tasks	Direct Strategies		Indirect Strategies	
Writing	▪ Practice in the lab. (all 27; this is a class requirement).		▪ I write to a pen pal (1).	▪ Keep a diary about our experience learning this language (27; this is a class requirement).
Vocabu-lary	▪ Website with pictures of objects, what the objects are called in French, and a voice pronounces the word for you (1). ▪ Use a dictionary (27). ▪ Ask somebody else (10). ▪ Use the glossary in textbook (27). ▪ Use Google translation (3). ▪ Use the context (5). ▪ Copy new words down and use them in a sentence (27). ▪ Associating new words with something I know (1).		▪ My girlfriend is also taking French. We send text messages to each other using French words we recently learned (1)	
Pronunci-ation	▪ Practice (27). ▪ Imitate the instructor (27). ▪ Practice on internet (2). ▪ I write words in a way that will help me with pronunciation (5).			
Grammar	▪ Memorize rules and exceptions (27). ▪ Practice on internet (2)			
Taking Notes	▪ Write in color, underline or highlight important information (5) ▪ If the professor says it's important, I write it down right away (1). ▪ Copy everything the professor writes on the board (27).	Write down all new things (27).		

Interview with the Instructor

The participants' instructor was also interviewed to find out her views of her students' French learning experience, the problems she thinks they encounter, and the steps they take to try and solve those problems. Some of her statements overlap with her students', but others reveal problems and learner behaviors that the students had not addressed. In the following paragraph, the instructor's replies to the investigator's questions are summarized.

Asked about the problems that her students encounter in their French learning experience, she first commented that their level of proficiency in the language was low, although they had spent a number of years learning French. She also mentioned time. Just as the students had said, she explained that many of them work full-time or two part-time jobs and carry a full load of university courses in addition to fulfilling family responsibilities. She added that some of her students were taking a large number of credit hours, as many as seventeen or nineteen, in order to graduate by a certain date.

Another issue that the instructor thought was getting in the way of her students' learning was their socioeconomic status. Just like the rest of the university, many of these students come from a low socioeconomic background and receive financial aid. It is not uncommon for a student to avoid purchasing textbooks and materials required for class. It is stated in her syllabi that students without books will not be allowed in class. She continued to say that their own beliefs about the difficulty of learning a foreign language might be preventing them from taking the steps necessary to progress at a satisfactory pace. During instruction, they often asked why

one has to say certain things a certain way and often compared the difficulty of French to their perceived ease of English, their native language.

Another problem she raised was the scarcity of opportunities for students to interact with other French speakers outside of the classroom. In an effort to solve that problem, she asked students to work in groups during class and encouraged them to cooperate outside of the classroom. Some departments on campus have professors who grew up in francophone countries and she has often invited them to come to speak to her students. She doubted if the students, on their own, sought out opportunities to interact with more proficient speakers or attend events that highlighted the culture of their L2. Opportunities to interact or use French outside the classroom can also be found in the extensive network of libraries in the Chicago area.

According to the instructor, students do not take advantage of the variety of resources offered in those libraries, which include books at different levels of proficiency, and mostly tapes on learning French. The best opportunity that is offered to students, she added, is the summer trip to the Université de Nice in France. Unfortunately, only a handful of students are able to take advantage of this trip because of the cost involved, the time away from home and work, and the department's academic requirements. No one among the study participants had been on that trip. The instructor was asked to discuss ways in which her students try to solve the problems they encounter in their foreign language experience. The strategies she listed are grouped below in Table 9.

Table 9
Language Learning Strategies the Instructor Reported Students Use.

Language Tasks	Direct Strategies		Indirect Strategies	
	Cognitive	Metacognitive	Social	Affective
Listening	-Let you know they didn't hear what you said -Ask you to repeat. -Ask a classmate what was said.	-Plan time to study, mostly before tests.	-Collaborate in groups, especially before tests.	-Keep journal (as class requirement).
Speaking	-Gesture. Ask instructor or someone else how to say something in French. -Just say a word/phrase in English hoping interlocutor will help them with the French equivalent. -Say a French word the best they can, with a questioning intonation, which signals to the interlocutor that they are looking for help.	Take time to think and prepare what to say.		Take a deep breath to reduce anxiety.
Reading	-Use the context. -Gognates -Glossary in textbook and notes. -Ask someone else.			
Vocabu-lary	-Glossary and notes -Ask other people -Internet -Memorization -Using words in sentences. -Taking notes. -Highlighting words.	Plan time to study, mostly before tests. Plan time to go to language lab.	Collaborate in groups, especially before tests.	Keep journal (as class requirement).
Pronunci-ation	-MP3's -Internet -Listen and repeat or imitate instructor or voice on tape.	Language lab.		

Language Tasks	Direct Strategies		Indirect Strategies	
Grammar	-Textbook and notes. -Internet. -Memorization of rules. -Practice. -Comparing French and English grammar.			
Note Taking	-Underline important information. -Highlight. -Box in important information.			

The preceding table summarized information gathered from the interview with the participants' instructor. In the following section, data gathered from the classroom observations are summarized.

Classroom observations

Three observations were conducted by the investigator, and their purpose was to see what strategies students used while engaged in learning activities. They use some of the strategies they discussed in the focus group interview, and a few more that they did not list.

The feeling that transpired from the beginning of the first observation was the students' anxiety and nervousness. One complained about the level of difficulty of their writing assignment and suggested an alternative, which the instructor accepted. In an attempt to reduce this anxiety, the instructor tried to make the class as pleasant as possible, complimented the students and encouraged them to work hard by promising extra credit points if they accomplished work beyond the requirements of the class. However, this anxiety was visible throughout the observations, especially when they had to speak.

The instructor used the target language as long as students could understand what she was saying, especially if her utterance contained cognates. It was evident that they had recently memorized the conjugation of the verb "faire" because they were able to recite and spell all of its six forms in the simple present tense without consulting their notes or textbooks. They were also able to remember expressions in which it is used.

When students were experiencing difficulty understanding what their instructor was saying, they found some way to make her notice that they had not understood her. They would at times ask her to repeat what she had said. Others asked the person sitting next to them.

Speaking seemed to create the most anxiety in the participants. Not many students volunteered to participate, which caused the instructor to pick students to answer rather than wait for them to raise their hands. When students were thus picked, one could see or hear them take a breath and then attempt to answer the question. Sometimes she would follow the order in which they were seated, and they knew when their turn was coming. In this way, they were able to prepare what they were going to say. They had a tendency to say as little as possible, answering the instructor's questions with one-word utterances or single words. The instructor asked them to reply with complete sentences so that they could practice their skills. For expressions and idioms, they used a word for word translation. This tactic should be considered a strategy because their interlocutor (instructor) was able to understand what they were trying to say and tell them the correct expression. The instructor asked them to work in groups to role play certain situations, and at that time they were able to assist one another with the correct word to use and its pronunciation. They also had

time to practice because they had to act their situation in front of the class. During that practice, they rehearsed their part a number of times to ensure that they would say it correctly and not feel embarrassed in front of the class.

For vocabulary, students relied heavily on the glossary in their textbooks. They also asked one another or the instructor. No dictionary was seen in the classroom. Dictionaries were not required, but since students had rated the use of dictionaries (item 22 in Appendix B) fairly highly (average of 2.7), one would expect to see at least one dictionary in the classroom. Vocabulary was embedded in every lesson because there was always a new word, either from the textbook or from the instructor's discourse. A few students used new words in sentences and asked the instructor whether or not their sentences were correct. After the instructor's feedback, they would write the sentences in their notebooks. However, the majority of students did not take those risks and copied what others had said. Once in a while the instructor would ask them to contribute a sentence. They also used the context when possible.

With regard to grammar, it was clear during the observations that students had memorized certain rules, which they were able to generalize and apply to new sentences. Two examples of this memorization are the inflections of the verbs "faire" and "finir". However, they compared some structures they were learning to their English forms, and were dissatisfied by the fact that one needed more words in French than in English to express the same grammatical structure. Although they had memorized certain verb inflections, they were worried about several others that they had not yet mastered. One young man openly expressed his fears by asking the instructor: "All those tenses: how can we remember them on a test?"

For the pronunciation of words, the students listened carefully and repeated them after the instructor. Another strategy they were observed using for pronunciation was to say the word or expression the best they could, with a rising intonation and a pause at the end to signal that they were not sure what they were saying was correct and they expected the instructor's assistance or feedback. They also cooperated with their classmates. Finally, some of them wrote words in a way that would remind or help them with their pronunciation, although it was not a phonetic transcription.

Table 10

Strategies Students Were Observed Using During Classroom Observations

Language Skills and Aspects	Strategy
Listening	Paying attention and listening carefully, asking interlocutor to repeat, seeking assistance from peers.
Speaking	Preparing, practicing, using word for word translation, seeking assistance, rehearsing.
Reading	None observed.
Writing	None observed.
Vocabulary	Memorization, taking notes, seeking assistance, using new words in sentences, using the context, using notes and glossary.
Grammar	Memorization, taking notes, practice, seeking assistance from instructor or peers, comparing L2 to L1.
Pronunciation	Repeating after instructor, trying to sound like her, writing words in special ways, seeking assistance, pronounce the word the best they can and signal need for assistance.
Note taking	Highlighting, underlining, writing in different color ink, boxing in important information.
Use of resources	They used their notes and textbooks.
Cooperation	Asking instructor or peers for help.
Emotions	Taking a deep breath, practicing, rehearsing, and seeking assistance.

Students took a lot of notes, but they did not organize their notes in any special way. They used color, highlighting, underlining, and boxing in important or new information to which they wished to pay special attention. No strategies were observed for reading and writing. During the three observations, no in-class reading or writing activities were conducted. The only resources they were observed using were their notebooks and textbooks. They cooperated among themselves during in-class group work, and asked one another for assistance. Anxiety and nervousness permeated many of their learning activities, especially speaking and grammar, and they dealt with these emotions by practicing, rehearsing, and seeking assistance from peers and the instructor.

Conclusion

This study was undertaken to investigate the interrelationships among language learning strategy use, self-efficacy, and language ability in a foreign language environment. Data were obtained from thirty-seven university students enrolled in French with an intermediate proficiency level. The data were collected through an eighty-item survey that measured language learning strategies and self-efficacy, a cloze test, a focus group interview, an interview with the instructor and three classroom observations.

Pearson correlations showed a statistically significant positive relationship between strategy use and language ability ($r=.56$), a statistically significant positive relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy ($r=.63$) and a statistically significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and language ability ($r=.83$).

Data collected from the interviews and classroom observations were grouped into categories. During the interviews, participants discussed their reasons for studying French, the problems they face in their foreign language learning experience, and the strategies they adopt in an attempt to solve those problems. It was found that some students had a clear idea of the usefulness of their L2 in their future lives, others had a vague idea, and still others had no specific reason for undertaking the study of French. It was also found that participants used a number of strategies to make their learning easier and more manageable, ranging from downloading songs to their MP3's to seeking assistance from peers, friends, family, coworkers, and their instructor. However, it should be mentioned that strategies listed by students are not necessarily used by all or the majority of the students. They discussed the lack of opportunities to practice their new language outside the classroom, because for them the Chicago area is poor in French speakers as opposed to Spanish. They shared the anxiety they feel when they are engaged in speaking activities, their fear of sounding wrong, and their embarrassment when they actually do sound wrong. The thought of how little they know, and how much language there is to learn, made them nervous. As tables 8, 9, and 10 show, the largest number of strategies used were cognitive, followed by metacognitive, and social strategies.

Affective strategies were the least used. It should also be mentioned that there are strategies that students did not report using or that they were not observed using; this fact should not imply that the participants never use those strategies. Students believed that they were good language learners and felt efficacious at learning French, but they blamed circumstantial factors for their perceived slow progress. The

participants' instructor also shared her views of her students' use of strategies. At times her responses were similar to her students', and at other times, they differed.

In the following chapter, the investigator will elaborate more on the relationships among language learning strategies, self-efficacy, and language ability that were found in this study. The chapter will also contain recommendations for foreign language students and professionals, and recommendations for future research, as well as the implications of the study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the study, a summary of the findings and conclusions, and to suggest recommendations for practice and future research, as well as to discuss the implications of the study

Summary of the Study

Second and foreign language students, teachers, and other language practitioners are increasingly aware of the existence of learning strategies and self-efficacy. Studies exploring the association between language learning strategy use and language ability have been replicated in different environments, sometimes finding an association, and other times failing to find one. In this study, the researcher wished to add to the body of existing knowledge about the relationship between strategy use and language ability. Few researchers have considered the relationship between self-efficacy and language ability, and even fewer researchers have studied any relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy. Therefore, there is still a need for more studies to contribute to the understanding of the role played by these constructs in foreign language learning. This study was undertaken to investigate the existence of relationships between strategy use and language ability, strategy use and self-efficacy, and self-efficacy and language ability.

Literature reviewed suggested that the use of language learning strategies is linked to language ability and learners who use them achieve higher levels of

linguistic achievement than learners who do not. A few studies found a statistically positive relationship between students' self-efficacy ratings and an aspect of language, such as a vocabulary test. Other studies suggested a link between strategy use and self-efficacy ratings.

The participants of this study were 37 university students enrolled in intermediate French. The research problem was threefold; the researcher sought to answer three research questions. First, what is the relationship between strategy use and language ability? Second, what is the relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy? Third, what is the relationship between self-efficacy and language ability? In order to develop a deeper understanding of the connections among these three constructs, the investigator administered to the participants an adaptation of Oxford's (1990) SILL (strategy inventory for language learning), a self-efficacy survey, and a cloze test. Data were also collected from a focus interview with the students, class observations, and an interview with the participants' instructor. A correlational study was then conducted to look for links among the three constructs, and the qualitative data were grouped in categories.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

Question 1. What Is the Relationship Between Strategy Use and Language Ability?

This question was answered through items 1 to 40 of the survey and the cloze test. In these 40 items, participants were asked to rate themselves, on a scale of 0 to 4, on the extent to which they used language learning strategies. The cloze test consisted of a text about a college student looking for a part-time job and an apartment, a topic which is very familiar to today's college population, especially in metropolitan or

urban areas. The participants had to fill in 60 blanks with words selected from a word bank. Analysis of the data revealed the existence of positive and significant relationships between strategy use and language ability. This finding is similar to those of studies discussed in the literature reviewed (Thompson & Rubin, 1993; Rubin & Thompson, 1994; Cohen, Weaver & Li, 1996; Bremner, 1999; Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown,1999; Huang, 2003) though the magnitude of the correlations is not always the same. With a positive correlation of $r=.56$, it is safe to say that for this group of learners, strategy use was found to be linked to language ability. Learners who use strategies adopt behaviors that improve their linguistic ability. They have tools to make the learning easier and more manageable, as well as solutions to overcome problems associated with learning a language as an adult, especially in a foreign language environment, which is not an acquisition-rich environment. For example, they pay attention and actively participate in class, purposefully put themselves in situations where they have to interact with native or more proficient speakers, use resources, and seek assistance. They monitor their own learning and have learned how to deal with anxiety, nervousness, and the fear of making mistakes (Wenden, 1991).

Students' self-rating of their strategy use: In the following section, strategies that were highly rated by the students are discussed first (rated 3.0 or higher), followed by those that received a low rating (rated between 0 and 1).

Out of the 40 items that measured strategy use, item number 18, "I pay attention in class or when someone is speaking in French", obtained the highest score, with an overall rating of 3.5. Only two participants circled 2 on their survey; 16

circled 3, and the other 19 circled 4. It seems common sense that individuals would pay attention and listen carefully in their foreign language classroom or when being spoken to in their L2; otherwise, they may miss out on important information during class. If they are interacting with somebody else and don't pay attention, they might experience a communication breakdown because they were not able to hear what was said. Language learners often say that they ask their interlocutors to repeat as a listening strategy, but there is a limit to the number of times one can ask for repetition. If that number (whatever it is) is exceeded, the more proficient speaker may become frustrated or question the learner's linguistic ability. During the three class observations, it was noticed that students paid a lot of attention, particularly when new information was being presented or when difficult material was being explained. At times, the class was totally quiet; the only voice being heard was that of the instructor and all eyes were fixed on her.

The second most highly rated item, with an overall rating of 3.4, was number 16, "I take notes in my French classes." With very little or no contact with other French speakers or French material outside the classroom, students heavily relied on their textbooks or notes for practicing, completing assignments, and preparing for tests. Attending and participating in out-of-class events where French is spoken (item 14 in Appendix B) received an average rating of 1.1, with as many as 26 students rating themselves 1 or 0 on that item. In addition, data from the focus group interview confirm this lack of exposure to other French speakers. Only one of the students had regular contact and assistance from a francophone individual (roommate), three had either family members or friends who spoke French, five collaborated with other students of French (four of them had created a phone study group), and one wrote to a

pen pal. Aware of this fact, the instructor often allowed all the time students needed to take notes. In addition, she assigned work or projects in which students had to look for authentic French information, such as recipes, to share with the class through presentations. Students were also required to attend a minimum of 14 tutoring sessions in the language lab.

The instructor stated that she did not believe her students sought out opportunities to interact with the French world and culture outside the classroom. She listed several agencies, such as embassies, consulates and "Alliance Française", and establishments, such as restaurants, international businesses that students could visit to practice their L2 and enhance their knowledge of its culture. In fact, once one of the participants was sent by the university as a student ambassador to the consulate of the Republic of Haïti downtown Chicago. When he returned to class, he showed some memorabilia he had brought back with him and he discussed his experience with the class. He had been amazed by the fact that upon arrival at the consulate office, the security officers had spoken to him in French, thinking that he was a Haïtian himself. Opportunities like these abound in the area, and one does not need to be a student ambassador to take advantage of them. Although the university library is not very rich in French material at or below an intermediate level of proficiency, the electronic network of interlibrary loan gives CSU library patrons access to sixty-five college libraries which possess books at varying levels of proficiency, as well as audio and video tapes.

Students do not take full advantage of these opportunities because of a combination of factors. During the focus group interview, they were asked if they would go to watch a free French movie that was playing in their neighborhood. Only

one student replied that she would go. The rest explained that they were afraid they would not be able to understand the whole movie or that they were not interested in French movies. During the survey, they also indicated their lack of participation in out-of-class activities through their low rating of item number 14, "I attend and participate in out-of-class events where French is spoken". The overall rating for this item was 1.1. The instructor offered a deeper explanation of this lack of contact with places where French is spoken. Asked whether there are no French speakers in Chicago, she replied

> they are not the types of people that our students would associate with.
> Foreign university professors, French speaking embassies and
> consulates, Alliance Française, all those are around, but for some
> reason, maybe socioeconomics, time, not knowing what is available,
> lack of confidence in one's ability to interact with a very fluent
> speaker, all these factors can prevent them from taking the steps
> necessary to meet French speakers.

With this limited contact with other French speakers, it is understandable that students would take large amounts of notes to use as resources, together with their textbook. However, no amounts of notes can compensate for the use of dictionaries and other reference material. Students were asked about their use in item number 22, "I frequently use dictionaries and other reference material to learn French", and they gave it a low overall rating of 2.2. During the focus group interview, they were asked what they do when they are reading and they come to a word the meaning of which they do not understand. They had quickly replied that they use the dictionary. But

when asked to raise their hands if they owned a dictionary, all of them kept their hands down. The lack of dictionaries seemed to be partially compensated by item number 19, "If I do not understand all the words I read or hear, I use clues from the context or situation", which was rated overall at 3.3.

The internet was cited by eight students as a resource that some students used to download music, practice pronunciation, and grammar and learn vocabulary. In addition, sometimes it was the only reference for students to complete assignments. However, since these students are most likely of low socioeconomic background, one can assume that only a few of them possess computers with internet service. Completing assignments using the internet meant a trip to the library or the computer laboratory, a trip they might not be willing or lack time to take so that they can practice their new language.

During the observations, it was evident that students compared their L1 and their L2 and used that information to help themselves remember structures in their L2. If words in French were cognates of their English counterparts, students noticed the similarity, but often checked the meaning with the instructor or other students. "I look for similarities between French and English words" was tied at a rating of 3.2 with "I pay attention to my mistakes in French and use that information to help myself do better." The latter is a metacognitive strategy that learners use to monitor their learning and try to avoid committing the same mistakes.

Finally, item 30, "If I do not understand what someone is saying in French, I ask him or her to repeat or to slow down" received an overall rating of 3. This is a cognitive strategy that the students were also observed using, although it should be used with caution because its overuse can lead to lack of trust by the speaker in the

listener's ability to understand what is being said to him or his language ability in general. This problem can usually be avoided when the speaker utters a statement or sentence and subsequently writes it down for the learner to see.

The strategies discussed above are the six out of 40 language learning strategies that received an overall rating of 3 or higher on a scale of 0 to 4. Five out of the six are cognitive; the other one is metacognitive. No social or affective strategy received a rating of 3 or higher. In the next section, language learning strategies that were rated between 0 and 1 are discussed.

Only two items out of forty received such a low rating. Item number 9, "I read for pleasure in French" and item number 28, "I keep track of my feelings in a language learning diary" were rated 0.9 and 0.8, respectively. The low rating about reading may be partially attributed to the lack of French reading material in the participants' immediate environment, as well as their low interest in that activity. Students also expressed their lack of reading during the focus group interview; only one student had read a book for pleasure (Le petit prince). Although she admitted not knowing all of the words, she was able to understand the main story.

In addition, they complained about the large quantity of responsibilities they have, and the lack of time to accomplish them. When asked how they found time to work on the other courses they were taking, one participant shared that he usually carries all his books with him and studies on the bus or train on his commute from work to class. This particular student was taking a course load of 17 credits and working. All 27 students who participated in the interview agreed that they studied most before a test, but tried to find time to complete and submit assignments by the due dates.

Out of the forty language learning strategies, item number 28 ("I keep track of my feelings in a language learning diary") received the lowest rating. This low rating was surprising because students are required by their instructor to keep a language learning diary. One possible explanation is that students misunderstood the statement as asking for their personal feelings such as sadness, joy, frustration, anger, without relating them to their language learning experience. Another possible explanation is that students were truthful about not writing feelings in their diaries and that they use this document to write assignments such as reports about their lives.

There are several factors that could account for these students' low level of strategic behavior. First, they might lack the knowledge of what is available to them. During the focus group interview, some students shared with the group how they could switch the language on their television sets to French and others were surprised to hear that it was possible. The same reaction occurred when certain uses of the internet were mentioned. Second, they might lack knowledge of the strategies themselves. One participant wrote at the end of the survey that the study had taught her things that she should have been doing. Third, students may lack the confidence to engage in activities where they would have to use their L2, such as visiting places where French is used. One of the students shared that he would not go to watch a French movie because he was not sure he would understand it. Fourth, there is the problem of time that they mentioned quite often. Finally, not knowing what one will do with the French one has learned and is still learning is not conducive to strategic behavior.

Participants' language ability: Had the students used strategies to a greater extent, their linguistic ability might have been higher, given the positive and statistically significant relationship between their strategic competence and their language ability as measured by the cloze test. A close examination of the results of the cloze test shows that eight students obtained a score of at least 54 out of a possible 60; eleven scored between 48 and 53.5; another eleven fell in the range of 42 and 47.5; four scored between 36 and 41.5; and one scored below 35. If the letter grade system had been used, there would have been eight A's (90 to 100%), eleven B's (80 to 89%), eleven C's (70 to 79%), four D's (60 to 69%), and one F (59% and below). These numbers show that 30 of the 35 students who took the cloze test passed it; 4 had a low pass, and one failed the test.

These tests results seem to be encouraging. However, given the association between strategy use and language ability, students' greater use of strategies would be linked to higher scores. A closer look at students' self-ratings of their use of language learning strategies revealed that thirty-five students rated themselves between 0 and 2.88. That range corresponds to the descriptors "Never true of me", "Usually not true of me" and "Somewhat true of me". Only two rated themselves higher than 3 (Usually true of me). There was no rating of 4.

In looking at the number of years they had studied French, one would have expected a higher language performance and possibly a better strategic behavior. The average number of years of French study, including high school, was 3, with a range of 1 to 7. Twenty-five out of the thirty-seven participants had studied French for a period of time ranging from two to seven years, which should have allowed them to

obtain a higher score on the cloze test. What can account for this average performance for students who have studied a language for such a fairly long period of time?

One possible explanation is that their L2 study was truncated or interrupted during their academic career. This idea is suggested by their age, which shows that many of them were older than regular college students. Their average age is 24.8, ranging from 18 to 64. It is highly probable that they did not enroll in and attend college right after high school, or if they did, they dropped out and reenrolled later. There is a time period when their studies or daily lives did not include French study (or communication). During the time that they were not using the French they already knew, their proficiency level decreased. When language learners cease to learn, especially at the beginner or intermediate levels, it is easy for them to forget what they already knew.

It is not possible to account for the quality of French instruction they had received before the beginning of this study. Although they did not have the same French teachers in their high schools, and many of their statements do not apply to the entire group, one participant's comments were quite suggestive. She wrote "My high school teacher did not really teach us how to communicate and use the language in real life. We spent most of the time on grammar drills."

In this section, a discussion of the participants' use of language learning strategies and ability as they relate to each other was provided. It was noted that participants did not use strategies as much as they ought to, a fact that may account for a weak correlation of .56. Possible reasons for the low level of strategic behavior among the study participants were listed. In the following section, the relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy is discussed.

Question 2. What Is the Relationship Between Strategy Use and Self-Efficacy?

This question was answered through items 1 through 40 to measure strategy use, and items 41 to 80 to measure self-efficacy. A Pearson correlation revealed the existence of a statistically significant positive relationship (r=.63, N=37, p<.05) between the two variables. This correlation entails a link between strategy use and self-efficacy. Specifically, students who use language learning strategies also experience a heightened sense of efficacy. They possess the tools to manage their learning as well as solutions to solve problems and have developed a degree of autonomous learning.

This finding is consistent with those of other researchers, such as Yang (1999), the National Capital Language Resource Center (2000), and Wong (2005), who have investigated links between language learning strategy use and self-efficacy. Participants overall rated their strategy use a little bit lower (average of 2.16) than their self-efficacy levels (average of 2.36).

Participants' self-efficacy beliefs: All but seven of the forty items on self-efficacy received an overall rating between 2 and 3.4, but only three items were rated between 3 and 3.4. No item received a higher rating. Item number 43, "I'm sure I can read a novel in French", received the lowest rating (1.2). During the focus group interview, only one student said that she had ever read a book in French other than the class textbook. It is not surprising that this was the same student who was learning French for pleasure. It may be the case that the participants abstained from reading because they believed they would not be able to understand the books. Another explanation might be that reading a book is an activity that takes time and effort,

especially if it is done in a foreign language, and students might not be willing to expend that time and effort to do so.

The second lowest rated item was number 61, "I know I can write essays or longer texts in French on a familiar topic", which received an overall rating of 1.5. Items 44, 47, and 56 tied for a rating of 1.8. They read, respectively, "After reading a text in French, I'm sure I can retell it in English", "While listening, I'm sure I can understand details of what I hear", and "I know I could accomplish a real life task in which I have to speak French (e.g.; if I fall sick in France, I will be able to describe my symptoms to a doctor)". Two of these items include speaking activities, which according to the instructor and the participants themselves, is the language skill in which they feel the least confident.

Items 52, 58, and 71 tied for the third lowest overall score of 1.9. These items read, respectively, "I'm sure I can tell my interlocutor details and explanations if the listener asks for them", "I'm sure I can correctly spell most words", and "I am confident about my ability to interact with other French speakers". Item 52 includes speaking, which is known to cause anxiety among these learners, and item 71, although it could include speaking, writing and reading, might have been misunderstood by the participants as involving speaking activities only. Item 58 asked them about spelling, which can be challenging for students of a foreign language.

From the students' self rating of their self-efficacy in the items discussed in the preceding paragraph, the recurrent area of concern involves activities in which the students have to produce their L2, either in written or oral form. In the next paragraph, items that were rated 3 or above are discussed.

Two items received a rating of 3.0. They were item 50, "I'm sure I can find books and other materials to study French outside the classroom" and item 80, "I strongly believe that, given enough time, I can achieve near-native fluency in French". The response to item 50 should be interpreted with mixed feelings. Whereas one should feel glad that students know how or where to find extra materials on their own, the sad reality is that few of these students actually looked for and obtained those materials to study and practice their L2 outside the classroom. The great majority relied on the textbook and class notes. During the focus interview, only one mentioned having read a book other than the course textbook; only one downloaded and listened to French music; and only two watched TV in French.

Item 80 summarized the highest expectation that second and foreign language teachers can hold for their adult students, i.e., to achieve near native fluency. After all, expecting native fluency from adult second language learners might turn out to be an unrealistic and unachievable goal. With a rating of 3.0, the participants expressed their confidence in themselves to achieve that highest goal.

Two items received the highest overall rating of 3.4. They were item 75, "I'm sure I can learn more French than I know now", and item 77, "I'm sure I can ask help from my instructor and classmates." Students felt that they could improve their knowledge and they knew that they could obtain assistance from the instructor and their classmates. This behavior of seeking assistance was witnessed by the investigator during class observations; however, participants mentioned the difficulty involved with cooperating with classmates outside of the classroom due to scheduling problems. Four of them had tried to meet and study together, but eventually settled for phone study sessions. When asked how they completed group work that the instructor

often assigned, four students replied that they usually tried to do it during the weekend. If it was difficult or impossible to meet (because of different schedules and distance to travel), they met quickly after class and most of the group assignment was completed by phone or through email.

These students in general seemed to have quite a healthy dose of self-efficacy, except in activities that involve speaking. This sentiment was also expressed by their instructor, saying that they tended to shy away from speaking. Despite their anxiety about oral communication situations, they believed that their knowledge of the French language will grow. They also strongly believed that they were good language learners and attributed their difficulties to factors external to them, such as lack of time, or difficulty of the language. The relationship between their self-efficacy feelings and their language ability is discussed in the next section.

Question 3: What Is the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Language Ability?

This question was answered with a correlation computed from students' self-efficacy ratings and scores they obtained on the cloze test. A statistically significant and positive relationship was found between these participants' self-efficacy and their language ability ($r=.83$, N=35, $p<.05$), thus suggesting a link between these two variables. From this correlation, one can conclude that second and foreign language learners who experience high levels of self-efficacy also achieve high levels of language proficiency in their target language.

This finding goes along the same lines as those of prior investigations, such as Huang, & Shanmao (1996), Anstrom (2000), Templin, Guile and Okuma (2001), that found a link between self-efficacy levels and other aspects of human action or

achievement. According to Bandura (1997b), people with high self-efficacy have high aspirations, set challenging goals for themselves, and commit themselves to achieving them. They visualize successful results and do not dwell on personal deficiencies or on what might go wrong. They also have stronger motivation because they believe they can attain their goals or adjust them based on their progress. At the affective level, efficacy beliefs regulate emotional states. People who lack self-efficacy are likely to magnify risks or threats, whereas those who have high self-efficacy know they can manage difficulties. The latter group lowers their anxiety and stress by acting on the stressful environment, while the former do not. Given these assertions and the self-efficacy levels of the study participants, one may wonder about their motivation for undertaking the study of the French language.

Participants' motivation for studying French: Did the participants undertake the study of the French language because of instrumental or integrative reasons? From the data gathered from their replies to the question "What will you use the French you will have learned for?", it was clear that the majority of participants did not have a clear or specific idea of the ways in which their second language might be useful in their future, as one can notice from Table 7. They listed the classic reasons for learning a second language, such as speaking it with other people who know it, communicating, and traveling (61 % of reasons listed by the participants).

Eight participants clearly stated that they could not see any way in which they would use French in the future. Four expressed some instrumental reasons, and the same number listed integrative reasons. However, during the focus group interview and with the investigator's probing, the majority of students confessed that they had enrolled in French courses because it was a graduation requirement of their programs;

had it not been the case, they would never have been in a foreign language course in college.

This sentiment echoes the one that students of Spanish at Northern Arizona University had shared with the investigator during a class project (Ndacasaba, 1999, unpublished research). In addition to studying a foreign language just to fulfill programmatic requirements, some students had to select French because the language they preferred was unavailable. In fact, these students had wished to study Spanish but were unable to enroll because all the sections were full and no overrides were being provided. Perhaps the group that had wished to study Spanish did so because this language is "less foreign" than French in the Chicago area, and students can easily find opportunities to practice and use it outside the classroom and later in their daily lives.

The preceding paragraph presented a detailed discussion of the interrelationships that were found among language learning strategies, self-efficacy and language ability. Possible explanations for the strengths of the correlations were offered together with considerations of the participants' strategic behavior, self-efficacy feelings, language ability, and motivation. In the following section, the conclusions of the study are listed.

Conclusions

Three conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this study. First, this study found a statistically significant positive relationship between language learning strategy use and language ability among the study participants. Therefore, one can conclude that there is a significantly positive relationship between language learning

strategy use and language ability among foreign language learners. The use of language learning strategies is linked to language proficiency level in a foreign language environment.

Second, the study found a statistically significant positive relationship between strategy use and self-efficacy among the thirty-seven participants. Therefore, one can conclude that the use of language learning strategies is linked to self-efficacy levels among foreign language learners. Foreign language learners who use strategies feel efficacious at learning their target language.

Third, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between self-efficacy and language ability for the thirty-seven study participants. Therefore, one can conclude that there is a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and language ability among students of foreign languages. Students who feel efficacious at learning a foreign language also achieve at least a satisfactory level of proficiency in the target language.

Recommendations

This section will be subdivided in two main parts. The first part deals with recommendations for practical applications of the study. In the second part, recommendations for future related research are suggested.

Recommendations for Practical Applications of the Study Results

This part is further subdivided into three subsections: recommendations for foreign language students, recommendations for foreign language instructors, and recommendations for institutions and foreign language programs.

Recommendations for Foreign Language Students

Students ought to take a more active role in their foreign language learning, rather than rely solely on the instructor. They may start by searching around and collecting resources that can be used for learning and practicing pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and other language aspects. A rich and easily accessible place to find such materials would be the university and community libraries in the Chicago area. These institutions often are connected in a vast network of interlibrary loan, a system that allows patrons to borrow materials from libraries in other locations, and pick them up at their own libraries. Materials available in these libraries include books, audiotapes, and movies (in French) targeted to French learners or speakers at different levels of proficiency. In addition to using these materials, students could take advantage of possible human contacts available both on campus and off campus.

There are foreign students on campus as well as expatriate professors who come from French-speaking countries. These individuals can provide conversation practice or even tutor French learners. Off campus, the City of Chicago houses some French-speaking consulates. Visitors are welcome and entrance is free. Activities such as these allow the learner to participate in out-of-class events where L2 is spoken. In addition to learning or practicing the foreign language, students also have the opportunity to learn about the culture of their foreign language. Learners greatly benefit from purposefully putting themselves in situations where L2 is spoken (Wenden, 1991; Rubin & Thompson, 1994).

These human contacts would result in the added benefit of potentially reducing the students' anxiety, by providing them with an opportunity to try out and practice what they know, and with models to imitate. Evidently conversing to or with

a very proficient speaker can be intimidating, but it is a very efficient way to learn a language. One of the participants shared her successful experience with learning languages. For this particular student, French was the fourth language she was learning. She stated:

> In addition to my native language, I also had to learn English and another language I learned because I was interacting on a daily basis with people who speak it. I tried to force myself to speak so I could learn faster and communicate with those people. To learn a language, you have to speak it. There is no other way. Spending time with other speakers of the language, trying to speak and not being afraid of making mistakes.

A language is naturally spoken and heard; writing and reading are products of human invention. If the learners feel nervous or too intimidated to speak to highly proficient speakers, they could try and speak to other students of French on campus, as well as cooperate through study groups and conversation partnerships. In response to this suggestion, the participants of this study might reply that they have no time.

It is not certain whether time is the most important barrier to these students' greater engagement and autonomy in their language learning; after all, they were taking other courses. One might be inclined to believe that the lack of a rationale for their foreign language study has led them to exert the minimum amount of effort. The majority of these students were enrolled in the course to fulfill graduation requirements of their programs of study. They could not identify many uses of their L2 in their future lives. A passing grade, rather than high proficiency, could be

satisfactory for most of these learners. Instructors could help them identify ways in which their foreign languages can be of practical use in their future lives.

Recommendations for Foreign Language Instructors

Given the statistically significant positive relationship found between the use of language learning strategies and language ability, students need to be trained in the use of strategies. It was a surprise to see how low they rated item number 28, "I keep track of my feelings in a language learning diary". They are required by their instructor to keep a diary, and one would expect them to write down their feelings. Since they do not read for pleasure, literature at their reading level should be brought and loaned to them. Participation or attendance in an out-of-class event should be a requirement, following the example of departments where students have to complete a certain number of hours of field experience and write reports or make class presentations about what they observed and learned. Foreign language learners need time during class to share their experiences and problems they face as well as solutions (strategies).

Since students seemed to attach little or no importance of their L2 to their future lives, the instructor could solve this problem by holding regular discussions about the usefulness of knowing languages other than one's mother tongue in today's world. Companies that search for employees are likely to hire someone who can accomplish a task in two languages instead of one, especially in today's culturally diverse world. In several fields, there is a growing need for staff proficient in other languages. Knowing a foreign language used to be a necessity for tourists and foreign embassy workers only; today, it has reached the confines of everyday life.

Healthcare workers continuously face the difficult task of communicating with patients who speak languages other than English. Certain pharmacies can now print medicine labels and instructions in other languages if the customer requests it. Financial institutions and real estate agencies post signs in their windows listing the languages in which they can render services. Law enforcement officers have to interact with individuals who do not speak English, and so does the court system, so much so that the need for police officers and lawyers proficient in other languages grows constantly. Likewise, the court system needs interpreters and translators. During elections, the ballot is printed in five languages in the Chicago area. Foreign language skills should not be underestimated in the construction, manufacturing, hotel and restaurant, and retail businesses either. Who are the employees and the customers?

Perhaps the need for individuals proficient in other languages is not as severe anywhere else as it is in education. One needs only to glance at the "Help wanted" section of the local newspaper to understand the extent of this problem. One job announcement in the Chicago Tribune reads: "School District U-46 is the second largest district in Illinois, serving over 40,000 students in all grade levels from 11 communities in Chicago's northwest suburbs. We are seeking qualified individuals to fill the following vacancies for the 2006-2007 school year. Teachers: Bilingual diagnostician, bilingual elementary education, bilingual special education, bilingual early childhood." Another school advertised for an ELL (English Language Learners) teacher who could speak Arabic. An announcement from the Illinois School Board of Education advertised for a consultant for its bilingual education division, and one of the required qualifications was proficiency in Polish. With increasing immigration, it

is highly likely that individuals with proficiency in other languages will also be needed. The very popular website craigslist.com list advertisements for teachers and tutors of French, Spanish, Russian, German, and other languages. Holding short class discussions and bringing to class ads such as these could show to the students that their L2 skills can be used locally, nationally, or internationally. In this way, the instructor can potentially improve their motivation, engagement, and autonomy.

Chan (2002) sought to understand how motivation and autonomy influence each other and which one is the product of the other. Her study participants were Hong Kong university students of English. She examined their views of what they thought to be their responsibilities in English learning and what they thought were the responsibilities of their teachers. The study also assessed the students' confidence in their ability to learn autonomously and their level of motivation to learn English. Their actual practices of autonomous learning both inside and outside the classroom were also studied. The results showed that motivation was a key condition for students to engage in autonomous learning; it influenced the extent to which these English learners felt ready to learn autonomously. This finding suggests that language teachers ought to increase the students' motivation before expecting them to become autonomous learners.

Studies about motivation are difficult to generalize because students vary in many ways, and so do their language learning contexts. One hypothesis that can be easily generalized is that learners who are motivated work harder and achieve more than those who are not. The implication for the classroom teacher is to find strategies to motivate the language learners. Dornyëi (2001) argues that the best means to motivate language learners is to improve the quality of teaching.

He summarizes motivational teaching practices in four main strategies. First, teachers should create the basic motivational conditions by displaying appropriate teacher behaviors, by creating a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom, by creating and maintaining cohesion, and by fostering a spirit of cooperation among students. After the basic motivational conditions have been set, the teacher can generate initial motivation by enhancing the learners' values and attitudes towards L2; by increasing the learners' expectancy and chances of success as well as their goal-orientedness; by making the teaching material relevant to the learners; and creating realistic learner beliefs.

Once motivation has been generated, it is necessary to maintain it, which is the second strategy. Teachers can maintain motivation by making learning stimulating and enjoyable, by introducing learning tasks in a motivating way, by setting specific, realistic and attainable goals for the learners, which will in turn protect and increase their self-efficacy, by creating and encouraging learner autonomy, and by establishing cooperation among the students and allowing them to maintain a positive social image. Finally, the second language teacher ought to encourage positive retrospective self-evaluation by promoting motivational attributions, providing motivational feedback, increasing learner satisfaction and offering rewards and awarding grades in a motivating manner. Attributional feedback sends the message to learners that a certain outcome was achieved thanks to their hard work or ability; it is an effective way of raising their self-efficacy.

These four points constitute the cornerstones of Dornyëi's motivational teaching practice in a second language classroom. In order to be able to accomplish all of these conditions and the strategies they imply, the teacher will need to be

pleasant, flexible, well organized, hard working, and caring about the students'

progress and success.

In order to work successfully with language learners, especially older learners,

it would be helpful for teachers to go through what Dubin and Olshtain (1986) call a

"fact-finding stage" during which they study the language setting. Is the L2 to be

learned in a foreign language or a second language setting? Or at what point on the

second language–foreign language continuum is the setting? What are the patterns of

L2 use in that society? What role does L2 play in that environment, in the learner's

education and in the labor market? It is also useful for the teacher to know the group

and individual attitudes towards L2 and the reasons why the students are learning it.

In some cases, the students have made a deliberate choice to study that language. In

other cases, it has been imposed on them by their educational system. These factors

can influence the learner's motivational level.

After the fact-finding stage is completed, teachers establish realistic learning

goals and decide on the organization of learning experiences. Goals that seem too

ambitious and challenging might discourage the students and reduce their self-

efficacy. They also identify teaching materials. In order to increase student

motivation, it is important that the teachers design learning experiences and use

teaching materials that involve the student as much as possible. Original and authentic

materials will motivate the students more and increase their curiosity, especially in

foreign language settings where contact with the L2 culture might be nonexistent.

Such materials can be audio and visual tapes, pictures, books, items of clothing,

newspapers, restaurant menus, foreign currency and other items, as well as guest

speakers who are L2 native speakers. The World Wide Web provides numerous

opportunities to virtually visit foreign lands, to practice pronunciation and grammar, and to learn about L2 culture.

In some foreign language environments, there exists an American Cultural Center, or a French Cultural Center. Alliance Française is well established even in African and Asian countries. These centers can serve as resources for the teacher of English or French as a foreign language. Dubin and Olshtain (1986) discuss the role of second language teachers in this age of communicative language learning. Their role is to teach the target language, but also to be a facilitator, and to be available to provide assistance and resources beyond the classroom. Availability of the teacher to help, and to listen attentively to all students, was identified by Dornyëi (2001) as one of the characteristics of teachers who are effective at motivating language learners.

For the learner to be motivated, he cannot be passive. He has to be actively engaged in the learning process where he is allowed to experiment without fear of making mistakes and in which he has opportunities to interact with classmates through pair or group work. Teaching methods that favor communicative activities give the students the opportunity to negotiate meaning with their peers and to reach unpredictable, nonformulaic outcomes. While they negotiate meaning, they are using strategies, noticing which ones work, and which ones fail to work. The more relevant these activities are to the learners' world and experience, the more engaged the students are likely to be. These activities can be either context-embedded or context-reduced, or somewhere between the two extremes, depending on the students' proficiency level and their cognitive ability.

While selecting materials for foreign language instruction, today's instructors need to search beyond the basic textbook and workbook and to look for packages that

include audio and video tapes, CDs, DVDs, dictionaries, and websites. Technology offers so many possibilities that often go untapped; if students can listen to music in their cars on audio tapes or CDs, or if they can download music onto their MP3s, they can also listen to a CD of foreign language material. The participants of this study come from disadvantaged backgrounds where computers or the internet may not be readily available. It is highly possible that they possess CD players. If technology is not available in their homes, the campus houses several computer rooms with state-of-the-art equipment.

During her presentation on *Educating the Net Generation* at Northern Arizona University, Oblinger (2006) addressed the issue of technology in these words: "But technology isn't the real story. It is what they are doing with it…..The context of the world we live in has shifted. Implications are that we do things differently" for these time-constrained learners. Instructors can either bring technology to the classroom, or assign students tasks they must complete using technology.

Recommendations for Foreign Language Programs and Institutions of Higher Education

Several participants of this study reported that they had planned to study Spanish, but when they went to register, they were told that all of the sections of Spanish had reached their maximum capacity and no overrides were being provided. Therefore, they registered in their first French course. Others mentioned that French was the only foreign language that met their schedule. Obviously, room and schedule are not valid reasons to select a course. It seems necessary for foreign language programs and institutions of higher learning to accommodate students' learning needs

by opening several sections of the same course and providing instructors (even adjunct) to teach those courses.

Many participants also reported not being able to see any use of the French they were learning in their future lives. Language study ought to be more contemporary and more goal or career-oriented. Universities and departments should modify their curricula to recognize the importance of bilingual individuals in several industries and then offer courses that can serve the students in their future careers. Most language professionals are familiar with the acronym ESP (English for Special Purposes); it is time for FLSP [Foreign Language for Special Purposes (acronym created by researcher)] where students would learn, for example, accounting in French, French for engineering, French or Spanish for pharmacists, business French, French or Spanish for healthcare workers or law enforcement workers, hotel and restaurant management, and many more. Chicago State University has already taken a step in that direction with its Business French course, but more could be done. The selection and implementation of such courses would be dictated by the location of the university, the needs of the students, and the needs of the community.

There are hundreds of thousands of foreign students on U.S. campuses. These students should serve as resources and bring their languages and cultures into U.S. foreign language classrooms. A system could be set up so that they assist instructors in the capacity of conversation and group work leaders, or tutors. The language learners would have the opportunity to hear a native speaker (other than the instructor if s/he is one) on a regular basis; they would have someone else to imitate, someone who is less of an authority figure to whom they can ask questions in a less threatening environment. In addition, the presence of this person would possibly reduce the

anxiety and nervousness felt by students. This arrangement could be beneficial, especially in large, beginner courses.

These recommendations, though not exhaustive, are intended to improve the quality of the foreign language learning environment, to make the task of learning a second language easier and more manageable, to provide more opportunities for students to learn their second language and its culture, to direct students towards more autonomy and independence, and to nourish the positive attitude these participants held about themselves and their ability to learn French. The ultimate outcome will no doubt mean better language ability. In addition to these recommendations for practice, a number of recommendations for future research surfaced.

Recommendations for Future Related Research

During the data analysis, four questions for future research emerged. First, several participants had been studying French for four to seven years. However, their scores on the cloze test were not any better than those of students who had been French students for just two years. Assuming that at one point they stopped their language study to pick it up some years later, one wonders how long the learner has to be away from the second language instruction for his proficiency level to plummet back to a lower or beginner level. In order to carry on such a study, one might recruit students exiting a foreign language program and administer them a foreign language proficiency test to determine their proficiency level. Subsequently, and at regular intervals, the researcher would administer the same test or its equivalent. Thus, he would be able to determine the proficiency level of the students after every testing

session. With such a longitudinal study, one would be able to follow and chart the language proficiency changes over a fairly long period of time.

Second, an experimental research study would provide strong evidence about the effect of strategy instruction and self-efficacy training on language ability. The experimental group would receive the treatment of strategy instruction and self-efficacy training at the same time that they are receiving similar second language instruction. At the end of a certain period of time, such as a semester, their respective second language ability would be compared.

Third, it would be enlightening to search for differences between the strategic behavior, self-efficacy levels, as well as the language ability of second language learners who have a specific purpose for learning a foreign language and those who do not have one.

Fourth, a qualitative investigation ought to be undertaken to take a closer look at the students' documents, especially their note books and journals. Analysis of these documents would provide more insights in the strategic behavior of foreign language learners and help elucidate the problems they face, their fears, anxiety, as well as the steps they take to solve those problems.

Finally, in this study, data were collected from a sample composed of students who were predominantly African American. Replicating this study and stratifying the sample to include larger numbers of whites and Hispanics would result in more generalizable findings. To include numbers of students equally representing language learners from different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, a different site or university would have to be selected.

Implications of the Study

This study has shown the existence of statistically significant positive

relationships among language learning strategies, self-efficacy, and language ability.

It has added to the growing body of research concerning links among the three

constructs at the center of this study (Huang & Shanmao, 1996; Cohen, Weaver & Li,

1996; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 1996; Templin, 1999; Anstrom,

2000; Jackson, 2002). These links entail certain dispositions, knowledge, attitudes and

behaviors that could improve the participants' linguistic ability, as well as that of

other foreign language students.

The goal of every second language instruction is to develop the learner's

communicative competence. This endeavor can be challenging; however, planning,

being actively engaged in the learning process, monitoring one's progress and

emotional temperature, can make the task more manageable and enjoyable. The extent

to which a language learner uses language learning strategies can ultimately

determine the level of his success.

Advice for Future Students

The participants of this study were aware of the importance of practicing one's

second language through communicative activities with other speakers of the

language. One student, who already knew three languages before starting the study of

French, offered this advice: "To learn a language, you have to speak it. There is no

other way. Spending time with other speakers of the language, trying to speak and not

being afraid of making mistakes."

The participants also discussed the fear of making mistakes, especially during

speaking activities. But they also recognized the importance of trying to overcome

one's nervousness and fears. One student noted that "you have to encourage yourself and not think about how wrong you are going to sound. I'm not saying that you will be 100% comfortable, but if the nervousness is so much that it prevents you from even trying, then it's too much".

The participants knew that language learning takes practice and independent work outside the classroom. They admitted that they were not practicing their French outside of the classroom as much as needed. They explained that they had little time and too many responsibilities. One young man shared that he often studied on the bus, the train, during his break at work or whenever he could have a few minutes to himself.

Finally, the participants strongly believed that they had what it takes to master their second language. They attributed the difficulties they encountered to their status of second language students. They also knew that high proficiency takes time to achieve. One student stated: "I encourage myself by reminding myself that I am still a learner". Another one added: "I know I won't become highly proficient overnight".

Advice for Future Instructors

The participants' instructor knew that students were not using to the full extent the resources available on campus and in the community. Therefore, she brought some of those resources to class. In fact, she invited French speaking colleagues, friends, and community members to visit her classes and interact with the students in French. During the class observations, the researcher was asked to join students during group work and help as a conversation leader.

In addition to proficient speakers, she also brought video tapes that students watched to listen to native speakers' way of speaking and to learn about the culture of

the L2. She also assigned independent work which required students to search for and use resources such as the Wide World Web. Students were also asked to work in groups inside and outside the classroom so that they could assist and learn from each other.

The instructor also had motivational techniques that she used to engage students in the learning process and to increase their sense of efficacy. She encouraged students to participate during class, praised them for contributing an answer, and even offered extra credit to students who accomplished work beyond the basic requirements of the class. Extra credit points could be earned by attending an event connected to the French language and culture, doing research on a topic related to French and reporting to the class, or doing some of the several writing activities from the class textbook and work book.

Finally, knowing how nervous students were about learning a foreign language, the instructor made them comfortable and reduced their affective filter by making sure they had understood a topic before moving to the next one, conducted lessons in an interesting way, using authentic materials that she had collected from her several trips to France, and being available to offer assistance to students.

This study has shown the importance of using language learning strategies and having a healthy dose of self-efficacy by believing in one's capability to accomplish learning tasks in a satisfactory manner. Training students to use strategies and raising their self-efficacy levels could significantly help students and teachers attain their ultimate goal of communicative competence, given the statistically significant positive correlations among strategy use, self-efficacy beliefs and language ability. In brief, increasing students' use of strategies could possibly result in a double

outcome, raising their self-efficacy and their language ability. Improving their self-efficacy would have the effect of boosting their ability even further. Mind set definitely matters.

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APPENDIX A: IRB DOCUMENTS

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE
PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

To: Olive Ndacasaba

From: Melanie Birck, IRB Administrator

Date: 02/28/05

Subject: Human Subjects Review

Project: 05.0217, The Relationships among Strategy Use, Self-efficacy and

          Language Ability in Foreign Language Learners

Approval Expiration: February 23, 2006

The Institutional Review Board of Northern Arizona University has reviewed and approved the involvement of humans as research subjects in your proposed project This approval; requires that informed consent be obtained from all persons prior to their involvement in the study by the use of the enclosed stamped written consent form.

This approval expires on the above referenced date, unless suspended or terminated earlier by action of the IRB. At the end of the current year a report must be submitted to the IRB summarizing progress on the study during that period, I' you wish to continue the study beyond the expiration of this approval, an application for continuation of your study must be submitted to the IRB at least one month prior to the expiration date,

Any injury and/or unanticipated problem involving risks to the human research subjects not included in the written consent form must be reported, in writing, promptly to the IRB, This report should describe the event, evaluate its probable relationship to the experimental treatment received by the subject, and summarize the resulting outcome of the event,

Any proposed change in the protocol or in the written consent form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval before the proposed change can be implemented

PO Box **4130, Flagstaff,** AZ 86011-4130   (928) S23 4880   fax (928) 523-1075

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

College of Education
NAU Box 5774
(928)5232611

INFORMED CONSENT *DOCUMENT FOR ADULTS*

Project Title: The Relationships among Strategy Use, Self-Efficacy, and Language Ability in Foreign Language Learners.

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Northern Arizona University and Chicago State University. Both universities require that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project

The investigator will explain to you in detail: (a) the purpose of the project, (b) the procedures or protocols to be used, (c) how your personal information will be kept confidential, and (d) the potential benefits and possible risks of participation.

You may ask her any questions you have to help you understand the project, A basic explanation of the project is written below. The investigator will also be available to answer questions and provide further information at the following phone numbers: (708) 799 9682 or (773) 995 2086; e-mail:
on3@nau.edu: and mailing address: Olive Ndacasaba, 18826 Queens' Rd, Homewood, IL 60430. She will also be available to meet with you in person when she visits your French class or in another location of your choice. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have. Then, if you decide to participate in the project, please sign on the last page of this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you, A copy of this form will be given to you for you to keep,

Project Purpose and Description: This study will be carried out among French learners at Chicago State University. The purpose of this project is to investigate the existence of relations among the use of language learning strategies, self-efficacy feelings and language ability. The researcher will collect data from French learners through a survey, a focus group interview, an interview with the French instructor, one French test in which the participants will be asked to fill in blanks (also called cloze test), and 3 class observations that will be conducted by the researcher.

2. Explanation of Procedures or Protocols: Participants will fill out an 80-item survey by circling one number, participate in a focus group interview, and take a cloze test with 60 blanks. The instructor will also be interviewed by the researcher. Both interviews will be audiotaped. In addition, the researcher will conduct 3 class observations without playing any role in the classroom other than observing and taking notes.

3. Confidentiality; Participants' names or other identifying information will not be disclosed at any time during the study. In addition, all collected data will be kept in a locked cabinet which will be accessible to the principal investigator only. Audiotapes will also be kept in a locked cabinet accessible to the principal investigator only. At the end of the research project, these audiotapes will be destroyed by cutting them up in pieces.

4. Benefits: This study will add to the body of existing knowledge of the processes involved in foreign language learning, especially concerning the existence of relationships among language learning strategies, self-efficacy, and language ability. St might also incite the participants to closely examine the ways in which they approach their French learning experience in a foreign language environment. It is hoped that the study will incite She participants to express their true feelings about the steps they take to be in charge of their own learning and possibly become aware of others that they may not have known. On a more personal level, the participants might experience a sense of pride and pleasure from the knowledge that they were able to help another student progress in her educational enterprise.

5. Risks; The risks of participation in this project are minimal, similar to those experienced in every day life. The main apparent concern is time since participants are likely to have family and work obligations in addition to being college students. Filling out the survey, participating in the focused group interview, and taking the cloze test will take time away from the participants' regular activities and obligations.

6. Refusal/Withdrawal:

(a) Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any present or future services or benefits that I may be entitled to from the University.

(b) Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty,

(c) I understand that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure.

- _____   Date _____

Signature of Participant

- _____ Printed Name

Date

Signature of Research Representative
*   Printed Name Olive
Ndacasaba

There is a dated approval stamp on this consent form (below). The stamp indicates that this project has been reviewed and approved by the Northern Arizona University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. Contact the Human Research Protections Administrator at 928-523-4340 if you have any questions about: (1) the conduct of the project, or (2) your rights as a research participant, or (3) a research-related injury. Any other questions about the conduct of this research project should be directed to:

Principal investigator(s): Olive Ndacasaba
University or Business Address; Chicago State University, Educational
Leadership Curriculum and Foundations, 9501 S. King Drive/ED 319, Business
Phone/ (773) 995 2086 or (708) 799 9682

E-mail: on3@nau.edu

Name of Faculty Sponsor/Institute Supervisor/Other Supervisor: Dr. Jon Reyhner Phone/ E-mail (928) 523 0580 / Jon.Reyhner@nau,edu

Sponsoring Department/Institute/Organization:
   College of Education, Curriculum and Instruction

NORTHERN **ARIZONA
UNIVERSITY** INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW
BOARD

FEB 2 3 2006

CONSENT FORM APPROVAL
VALID UNTIL

CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

9501 S. King Drive / SCI 116A
Chicago, Illinois 60628-1598
TEL 773.995.2192 °'
773.995.2485

June 13, 2005

Ms. Olive Ndacasaba
Northern Arizona University (School of Education)
Box 5774
Flagstaff, AZ. 86011

Dear Ms. Ndacasaba,

Thank you for submitting your revised research protocol titled, "The Relationships Among Strategy Use, Self-Efficacy, and Language Ability in Foreign Language Learners." Your submission dated May 17, 2005 requested that your proposal be reviewed on an *"exempt"* or *"expedited"* basis. Because there is only minimal risk involved, the protocol was reviewed on an expedited basis. On behalf of the CSU IRB, I want to thank you for proposing such important work and for continued success in your chosen area of research.

Dr. Lindsey and I have reviewed your protocol and are pleased to inform you that the proposed study has been **approved.** This approval expires 365 days after the date of this notification and should be accompanied by a copy of the final report of the study when complete and a two-page summary of the findings. Please report any adverse effects or changes to the original protocol to the CSU IRB immediately.

Best wishes for the success of your work.

Sincerely,

Rachel Lindsey, Ph.D.
Chair, CSU IRB

Philip Cronce, Ph.D.
IRB Secretary

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: On a scale of 0 to 5, please rate yourself by circling the number that best represents the degree to which the corresponding statement applies to you.

	Never 0 ← → 5 Always					
1. I use new French words in sentences so I can remember them.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
2. I make mental pictures of new French words.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
3. I use flashcards to remember new French words.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
4. I review French lessons regularly.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
5. I say or write new words several times.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
6. I try to imitate the way French native speakers talk.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
7. I start conversations in French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
8. I watch French language TV shows or listen to French tapes on my own.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
9. I read for pleasure in French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
10. I write notes, letters or messages in French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
11. I read over a French passage quickly, then go back and read carefully.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
12. I look for similarities between French and English words.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5

13. If I can't find the right word to use in a conversation, I use gestures.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
14.I attend and participate in out-of-class events where French is spoken.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
15. I read in French without looking up every new word.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
16.I take notes in my French classes.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
17. I pay attention to my mistakes in French and use that information to help myself do better.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
18. I pay attention in class or when someone is speaking in French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
19.If I do not understand all the words I read or hear, I use clues from the context or situation.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
20. I plan my time so as to have enough time to study French outside of class.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
21. I look for people I can talk to in French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
22. I frequently use dictionaries and other reference material to learn French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
23.I ask my interlocutor to tell me the right word if I can not think of it in a conversation	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
24. I think about my progress in learning French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
25. I have clear plans for improving my French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
26. I try to relax when I feel nervous while using French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
27. I encourage myself to speak French when I'm afraid of making mistakes.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5

28. I keep track of my feelings in a language learning diary.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
29 I ask other French speakers to correct my mistakes.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
30. If I do not understand what someone is saying in French, I ask him or her to repeat or slow down.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
31. I practice French with other students.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
32. I try to understand the reasons for my language errors.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
33. I organize my French notes in special ways.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
34. I plan what I'm going to accomplish in my French learning each day or each week.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
35. I encourage myself to try hard and do my best if I feel nervous.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
36. I give myself a reward when I have done something well in my French learning.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
37.I ask other people to correct my pronunciation	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
38 .I look for patterns in the French language.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
39. When I'm talking with fluent French speakers, I let them know if I need help.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
40. I look for information about the French culture.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
41. I know I can read a text in French and answer questions about specific information.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
42. I'm sure I can figure out the meaning of words or phrases I don't understand in a French text.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
43. I'm sure I can read a novel in French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
44. After reading a text in French, I'm sure I can retell it in English.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
45. I know I can understand the gist of what I read in French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5

46. While listening to someone speak French, I'm sure figure out the main topic of what I hear.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
47. I'm sure I can I can also understand details.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
48. I'm sure I can retell in English what I heard in French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
49. I'm sure I can use information heard in French to accomplish a task in real life (e.g. hear a weather report and decide what to wear outside).	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
50. I'm sure that I can figure out the meaning of words or phrases I don't understand in French text.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
51. I'm confident I can communicate the major points of what I need to say in French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
52. I'm sure I can tell my interlocutor details and explanations if the listener asks for them.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
53. I'm sure I can tell if my listener understands what I'm saying in French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
54. If my listener doesn't understand what I'm saying in French, I'm sure I can find ways to solve such communication problems.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
55. I'm sure I can learn the meaning of most French words and expressions.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
56. I know I could accomplish a real life task in which I have to speak French (e.g.; if I become sick in France, I will be able to describe my symptoms to a doctor).	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
57. I'm sure can understand a text in which some words are new to me.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
58. I'm sure I can correctly spell most words.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5

59. I know I can write complete and correct sentences.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
60. I'm sure I can correctly use each French word in a sentence after learning it.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
61. I know I can write essays or longer texts in French on a familiar topic	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
62. I'm sure I am able to hear or read sentences with words I have learned and understand the meaning of these sentences.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
63. I know I'm able to remember the meaning of each word a month later.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
64. I'm sure I can use or understand new French words in real life settings.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
65. I feel confident that I can master the French language.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
66. I'm sure I can correctly pronounce words that I have already learnt.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
67. I'm sure I can correctly pronounce words I see for the first time.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
68. I'm sure I can conjugate most verbs in French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
69. I know I can master French grammar	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
70. I am able to motivate myself to practice French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
71. I am confident about my ability to interact with other French speakers.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
72. I know I'm able to actively participate in my French classes.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
73. I'm sure I can use French outside the classroom.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
74. I'm sure I can develop more vocabulary.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
75. I'm sure I can learn more French than I know now.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5

76. I'm sure I know what to do if I have a negative feeling during my French learning experience.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
78. I'm confident in my ability to use a French text to accomplish a task in real life (for example find a location by reading French directions).	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
79. I believe I am a good language learner.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5
80. I strongly believe that, given enough time, I can achieve at least near-native fluency in French.	Never 0	1	2	3	4	Always 5

How long have you been studying French in school, including elementary, high school and college? _____ years.

Gender: _____F   _____M   Age: _____

Racial background (check one):   __African-American   __White
                                      __ Hispanic   __ Asian
                                      __Native American   __Other

What will you use the French you will have learned for?

Any comments about your French learning experience?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY.

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Please tell me the difficulties you often encounter in your French learning experience? How do you solve those difficulties?
2. What opportunities do you have to use French outside the classroom?
3. What opportunities do you have to interact with more fluent or native French speakers (other than your university French instructors)?
4. Where do you find French material to read or listen to?
5. What French books have you read (other than textbooks)?
6. You are reading a text in French and you come to a word the meaning of which you do not know. What do you do?
7. What do you do to help yourself learn the meaning of new words?
8. You are speaking French in the class or outside, and you just can't think of the right word to say. What do you do then?
9. If you need assistance while studying, doing an assignment or performing any another learning task, who do you get it from?
10. In what ways do you work together with other students of French, inside or outside the classroom?
11. What do you do if someone says something in French and you have difficulty understanding what s/he is saying?
12. Please tell me how you organize your time in order to study.
13. How do you organize your notes?
14. Please tell me how you feel when you have successfully accomplished a hard task.
15. How do you learn French pronunciation?
16. How do you deal with nervousness, anxiety or negative feelings that you may experience during your French learning experience?
17. Do you have any plans to improve your knowledge of French? If yes, which ones?
18. Do you consider French to be a difficult or an easy language to learn? Please explain.
19. Do you feel that you have what it takes to master this language?
20. What language skills do you feel less comfortable with?
21. How about French grammar?
22. Do you feel that you could travel to Paris on your own and communicate efficiently with French people?
23. How do you view yourself as a language leaner?

Thank you very much for your cooperation

APPENDIX D: CLASS OBSERVATION RUBRIC

The researcher will look for evidence that students use language learning strategies in regard to the following language skills and aspects.

Language Skills and Aspects	Observed	Not Observed	Researcher Notes
Listening			
Speaking			
Reading			
Writing			
Vocabulary			
Grammar			
Note Taking			
Use of Resources			
Cooperation			
Emotions			
Other			

APPENDIX E: CLOZE TEST

Last four digits of your ID #: _____

Please fill in the blanks with words from the word bank.

appelle	cherchons	parler	téléphone	vous	étoiles	américaine	poste
ordinateur	travaillé	réceptionniste	dans	avez	aime	beaucoup	

Judith, une étudiante américaine, passe un trimestre à l'université en France. Elle veut

trouver un emploi cet été pour s'acheter des choses. Elle consulte les pages "Offres

d'emploi" dans Nice-Matin. Elle trouve une annonce intéressante. Elle téléphone:

Judith: Bonjour, Madame. Je m'_____ Judith Montgomery. Puis-

je_____ au chef du personnel? Je _____ pour l'annonce

concernant le _____ de réceptionniste parue dans Nice-Matin

d'aujourd'hui.

La dame: A votre accent, je devine que _____ n'êtes pas française!

Judith: Non, je suis _____, j'étudie dans le programme Monfort depuis deux

mois à la Faculté des Lettres.

La dame: _____-vous travaillé avant?

Judith: Oui, j'ai _____ six mois aux Etats-Unis comme standardiste-

_____ dans une auberge de jeunesse.

La dame: _____ une auberge de jeunesse! Mais nous _____ un

réceptionniste pour un hôtel quatre _____!

Judith: Je m'adapte facilement, j'_____ les choses nouvelles! Je parle

_____ de langues et je sais utiliser un _____.

(This is the same conversation that continues. The words you need to fill in the blanks on this page are in the box below).

de	Français	Acceptez	parle	travailler	je	Martineau	intéressant
examiner	plaisir	présenter	après-midi	bien	confiance	bonne	vous

La dame: Quelles langues parlez-_____?

Judith: Je _____ Anglais bien sûr, Allemand, _____, et un tout

petit peu italien.

La dame: En effet, vous êtes polyglotte! _____-vous des horaires flexibles et

de _____ le week-end?

Judith: Sans problème, _____ suis libre.

La dame: Bien, cela semble _____. Vous pouvez venir cet _____

à 14 heures 30 avec votre curriculum vitae pour un entretien d'embauche. Je vais

_____ plus sérieusement votre candidature.

Judith: Avec _____. Où est-ce que je dois me _____?

La dame: Venez au numéro 11, rue _____ la République. Démandez Mme

_____ à l'accueil.

Judith: Très _____, c'est noté. Merci pour votre _____, à tout à

l'heure et _____ journée.

(This is a different dialogue).

Je	appartement	des	trouver	type	grand	quartier
commencer	aider	cuisine	budget	ou	mille	

Alain est étudiant en histoire. Il vient d'arriver à Nice et il cherche un appartement près

de l'université. Il n'a pas beaucoup de temps, alors il va dans une agence immobilière.

Alain: Bonjour Madame.

La dame: Bonjour Monsieur, je peux vous _____?

Alain: Oui, je cherche un _____. Mes cours à l'université vont

_____ la semaine prochaine, je dois donc _____ quelque chose

rapidement.

La dame: Vous cherchez quel _____ d'appartement?

Alain: Je voudrais louer un _____ studio ou un appartement dans un

_____ calme mais à proximité de la faculté _____ Lettres

et des Commerces.

La dame: Vous préférez un vide _____ un meublé?

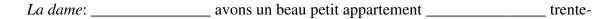*Alain*: Je préférerais un meublé avec une _____ equipée.

La dame: Vous avez un _____ précis?

Alain: _____ peux payer un loyer de deux _____ cinq cents

(2500) francs maximum.

(Dialogue from page 3 continues. The words you need for page 4 are in the box below)

francs	de	heures	région	laissé	sûr	quel	Nous
demande		chambre	Est-ce que	WC	pouvons		Il y a
son	pour						

La dame: _____ avons un beau petit appartement _____ trente-

cinq mètres carrés refait à neuf. _____ une cuisine équipée, une grande

_____ et une salle de bains avec _____ séparés. L'ancien

locataire a _____ son lave-linge et _____ four micro-ondes.

Alain: Et _____ est le prix à payer _____cette "merveille"?

La dame: Le propriétaire _____ deux mille trois cents _____ de

loyer mais il n'y a pas de charges. Nous demandons une caution de trois mois,

c'est courant dans cette _____.

Alain: _____ ce serait possible de le visiter?

La dame: Oui bien _____, on vient juste de terminer les travaux.

Nous _____ y aller demain après-midi. Appelez-moi dans la

matinée vers neuf _____ pour fixer notre rendez-vous.

 Alain: Merci Madame, à demain.

La dame: Bonne soirée Monsieur, à demain.

Merci beaucoup

APPENDIX F: INSTRUCTOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Please tell me the difficulties your students have encountered in their French learning experience.

2. What opportunities do they have to use French outside the classroom here in the Chicago area or beyond?

3. What opportunities do they have to interact with more fluent or native speakers?

4. What reading and listening material is available to them outside the classroom?

5. What strategies have you seen them using while they are listening and have difficulty understanding what is being said? How about while they are speaking? How about reading and writing?

6. How do they learn vocabulary? Please tell me what mnemonics and other steps they take to remember the meaning of new words.

7. How do they learn French pronunciation? How about grammar?

8. Do they seek assistance if they have difficulty completing learning tasks? If yes, where do they seek that assistance?

9. To what extent do they cooperate with each other to improve their knowledge of French?

10. How much notes do they take in class? Have you observed students organizing their notes in special ways?

11. Do they possess or have access to French reference material? If yes, which ones?

12. How do they deal with negative emotions, such as nervousness and anxiety, which often accompany foreign language learning?

13. What language skills or tasks do they feel less comfortable participating in?

14. To what extent do you believe that they could travel to a French speaking country and effectively interact with the local people?

15. What is their view of French? Do they consider it an easy or a difficult language to learn?

16. What would you say about your students' views of themselves as French learners?

Thank you so much for your cooperation.

APPENDIX G: ALPHA TEST

The Survey

The 80-item, 6-point Likert-scale questionnaire was tested on 15 college students enrolled in intermediate French or higher at an area university with student demographics similar to those of the sample. These fifteen students expressed dissatisfaction about the length of the survey (80 items and 5 open-ended questions, typed on 7 pages). However, after consultation with the expert judges, the researcher was advised by two of them to maintain the current length of the survey. Judge number 1 noted "If you reduce the number of items, you are likely to eliminate questions about some important aspects of language learning." And judge number 2 wrote: "This is a good way to measure strategic competence." Therefore, the survey was maintained at 80 items.

Three of the fifteen students noticed that item # 42 (I'm sure I can figure out the meaning of words or phrases I don't understand in a French text) was identical to item # 50. Therefore, item # 50 was changed to "I'm sure I can find books and materials to study French outside the classroom."

While filling out the survey, some of the fifteen students also corrected some structural mistakes and wrote comments that led to the alterations of some items. For instance, one student noticed that there was a word missing in item 46, which read "While listening to someone speak French, I'm sure figure out the main topic of what I hear." The student had written "to" in front of "figure" and this item was changed as "While listening to someone speak French, I'm sure I can figure out the main topic of what I hear."

After reading item 80, which was "I strongly believe that I can achieve at least near-native fluency in French", one student wrote "I don't have the necessary amount of time" and did not respond to the statement. Therefore, the phrase "given enough time" was added to the sentence and the new statement read: "I strongly believe that, given enough time, I can achieve at least near-native fluency in French."

The Cloze Test

The same 15 students who tested the survey also tested the cloze test. They were asked to work at a steady but comfortable speed, without rushing or taking too much time. They were also asked to write, at the end of the test, the number of minutes it had taken them to complete it. These numbers were averaged to determine the amount of time the participants would need to complete the cloze test, which was 28 minutes, later rounded to 30 minutes.

Focus Group Interview Protocol

Students who participated in the pilot study answered question 20 (What language skills do you feel less comfortable with?) the same way they had answered question 22 (Are there any language tasks or assignments you wish you did not have to do in French? Please explain.). Therefore, question 22 was eliminated.

APPENDIX H: BETA TEST

Survey

Judge number 3 thought that 80 items were too many for participants too answer but judges #1 and #2 disagreed with her. In fact, judge #2 wrote: "That is a good number of items to measure strategic competence and self-efficacy". Therefore, the number of items remained the same.

After the 80 items, a number of open-ended questions were asked to the students. One of them was "why are you learning French?" Judge # 2 felt that the question should be altered to elicit richer responses from the participants. She suggested "What will you use the French you will have learned for?" Thus, the last but one question was changed from "Why are you learning French?" to "What will you use the French you will have learned for?"

Judge # 1 noticed that there was no full stop at the end of item # 66, and one was added. The three judges also alerted the researcher to the wrong word order in item # 67. It read "I'm sure I correctly can pronounce words I see for the first time." The item was changed to "I'm sure I can correctly pronounce words I see for the first time."

Finally, item # 71 initially read "I am confident about my ability to interact with French native speakers." After reviewing it, judge # 3 commented that in a foreign language environment, language learners do not always find native speakers with whom to interact. Thus, it was altered to say "I am confident about my ability to interact with other French speakers."

Text for Cloze Test.

Several French texts were considered as possible bases for the cloze test. The first text was obtained from "Le Monde", a daily newspaper published in France. When that text was submitted to the expert judges, they expressed the concern that it was too difficult for intermediate learners and would be most appropriate for French native speakers. Judge # 3 also remarked that the text was emotionally charged and may cause uncomfortable reactions among some of the participants. That text was therefore abandoned, a second one selected and submitted to the judges. They thought that this new text was neutral and more appropriate than the first one. Students would relate to it better since it contained activities, such as searching for a part time job or an apartment, which many college students experience.

Judge # 1 made a suggestion concerning the appearance of the cloze test. The blanks were represented by ellipses of the same length. Judge #1 suggested replacing the ellipses by solid lines because the former could cause confusion especially when they appeared at the end of a sentence and were followed by a full stop. For example, *je sais utiliser un ………………* became *je sais utiliser un* _____.

Interview Protocol for Focus Group Interview

The first question of the focus group interview protocol originally read: "Please tell me the difficulties you encounter in your French learning experience? How have you solved those difficulties?" Judge # 2 preferred to insert the word "often" before "encounter" and to change the verb "solve" from the present perfect to the simple present. Thus, the wording of the first question became "Please tell me the difficulties

you often encounter in your French learning experience? How do you solve those difficulties?" She also suggested improving the third question by inserting the "French" between the words "native" and "speakers", and thus, question # 3 became "What opportunities do you have to interact with more fluent or native French speakers (other than your university French instructors)?"

Question 9 of the focus group interview protocol initially read: "If you need assistance with studying, an assignment, or another learning task, who do you get it from?" After suggestions from judge # 1, the final draft read "If you need assistance in French while studying, doing an assignment or performing any other learning task, who do you get it from?"

The tenth question initially read "In what ways do you work together with other students of French?" Judge # 2 thought that adding "inside or outside the classroom" would generate more responses. Thus, in the final draft, question 9 of the focus group interview protocol read "In what ways do you work together with other students of French inside or outside the classroom?"

Judge # 1 felt that the second part of item #21 (And French pronunciation) should be eliminated because she believed that students will surely have addressed it in item 20. Thus, "And French pronunciation" was erased and item 21 became: "How about French grammar?"

APPENDIX I: QUANTITATIVE DATA

Participant's number	Years of French study	Age	Gender	Race	Strategy use Scores	Self-efficacy scores	Cloze test scores
1	1.5	64	M	Afr.Am	2.88	2.93	59
2	5	22	F	Afr.Am	2.35	2.98	59
3	1	24	F	Afr.Am	2.00	1.60	40
4	4	23	F	Afr.Am	3.25	3.15	56.5
5	3	23	F	Afr.Am	2.38	2.25	45
6	2	18	F	Afr.Am	2.38	2.30	43
7	3	22	F	Afr.Am	2.85	2.40	52.5
8	1	21	M	White	1.85	1.78	43
9	4	20	F	Afr.Am	2.00	2.40	47
10	4	19	M	Afr.Am	0.85	1.78	41.5
11	2.5	20	F	Afr.Am	1.95	2.98	56
12	3	21	F	Afr.Am	1.40	1.73	43.5
13	5	24	F	White	2.45	2.70	52.5
14	3	29	F	Afr.Am	1.80	2.30	49
15	2	19	F	Afr.Am	2.33	2.58	50
16	3	24	M	Afr.Am	2.10	2.33	47
17	6	19	M	Afr.Am	2.18	2.45	50.5
18			M	Other	1.83	1.90	46
19	1	30	F	Afr.Am	2.30	2.90	53
20	6	24	F	Afr.Am	2.75	3.13	59
21	5	20	F	White	2.53	2.73	54.5
22		22	M	Hispanic	2.48	2.10	51.5
23	3	18	F	Other	2.35	2.90	51
24	5	22	M	Afr.Am	2.80	2.98	59
25	3	19	F	Afr.Am	1.85	2.53	44.5
26	7	19	F	White	1.48	3.13	60
27	4	22	F	Afr.Am	1.93	2.15	49
28	2.5	18	F	Afr.Am	0.73	1.98	
29	1	24	M	Afr.Am	1.98	2.10	51
30	1	41	M	Other	3.63	3.48	51.5
31	4	34	F	Afr.Am	2.73	2.45	47.5
32	1	23	M	Afr.Am	1.65	1.58	32.5
33	3	22	M	Afr.Am	2.23	1.43	43
34	1	30	F	Afr.Am	2.13	2.30	47.5
35	1	37	M	Afr.Am	1.88	1.53	
36	1	35	M	White	2.23	2.10	40.5
37	1	19	F	Afr.Am	1.43	1.20	38