

CHILDREN'S LEARNING STRATEGIES IN THE PRIMARY FL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

This paper begins with a revision of the learning strategy literature and highlights the overlapping which currently characterizes the field as regards issues considered criterial for their definition. The role of consciousness in learning strategy use is discussed and the terms process, strategy and technique are defined in the light of a classroom-based empirical study carried out with children aged between eight and ten. From verbal report data gathered individually and in groups, a classification scheme is presented of children's metacognitive, socio-affective and cognitive strategies and techniques.

RESUMEN

En este artículo se hace una revisión de la literatura sobre las estrategias de aprendizaje, destacando el alto grado de superposición en cuanto a las características que las definen. Analizamos el papel de la consciencia en el uso de estrategias y ofrecemos una definición de proceso, estrategia y técnica, basada en un estudio empírico llevado a cabo con niños de ocho a diez años en el marco formal de aula. Se incluye una clasificación detallada de estrategias y técnicas metacognitivas, socioafectivas y cognitivas, identificadas en los niños mediante el uso de entrevistas individuales y en grupo.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article est une révision de tout ce qui a été écrit jusqu'à présent à propos des stratégies d'apprentissage; il nous fait remarquer à quel point les caractéristiques qui définissent ces stratégies peuvent se superposer. Il analyse

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également le rôle de la conscience dans l'usage de stratégies et propose une définition de processus, de stratégies et de techniques, basée sur une étude empirique menée auprès d'enfants de 8 à 10 ans dans le cadre formel de la classe. Il offre aussi une classification détaillée de stratégies et de techniques métacognitives, socio-affectives et cognitives, détectées chez les enfants à travers des entretiens individuels et en groupe.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the profusion of rich and varied research on the role of Learning Strategies (LS) in second language acquisition (SLA), today, some twenty years on from the first attempts at exploring how learners go about the task of learning a second language, researchers are still struggling to agree upon a universally accepted definition for the concept of *strategy*. In 1991 Seliger complained that the indiscriminate use of the word *strategy* in SLA literature had brought us to a point of '*semantic satiation*' in which the term had become devoid of any real meaning (1991, p. 36). Less pessimistically, but in the same vein, Ellis (1994) referred to the concept of 'strategy' as '*fuzzy ... and not easy to tie down*' (1994, p. 529).

The confusion surrounding the definition of '*strategy*' arises from the research literature itself where the term has often been substituted for synonyms which have blurred the inherent meaning of the word by equating it with other similar concepts. Wenden (1987) has pointed out the multi-purpose use of the term to refer to all of the following: *techniques, tactics, potentially conscious plans, consciously employed operations, problem-solving procedures, etc.* (1987, p. 7). In fact a closer look at the definitions of Learning Strategies offered by different researchers indicates the high degree of overlapping and lack of precision in their choice of terminology. While for Naiman *et al.* (1978), Stern (1983), Schmeck (1988) and Seliger (1991) *strategies* are seen as general learning approaches, with the more specific learner actions receiving the name of *techniques* or *tactics*, Rubin (1981) refers to general cognitive *processes* and specific *strategies*. In her definition Wenden (1987) refers to language learning '*behaviours*' while O'Malley and Chamot (1990) speak about '*thoughts or behaviours*', leaving us in doubt as to whether strategies are to be considered as behavioural or mental or both. Finally Chesterfield and Chesterfield's (1985) definition reflects their concern with learner interaction while Oxford (1990) stresses the affective side of learning.

Unable, then, to agree upon one generally accepted definition of Learning Strategies, researchers have had to resort to listing what seem to be their main characteristics in an attempt to solve this conceptual problem (Wenden, 1987; Ellis, 1994). This has clarified very little, however, as the characteristics cited tend to be contradictory and vague. For example, Ellis (1994) states that '*Strategies refer to both general approaches and specific actions or techniques to learn an L2*' or that '*Some strategies are behavioural while others are mental. Thus some are directly observable while others are not*' (1994, p. 532). Wenden (1987) lists problematicity (potential), consciousness and the directness/indirectness of their effect on learning as among their defining characteristics. The persistence of such ambiguity around the construct of strategy is detrimental to the concerns of empirical research in the fields of second and foreign language development. Researchers have recognized the need to try to achieve some coherence across the field in terms of both the descriptive terminology and the conceptual characteristics inherent to the construct of *strategy* and while attempts in this direction have been made (Willing, 1989; Bialystok, 1990; Oxford and Cohen, 1992) as yet no consensus has been reached.

Given the diverging opinions of individual researchers on a series of important, yet conflictive, issues relating to the definition of Learning Strategies, it is vital that any discussion of strategies, in whatever context, should begin with an explicit statement of the position adopted with respect to these crucial conceptual and classificatory problems. The most serious points of contention in Language Learning Strategy research include:

1. The overlapping which occurs between terms such as process, strategy, tactic and technique.
2. The issue of consciousness as criterial to the definition of Learning Strategies.
3. The distinction between Learning, Production and Communication Strategies.

Each of these areas has important implications for the nature of our understanding of LS and the role they play in the language learning process.

Among the aims of the present study is that of proposing a framework for the classification of children's FL Learning Strategies which is both coherent and psychologically plausible. In order to do this it is essential to provide a clear set of criteria for categorizing and distin-

guishing between various types of strategies. To arrive at a comprehensive characterization of LS we will begin by reviewing current theoretical arguments on the issues highlighted above before going on to outline our own position on these matters.

2. LEARNING STRATEGIES: PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION

One of the most glaring problems in SLA research, then, has been the failure to make clear distinctions between the terms 'process', 'strategy' and 'tactic' or 'technique'. These labels have been used inconsistently by researchers to refer both to the *same* and to *different* mechanisms of language processing. The confusion over which behaviours are to be classified as learning strategies is indicative of the terminological and conceptual differences which characterize both theory and research in the Learning Strategy paradigm. These differences first emerged with the investigations of the 'Good Language Learner' in the late 1970's. This early work produced what initially appeared to be very different inventories of Learning Strategies (Rubin, 1981; Naiman *et al.*, 1978; Stern, 1983), but which on closer inspection were seen to comprise the same basic categories of behaviour which had been classified in different terms. Rubin's (1981) work describes general cognitive *processes* and their underlying *strategies*, while Naiman *et al.* (1978) and Stern (1983) refer to general *strategies* and specific, observable learner *techniques*. However, as Skehan (1989) has shown, and as we shall discuss later, the actual behaviours described are not that unlike. The principal differences between this early research lie essentially in the *terms* chosen to describe more general and specific levels of learner behaviour.

For other researchers (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990) *strategy* has been used as a general cover-term for different learner operations regardless of levels of generality/ specificity. Their approach has been to divide strategies into different categories or groups according to the type of behaviour they represent. Since O'Malley and Chamot (1990) are concerned primarily with strategies for *learning* the L2, they describe Metacognitive, Cognitive and Socio-affective strategies. Oxford (1990), however, aims to account for the whole repertoire of strategies available for *learning* and *using* language, and so presents a multi-levelled classification scheme of Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective and Social strategies. Oxford's taxonomy is interesting, though at times confusing, in this respect as it includes a wide range

of both general and specific thoughts and behaviours, all of which are termed *strategies*.

More recently, however, Oxford and Cohen (1992) have argued in favour of abandoning the a priori categorization of learning strategies into generic groups and have opted for a classification which differentiates between broad bands of *strategies* and their related *tactics*. Their distinction, based on the difference in military usage of the words strategy and tactic, leads them to define strategy as the '*long-range art of learning more easily and effectively by using major clusters of behaviours*', while tactic is used to refer to the '*short-term art of using specific behaviours or devices*' (1992, p. 4). This return to the separation of language processing behaviour on the general/specific dimension would seem, superficially at least, to coincide with the same distinction posed by Naiman *et al.* (1978) and Stern (1983). A more detailed analysis of their proposal, however, reveals that what has actually happened is that the concept of strategy has been raised to the level of what other researchers (for example Faerch and Kasper, 1980, 1983) have termed *process* (for example 'forming concepts and hypotheses'; 'testing hypotheses'; 'embedding new material in long-term memory'), and tactics to what has generally been thought of as *strategy* (for example 'inferencing'; asking for clarification/verification'; 'repetitive rehearsal', etc.).

In adopting this new emphasis on *tactics* to describe what in previous theory and research (including their own) had been referred to as strategy, Oxford and Cohen (1992) follow the precedent created by Seliger (1991) and Schmeck (1988). Both of these researchers have posited the need for a theoretical distinction between higher level, general approaches to learning and more specific learner activity, and both have coincided in the choice of the terms *strategy* and *tactic* to label these differences. Once again, however, we find that the actual behaviours described as strategies and tactics in their accounts are the counterparts of what to others are more accurately described as processes and strategies. Seliger (1991) for example talks about the *strategies* of 'hypothesis testing', 'simplification', and 'overgeneralization' while Schmeck (1988) cites those of 'conceptualizing', 'personalizing' and 'memorization', all of which have traditionally been thought of as more general cognitive operations.

This inconsistency in the use of the metalanguage involved in Learner Strategy research is symptomatic of the vagueness of the constructs themselves (Ellis, 1986). Researchers have called for theoretical accounts of Learning Strategies to attempt to disentangle the concepts inherent

to this area of SLA research (Bialystok, 1983; Oxford and Cohen, 1992) but there is still much to be resolved. A priority in any study of Learning Strategies, then, must be to provide explicit definitions of the way in which processes, strategies and tactics or techniques are conceptualized and understood in the research work. The position we advocate in the present study is that the description of children's strategies of Foreign Language Learning can be integrated within a theoretical framework for SLA based on cognitive accounts of language learning which describe language learning in terms of the acquisition of a complex skill, and highlight the learner's active role in the process.

3. PROCESS, STRATEGY AND TECHNIQUE IN CHILDREN'S FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

The cognitive paradigm for the explanation of SLA has emerged from information-processing models of learning and from developmental studies on the role of cognitive processes in learners, both of which have sought to explain the mechanisms by which the mind acquires and stores new information. In cognitive theory learners are said to *process* information and the thoughts involved in this activity are referred to as *mental processes* (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). One of the fundamental principles of cognitive theory holds that while all learners possess the same internal mechanisms for the manipulation of incoming information (sensorial register, short-term or working memory, long-term memory) variation in the storage capacity and functioning ability of these components exist across individuals. These differences are caused by the processes and strategies the learner activates, more or less effectively, while learning (Beltrán, 1993).

Although cognitive psychologists do not coincide in either the number or names they attribute to these processes, there is tacit agreement as to the importance of their role in human learning. Processes are said to act as mediators between instructional and informative input and the learner's output to the extent that the quality and quantity of any learning experience will be determined by the degree of active cognitive processing the learner engages in and the effective employment of appropriate strategies to enhance and develop these processes (Pérez, 1993, in Beltrán). It is in this sense that learning strategies are described as special ways of processing, storing, retrieving and using information (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990).

In the present study, our use of the term **process** coincides with the definitions prevalent in cognitive discussions of learning which refer to the processes by which individuals **comprehend, store and retain** and **use** information. In the same way, and following Willis (1989, p. 139), we understand **learning strategies** to refer to the '**goal-directed thoughts or actions used by the learner to transform language input into internally available resources for the comprehension, retention and use of the foreign language**'. However, given the context of our study –the learning of a FL in a classroom setting; the age of the subjects involved– children of 8-10 years; and our ultimate pedagogical motivation, we believe it is essential to go beyond the scope of the definition cited above in our description of learning strategies in an attempt to describe the *precise* nature of the ways in which our young learners convert the input they receive in the classroom context into knowledge of the foreign language. For this reason, we have opted to use the construct **learning technique** to arrive at a more finely-grained analysis of the strategic behaviour involved in FL learning. Learning techniques, then, as used throughout this study can be defined as '**specific, primarily task-related and (mostly) observable forms of language learning**'. In a classroom setting learning techniques are those manifestations of the learning process in action, as for example when the learner voluntarily repeats a linguistic model or identifies content words for the understanding of context-specific discourse.

The position we adopt in this respect coincides with that of Beltrán (1993) who has theorized on the relationships of technique, strategy and process as applied to general school-based learning. For Beltrán (1993) learning strategies are central to the process of learning, their true definition lying in their mediating role between the invisible, concealed processes of learning and specific task-related learner techniques. Strategies, in turn, are affected by the use of specific learner techniques. In Beltrán's model techniques are said to *activate* strategies in that they are actions linked to classroom activities, which when underway, reveal the presence of particular strategies in learners. They are distinguishable from strategies in that they are observable learner operations closely linked to the study activities suggested by the teacher in the classroom environment.

One of the assumptions underlying our work is that this rationale, as applied to the description of the instructional process in general, can be adapted to provide an explanation for the learning which occurs in the foreign language classroom. In our study of children's foreign lan-

guage learning strategies we acknowledge the connections outlined by Beltrán between process, strategy and technique. Strategies, as we have defined them above, are the special thoughts or actions which individuals use to help them learn. They can take the form of mental operations (*inferencing*) or behaviours (*repetition*) which act to facilitate the processing of information. However, our definition of techniques expands on Beltrán's original definition to include learner operations which, although not *directly* observable, such as *guessing meanings from the teacher's gestures* or *associating vocabulary with a physical action*, can still be considered as learning techniques on the grounds that: 1) they can be inferred from detailed analysis of the learning context and the instructional strategies used by the teacher in the presentation and practice of the TL input and 2) the behaviours have been explicitly verbalized by the children themselves. Although not all children will necessarily employ nor describe all their learning techniques, it is assumed that many, especially the 'good language learners', will do so. Learning techniques, the smallest component of the student's processing mechanisms, are directed, then, at promoting the appearance in the learner of effective strategies for understanding and using the FL. Their role, as conceived from a cognitive perspective, has acquired much greater prominence than that contemplated by Naiman *et al.* (1978) and by Stern (1983).

It is hoped that the preceding discussion has clarified the interpretation given in our research to the terms process, strategy and technique. The approach taken in the present study is a variation on current positions in the field of SLA strategy research. While sharing many of the features suggested by leading learning strategy researchers, we do not coincide exactly with any one position. We agree, for example, with Schmeck's view that '*a learning strategy is a higher level cluster of learning tactics that work together to provide a unified learning outcome*' and that '*the term tactic refers to the specific activities of the learners*' (1988, p. 171), but the interpretation we have made is different to the long/short term distinction expressed by Oxford and Cohen (1992), and reflects our prime concern to connect the study of learning strategies with its implications for teacher-training and practice.

4. THE ROLE OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN DEFINITIONS OF LEARNING STRATEGIES

The idea which emerges from the previous discussion is that we consider both learning strategies and techniques as **goal-directed actions**

aimed at facilitating the acquisition, retrieval and use of knowledge. This, in fact, would seem to be the accepted view of Learning Strategy researchers in the fields of both cognitive psychology and SLA (Weinstein and Mayer, 1986; Beltrán, 1993; Derry and Murphy, 1986; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Faerch and Kasper, 1980, 1983; Ellis, 1986; Oxford and Cohen, 1992). Yet discussions of language learning strategies have not always coincided in the acceptance of other features cited by theorists and researchers as criterial to their definition. The feature which has been most conflictive in this respect is that of consciousness.

Two opposing views have emerged which differ as regards the importance they attach to consciousness as an essential feature of LS. One group of researchers assert that LS are deliberate actions which are **consciously selected** (i.e. with awareness) by the learner (Weinstein and Mayer, 1986; McCombs, 1988; Beltrán, 1993; Cohen, 1990; Oxford and Cohen, 1992). Oxford and Cohen (1992), for example, argue for a learner action to be considered as strategic, learners must have *some degree of awareness* that they are employing a particular strategy. In their opinion unconscious learning behaviours are more accurately described as *automatic processes* rather than strategies.

Exponents of the opposite view propose that either:

1. strategy use **need not always involve conscious awareness** on the part of the learner (Faerch and Kasper, 1980, 1983; Wenden and Rubin, 1987; Willing, 1989; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Ellis, 1986) or
2. that **consciousness is not a feature of strategy use** (Bialystok, 1983, 1990).

Within this first group of researchers are Faerch and Kasper (1980, 1983) and Wenden and Rubin (1987) who describe LS as being 'potentially conscious'. Faerch and Kasper (1983) recognize an indeterminacy about the use of consciousness as a defining criteria of strategic behaviour. They suggest that consciousness is not constant among individuals and that some learners are more aware than others of their mental functioning. In his discussion on LS, Ellis (1986), states that some strategies are conscious while others are not but gives no indication as to which particular LS he is referring to in either case. Wenden and Rubin (1987) take a similar stand to that of O'Malley and Chamot (1990) who, on outlining their position from within a cognitive theory of learning, recognize the variability inherent to the feature of consciousness.

Willing's (1989) view is much less of a compromise. He states that the conscious/subconscious dichotomy is misleading and asserts that **LS can function at both conscious and subconscious levels of mental processing**. Willing's claim is that there are *'no absolute theoretical criteria for denying these activities to the subconscious'* (1989, p. 141), arguing that almost all mental functioning does, in fact, take place outside the realms of conscious awareness. In his opinion subconscious processes are just as capable as conscious ones of functioning in pursuit of a learning goal.

The idea that learning involves shifts between subconscious and conscious behaviour is closely related to the question of **automatic and controlled processing** (Schiffrin and Schneider, 1984, in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). In cognitive theory consciousness is closely related to attention, the control process which brings information into focal awareness (Schmidt, 1990). A distinction is made between learning tasks which require high levels of attention, **controlled processing**, and those which do not, **automatic processing**. In this view skills which are less familiar to the learner require greater control of processing, while more automatic processing is performed without awareness. For theories such as Anderson's three-stage model of skill acquisition (Anderson, 1983, 1985, in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990) learning is characterized by a **shift from controlled to automatic processing**, through the proceduralization of the skill. Researchers also point out that automatic processing associated with high levels of skill learning **may become conscious** (controlled) if the learner comes across new or unfamiliar information in the course of a learning task (Anderson, 1985, in O'Malley and Chamot; Faerch and Kasper, 1987; McLaughlin, 1983, in Willing, 1989).

Willing (1989), while accepting the distinction between automatic (subconscious) and controlled (conscious) processing, insists that the relationship between them should be viewed as a continuum rather than a question of either/or. Willing's theory is based on the idea of cognitive unity which sees no need to differentiate between subconscious and conscious processing. He argues that

"It is true certain learning strategies, particularly those which appear to be virtually universal such as associating or simplifying, most often arise without deliberation and will thus be seen as operating, most typically on a relatively less conscious level. Other strategies, for example, such as certain modes of inferencing, may at first be exercised consciously and deliberately, and can later become more nearly second nature through use and familiarity. Still others will always continue to require larger

amounts of cognitive effort; therefore these will continue indefinitely to be controlled processes. However, the differences among these various sorts of strategy can be seen as a matter of degree rather than of type" (1989, p. 142).

Bialystok has argued strongly against the inclusion of consciousness as a defining criteria of strategic behaviour. She states that '*...language learners use a number of systematic strategies for which consciousness is not a feature*' (1985, in Willing, 1989, p. 141) and cites as an example the strategy of relating new vocabulary to prior knowledge to assist recall, which in her opinion '*need not be conscious for the learner*'. Bialystok's views on consciousness stem from her attempts to develop a theoretical framework which could account for the Learning and Communication Strategies (L1 and L2) of both adults and children (Bialystok and Ryan, 1985, in Ellis, 1994; Bialystok, 1990, 1991). Bialystok's main line of reasoning is intended to describe strategies of Communication, but we believe her ideas deserve careful consideration in that they are explicitly related to children's learning. Bialystok's assertion that the use of CS by adults learning a L2 is similar to the use of strategies by young children when acquiring their L1, necessarily rules out for her the importance attributed to the role of consciousness in other theories. Bialystok states her point thus,

"Using consciousness as a criterion also has the rather restricting implication that strategy use is available only to those speakers for whom conscious reflection is possible. The major group excluded by this feature is children, for whom it is usually claimed that conscious monitoring of their cognitive processing is not possible" (1990, p. 4).

The issue of consciousness in Learning Strategy theory and research is clearly a complex one. Oxford and Cohen (1992) would have it that all LS, to be considered strategic at all, must necessarily be conscious. Bialystok (1990), stating the case for children learning their first language, argues that consciousness is not criterial to definitions of LS. Willing (1989) claims much the same in his discussion of the multiple shifts between conscious and subconscious processes in language learning. From a cognitive theory of skill acquisition O'Malley and Chamot (1990) state that LS begin as conscious processes but can become automatic through practice. Faerch and Kasper (1983) and Wenden and Rubin (1987) prefer the term 'potentially conscious' to refer to LS. The theoretical position taken in the present study will depend, naturally, on the fact that the subjects of our research, are young primary school children. This raises

the question of whether or not children's use of LS can be said to be fully conscious, or subconscious or whether there is in fact an awareness of learning in the cognitive sense.

The research conducted so far in the field of SLA has centred almost exclusively on adult learning and as such cannot provide answers to these questions. Before we can ascribe to any of the views expressed above we must look to the literature on children's learning for deeper insights into the learning process. In this sense, Miller and Ceci and Howe (in Schmidt, 1990) insist that young children learn essentially without conscious awareness, suggesting that as they mature they lose the more open awareness of environment that characterizes early 'incidental' learning (McLaughlin, 1990), and acquire, around the age of thirteen, the ability to allocate their attention strategically as occurs in adult consciousness. Similarly, Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986), in a study of children's learning in British primary schools, have argued that strategic behaviour is largely intuitive until the age of fourteen, and determined largely by the teachers, either through procedures taught explicitly or through approaches implicit in their presentation of classroom tasks. They suggest further, that children's increasing capacity for conscious planning and direction of their own learning begins to emerge by the age of 10. In the light of these observations, and given that the subjects in the present study are aged between eight and nine years old, the position we take here is that consciousness is not considered criterial for our definition of learning strategies as used by the children in their attempts to construct knowledge of the FL.

5. LANGUAGE LEARNING AND LANGUAGE USE: AN INTEGRATIVE VIEW

A distinction has often been made within second language learning strategy research between Learning, Production and Communication strategies (Tarone, 1980; Faerch and Kasper, 1983). The term learning strategies has been used to refer to the operations by which the learner processes the target language (TL) input for language learning (i.e. improving linguistic knowledge). Distinct from these are production and communication strategies which are strategies of language use. Production strategies enable the learner to use previously acquired linguistic knowledge to accomplish communication goals (Ellis, 1986). Examples include simplification or discourse planning. Communication strategies are employed when the learner fails to achieve a communicative goal because

of a gap in his or her linguistic knowledge. They have been classified as either reduction strategies (eg. topic avoidance) or achievement strategies (eg. paraphrase, code-switching, etc.) (Faerch and Kasper, 1984).

Researchers have been divided in their interpretations of the effect of these strategies on the learning process. Some maintain that production and communication strategies cannot be considered as learning strategies on the grounds that they do not contribute directly to the learning process (Selinker, 1972; O'Malley and Chamot, 1989), that is, they are strategies motivated by the learner's desire to communicate rather than to learn. Others, however, argue that this language learning *vs.* language use dichotomy is overly simplistic and difficult to sustain (Oxford and Cohen, 1992). They affirm that it is almost impossible to determine a learner's intention in using a particular strategy and that even if a strategy is employed for the purpose of language use, learning may in fact take place anyway (Tarone, 1981, 1983; Littlewood, 1979; Corder, 1983). This integrative view of learning, production and communication strategies is implicit in the work of several strategy researchers who see communication and production strategies as complementary to the learning process (Wong Fillmore, 1976; Stern, 1983; Chesterfield and Chesterfield, 1985; Oxford, 1990).

In view of this background of conflicting theoretical perspectives and conceptual confusion, a position is needed which might mediate somehow between the more extreme positions of those who advocate either the total separation of LS, CS and PS or those who propose their complete integration within broader strategy definitions. If, as we have already suggested, strategies are to be understood as goal-directed actions, then our position in this study must, necessarily, be closer to the theoretical perspective held by those who describe strategies in terms of the goals they are said to pursue. Willing (1989) has described the goals of LS as the '*comprehension, internalization, storage and setting up of accessing potential for usable data*' and that of CS as '*the successful transmission and receiving of messages*' (1989, p. 143), but goes on to make the very valid point that the realities referred to by these terms can and do, in fact, overlap. In his opinion '*It is of course possible to act in pursuit of two purposes at once*' (1989, p. 143).

From the perspective of our study this overlapping is exactly what occurs in an instructional setting such as that described in this research where learning can be seen to take place through the **active and purposeful use of the FL in meaningful situations**. If this is so, then how justifiable is it to separate strategies of learning from those of language use?

Such a distinction may be appropriate in naturalistic SLA or in instructional settings which emphasize the formal study of language as a system and where little communication takes place, but it is perhaps not the case in classrooms where, as Faerch and Kasper (1983) have suggested, learners engage in communicative activities expressly for the purpose of learning.

This is the position held by Willing (1989) and the one to which we ascribe in this study. What we are suggesting is that, in the primary classroom, the goals pursued by strategies of language learning and strategies of language use are essentially interrelated. Willing argues the same point by describing how communicative classroom tasks in which learners are expected to use the FL for a particular purpose (decision-making, describing, exchanging information, etc.) involve the **joint operation of both cognitive and communication strategies** for the actual performance of the task itself and the linguistic resources needed for doing so. In this sense he highlights the important links between the processing and linguistic demands of classroom activities in which language learning and language use are part of the same phenomenon. The classification of children's strategies we propose in our research does not distinguish between Learning and Communication Strategies, but suggests that in the realization of classroom activities which focus on the *use* of the FL, all the strategies employed by the pupils will necessarily contribute to their FL learning.

6. STUDIES OF CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

With very few exceptions the majority of research work on language learning strategies has concentrated on the strategy use of young adolescents and adults in ESL or L2 French situations. There are only three studies that we know of which have looked at children's use of learning strategies, and all within an ESL context (Wong Fillmore, 1976, 1979; Chesterfield and Chesterfield, 1985; Chamot and Beard El-Dinary, 1999). Given the scarcity of research work with young learners these studies take on immense importance for their insights into children's second language learning in a classroom context.

In the first of these studies Lily Wong Fillmore studied five Mexican children aged between five and seven learning English at school in the United States. The children were each paired with a native speaking child and their interactions were recorded for one hour every week for a period of nine months. These interactions enabled Wong Fillmore

to highlight the cognitive and social strategies used by these children which she felt were responsible for improvements in their communicative competence. Wong Fillmore emphasizes the importance of the social strategies in this study, as the children's primary interest was in establishing friendships with their classmates. Learning the language was their means of doing that. Linked to each social strategy is one or more cognitive strategies which reflect important differences with the research which has focused on adult strategy use. Given the age of the children and the immersion situation of the bilingual classroom the cognitive strategies identified here are related more to language comprehension and use than to metacognitive awareness or the analysis of language as a formal system. They suggest the importance of the immediate context of speech for understanding the linguistic input, C-1 Assume what people are saying is relevant to the situation at hand Metastrategy: Guess, and the significant role played by formulaic speech in language production, C-2 Get some expressions you understand and start talking. As Skehan (1989) has pointed out underlying the Wong Fillmore study is the theory that 'learning to talk involves talking to learn' (1989, p. 82) for communication is facilitated by the use of ready-made expressions which are then gradually broken down into their constituent parts, C-3 Look for recurring parts in the formulas you know, a process by which children infer rather than analyze the rules of the linguistic system.

Chesterfield and Chesterfield (1985) have also examined the use of learning strategies by young children in a bilingual classroom situation. They studied both the range of strategies used by fourteen 5-6 year old Mexican-American children and the order in which these strategies emerged as the children's knowledge of the L2 improved. Eight of the fourteen children were observed on three different occasions during their first year at school and their strategy use recorded. This allowed the researchers to compare and contrast the learning strategies of the eight children at any one time and to analyse the variation in each of the children over a longer period. The results of this study indicated that there did seem to be a natural order for the emergence of learning strategies in young children over a period of time. Chesterfield and Chesterfield reported that children, regardless of their L2 proficiency, employed strategies following the same general pattern. The sequence of strategy use ranged from primarily receptive, independent strategies such as Repetition and Memorization, to strategies such as Formulaic expressions and Verbal attention getters which permitted children to initiate and sustain interactions. Those strategies which required greater linguistic competence, for example

Elaboration, Appeal for assistance, Request for clarification or some degree of metacognitive awareness, Monitoring, were the last to emerge, and even then were developed by only a few children.

In the light of these findings the 'natural order' theory can be seen to have important implications for classroom teaching. Chesterfield and Chesterfield feel that the child's progress in the TL would be enhanced by educational experiences constructed to foster the development of these learning strategies. They suggest that language teaching methods which generally emphasize the more elementary strategies of repetition and memorization may be neglecting those strategies, which according to their study, promote greater interaction (and hence learning) among children. What the Chesterfields seem to be implying is the need for instruction to encourage children to engage in, in O'Malley's terms, more active mental processing.

More recently, Chamot and Beard El Dinary (1999) have carried out a study of children's learning strategies in foreign language classroom immersion classrooms in the USA. The focus of their study was on identifying the strategies that more and less effective learners use for reading and writing tasks in French, Japanese and Spanish FL classrooms. Using think aloud protocols, Chamot and Beard analysed the children's appreciations of how they approached different tasks and, in doing so, were able to identify a hierarchically organized coding scheme of Metacognitive and Cognitive learning strategies. Qualitative analyses of the interview transcripts revealed important differences between more and less effective learners as regards the appropriateness of their use of learning strategies for specific tasks. Effective learners were seen to be more flexible in their strategy use and better at monitoring and inferencing than less effective learners who tended to cling to single strategies such as laborious decoding of individual words, seemingly unaware of its ineffectiveness for the task in hand.

The Chamot and Beard study is important for the insights it provides into the language learning processes of young children in immersion education. It is also relevant to our study on a number of accounts. Firstly, the coding scheme developed by the researchers is the first of its kind to be applied to children's learning and it is significant that many of the learning strategies identified there have much in common with the findings of our research. Secondly, as regards the data collection techniques used, we too share the satisfaction expressed by Chamot and Beard on the successful use of 'think aloud' procedures in children. This aspect of our study is discussed below.

7. STUDY PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The study reported on in this paper formed part of a larger two year longitudinal research project on the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in the primary classroom. Specifically, it focuses on identifying and classifying the LS used by young children in their attempts to learn English. The present study was carried out with a sample of eight children from the same class, identified by their teacher to be effective language learners, during their first two years of EFL instruction in a Spanish state primary school.

Data for the main study included classroom observations of over 50 hours teaching, all of which were video recorded for transcription and analysis. The sub-study described here used data gathered from these observations as well as from retrospective and think-aloud interviews (see Table 1), which have been favoured by LS researchers for the rich information they can provide of students' mental processing. It was hoped that this would also be the case here, in spite of the age limitations of the subjects involved. The interviews we conducted were designed to access the children's reported thoughts *while* or *immediately after* working on activities (storytelling, playing games, writing a composition) they were familiar with in the classroom. The children were encouraged to verbalize their thoughts aloud, using their L1, and were prompted by the interviewer to clarify and elaborate on their comments when necessary. All seven interviews were either video taped (1-3) or audio taped (4-7), and transcribed for analysis.

8. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The analysis of the observation and interview data proceeded as follows. Three raters working together first viewed 30 hours of classroom interaction, corresponding to three complete Teaching Units, in order to identify and agree on observable behaviours (eg. spontaneously initiating an exchange with the teacher) which would suggest that children were using, albeit subconsciously, particular learning strategies. Then, working independently, the same three raters analysed all the interview protocols, marking each occurrence of a potential learning technique and transferring the verbal data onto coding sheets for each interview. Through discussion the raters compared and contrasted their data to reach an agreement on the nature

Table 1.

<i>Nº</i>	<i>Technique</i>	<i>Participant Structure</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Focus</i>
1	Stimulated Recall	Small group (3)	Song	Initial exploration of children's ability to verbalize information on processes of FL comprehension, retention.
2	Immediate Retrospection	2 small groups (4)	Oral description of model house	Strategies used in FL oral production; influence of L1 on FL production; FL rehearsal; Ss reaction to error; etc.
3	Immediate Retrospection	4 pairs	Story	Strategies for retention and oral production; importance of Ss previous knowledge.
4	Immediate Retrospection	Individual	Students' written compositions	Strategies for FL written production; strategies of analysis.
5	Immediate retrospection	4 pairs	Board game	Oral FL production; social strategies.
6	Delayed Retrospection	Individual		General questions on children's attitude and motivation towards EFL learning
7	Evaluative	Individual	FL contents worked on in class	Evaluation of the children's EFL competence.

of the learning techniques and the appropriateness of the discursive examples identified, eliminating any techniques which were considered ambiguous or which had been marked by only one rater. The interviews were then analysed once again using the revised list of learning techniques.

In order to create a typology of interrelated actions, the learning techniques identified from the empirical data were then grouped into the broader category of Learning Strategies, again after previous discussion and consensus of opinion. These categories were theoretically driven and included Metacognitive, Social/Affective and Cognitive learning strategies previously identified in the research literature on learning strategies. The definitions we have used in our classification of children's FL learning strategies are presented below.

CHILDREN'S LEARNING STRATEGIES IN THE PRIMARY FL CLASSROOM

Metacognitive Strategies

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Student-initiated strategic behaviour</i>
SELF MANAGEMENT O'Malley <i>et al.</i> (1985); Chamot <i>et al.</i> (1987); O'Malley & Chamot (1990); Oxford (1990); Wenden (1991); Oxford & Cohen (1992); Chamot & Beard (1999)	The child's ability to regulate or support his own learning process by developing an understanding of the conditions or circumstances that will promote better or more successful learning
PLANNING O'Malley <i>et al.</i> (1985); Chamot <i>et al.</i> (1987, 1988); O'Malley & Chamot (1990); Oxford (1990); Wenden (1991); Oxford and Cohen (1992); Chamot & Beard (1999)	Deciding in advance to attend to a learning task and ignore distractions and proposing strategies for carrying out a language task individually or in groups.
SELF MONITORING Naiman <i>et al.</i> (1978); Rubin (1981, 1987); Chesterfield & Chesterfield (1985); O'Malley <i>et al.</i> (1985); Chamot <i>et al.</i> (1987, 1988); O'Malley & Chamot (1990); Ellis (1986); Oxford (1990); Wenden (1991); Chamot & Beard (1999)	The child's awareness of 'on-line' difficulties or problems in the performance of a language task as well as their attempts to correct their own speech for accuracy in pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary.

Social/Affective Strategies

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Student-initiated strategic behaviour</i>
COOPERATING WITH OTHERS Wong Fillmore (1976); O'Malley <i>et al.</i> (1985); Chamot <i>et al.</i> (1987, 1988); O'Malley and Chamot (1990); Oxford (1990)	Helping other children to understand or use the FL or to solve a problem in class
REGULATING CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR Cathcart (1985)	Trying to control the behaviour of other children by getting them to comply to their ideas, beliefs, class rules, etc.
DEVELOPING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FL Oxford (1990)	Expressing positive feelings towards the study of the FL
SELF-CONFIDENCE Naiman <i>et al.</i> (1978); Chesterfield and Chesterfield (1985); Oxford (1990);	Using the FL confidently without fear or anxiety
SHOWING INTEREST IN THE FL OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM Naiman <i>et al.</i> (1978)	Being aware of and interested in examples of the FL outside the school environment

Cognitive Strategies

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Student-initiated strategic behaviour</i>
<p>USING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE O'Malley <i>et al.</i> (1985); Chamot <i>et al.</i> (1987, 1988); O'Malley & Chamot (1990); Oxford (1990); Oxford and Cohen (1992); Chamot & Beard (1999)</p>	<p>Relating new information to previous knowledge to understand meaning in the FL</p>
<p>INFERENCE Wong Fillmore (1976); Rubin (1981, 1989); O'Malley <i>et al.</i> (1985); Chamot <i>et al.</i> (1987, 1988); O'Malley & Chamot (1990); Oxford (1990); Chamot & Beard (1999)</p>	<p>Using contextual or physical clues to make sense of the meanings being expressed in the FL</p>
<p>USING VISUAL, AUDITORY AND KINETIC IMAGERY Rubin (1981, 1989); O'Malley <i>et al.</i> (1985); Chamot <i>et al.</i> (1987, 1988); O'Malley & Chamot (1990); Oxford (1990); Oxford & Cohen (1992)</p>	<p>The retention and recall of specific FL vocabulary and expressions by means of physical, visual and gestural imagery</p>
<p>REPETITION O'Malley <i>et al.</i> (1985); Chamot <i>et al.</i> (1987, 1988); O'Malley & Chamot (1990); Chesterfield & Chesterfield (1985); Rubin (1989); Oxford & Cohen (1992)</p>	<p>Voluntary on task repetition of FL vocabulary and models and voluntary repetition of FL input outside the class</p>
<p>LANGUAGE ANALYSIS Wong Fillmore (1976); Rubin (1981, 1989); O'Malley <i>et al.</i> (1985); Chamot <i>et al.</i> (1987, 1988); O'Malley & Chamot (1990); Oxford (1990); Oxford & Cohen (1992); Chamot & Beard</p>	<p>The application of learned or self-developed rules to understand or produce the FL</p>
<p>BUILDING AUTONOMOUS DISCOURSE O'Malley <i>et al.</i> (1985); Oxford (1990)</p>	<p>Constructing meanings in the FL by combining known vocabulary and patterns in a new way.</p>
<p>OVERCOMING LIMITATIONS IN FL KNOWLEDGE Faerch and Kasper (1983); Corder (1983); Oxford and Cohen (1992); Tarone (1977); Oxford (1990); Oxford and Cohen (1992)</p>	<p>Attempts to communicate in the FL in spite of having only limited linguistic knowledge</p>

9. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As far as we are aware, the typology of Learning Strategies presented in this study is the first to have highlighted the types of thoughts and behaviours used by children as young as eight and nine years old for learning English in a foreign language classroom setting. The analysis of the interview transcripts, coupled with the classroom observation, has revealed a variety of techniques and strategies being put into practice by young EFL learners. The typology we present here includes **Metacognitive** and **Social/Affective strategies** on the one hand and **Cognitive strategies** on the other, with the latter classified according to the higher level processes of **Comprehension, Retention and Language Use** which they work to enhance and develop. At a more specific level, most strategy types are manifested through several different learning techniques. The following tables illustrate the hierarchical grouping we have made of Process, Strategy and Technique and include examples for each technique extracted from the interview and classroom data. The number after each excerpt refers either to the interview or to the Teaching Unit from which the example was taken.

Metacognitive Strategies

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Techniques</i>	<i>Examples</i>
SELF MANAGEMENT	Deciding in advance to use the FL in the classroom	Sil: Si hablamos en español es bajito para que no nos oiga. Eloy: Serás tú la que hablas en español. Ent: ¿Tú no hablas en español nunca Eloy? Eloy: Al principio cuando era más pequeño y empezabamos a dar inglés sí, pero ahora ya no. Ahora ya sabemos bien y lo que no entendemos se lo decimos a Don Matías y él nos lo explica en inglés. (5)
	Making an effort to carry out classroom activities well	Int: ¿Qué haces para caerle bien a tu profesor? El: Yo intento hacer todos los deberes Int: ¿Y en clase qué haces? El: Pues inento hacerlo dentro de lo mejor posible... Porque yo quiero que me vea que soy listo. (6)
	Deciding to pay attention to the teacher in class	Sor: Pues yo intento, intento lo posible para poder entender todas las pala... todas las palabras en inglés, intento cada vez aprender más. JV: (<i>Referring to the teacher</i>) Cuando dice algo que no hemos dado entonces presto más atención. (6)
	Deciding to pay attention to other children's oral productions to learn from them	Int: ¿Crees que puedes aprender de los compañeros? Yol: Sí. Int: ¿Por qué? Yol: Porque hay algunos que son más listos que otros y los que son más listos pues, si yo no sé decir una frase pues si la dicen ellos bien pues yo, como lo he oído varias veces, pues sé decirlo. (6)

Social/Affective Strategies

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Techniques</i>	<i>Examples</i>
COOPERATING WITH OTHERS	Helping other children with classroom activities (comprehension; reading; oral production)	Sor: (<i>Talking about a composition they have written in class</i>) Como, varias cosas no las entendía entonces, mi compañero Juan Pedro también varias cosas no las entiende, cosas que yo no entiendo y él si las sabe pos yo se las pregunto y las cosas que él no sabe y yo sí me las pregunta y así varias cosas que no entendemos entre los dos las podemos aprender. (4)
	Correcting other children's mistakes (comprehension; pronunciation; use of the FL)	Sor: (<i>Referring to a song they've learned in class</i>) y luego dice 'two tiny windows' que son... Son: que son las sillas. JP & Sor: (<i>together</i>) no son las ventanas. (1)
REGULATING CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR	Insisting that other children use FL during classroom activities	(<i>Asking and answering questions about pictures they have drawn of their 'dream house'</i>) Sor: Big, no, small bedroom. Four bedroom, bedrooms. Big or small door. Son: Big or small? JL: Juan Pedro ¿Cuántas plantas tiene tu casa? JP: One. Sor: English, no Spanish. (UD1)
DEVELOPING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS LEARNING THE FL	Expressing a preference for English over other subjects	Int: ¿Porqué te gusta el inglés más que a otras asignaturas? Yol: Por que haces juegos, te lo pasas bien, ves cintas de video, en las otras tienes que estar siempre estudiando, haciendo deberes, haciendo ejercicios. (6)

<p>SELF CONFIDENCE</p>	<p>Having confidence in your ability to understand and use the FL</p> <p>Using the FL in class without being frightened of making mistakes</p> <p>Anticipating an answer to the teacher's questions</p>	<p>El: Es buen profesor, por que ahora mismo nosotros sabemos muchas cosas que yo se lo he preguntado a otros crios de otra escuela que no lo saben tanto, no están aprendiendo tanto como nosotros.</p> <p>Sor: Yo pienso que yo sé mucho de inglés que por ejemplo a algunos les gano hablando. (6)</p> <p>Int: ¿Tienes miedo a equivocarte cuando hablas en inglés?</p> <p>JL: No, si me equivoco y sé que me he equivocado, lo digo bien.</p> <p>El: Cuando no está grabando el video me da igual que me equivoque. (6)</p> <p>Int: ¿Te gusta levantar la mano para contestar o no?</p> <p>JL: Levanto la mano y empiezo a decir 'me, me, me please'. (6)</p>
<p>SHOWING INTEREST IN THE FL OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM</p>	<p>Using the FL at home with family members or in the playground with friends</p> <p>Noticing examples of the FL on the television; in advertisements; songs, etc.</p>	<p>Sor: Digo en casa todo lo que sé, todo lo que puedo para poder esforzarme para aprobar la asignatura, y también para... para... en mi casa, yo muchas veces estoy sola y luego, llegan mis padres y todo eso, y yo empiezo a hablar en inglés, empiezo a decirles los animales que he aprendido nuevos, empiezo a cantarles canciones, empiezo a contarles muchas cosas y eso a mis pad... A mis padres les da mucho gusto, por que mis padres quieren que yo saque la carrera de... de profesora. (6)</p> <p>Int: ¿Fuera de clase te interesa ver cosas en inglés?</p> <p>Eloy: Sí por que mira un amigo mío me dejo una cinta que todo era... que todo era en inglés y yo la escuché.</p> <p>Son: También cuando hay películas. Es que yo tengo un canal inglés. (6)</p>

Cognitive Strategies

COMPREHENSION		
<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Techniques</i>	<i>Examples</i>
USING PRIOR L1 KNOWLEDGE	Using prior knowledge of the activity structure (games, stories)	Int: ¿Vosotros tenéis juegos de estos en casa? Sor: Yo sí, tengo el juego de la oca que es parecido a éste. JP: Y yo. Int: Y tú también. Entonces tú sabes por las reglas o por que sabes jugar? Sor: Porque sabemos jugar. (5)
	Using prior knowledge of the topic or context	Int: (<i>Asking how the pupil had understood the story The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i>) ¿Esto te lo sabías porque ya sabías lo que pasaba a una oruga? El: Ah pero eso yo ya lo sabía. Int: ¿Dónde lo habías estudiado? El: Pues es que también yo cuando es el tiempo de los gusanos, pues yo cojo gusanos, y luego hacen el, el capullo y luego sale la mariposa y y pone huevos. Int: ¿Y cómo se dice capullo en inglés? El: Cocoon. (3)
INFERENCING	Guessing meanings from the teacher's gestures, modulated output (intonation; volume; pauses; stress)	Int: (<i>Checking their comprehension of a song they have learned in class</i>) ¿Y eso qué es de 'peep inside'? JP: Porque es una palabra y luego dice que entre o algo así. Sor: Entonces Don M se pone así (circles her eyes with her hands). JL: El agujero y ver lo que hay dentro. (1)
	Guessing meanings from pictures, objects blackboard drawings, video sequences	JP: Don M estuvo poniendo en la pizarra algunas cosas. Sor: Dibujando... yo me acuerdo de muchas: saw, plyers, screwdriver, hammer. JP: Y Don M nos lo ponía el dibujo y luego nosotros teníamos que decirlo. (1)

RETENTION AND RETRIEVAL		
<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Techniques</i>	<i>Examples</i>
VISUAL, AUDITORY, KINETIC IMAGERY	Associating vocabulary and language models with the teacher's gestures	JP: Además Don M, cuando cantaba la canción, cuando decía 'build' hacía así (<i>pretends to dig with a spade</i>). (2)
	Recalling vocabulary and language models from blackboard drawings and pictures in story-books, slides, video images, etc.	Int: ¿Y cómo os acordáis del cuento, tú que lo has contado sin mirarlo cómo te acuerdas de todo? Sor: Pues yo me acuerdo porque lo vimos dos veces yo lo ví dos veces en el video y Don M a veces nos pone, como a veces no nos acordamos bien de las cosas nos pone el video y lo recordamos y luego yo me acuerdo, porque cuando yo doy algo de inglés se me aprende, y se me mete en la cabeza y no se me olvida. (3)
	Recalling vocabulary and language models in association with the thematic context in which they were first introduced	Int: (<i>Asking about vocabulary</i>) A ver JV, ¿tú de cuáles te acuerdas mejor? JV: De las que salen en el cuento y alguna otra. (3)
	Associating vocabulary and language models with physical action	El: Otra cosa que nos ayudó a recordar era cuando Don M. cogía un nombre si tú lo decías y lo acertabas luego lo ponías en el papel, eso también nos ayudó, ayudó más. (3)

Cognitive Strategies (cont.)

RETENTION AND RETRIEVAL		
Strategies	Techniques	Examples
REPETITION	Voluntary in-class repetition of vocabulary, language models presented by the teacher	T: I'm going to build a house Ss: with a sloping roof T: with a chimney tall Ss: with a chimney tall T: sloping roof Ss: sloping roof T: ok? (TU1)
	Playfully repeating to oneself or with friends outside class (new words, numbers, songs, etc.)	JL: yo muchas veces yo voy pensando en los números, cuento, mira (se levanta) voy haciendo pensando, one two three four five, voy cantándolos. (1)
	Re-reading class exercise book to remember new vocabulary	Int: ¿Qué estudias, los fines de semana? Sor: Sí y a veces como me lo llevo (<i>referring to her exercise book</i>) por las tardes cuando estoy sola pos me pongo a estudiar y así no estoy aburrida. Int: Y cuando dices que estudias ¿qué haces, ves los dibujos o lees o...? S: No, yo al principio veo los dibujos y así lo recuerdo lo que es y luego me pongo a leer y ya sé lo que es. Int: ¿Y escribes también o no? S: Cuando, no, cuando, como seguramente más adelante haremos dictados de inglés entonces, yo muchas veces cojo el lápiz y una hoja, o me pongo el libro y empiezo a dictar dos hojas y luego, cuando, después de eso. me pongo a leerlo y ya me lo sé. (3)
	Voluntarily repeating the teacher's corrective feedback	T: For example if I want to buy stamps to send letters, where do I go? JL: post office T: I go to the post office JL: I go to the post office (TU3)

USE OF LANGUAGE FOR ORAL/WRITTEN COMMUNICATION		
<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Techniques</i>	<i>Examples</i>
LANGUAGE ANALYSIS	Inducing phonological rules from the language input	Int: Vosotros decís 'peep' siempre y eso lo veo muy raro. JL: Pero en inglés se escribe de una manera y luego se dice de otra manera. Sor: Si las corticas más o menos se dice iguales pero las más grandes se pronuncian distinto. (1)
	Applying learned rules to understand/produce the FL	Int: ¿Habéis oído a Don M decir 'ate', 'ate'? ¿ Y sabéis cuál es la diferencia entre 'eat' y 'ate'? JV: Que 'ate' es que comió y 'eat' es que come. Int: Bien, muy bien. ¿Y cómo lo sabes? JV: Porque a mí cuando decía 'eat' entonces me lo dijo. (3)
BUILDING AUTONOMOUS DISCOURSE	Using unanalysed formulas	Int: Allí pone (<i>pointing to the blackboard</i>) Today is Wednesday ¿qué quiere decir? Yol: Yo sabía decir 'Today is Wednesday' pero 'is' no sabía muy bien lo que significa. (4)
	Spontaneously initiating an exchange with the teacher or another pupil in the FL	T: Did you enjoy your weekend? Sor: M. it's Ruben's happy birthday to you (<i>singing</i>) happy birthday to you. T: It's Ruben's birthday, ok, congratulations, happy birthday. (TU 3)
	Incorporating the teacher's feedback in oral /written production	JV (<i>Talking about a composition he had written about his own village in which the teacher had corrected several words and expressions and which has helped him to write a second composition about his ideal village</i>) Como escribí sobre Alquerías las ponía mal, y Matías las puso bien y me acordaba de cómo se escribían... Algunas cosas me las comía y él me dijo como las tenía que poner. (4)

Cognitive Strategies (cont.)

USE OF LANGUAGE FOR ORAL/WRITTEN COMMUNICATION		
<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Techniques</i>	<i>Examples</i>
BUILDING AUTONOMOUS DISCOURSE	Recombining linguistic patterns and vocabulary	Int: What do you like doing at the weekend? Sor: Listen to music, study English and mathematics. Watching television, to go to mass, the church, to go to the... at the swimming pool (6)
	Using semantic simplifications (content words)	Int: Do you remember the story of the caterpillar? Can you tell me a bit of the story? El: One one day, on Monday one strawberry, Tuesday two bananas, on Wednesday four tomatoes, on... on Thursday four eggs, on Friday five lollypop... Int: and what happened? El: On Saturday? On Saturday leaf, is big and cocoon... on Sunday? butterfly (6)
	Overgeneralized use of 'is'	Son: (<i>Describing a model house they have made in groups</i>) JP, JL and me is the cement Sor: The chimney, the chimney, the colour black is me... (2)
OVERCOMING LIMITATIONS IN FL KNOWLEDGE	Asking the teacher or another pupil for help	Int: Y cuando estás hablando y de repente una palabra no sabéis decirla, ¿qué hacéis? El: Pues decirle cómo se dice en inglés. Le dices 'How do you say this in English?' y te lo dice. (3)
	Using gestures	Int: Pero en el video os he visto jugar y hacéis así (<i>gestures</i>) ¿No habláis por señas? Yol: Sí, cuando algunas veces no lo sabemos se lo decimos a Don M por señas (5)

OVERCOMING LIMITATIONS IN FL KNOWLEDGE	Code-switching	Int: Cuando no sabéis decir las cosas en inglés ¿cómo las decís? Yol: Algunas veces cuando no sé decir una cosa pues la digo en medio inglés medio español. (5)
	Paraphrasing	Int: Are you the oldest or the youngest in your family? JV: One old and one small. Int: And you? In the middle? JV: Yes. (7)
	Approximating the L2 word	Int: What about your bedroom? What furniture can you find? El: Two bed... a wardrobe two. Int: Anything else. El: No, a link, a lit. Int: Light. El: Yes. (7)
	Foreignizing	Int: What food do you not like? El: Legum and fish and pizza. (7)
	Avoiding the topic	Int: (<i>Asking about his mother</i>) What colour is her hair? El: Me no remember. Int: What is it in Spanish? El: Castaño. Int: Brown. (7)

The children who took part in the research had been identified by their teacher as 'good language learners', and so the techniques and strategies they reported to be using can provide us with useful information about the cognitive processes involved in initial EFL learning. It would appear that effective learners are good at **managing their own learning** both inside and outside the classroom, since they tend to **plan** for learning activities and **monitor** their use of the FL. Similarly they enjoy **cooperating with peers** either helping with problems, correcting mistakes or simply insisting that classroom rules are respected by all. Affectively, these children are **highly motivated** by their English classes and **confident** in their ability to use the FL, extending their enthusiasm for learning to the world outside the classroom, where many of them **pay attention** to the English they hear in songs or on television and they **actively seek out opportunities** to try out their growing knowledge of the language with friends and family. It is significant that there is a certain amount of overlapping between the social and affective strategies shown by these children and the Attitudinal Contents contained in the Official Curriculum for foreign languages at primary level, indicating, consequently, that one way of developing this area of the curriculum would be by explicitly promoting such strategy use in the classroom.

Indeed, an important finding, coinciding with Nisbet & Shucksmith (1986), was that the learning techniques reported by these effective learners appeared to be closely linked to the classroom methodology they experienced, that is to the type of communicative activities they experienced and more importantly, to the way in which they were presented and carried out. Since English was the medium of instruction used in this classroom, these children relied on their **background knowledge** and **inferred meanings** from pictures, gestures, intonation and contextual information which helped them both understand and remember the FL models and vocabulary, as did **self initiated repetition** in class and home. Since oral production was a high priority in this classroom, the children's speech revealed strategic interlanguage use in the form of **unanalysed formulas, recombinations of known patterns and vocabulary**, use of **content words** or **compensatory** techniques to convey messages with their limited linguistic resources. Interestingly, some children also showed evidence of having explicitly begun to form hypotheses about the rules underlying their use of English. The question then is not so much whether teachers can help children to learn or not, the results of our research suggest that, at primary level, they already *do*,

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since many of the learning strategies developed by these children seemed to be modelled on the teacher's methodology and approach to learning English.

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of this study lies, we believe, in the insights it can offer for teachers of English to young learners. By explicitly identifying the types of techniques and strategies used by children to learn the FL, and by making them available to teachers, we can help to raise their awareness of the ways in which they can promote successful learning in their classrooms. Pedagogically, then, the results of this study point to a number of immediate implications. These include the need for teachers to **create a supportive and affective learning environment**; to establish **explicit links between the FL content and the children's previous knowledge**; to make effective use of **extralinguistic and gestural support** to facilitate comprehension *in the FL*; to encourage the productive use of English by teaching (and explaining) **routine formulas** and by **encouraging children to express themselves as best they can**, despite their limited knowledge of the FL. Clearly, what is needed is for teachers to incorporate sound learning strategies into their teaching, so that the intuitive use of these strategies as shown by the more effective learners could be extended to *all* children and automatized at an early age.

We would like to conclude this paper by indicating our awareness that the results of this study have been obtained from only a small sample of eight learners. However, we also believe that the identification of these children's learning strategies represents a significant step in educational research within the area of foreign languages. We also consider that further studies of this kind, carried out with a greater number of children, both more and less effective learners, would most certainly provide further insights into the cognitive processes involved in initial FL learning in primary schools.

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