Second Language Learning and Use Strategies: Clarifying the Issues

BY ANDREW D. COHEN

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SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND USE STRATEGIES: CLARIFYING THE ISSUES[1]

Andrew D. Cohen

Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

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Produced by

Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition
University of Minnesota
140 University International Center
331 17th Ave SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414
USA
612.626.8600
carla@umn.edu
http://www.carla.umn.edu

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INTRODUCTION

This paper was written in response to a request to help provide clarification for a field that has become characterized by a plethora of terminology and perhaps a dearth of clear understandings as to what the terms actually refer to and how to operationalize them in foreign language instruction. The effort was assisted by the fact that the present author had had the benefit of co-authoring a "strategies concepts" paper with Rebecca Oxford several years before (Oxford & Cohen 1993), and so many of the problematic issues had already been aired.

The current paper will begin by providing working definitions for language learning and use strategy terminology. It then will then consider five problematic issues that have arisen in the language learning strategy field: the distinction between the term **strategy** and other terms, the issue of whether learning strategies need to be conscious in order to be referred to as strategies, criteria for classifying language learning and use strategies, a broadening of the concept of **strategic competence**, and the linking of learning strategies to learning styles and other personality-related variables. Finally, an example will be given of how these problematic issues are dealt with in a program of strategy-based instruction at the university level.

DEFINING "SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND USE STRATEGIES"

The following represents a broad definition of second language learning and use strategies. **Second language learner strategies** encompass both **second language learning** and **second language use strategies**. Taken together, they constitute the steps or actions selected by learners either to improve the *learning* of a second language, the *use* of it, or both. **Language use strategies** actually include **retrieval strategies**, **rehearsal strategies, cover strategies,** and **communication strategies**. What makes the definition for language learning and language use strategies broad is that it encompasses those actions that are clearly aimed at language learning, as well as those that may well lead to learning but which do not ostensibly have learning as their primary goal.[2] Whereas *language learning* strategies have an explicit goal of assisting

[2]See McDonough 1995, Ellis 1994, Cook 1993, and Towel & Hawkins 1994, for recent reviews of the learning and communication strategy literature, and for discussion of its terminology.

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learners in improving their knowledge in a target language, *language use* strategies focus primarily on employing the language that learners have in their current interlanguage.

Thus, strategies for *learning* the subjunctive in Spanish as a foreign language, for example, could include grouping together and then memorizing the list of verbs that take a subjunctive in constructions like *quiero que vengas* (`I want you to come'), or noticing the difference in imperfect subjunctive inflections between the -*ar* conjugation (e.g., *cantara*) and the -*er* and -*ir* conjugations (e.g., *comiera, existiera).* The specific strategies for memorizing this group might involve putting these verbs inside a box in the notebook and reviewing the contents of the box regularly, as well as noting what these verbs have in common semantically. Language learning strategies would also include strategies for learning new vocabulary such as through flash cards and including on the flash card a keyword mnemonic to use to jog the memory if necessary.

Strategies for *using* the subjunctive include three subsets of strategies: **retrieval strategies**, **rehearsal strategies**, **cover strategies**, and **communication strategies**. In the above example with the subjunctive, **retrieval strategies** would be those strategies for retrieving the subjunctive forms when the occasion arises in or out of class, and for choosing the appropriate forms. For those learners who keep a list of verbs taking the subjunctive, a strategy may involve visualizing the list in their mind's eye and cross-checking to make sure that the verb that they wish to use in the subjunctive form actually requires the subjunctive. Likewise, a language use strategy would entail using the keyword mnemonic in order to retrieve the meaning of a given vocabulary word. So, say that a learner encounters the verb *ubicar* (`to locate') which she had learned by means of the keyword mnemonic "ubiquitous," and she wants to retrieve the meaning of the word. The language using strategies would include any efforts by the learner to retrieve the meaning of the word *ubicar*--involving the linking of the Spanish sounds /*ubik*/ with the English /*yub k*/, and then perhaps seeing an image of someone who is keeps turning up everywhere the language learner looks for them.

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Rehearsal strategies constitute another subset of language use strategies, namely, strategies for rehearsing target language structures (such as form-focused practice). An example of rehearsal would be form-focused practice, for example, practicing the subjunctive forms for different verb conjugations. **Cover strategies** are those strategies that learners use to create the impression that they have control over material when they do not. They are a special type of compensatory or coping strategies which involve creating an appearance of language ability so as not to look unprepared, foolish, or even stupid. A learner's primary intention in using them is not to learn any language material, nor even necessarily to engage in genuine.[3] An example of a cover strategy would be using a memorized and not fully-understood phrase in an utterance in a classroom drill in order to keep the action going. Some cover strategies reflect efforts at simplification (e.g., a learner uses only that part of a phrase that they can deal with), while other such strategies complexify the utterance because this is actually simplest for the learners (e.g., saying something by means of an elaborate and complex circumlocution because the finely-tuned vocabulary is lacking or to avoid using the subjunctive)--both cases representing an attempt to compensate for gaps in target language knowledge.

Communication strategies constitute a fourth subset of language use strategies, with the focus on approaches to conveying meaningful information that is new to the recipient. Such strategies may or may not have any impact on learning. For example, learners may use a vocabulary item encountered for the first time in a given lesson to communicate a thought, without any intention of trying to learn the word. In contrast, they may insert the new vocabulary item into their communication exp without intending to learn or communicate any particular aspect of the target language ressly in order to promote their learning of it.

Language learning and use strategies can be further differentiated according to whether they are cognitive, metacognitive, affective, or social (Chamot 1987, Oxford 1990). **Cognitive** strategies usually involve both the identification, retention, storage, or retrieval of words, phrases, and other elements of the second language. **Metacognitive** strategies deal with pre-assessment and pre-planning, on-line planning and evaluation, and post-evaluation of language learning activities, and language use events.[4] Such

[3]The term "cover strategy" was suggested by Tim McNamara (Personal Communication, July 9, 1996).
[4] In language use situations, there may be no intention to communicate, such as in mechanical drills.

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strategies allow learners to control their own cognition by coordinating the planning, organizing, and evaluating of the learning process. **Affective** strategies serve to regulate emotions, motivation, and attitudes (e.g., strategies for reduction of anxiety and for self-encouragement). **Social** strategies include the actions which learners choose to take in order to interact with other learners and with native speakers (e.g., asking questions for clarification and cooperating with others).

TERMINOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL ISSUES IN NEED OF CLARIFICATION

Having considered working definitions for language learning strategy terminology, let us now consider five problematic issues that have arisen in the learning strategy field and suggest means for dealing with each one.[5]

1) The Distinction Among Strategies, Substrategies, Techniques, and Tactics

The first issue concerns a distinction made between **strategy**, **substrategy**, **techniques**, and **tactics**, and the lack of clarity that this distinction has generated in the research literature. The term **strategies** has, in fact, been used to refer both to general approaches and to specific actions or techniques used to learn a second language. For example, a general approach could be that of forming concepts and hypotheses about how the target language works. A more specific strategy could be that of improving reading skill in the new language. Among the strategies aimed at improving reading could be the use of coherence-detecting strategies. A more specific strategy could entail making use of summaries in order to comprehend reading passages. A more specific strategy still could be that of indicating that the summaries are to be learner-generated (rather than supplied by the author). An even more specific strategy could stipulate that ongoing summaries be written in the margin in telegraphic form.

So the issue is one of how to refer to these various actions. The literature includes the terms **strategy**, **technique** (Stern 1983), **tactic** (Seliger 1984), and **move** (Sarig 1987), among other terms, and also includes the split between **macro**- and **micro**-strategies and tactics (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991). A solution to the problem would be to refer

[5]This discussion of the five problematic issues is based in part on Oxford & Cohen, 1992. For the most part, when reference is made to *language learning strategies* without mention of *language **use** strategies*, the latter is implied as well.

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to all of these simply as **strategies**, while still acknowledging that there is a continuum from the broadest categories to the most specific or low-level. While learners will want to know the general rubrics for strategies that they use, for them the most important thing may be to see lists of suggested strategies that are specific enough so that they are readily operationalizable (such as the most specific ones for summarizing in reading, mentioned above).

2) Learning Strategies as Conscious or Unconscious

The second problematic issue pertains to the absence of consensus as to whether strategies need to be *conscious* in order for them to be considered strategies. A recent discussion of the role of consciousness in second language learning would suggest terminology that may be appropriate for the issue of awareness in using language learning strategies, even though the terms were meant to refer to attention to language material and **not** to language strategies.. Drawing on Schmidt (1994), we could stipulate that language learning strategies are either within the **focal attention** of the learners or within their **peripheral attention**, in that they can identify them if asked about what they have just done or thought. If a learner's behavior is totally unconscious so that the given learner is not able to identify any strategies associated with it, then the behavior would simply be referred to as a **process**, not a **strategy**. For example, a learner may use the behavior of skimming a portion of text in order to avoid a lengthy illustration. If the learner is at all conscious (even if peripherally) as to why the skip is taking place, then it would be a strategy. Ellis (1994) points out that if strategies are proceduralized until a stage where the learner is no longer conscious of employing them, they are no longer accessible for description though verbal report by the learners and thus lose their significance as strategies. This approach to dealing with strategies has appeal for researchers who conduct empirical research on strategies in order to arrive at descriptions to be used in strategy-based instruction.

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3) Differing Criteria for Classifying Language Learning Strategies

The third problem results from the fact that different criteria are used to classify language learning strategies, causing inconsistencies and mismatches across existing taxonomies and other categorizations. As we indicated in the above definitions, some strategies contribute directly to learning (e.g., memorization strategies for learning vocabulary items or grammatical structures), while other strategies have as their main goal that of using the language (e.g., verifying that the intended meaning was conveyed). Some strategies are behavioral and can be directly observed (e.g., asking a question for clarification), others are mental and behavioral but not easily observable (e.g., paraphrasing), while others are just mental (e.g., making mental translations for clarification while reading) and must be accessed through other means, such as through verbal report. Strategy frameworks have also been developed on the basis of degree of explicitness of knowledge and the kind of knowledge (e.g., linguistic vs. world knowledge, and form-focused vs. meaning-focused knowledge) (Bialystok 1978, Ellis 1986).

In addition, strategies are sometimes labeled as belonging to "successful" or "unsuccessful" learners, when, in fact, the effectiveness of a strategy may depend largely on the characteristics of the given learner, the given language structure(s), the given context, or the interaction of these. Moreover, the very same learner may find that a given reading strategy (such as writing ongoing, marginal summaries while reading a text) works very well for the fifth paragraph of a given text but not for the sixth. The difficulty could result from the learner's lack of vocabulary or grammatical knowledge, from the fact that the material is summarizer-unfriendly in that paragraph, from some distraction in the environment where the reading is going on (the classroom, the home, the library, etc.), or from some other cause.

Strategies have also been distinguished from each other according to whether they are cognitive, metacognitive, affective, or social (as defined above). The problem is that the distinctions are not so clear-cut. In other words, the same strategy of ongoing text summarization may be interpretable as either cognitive or metacognitive. It might not be possible to neatly draw the line between **metacognitive** strategies aimed at planning a summary and evaluating the results both while in the process of constructing the marginal entry and after finishing the writing of it, and **cognitive** strategies involving the reconceptualization of a paragraph at a higher level of

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abstraction. In fact, both types of strategies may well be utilized. Delineating whether the strategy is one or the other is what is problematic. In fact, the same strategy may function at different levels of abstraction. For instance, skipping an example in the text so as not to lose the train of thought may reflect a metacognitive strategy (i.e., part of a conscious plan to not get distracted by detail) and also a cognitive strategy to avoid material that would not assist in generating a gist statement.

So given these dichotomies and continua in the classification of learning strategies (as well as others not mentioned here), what solution might there be for the practitioners and researchers? Ellis (1994) takes the somewhat upbeat attitude that "considerable progress has been made in classifying learning strategies...from the early beginnings when researchers did little more than list strategies" (p. 539). He notes that there are now comprehensive, multi-leveled, and theoretically-motivated taxonomies (e.g., O'Malley & Chamot 1990, Oxford 1990, and Wenden 1991). Ellis notes that high inference is still called for in order to interpret which strategy is being used when, and that strategies belonging to one type frequently vary on a number of dimensions such as specificity (as illustrated above with the example of summarizing) and the extent to which they are observable.

It would seem that what is called for on the part of researchers and developers of materials for strategies instruction is greater care in specifying strategies on the dimensions that are likely to be relevant for the given learners in the given context. It would also seem advisable to make an effort to identify non-observable strategy use through various research methods, such as through learning strategy interviews and written surveys, observation, verbal report, diaries and dialog journals, recollective studies, and computer tracking (Cohen & Scott, forthcoming). At the present time, no single assessment method prevails in the field. Certain research methods (e.g., surveys and observations) are well established but have failed in some cases to generate useful data on learners' strategy use. Other methods (e.g., computer tracking[6]) are emerging as new research tools, but their potential has not yet been fully explored by researchers. While the use of verbal report as a research tool has come under criticism, it nonetheless has provided numerous insights about the strategies used before, during, and after

[6]Tracking programs can unobtrusively create a log of learners' uses for various resource functions contained within the computerized language program, whether in writing tasks (e.g., word processing, filling out forms, etc.), reading tasks (a summarization exercise, a cloze task, a multiple-choice reading comprehension task), or grammar drills.

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tasks involving language learning and language use.

4) Broadening the Concept of Strategic Competence

A fourth issue involves the fact that the term **strategic competence** has broadened well beyond its original meaning. While early reference to strategic competence as a component of communicative language use (Canale & Swain 1980, Canale 1983) put the emphasis on **compensatory** strategies (i.e., strategies used to compensate or remediate for a lack in some language area), Bachman (1990) provided a broader theoretical model for viewing strategic competence. In his model, there is an **assessment** component whereby the speakers (listeners, readers, or writers[7]) set communicative goals, a **planning** component whereby the they retrieve the relevant items from their language competence and plan their use, and an **execution** component whereby they implement the plan. After finishing the activity, the speakers may again perform an assessment to evaluate the extent to which the communicative goal was achieved.

Within this broader framework, it may still be the case that a fair number of strategies are, in fact, compensatory. Nonnative speakers (and even some native speakers in some situations) may omit material because they do not know it when put on the spot, or may produce different material from what they would like to with the hope that it will be acceptable in the given context. They may use lexical avoidance, simplification, or approximation when the exact word escapes them under pressure or possibly because they simply do not know the word that well or at all. Yet much of the strategic behavior that falls under the rubric of strategic competence in Bachman's model is not compensatory: for instance, metacognitive strategies for assessing the language needed to perform the given task, cognitive strategies for selecting appropriate language structures (when the necessary or desired structures **are**, in fact, available to the nonnative), strategies for executing the plan, and finally post-task assessment strategies.

As in the case of any theoretical model, nonnatives may make differential use of the components of this model when performing specific communicative tasks. For

[7]Whereas strategic competence was initially linked primarily to speaking, researchers have expanded its coverage to include listening (Tarone & Yule 1989), reading, and writing (Oxford 1990) as well.

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example, there are those who frequently or at times do not assess the situation before engaging in communication, and because of this they may violate certain sociocultural conventions. Likewise, there are nonnative speakers who plan out the specifics of their utterances before producing them, while others just start talking immediately with the intention of working things out on an on-line basis. Recent research involving the use of verbal report directly after the performance of oral role-play interaction obtained data regarding the extent of strategic assessment and planning actually taking place before the execution of three speech acts--apologies, complaints, and requests (Cohen & Olshtain 1993). In that study it was found that half of the time the nonnative adult speakers conducted only a general assessment of the utterances called for in the situation without planning specific vocabulary and grammatical structures.

The fact that the concept of strategic competence has been broadened to encompass not only compensatory but also non-compensatory behaviors clearly suggests that the previous definition was too restrictive. It is now important to conduct more empirical studies to determine the extent to which such models actually reflect the strategic behavior of the nonnatives they are intended to describe.

5) Linking Learning Strategies to Learning Styles and Other Personality-Related Variables

The fifth, and final problematic issue involves what is perceived by some as an inadequate linking of learning strategies and learning styles in the language learning field. Learning strategies do not operate by themselves, but rather are directly tied to the learner's underlying learning styles (i.e., general approaches to learning) and other personality-related variables (such as anxiety and self-concept) in the learner (Brown 1991). They are also related to demographic factors like sex, age, and ethnic differences (Politzer 1983, Oxford 1989). Schmeck (1988) underscores the need to understand learning strategies in the context of **learning styles**, which he defines as the expression of personality specifically in the learning situation. Schmeck also exhorts researchers to view learning styles and learning strategies in the context of general personality factors such as the following: introversion/extroversion, reflectiveness/impulsiveness, field independence/dependence, self-confidence, self-concept, self-efficacy, creativity, anxiety, and motivation (intrinsic/extrinsic) (Oxford & Cohen 1992). According to Schmeck, a learning strategy disembedded from personality-related factors is "only a

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short-term prop for learning" (p. 179).

Many language learning strategy studies over the last decade have looked at cognitive and metacognitive strategy use but have failed to gather, analyze, or report personality-related, social, and demographic information about the subjects. Factors such as motivation, beliefs, attitudes, anxiety, learning style, world knowledge, sex, and ethnicity have received lesser emphasis (Oxford & Cohen 1992). The O'Malley and Chamot (1990) taxonomy focused on cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and only touched the surface of social and especially affective strategies. Likewise, affective aspects of language learning were generally left out of the Faerch and Kasper (1983) taxonomy. The situation has improved somewhat through the **personological** work of some strategy investigators (Ely 1989, Ehrman & Oxford 1990, Galloway & Labarca 1991). But there is need for more routine collection of information on sex, ethnicity, age, degree of language learning experience, world knowledge, motivation, anxiety, beliefs, attitudes, and learning style--along with data on the learning environment and teacher variables.

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DEALING WITH THE PROBLEMATIC ISSUES IN A STRATEGY-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

In this last section, an example is given of how the problematic issues are dealt with in a program of strategy-based instruction at the university level. The current program of learning strategy instruction, evaluation, and research at the University of Minnesota is utilized for the purposes of illustration. At present, there are numerous means available for strategy instruction, such as general study skills courses, peer tutoring, research-oriented training, videotaped mini-courses, awareness training, strategy workshops, insertion of strategies into language textbooks, and integration of strategies into foreign language instruction (Weaver & Cohen, 1994). Since past experience at the University of Minnesota and elsewhere had indicated that various short-term interventions had only short-term effects at best, it was determined that the most effect program would most likely be one of strategy-based instruction--that is, one that began with intensive teacher development and then relied on the teachers to provide strategy awareness to their learners as a regular feature of their instruction.

A series of thirty-hour seminars, entitled "Strategies-Based Foreign Language Learning," have been created at the University of Minnesota for teachers from different foreign language programs. The seminars have focused on training the participating teachers in how to create their own strategy-based instructional materials.[8] The teachers are thus responsible for applying the strategies to their own curricular needs, and, when possible, are paired with teachers from their own language department to share lesson plan ideas. For the less commonly taught languages (e.g., Hebrew, Hindi, Irish, Norwegian, and Portuguese[9]), the teachers are asked to form cross-language strategy support teams. After the teachers have had opportunities to create strategy-based materials and to practice integrating strategies into typical language learning tasks, they present micro-teaching strategy/language sessions to their peers in order to practice strategy instruction techniques before introducing the activities into their own classrooms. The sessions are videotaped and critiqued by all the participants. Fourteen teachers representing nine languages participated in the first seminar offered during the

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[8]These seminars have been funded through a National Language Resource Center grant awarded by the Center for International Education, U.S. Office of Education, to the University of Minnesota.
[9]What is deemed a less commonly taught language (LCTL) varies from context to context. So whereas Portuguese may be a LCTL in Minnesota, it would probably be a most commonly taught language in parts of Spain.

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Spring Quarter, 1994.

1) Using the Term *Strategy*

Strategy-based instruction refers to explicit classroom instruction directed at learners regarding their language learning and use strategies, and provided alongside instruction in the foreign language itself. The goal of strategy-based instruction is to help second language students become more aware of the ways in which they learn most effectively, ways in which they can enhance their own comprehension and production of the target language, and ways in which they can continue learning after leaving the classroom. A strategy is considered to be "effective" if it provides positive support to the students in their effort to learn the language or to communicate through its use. For the purposes of the teacher seminars in strategy-based instruction, the term **strategy** has not been distinguished from **substrategy**, **technique**, **tactic**, or any other terms, even though a good deal of subcategorizing has taken place.

For example, a classification scheme for speaking strategies was developed for an experimental treatment administered by three of the teachers who completed the seminar on strategy-based instruction--two intermediate French teachers and one intermediate Norwegian teacher (Cohen, Weaver, & Li 1995). The details of the experiment appear below. The classification included pre-speaking, speaking, and post-speaking strategies (Alcaya, Lybeck, & Mougel 1994; see Appendix). Just taking the before-speaking strategies, it is noted that there are four levels of specificity. The first is the category of pre-speaking strategies, the most general category. Then this category is subdivided into strategies for lowering anxiety (e.g., relaxation techniques and positive self-talk) and those for preparing and planning--for example, identifying the goal and purpose of the task, activating background knowledge, predicting what is going to happen, and planning possible responses. The prediction and planning strategies were further subdivided, with seven prediction strategies and six planning strategies. The purpose of this example is to show that during efforts to make strategy options explicit, the

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metalinguistic labels and sub-labels are less important than the descriptive labels for each level of specificity. These descriptive labels take much time and thought to develop adequately, and depend highly on empirical investigations for their authenticity and applicability to the given language tasks.

2) Conscious Use of Strategies

In the University of Minnesota research study, an effort was made to describe the actual strategies that the French and Norwegian intermediate learners in both the experimental and control classrooms utilized in performing speaking tasks. Accordingly, the focus was exclusively on the strategies that would be within the students' sphere of consciousness, whether receiving peripheral or focal attention from the student at the time. Thus, the approach concurred with Ellis' (1994) position that strategies no longer accessible for description though verbal report by the learner lose their significance as strategies. In order to describe how the experimental and control students' awareness of their strategy use was investigated, it is necessary to describe the study in a somewhat more detailed fashion. So what follows is a brief description of this experiment on strategies-based speaking instruction:

This study set out to examine the contribution that formal strategies-based instruction might offer learners in university-level foreign language classrooms, with a particular focus on speaking. The emphasis was on speaking because this area had received such limited attention in the research literature, although it is in many cases the most critical language skill of all. The study asked the following three research questions:

1. How does explicit instruction in language learning and use strategies affect students' speaking proficiency?
2. What is the relationship between reported frequency of strategy use and ratings of task performance on speaking tasks?
3. How do students characterize their rationale for strategy use while performing speaking tasks?

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In the study, 55 intermediate learners of foreign language at the University of Minnesota were either participants in a strategies-based instructional treatment or were Comparison students receiving the regular ten-week language course. Both groups filled out a pre-treatment questionnaire and then performed a series of three speaking tasks on a pre-post basis--a self-description in order that a visitor would recognize them at the airport, the retelling of a short folklore passage, and the description of their favorite city. The first and third tasks were rated for self-confidence in delivery, acceptability of grammar, and control over vocabulary. The second was rated for the identification of key story elements and for the ordering of these elements. The students also filled out the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) on a pre-posttest basis, as well as completing a Strategy Checklist after performing each of the three tasks. Twenty-one of the Experimental and Comparison group students also provided verbal report data while they filled out the posttest Strategy Checklists--indicating their rationale for their responses to certain items, as well as their reactions to the instrument itself.

With regard to the question of whether strategies-based instruction makes a difference in speaking performance, the finding was positive: the Experimental group outperformed the Comparison group on the third task, city description, in the posttest, after adjusting for pretest differences. In addition, while there were no significant differences in overall mean performance on any of the three tasks for the advanced intermediate and intermediate French students grouped together, there was one difference in looking at the French posttest task performance by scale. The Experimental group students were rated as higher on the vocabulary scale for the self-description task.

Since the checklists for strategies used before, during, and after each speaking task contained strategies that were, at least to some extent, designed specifically for the given task, the intention was to make a fine-tuned link between strategies and their use on specific language tasks. Such a link had been missing from previous research which reported strategy use in broad terms but not necessarily linked to specific tasks. The relationship between reported frequency of strategy use (pre-post) and ratings of task performance (pre-post) was complex. An increase in the use of certain strategies included on the Strategy Checklist was linked to an improvement in task performance for the Experimental group, in other instances only for the Comparison group, and in some cases for both groups. Furthermore, there were other strategies which could be considered less supportive to the students on the given speaking tasks. Some of these

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were more frequently reported by the Comparison group students, who did not benefit from having received the treatment.

For the Experimental group, it was seen that an increase in certain preparatory strategies (e.g., translating specific words, writing out sentences, practicing the pronunciation of words, striving to select the right words and writing these words down) and monitoring strategies (e.g., monitoring for grammar, paying attention to the pronunciation of words, and analyzing a story for its key elements) related to an increase on one or more of the rating scales--self-confidence, grammar, vocabulary, and identifying and ordering elements in a story. For the Comparison group, an increase in the use of certain strategies during the self-description and city description tasks was positively related to an increase in ratings on task performance. Of the fifteen total positive correlations for the Comparison group across tasks, eleven of these involved strategies from the "During" part of the Checklist on tasks #1 and #3. These included communication strategies, as well as learning strategies.

To reiterate what was said at the beginning of this section on consciousness, the emphasis in this study was on those strategies that could be explicitly identified by experimental and control subjects before, during, and after the three speaking tasks that they were asked to perform. The findings of the study would suggest that explicitly describing, discussing, and reinforcing strategies in the classroom--and thus raising them to the level of conscious awareness--can have a direct payoff on student outcomes. If instructors systematically introduce and reinforce strategies that can help students speak the target language more effectively, their students may well improve their performance on language tasks. Preserving the explicit and overt nature of the strategy training better enables students to consciously transfer specific strategies to new contexts. The study also seems to endorse the notion of integrating strategy training directly into the classroom instructional plan and embedding strategies into daily language tasks. In this way, the students get accustomed to having the teacher teach both the language content and the language learning and use strategies at the same time.

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3) Classifying the Strategies

The current seminar and research study received direct input from Oxford and from Chamot, and the general strategy categorization utilized reflected a combination of the taxonomy upon which Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was based and that used by Chamot in her research. Both the strategies used in explicit training and those assessed through the checklists combined both metacognitive, cognitive, affective, and social strategies; both observable and mental strategies; and a combination of learning and use strategies. The three selected tasks were purposely designed so as to elicit somewhat different kinds of strategies, and the checklists accompanying the different tasks were thus somewhat different from one another.

4) The Broader Concept of Strategic Competence

The series of University of Minnesota seminars on strategies-based instruction and the accompanying research reside squarely within the broadened concept of strategic competence. Just as this framework calls for describing how nonnative users of a language determine what they need to do in a given task and plan the specific action that they will take, execute their plan, and then assess their success at the task, so the current research design purposely focused on obtaining descriptions of the three stages in the speaking process (before, during, and after) through the checklists that the respondents were asked to fill out immediately following the completion of each task.

5) Linking Strategies to Learning Styles and Other Personality-related Variables

Although students in the University of Minnesota study were asked questions about their learning preferences, their reasons for studying the target language, and a series of demographic questions, their responses were not systematically related to the frequency of use of particular strategies on a given task. Such an analysis would be intended to determine the extent to which strategy use is conditioned by personal variables. Although we did conduct a series of preliminary correlations, the limited numbers of students did not seem to justify pursuing a more rigorous analysis of these data. Further, the statistical analysis for the study was already highly complex. Ultimately, the questionnaire data were used to determine the comparability of the

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demographics for the Experimental and Comparison groups, and the preliminary analysis performed on the data indicated that there were indeed few differences between these groups. Fortunately, a series of studies have been conducted by Oxford and colleagues in this area (see, for example, Oxford, in press). Among the studies are one on the influence of gender and motivation on EFL learning strategies (Kaylani 1996) and one on the influence of cultural factors on strategy use (Levine, Reves, & Leaver 1996).

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has provided working definitions of second language learning and language use terminology, has considered five problematic issues relating to the conceptualization and use of these terms, and has briefly demonstrated ways that one program for strategy-based instruction has dealt with these issues in the field.

While the terminological issues are in no way settled, there does appear to be a greater movement towards consensus. The growing demand for operationalizing the strategy taxonomies for the purpose of teacher and learner seminars has put a premium on generating strategy lists that are comprehensive, comprehensible, and functional. As more field work takes place, lists such as that of speaking strategies in this paper will become far more common. Already books are beginning to appear which take one of the skill areas, such as listening (see Mendelsohn 1994), and develop it fully at both a theoretical and a practical level. This is a most promising trend at a time when language learning and use strategies can have a major role in helping to shift the responsibility for learning off of the shoulders of the teachers and on to those of the learners.

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APPENDIX: SPEAKING STRATEGIES

[Compiled by C. Alcaya, K. Lybeck, & P. Mougel, teachers in the Experimental sections of the Speaking Strategies Experiment, NLRC/CARLA, Univ. of Minnesota, November 1994]

1) Before You Speak

Lower your anxiety

- deep breathing
- positive self-talk
- visualize yourself succeeding
- relaxation techniques
- feel prepared
- other anxiety-lowering techniques?

Prepare and plan

- Identify the goal and purpose of the task: what is it you are to learn/ demonstrate in this exercise?
- Ask for clarification of the task if you are unsure of its goal, purpose, or how you are to do it.
- Activate background knowledge; what do you already know about this situation/task?
- Relate the task to a similar situation; make associations.
- Predict what is going to happen:
  - Predict the vocabulary you will need. Make word maps, groupings.
  - Think of how you might circumlocute for vocabulary you do not know. Think of synonyms, antonyms, explanations, or nonverbal communication that can substitute.
  - Translate from English to French any words you predict you will need that you do not already know.
  - Predict the structures (grammar) you will need.
  - Review similar tasks in your textbook.

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    - Transfer sounds and structures from previously learned material to the new situation.
    - Predict the difficulties you might encounter.
- Plan your responses and contributions:
    - Organize your thoughts.
    - Prepare a general "outline" (use notes, keywords, draw pictures).
    - Predict what the other party is going to say.
    - Rehearse (practice silently, act out in front of a mirror, record yourself and listen).
    - Cooperate in all areas if it is a group task.
    - Encourage yourself to speak out, even though you might make some mistakes.

2) While You Are Speaking

Feeling in control

- Take your emotional temperature. If you find you are tense, try to relax, funnel your energy to your brain rather than your body (laugh, breathe deeply).
- Concentrate on the task, do not let what is going on around you distract you.
- Use your prepared materials (when allowed).
- Ask for clarification ("Is this what I am supposed to do?"), help (ask someone for a word, let others know when you need help), or verification (ask someone to correct pronunciation).
- Delay speaking. It's OK to take time to think out your response.
- Don't give up. Don't let your mistakes stop you. If you talk yourself into a corner or become frustrated, back up, ask for time, and start over in another direction.
- Think in the target language.
- Encourage yourself (use positive self-talk).

Be involved in the conversation

- Direct your thoughts away from the situation (e.g., test!) and concentrate on the conversation.

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- Listen to your conversation partner. Often you will be able to use the structure or vocabulary they use in your own response.
- Cooperate to negotiate meaning and to complete the task.
- Anticipate what the other person is going to say based on what has been said so far.
- Empathize with your partner. Try to be supportive and helpful.
- Take reasonable risks. Don't guess wildly, but use your good judgment to go ahead and speak when it is appropriate, rather than keeping silent for fear of making a mistake.

Monitor your performance

- Monitor your speech by paying attention to your vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation while speaking.
- Self-correct. If you hear yourself making a mistake, back up and fix it.
- Activate your new vocabulary. Try not to rely only on familiar words.
- Imitate the way native speakers talk.
- Compensate by using strategies such as circumlocution , synonyms, guessing which word to use, getting help, using cognates, making up words, using gestures.
- Adjust or approximate your message. If you can't communicate the complexity of your idea, communicate it simply. Through a progression of questions and answers, you are likely to get your point across, rather than shutting down for a lack of ability to relate the first idea.
- Switch (when possible) to a topic for which you know the words. (Do not do this to avoid practicing new material, however!)

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3) After You Speak

Evaluate your performance

- Reward yourself with positive self-talk for completing the task. Give yourself a personally meaningful reward for a particularly good performance.
- Evaluate how well the activity was accomplished (Did you complete the task, achieve the purpose, accomplish the goal? If not, what will you do differently next time?)
- Identify the problem areas.
- Share with peers and instructors (ask for and give feedback, share learning strategies).
- Be aware of others' thoughts and feelings.

Plan for future tasks

- Plan for how you will improve for the next time.
- Look up vocabulary and grammar forms you had difficulty remembering.
- Review the strategies checklist to see what you might have forgotten.
- Ask for help or correction.
- Work with proficient users of the target language.
- Keep a learning log (document strategies used and task outcomes, find out what works for you).

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