



## ABSTRACT

This research was carried out with the intention of investigating the effect that explicit instruction of listening and vocabulary strategies had on third level university students of tourism. In order to fulfill this purpose, a qualitative study was conducted in which the following techniques were applied: a background questionnaire reflected the participants' educational background; a Strategy Inventory for Language Learning examined the learning strategies used by students when learning English and helped to design strategy instruction; nine lesson plans were developed to explicitly teach some top-down and bottom-up listening strategies and some vocabulary strategies as well; a strategy checklist revealed the strategies that were used by students after strategy instruction; and finally, a pre-test and post-test, a survey, and an interview were administered. The findings reflected that in fact, strategy instruction helped students improve vocabulary acquisition and listening which led to the conclusion that it is advisable to embed explicit strategy instruction in regular English programs.

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Maestría en Lengua Inglesa y Lingüística Aplicada

ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF STRATEGY-BASED INSTRUCTION ON  
VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AND THE LISTENING SKILL

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del grado de Magister en  
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AUTOR: Mónica Patricia Abad Célleri

DIRECTOR: Dr. Anne Carr

Cuenca – Ecuador

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Al presentar esta tesis como uno de los requisitos previos para la obtención del título de Maestría en Lengua Inglesa y Lingüística Aplicada, por la Universidad de Cuenca, autorizo al Centro de Información Juan Bautista Vásquez para que haga de esta tesis un documento disponible para su lectura, según las normas de la universidad.

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Mónica Abad

Cuenca, mayo de 2011.



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This thesis is dedicated to my daughters, the motor of my life, who have accompanied me during a long journey of sacrifices and hard work that were necessary for the completion of the master's studies.



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## INTRODUCTION

Due to the influence that behaviorism and thus, conditioning has had in education, it seems that some students (even adults) still prefer to be told what to do and only do what teachers say and what it is necessary not to fail a course. Some experts contend that it is not possible to achieve proficiency in a language if this kind of attitude remains because for communicative competence to take place, autonomous learning is an essential requisite (Oxford 201). For language teachers who try to be better in their daily practice and really want to be facilitators who guide and encourage students to develop their skills, it might be significant to find out how to help students achieve this language learning autonomy. Some researchers point out that strategy-based instruction can help students become autonomous learners and ease the burden that language learning involves (Cohen 1).

On the other hand, listening is considered an essential skill for learning a second language and it appears to be one of the most difficult for students, especially because it seems that some teachers believe that students who do not have hearing problems are well prepared to do listening activities without taking into consideration that they need to be taught how to listen in order to be able to listen to learn. In the same vein, learning a language involves learning a great deal of vocabulary (and thus considerable memory work) which will be the foundation for language learning and which is considered a very demanding task; however, some teachers tend not to bother with spending time in teaching students different ways of learning vocabulary because of their assumption that learners already know how to handle vocabulary learning appropriately and expect to pick it up on their own.

Therefore, this research project consisted of explicitly teaching certain strategies for listening and vocabulary learning to third level university students of tourism using strategy-based instruction in order to analyze its effects. This thesis is divided into five chapters. In chapter one there is a description of some important aspects related to the study as well as the objectives, importance and research questions. Chapter two provides a literature review of the most important aspects of language learning strategies, strategy-based instruction, listening and vocabulary on which this work is based. In chapter three the methodology used for the study is presented and thus, there is a description of the participants, material and



procedures. The results and analysis are presented in chapter four and finally, the conclusion and some recommendations appear in chapter five.

## CHAPTER 1

### DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM :

In learning a second or foreign language, vocabulary seems to play a crucial role as many authors have pointed out. For example, Krashen states that "when students travel, they don't carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries." (qtd. in Nunnally 1). Although the relevance of vocabulary in language learning, there seem to be some language textbooks and some teachers who do not encourage students to learn vocabulary successfully. Therefore, students seem to find it very difficult to accomplish the purpose of vocabulary learning, which is "the ability to remember and use words in different contexts whenever is needed" (Yongqi 1). "Vocabulary learning is more often than not left to the learners" (Takac 2) and the "great majority of learners seem to favor some form of mechanical strategy such as repetition over deeper, more complex ones, such as contextual guessing or metacognitive strategies" (Segler 2). In addition, Ellis states that "many of the traditional techniques teachers and students use to learn vocabulary do not work because most students, not just those with learning problems, rarely remember the meanings of new terms beyond the test" (Ellis 2).

On the other hand, listening is considered a vital skill which provides foundation for speaking. According to Rost, listening provides input for learners and "without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin. Listening is thus fundamental to speaking". (qtd. in Richards 235 ). Sheila Thorn argues that listening can be considered one of the most difficult language skills because it involves a multiplicity of skills such as recognizing phonological features, idiomatic expressions, fillers, and so on; understanding the main idea and details of what is being said, and many more; therefore, it is very common for students to complain that "English people speak too fast!" (Thorn 1). "Students do not have an innate understanding of what effective listeners do; therefore, it is the responsibility of teachers to share that knowledge with them "(Pekin et al.3).



During my teaching years, I have been able to notice the difficulty students face when doing listening tasks. They do not seem to know how to approach these activities and they just want to understand everything they hear; therefore, most of the time they get frustrated when they are not able to do it and thus, they give up easily. Moreover, it seems to be quite complicated for them to learn long lists of words and apply them in different contexts, let alone store them in the long term memory. Therefore, I have always been curious about the existence of a "magical approach" to teaching these skills, so that my students enjoy my classes and at the same time learn more.

### **1.2 OBJECTIVES:**

General Objective: to improve the students' ability for listening and storing a substantial number of words in their long term memory.

Specific Objectives:

- To analyze learner's background
- To identify students' learning strategies through the encouragement of learner's reflection.
- To select with the students the best strategies to successful listening and vocabulary acquisition
- To give students the opportunity to practice the chosen strategies
- To evaluate the effects of teaching and using learning strategies in the classroom.

### **1.3 JUSTIFICATION AND IMPORTANCE:**

Due to the significant role that vocabulary and listening play in language learning and the fact that students seem not to be able to handle them in an effective way this study was designed with the intention of helping the participants overcome these difficulties, and thus, become better learners. Since language learning strategies seem to be favored by many researchers because of the fact that the use of them promotes effectiveness, proficiency, motivation, self-direction, autonomy, and most important of all, communicative competence (Oxford 8), it appeared to be significant to apply language learning strategies to try to enhance vocabulary learning and



listening. In addition, since some researchers agree with the fact that the field of language strategies is a new field and more research is needed in order to clarify certain issues that are not clear enough (Macaro 323), this study can add some more knowledge to this controversial field.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How does explicit instruction of language learning and use strategies affect the acquisition of vocabulary and the listening skill?
2. Is the increase of strategy use related to a similar increase in task performance for both the more and less proficient learners?



## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

##### 2.1.1 The Importance of Language Learning Strategies

Nowadays, in current teaching and learning, teachers have a more demanding role than they used to when they performed traditional instruction. They tend to be considered guides who help students construct their own learning; therefore, teachers not only have the responsibility of making sure students learn certain facts, but also that they learn how to learn successfully. In second and foreign language teaching, teachers can take advantage of certain tools in order to achieve this goal. Language learning strategies appear to be these tools; therefore, many authors recommend the teaching and use of a wide range of learning strategies in the classroom, so that students can select the strategies that work best for them (Oxford 13). In fact, many modern cognitive psychologists emphasize that if present education is to improve, the most important goal of the teaching-learning process is to support students so that they become independent, autonomous and efficient learners (Ze-sheng 2). The role of teachers in promoting autonomy may be crucial nowadays especially when McGarry points out that "the majority of students are still being taught in ways which promote dependence and leave them ill-equipped to apply their school-learned knowledge and skills to the world beyond the classroom" (qtd. in Ze-sheng 2).

The interest in language learning strategies appeared during the late 1970s when the shift from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered instruction became very important due to the change from a behaviorist paradigm to a constructivist one. Researchers such as Oxford, Cohen, O'Malley & Chamot, Wenden, Brown, Rubin & Thompson, Mendelsohn, McDonough, among others, have made important



contributions to this field and suggest a possible relationship between strategy use and second language learning success (authors cited in Cohen et al. 3). Their work also provides some evidence that learners can be helped to use strategies more effectively and they hold the assumption that given effective learning strategies, ineffective learners could be in a better position to solve their problems in language learning. In addition, researchers have shown that efficient L2 learners tend to use a combination of language learning strategies more than unsuccessful learners do. Some researchers agree that efficient learners frequently guess accurately; are willing to communicate; are often uninhibited; are willing to make mistakes; are looking for language patterns and analyze the speech of others and their own; take advantage of all practice opportunities; monitor their speech as well as that of others; pay attention to meaning; enjoy doing grammar exercises; have lots of confidence and a good self-image; among others (Macaro 323).

However, several criticisms have been made of this field of research, particularly pertaining to a lack of theoretical framework (Macaro 322). For example, Kellerman dismissed learner strategy instruction as irrelevant on the basis that learners have already developed strategic competence in their first language (L1) and can therefore simply transfer it to their L2 (qtd. in Macaro 322). Reese-Miller argued that there was no demonstrated causal relationship between strategy awareness and L2 learning success, that few strategies were transferable beyond a specific task, that not all strategy users appeared to be, or to become, good learners of the L2, and that there is a lack of clarity in the definition of what a strategy actually is. Bialystok argued that there was "little consensus in the literature concerning either the definition or the identification of language learning strategies" (qtd. in Macaro 322). D'ornyei and Skehan argued "that a strategy cannot be either cognitive or emotional or behavioral, and posited that there was no theoretical explanation for how strategies might be related to skills" (qtd. in Macaro 322). D'ornyei has also questioned the existence of strategies because, as he states, researchers have not been able to explain the difference between "engaging in an ordinary learning activity and a strategic learning activity" (qtd. in Macaro 322).

Although the language learning strategy field continues to be characterized by "no consensus", as O'Malley et al. points out, and "more research is needed in order to come up with an underpinning theory", language learning strategies "should not be



rejected as important tools to enhance language learning and promote learners' autonomy" (qtd. in Macaro 323).

Rebecca Oxford defines learning strategies as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferrable to new situations"(8).

The main goal of language learning strategies is the achievement of communicative competence (Oxford 8). According to Canale and Swain, communicative competence involves four different components such as grammatical competence (the knowledge of lexical items, rules of morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology), discourse competence (intersentential relationships or the ability to connect sentences to form a meaningful whole) , sociolinguistic competence (the understanding of the social context) and strategic competence ( the way people manipulate the language in order to achieve communicative outcomes, so they can enhance the effectiveness of communication or compensate for breakdowns) (qtd in Brown 266). Language learning strategies can foster each aspect of communicative competence and thus, help to pursue the main goal at the end.

Language learning strategies encourage learners to rely on themselves, be more responsible and be managers of their own learning and thus, not to do only what the teacher tells them to do, but go the extra mile to become successful in the target language (Oxford 10). Language learning strategies, states Oxford, have the following characteristics:

- They are problem oriented, which means that learners use them in order to solve a problem or to accomplish a task.
- They are influenced by learners' individual features such as learning style, motivation level, aptitude, degree of awareness, stage of learning, age, sex, nationality, ethnicity, personality traits, and purpose for learning the language as well as some external factors such as task requirements and teacher expectations.
- Some strategies cannot be observed easily, which might constitute a setback for teachers and researchers.
- They are always conscious actions on the part of the learner; however, they can become automatic after steady practice.



- They are easy to teach and modify.

Unfortunately, there is no one well defined system to classify language learning strategies, but a great variety of language learning strategy classification systems which make strategy description difficult for researches (Oxford 14). For example, O'Malley et al. established a range of 26 language learning strategies distributed in 3 broad categories of metacognitive, cognitive, and social-affective. Metacognitive strategies according to them are defined as the steps taken to prepare for, manage and control one's own learning activity. Examples of metacognitive strategies are advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, functional planning, self-monitoring, delayed production, self-evaluation and self-reinforcement. Cognitive strategies are related to the direct manipulation of incoming information in ways that improve learning, for example, repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note-taking, deduction, recombination, imagery, auditory representation, keyword, contextualization, elaboration, transfer and inference. Finally, social-affective strategies are used when interacting with others such as cooperation and asking questions for clarification (O'Malley et al. 24).

On the other hand, Oxford classifies language learning strategies into two major classes: direct and indirect. Each class is subdivided into three groups which are further subdivided into more groups. The following chart summarizes this way of classifying language learning strategies (Oxford 16-21):

DIRECT STRATEGIES	<u>Memory</u> <u>Strategies</u>	Creating mental linkages	Grouping
			Associating/elaborating
			Placing new words into a context.
		Applying images and sounds	Using imagery
			Semantic mapping
			Using keywords
			Representing sounds in memory
		Reviewing well	Structured reviewing
		Employing action	Using physical response or sensation
			Using mechanical techniques
		Practicing	Repeating
			Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems
			Recognizing and using formulas and patterns



	<u>Cognitive Strategies</u>	Receiving and sending messages	Recombining
			Practicing naturalistically
			Getting the idea quickly
			Using resources for receiving and sending messages
		Analyzing and reasoning	Reasoning deductively
			Analyzing expressions
			Analyzing contrastively (across languages)
			Translating
			Transferring
		Creating structure for input and output	Taking notes
			Summarizing
			Highlighting
	<u>Compensation Strategies</u>	Guessing intelligently	Using linguistic clues
			Using other clues
		Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing	Switching to the mother tongue
			Getting help
			Using mime or gesture
			Avoiding communication partially or totally
			Selecting the topic
			Adjusting or approximating the message
			Coining words
			Using a circumlocution or synonym
INDIRECT STRATEGIES	<u>Metacognitive Strategies</u>	Centering your learning	Overviewing and linking with already known material
			Paying attention
			Delaying speech production to focus on listening
		Arranging and planning your learning	Finding out about language learning
			Organizing
			Setting goals and objectives
			Identifying the purpose of a language task (purposely listening/reading/writing)
			Planning for a language task
			Seeking practice opportunities
		Evaluating your learning	Self-monitoring
			Self-evaluating
		Lowering your anxiety	Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation
			Using music
			Using laughter



	<u>Affective Strategies</u>	Encouraging yourself	Making positive statements
			Taking risks wisely
			Rewarding yourself
		Taking your emotional temperature	Listening to your body
			Using a checklist
			Writing a language learning diary
	<u>Social Strategies</u>	Asking questions	Discussing your feelings with someone else
			Asking for clarification or verification
		Cooperating with others	Asking for correction
			Cooperating with peers
			Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
		Empathizing with others	Developing cultural understanding
			Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings

Table 1 Language Learning Strategies according to Oxford.

Direct strategies “directly involve the target language” and all of them require “mental processing of the language”; however, the three groups of direct strategies differ from each other in the purpose for language processing. For example, memory strategies have the purpose of helping learners “store and retrieve new information”; cognitive strategies “enable learners to understand and produce new language by many different means” and compensation strategies “allow learners to use the language despite their often large gaps in knowledge” (Oxford 37).

In the past, especially before the invention of writing, memory strategies (or mnemonics) seem to have been frequently used for passing messages. After this, and particularly due to the technological advances that exist nowadays, people appear to rely more and more on these devices instead of on their memory. This can cause some problems in language learning because memory strategies are considered powerful tools, especially for vocabulary learning. Memory strategies are based on the following principles: arranging things in order, making associations, and reviewing. All of these principles involve meaning because “the arrangement and associations must be personally meaningful to the learner, and the material to be reviewed must have significance” if memory strategies are to work (Oxford 39). Cognitive strategies seem to be the most used by students and are essential in learning a new language because they “involve manipulation or transformation of the target language” (Oxford 43). Finally, compensation strategies are “intended to make



up for an inadequate repertoire of grammar and, especially, of vocabulary" (Oxford 47).

Indirect strategies do not directly involve the target language, but they contribute powerfully to learning. Unfortunately, as Oxford points out, indirect strategies have not received enough attention and there has been the tendency of focusing only on strategies that involve cognitive functions (11). Indirect strategies are divided into metacognitive, affective and social. Metacognitive strategies are "actions which go beyond purely cognitive devices, and which provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process" (Oxford 136). Even though metacognitive strategies are essential for successful learning, research indicates that students do not use these strategies regularly and that they are not aware of the usefulness of them (Oxford 138). Affective strategies can help learners to take control of affective factors (such as emotions, attitudes, motivations, values, and so on) which might highly influence the learning process because "language learning is indisputably an emotional and interpersonal process as well as a cognitive and metacognitive affair" (Oxford 11). Finally, social strategies help learners in the interaction with people, and, since language is communication, they enhance it as well.

Oxford emphasizes that direct and indirect strategies are interrelated and support each other; therefore, they work best when used in combination. She compares direct strategies with the Performer in a stage play while indirect strategies will be the Director of the play who focuses, organizes, guides, checks, corrects, coaches, encourages and cheers the Performer as well as ensures that the Performer works cooperatively with other actors in the play (Oxford 15). The author also mentions that overlapping of strategies is inevitable, for example "metacognitive self-assessment and planning often require reasoning, which is itself a cognitive strategy" (Oxford 16).

This system of classification has been recognized as a comprehensive and reliable system (Macaro 322); however, as it was stated before there is no consensus on the field of language learning strategies and as Oxford points out, "any existing system of strategies is only a proposal to be tested through practical classroom use and through research" (17). The author also states that there is no



agreement on "whether it is or ever will be possible to create a real, scientifically validated hierarchy of strategies"(17).

Students use strategies all the time, some of them might be appropriate and others might not. For example, when students have received bad grades and affirm that in fact they did study, it is likely that they did not use the correct strategies for learning. As some research shows, language learning strategies are good tools for teachers that are interested in helping students become successful; therefore, it seems relevant to try new strategies in class in order to help students to develop "a more practiced eye, a more receptive ear, a more fluent tongue, a more involved heart, and a more responsive mind" (Oxford IX).

#### **2.1.2 Strategy-based instruction**

Strategy based instruction is a learner-centered approach to teaching which helps students to become more efficient, independent, confident and more motivated learners (Cohen 4). The role of strategy instruction is that students become aware or conscious of the strategies they are using and be able to evaluate the effectiveness of them. "Strategy training is most effective when students learn why and when specific strategies are important, how to use these strategies, and how to transfer them to new situations" (Oxford 12). Besides strategies, strategy instruction deals with feelings, beliefs and fears, as Wenden points out, "unless learners alter some of their old beliefs about learning, they will not be able to take advantage of the strategies they acquire in strategy training" (qtd. in Oxford 201). The need for strategy training in second and foreign language learning is emphasized by many authors who state that even though learning is part of the human condition, "conscious skill in self-directed learning and in strategy use must be sharpened through training" because the achievement of communicative competence, which is the goal of language learning, cannot be acquired if students only wait to be "spoon-fed" by teachers (Oxford 201).

Before starting strategy training it is very important to assess the strategies that students currently use in order to design the strategy program that will be appropriate for them and that will help them learn more effectively. Moreover, it is crucial to keep



in mind that strategy training should not be abstract and theoretical, but should be highly practical and useful for students (Oxford 200-201).

Oxford mentions three ways in which strategies can be taught: awareness training, one-time strategy training, and long-term strategy training. The first way introduces the idea of language learning strategies in general and how they help to perform certain tasks; however, learners do not have to use the strategies in specific language tasks. The second one involves learning and practicing one or more strategies with actual language tasks usually those found in the regular language learning program. Generally, the training includes the value of the strategy, when and how to use it, and how to monitor and evaluate the learner's own performance. However, it is not connected to a long-term sequence of strategy training and thus, "it is appropriate for learners who have a need for particular, identifiable, and very targeted strategies that can be taught in one or just a few sessions". Finally, the third way is the most effective one because learners learn and practice strategies with actual language tasks for a longer period of time in which a great number of strategies can be covered (Oxford 203).

Oxford also presents a model for strategy training that has eight steps and that it is especially useful for long-term training. Assuming that the students' current learning strategies have been previously assessed, this model suggests the following steps:

1. Determine the learners' needs and the time available: the first step focuses on the consideration of important factors such as what the learners are, what their needs are, what strategies they have been using according to the strategy assessment results and what strategies the teacher thinks are the ones that students need to learn.
2. Select strategies well: strategies must be selected according to the learners' needs and characteristics. A broad focus in strategy training consists on combining different categories of strategies (for instance affective, compensation and metacognitive). However, this broad focus does not "allow precise assessment of training effectiveness in reference to any specific strategy" (Oxford 205). A narrow focus in strategy training is centered on one or two learning strategies, which reduces the learning load for the student and



allows a more precise strategy training assessment; however, it "does not allow for multiple strategies to interact to maximize learning potential" (Oxford 205). According to Oxford, an excellent way to approach strategy training is the combination approach in which many strategies are presented to the learners (broad focus) who rate subjectively the use of different strategies in order to select (according to the ratings) specific strategies for a more focus training (narrow focus). Strategy training has best results when the learners themselves choose the strategies they want to learn "since learning strategies are the epitome of learner choice and self-direction" (Oxford 206).

3. Consider integration of strategy training: strategy instruction is more efficient when it is integrated into the regular language learning program.
4. Consider motivational issues: explaining to students how the use of strategies will help them to become effective and successful learners could be motivating for them; however Oxford suggests that teachers should also give students grades or credit for the attainment of new strategies. In addition, the author advises teachers to be "sensitive to learners' original strategy preferences and the motivation that propels these preferences", so that teachers do not expect students to change their strategies immediately after strategy training and understand that there could be some students who might be reluctant to change their strategies. In this case, teachers should "try new strategies gently and gradually, without whisking away students' security blankets, no matter how dysfunctional teachers consider those old strategies to be" (Oxford 207).
5. Prepare materials and activities: Oxford states that current teaching materials for language learning are good enough for language learning instruction. She also suggests the development of handouts for learners on how and when to use the chosen strategies with which they can develop a strategy handbook by themselves.
6. Conduct completely informed training: When carrying out strategy training, there are four ways to inform learners about strategies. The first way (or level A) is an encouragement of strategy use in general without special training, in which "stimulating activities promote an unfocused, unselected, wide range of strategies without providing any kind of special training or information about the strategies" and thus, learners are encouraged to use whatever strategy



they want (Oxford 257). The problem with this level of information is that “learners might not focus on the most appropriate strategies, might not know how to assess the value of particular strategies or how and when to transfer strategies to new tasks” (Oxford 257). Blind training (or level B of information) consists of using tasks or materials that call for the use of particular strategies, which are “hidden strategies” because the students use them unconsciously. Even though students seem to improve the performance on the specific tasks, and since no information is provided about the value of those strategies, most of the students are left in the dark about the importance of the strategies being used and thus, are unable to continue to use the strategy or to transfer it to other relevant situations (Brown qtd. in Oxford 257). Level C is informed training which consists on giving some information about the significance of the strategies (how they work and why) being trained as well as letting the learners use the strategies. Informed training is more effective than blind training because students improve performance on the task, maintain the strategy across time and show “some degree of transfer the strategy to other similar tasks” (Brown qtd. in Oxford 257). Finally, level D is completely informed training (strategy-plus-control training or self-control training) in which complete information about how to use, control and transfer strategies are given to learners. According to Brown, most learners perform best with this informed training because “they are not only instructed in the use of strategy, but are also explicitly instructed in how to employ, monitor, check and evaluate that strategy” (qtd. in Oxford 257). Oxford suggests the following steps to present a new strategy (208):

- a. Let students try a language task without any training in the target strategy.
- b. Let students comment on the strategies they used.
- c. Teacher explains and demonstrates the new strategy building on what the students comment before and showing how they might either improve use of their current strategies or employ an entirely new strategy.
- d. Learners apply the new strategy to the same language task or a similar one.



7. Evaluate the strategy training: self-assessment plays a very important role in strategy training because it let students practice the strategies of self-monitoring and self-evaluating and gives teachers useful data to evaluate the whole process. Oxford mentions that the following aspects can be useful for assessing the training: task improvement, general skill improvement, maintenance of the new strategy over time, transfer of strategy to other relevant tasks, and improvement in learner attitudes.
8. Revise the strategy training: the data obtained in the previous step might suggest possible revisions for materials and some problems during the process, which leads to consider step one again (consider the learners' needs) in order to improve the cycle.

According to YIN Ze-sheng, learner autonomy may be promoted through strategy-based instruction because when learners understand their own learning processes (what, why, and how they are trying to learn), they can exert some control over these processes and thus, they tend to take more responsibility for their own learning and become more autonomous (1). The goal of this kind of instruction, as many authors agree, is to help language students become more aware of what kinds of strategies are available to them, understand how to organize and use strategies systematically and effectively given their learning-style preferences, and learn when and how to transfer the strategies to new language learning and using contexts. In fact, many research findings indicate that strategies-based instruction is one of the effective practices of pedagogy in classroom instructional situations, especially in this era when the concept of "best methods can be explored in more than one sense of the term after decades of methodological searches for the best methods ended with a non-unitary solution" (Ze-sheng 2). Cohen states that strategy based instruction "emphasizes both explicit and implicit integration of language learning and use strategies in the language classroom" and he also mentions that this instruction has the following components, which are similar to the ones described by Oxford (Cohen 4):



1. **Strategy Preparation:** to determine how much knowledge of and ability to use strategies the learners already have (students are likely to have developed some strategies, but they do not know how to use them systematically).
2. **Strategy Awareness-Raising:** to alert learners to the presence of strategies they might never have thought about or used. Awareness-raising activities are always explicit to help students become aware about what the learning process may consist of; their learning style preferences or general approaches to learning; the kinds of strategies that they already employ, as well as those suggested by the teacher or classmates; the amount of responsibility that they take for their learning and approaches that can be used to evaluate the students' strategy use.
3. **Strategy Training:** to teach how, when, and why certain strategies (whether alone, in sequence, or in clusters) can be used to facilitate language learning and use activities. Teachers describe, model, and give examples of potentially useful strategies. They elicit additional examples from students based on the students' own learning experiences; they lead small-group or whole-class discussions about strategies (e.g., the rationale behind strategy use, planning an approach to a specific activity, evaluating the effectiveness of chosen strategies); and they can encourage their students to experiment with a broad range of strategies.
4. **Strategy Practice:** to encourage students to practice the strategies that have already been dealt with and allow students enough time to try them out on numerous tasks. These activities should include explicit references to the strategies being used in completion of the task. Students plan the strategies that they will use for a particular activity, have their attention called to the use of particular strategies while they are being used, or analyze their use of strategies (and their relative effectiveness) after the activity has ended.
5. **Personalization of Strategies:** to allow learners personalize what they have learned about these strategies, evaluate to see how they are using the strategies, and then look to ways that they can transfer the use of these strategies to other contexts.



In strategy-based instruction, as Cohen says, the teachers' role is to see that strategies are integrated into everyday class materials and are both explicitly and implicitly embedded into the language tasks to provide for contextualized strategy practice. Teachers may start with the established course materials and then determine which strategies might be inserted, start with a set of strategies that they wish to focus on and design activities around them, or insert strategies spontaneously into the lessons whenever it seems appropriate. Although strategies are especially important for less proficient students, even the best students do not use strategies as thoughtfully and flexibly as they could (Cohen 7).

According to Zhang, efficient and effective practice under the guidance of the classroom teacher and frequent use of strategies can help learners to use them effectively and flexibly, and, more often than not, automatically for optimal learning results (5). This means that the transition from strategies to skills is a gradual one, and often it needs sufficient practice and cognitive modification in the learner.

"Strategy teaching does not require commercial materials, nor does it need to be a separate part of the curriculum; it does not consist of "tricks" or isolated activities. Effective strategies instruction is not an "add-on" or a separate content area; rather, strategies instruction is used to support language learning and to accomplish authentic, meaningful language tasks." (Zhang 5)

## **2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING IN LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

### **2.2.1 Listening as the "Cinderella" skill**

Among the four skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) that are necessary to develop when learning a language, it seems that listening has received the least attention of all. One of the reasons for this fact might be that listening has been considered a passive skill which does not require instruction because it would develop by itself when enough exposure takes place (Osada 54). As Nunan points out, listening has been the "Cinderella" skill which has been left out because of its "elder sister" – speaking (qtd. in Richards et al. 238). He also states that the knowledge of a second language is measured according how well people can speak



and write in the target language; therefore, listening and reading are considered as "secondary skills -- means to other ends, rather than ends in themselves" (238). In addition, Mendelsohn states that teachers expect that students acquire the listening skill by "osmosis" because it is believed that the more students listen, the better they acquire the skill through the experience (qtd. in Osada 54). Notwithstanding, listening has come a long way to the point of being considered a crucial skill in language learning.

### 2.2.2 Brief history of Listening

In order to understand how listening has gained importance, it is necessary to make a brief review of how this skill has been looked upon during the history of language teaching. Many years ago with the traditional Grammar Translation method listening received no attention at all because the goal of learning a language was to be able to read in the target language (especially classical languages such as Greek and Latin) and it was acknowledged that the target language would probably never be used for communication (Larsen-Freeman 4). On the other hand, the Direct Method focused primarily on teaching listening since oral communication was the main focus; however, "there was no systematic attempt at teaching listening or at developing listening strategies in the learners" because there was the expectation that the learner will eventually develop comprehension of what was heard (Flowerdew et.al 6).

The Audio-Lingual method focused on using the target language communicatively and emphasized listening to pronunciation and grammar which had to be repeated over and over through drills and exercises. However, according to Flowerdew et al., the main focus of this approach is the manipulation of structures and not the development of listening strategies (10). The Audio-Lingual method was developed in a time when the behavioural paradigm was at its peak. This paradigm explained learning as habit formation; therefore, languages had to be learned by imitation and a lot of practice. According to Meyer, this traditional approach to listening, "which treated it as an enabling skill for production-oriented activities has trapped students in a frenzied 'Hear it, repeat it!', 'Hear it, answer it!' or 'Hear it, translate it!' nightmare" (qtd. in Osada 54).



Listening comprehension started to gain importance in the mid-1960s when Rivers stated that speaking by itself could not be considered communication unless what was being said was comprehended by others; therefore, he claimed that "teaching the comprehension of spoken speeches is of primary importance if the communication aim is to be reached" (qtd. in Osada 55). After that, and with the development of cognitive science, little by little, listening comprehension started to receive more focus and it attracted a lot of attention during the 1980s when Krashen stated in his Natural Approach that teachers should provide learners with comprehensible input and that learners would learn better if production was delayed until speech emerged (Brown 108). During the 1980s researchers were interested in discovering the intricacies of listening comprehension and during the 1990s aural comprehension in second and foreign language acquisition became a crucial area of study (Osada 55).

In addition, more new ideas about listening in a second language were derived from research on listening in a first language which stated the importance of this skill. For example, Brown demonstrated the importance of "developing oracy (the ability to listen and speak) as well as literacy, in school" (qtd. in Richards et al 238). Before his work, as Nunan mentions, it was considered that listening and speaking did not need instruction (unlike reading and writing) because "these skills were automatically bequeathed to native speakers" (qtd. in Richards et al 238). Nowadays many authors consider listening as a paramount skill needed to succeed in many fields such as college, business and life in general. According to Conway, "listening is the foundation of critical thinking and is a stronger factor than reading skills or academic aptitude in the achievement and retention of college students" (qtd. in Thompson et al. 225). The U.S. Department of Labor "identified listening, along with mathematics, reading, writing, and speaking, as an essential ability graduates must possess in order to function competently in the workplace" (Thompson et al. 225). For this reason, more and more research is being done as an attempt to include listening in the school curriculum.

More recently, the approach to teach listening involves real communication and thus real language in real time, and also instructors are focusing not only on the product of listening, but on the process as well (Vandergrift 3).



Currently, listening is considered a complex, dynamically, interpretive, active language process because listeners do not "passively sample incoming messages", but they are "actively involved in predicting topic developments, using a series of definable strategies for listening and relating what they hear to their personal stores of prior knowledge", so that they are "dynamically engaged in the construction of meaning" (Murphy 27). According to the International Listening Association "listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages" (Thompson et al. 226). As it can be seen from the above definitions, none of them refer to listening as a passive skill, on the contrary, they show the complexity that this skill comprises. As Celce-Murcia contends, listeners manage to understand spoken messages by integrating a great deal of sources such as "phonetic, phonological, prosodic, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. The fact that we achieve all this in real time as the message unfolds make listening complex, dynamic and fragile" (qtd. in Osada 56).

### **2.2.3 Listening and Learning a Second or Foreign Language**

In learning a second language, listening comprehension appears to be an essential skill. According to the International Listening Association, students spend 45 percent of a day on listening and they are expected to acquire 85 percent of the knowledge they have by listening (RFB&D 1). Most of the time people face and accomplish different daily activities that require their listening ability, for instance, listening to announcements in airports or stations; listening to the radio news, weather forecast, songs, etc.; participating in a face-to-face conversation; watching a film or a TV program; listening to a talk or a lecture; communicating on the phone; receiving instructions on how to do something or get somewhere; being interviewed and so on, just to name a few. Therefore, it seems of vital importance that second language teachers spend a considerable amount of their teaching time on the mastering of this skill. Rost has pointed out that "listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner. Without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin. Listening is thus fundamental to speaking" (qtd. in Richards et.al 239).

Even though listening has been acknowledged as an active skill which involves many processes and as a crucial skill for students in general (let alone for non-native



language learners), it has still a long way to go because there appear to be certain gaps in theory and practice, and in many language programs and classrooms it is still considered as the least important of all the skills and thus, it is poorly taught and neglected (Osada 57).

#### **2.2.4 Strategies for listening tasks**

It is of paramount importance to understand that in fact, there is a great difference between hearing and listening. Hearing takes place when the ear perceives sound; therefore it can be said that it is just a simple physical act that people who do not have hearing problems can accomplish easily. Listening, on the other hand, is a very complex process that not everybody is able to do it properly because it involves "physiological and cognitive processes at different levels as well as attention to contextual and socially coded acoustic clues" (Vandergrift 4). Therefore, when listening takes place, people carry out a variety of activities such as discriminating between sounds; understanding vocabulary and grammatical structures; interpreting stress, intention and socio-cultural context; constructing and representing meaning; negotiating meaning; creating meaning; among others. Listening is a "complex, active process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know" (Vandergrift 2).

In order to have a better understanding of what listening is it seems fundamental to comprehend the complex cognitive processes that underlie this skill. Many researchers agree that when listening comprehension takes place, the brain seems to process the information in two ways: bottom-up and top down. A bottom-up process occurs when the brain decodes the perceived sounds from "the smallest meaningful units (phonemes) to complete texts". Therefore, as Nunan states, phonemic units are "decoded and linked together to form words, words are linked together to form phrases, phrases are linked together to form utterances, and utterances are linked together to form complete meaningful texts" as if it was a linear process in which meaning is the last step (qtd. in Richards et al. 239). According to Field, the decoding process begins with a matching process in which acoustic features reach the listener's ears to be transformed in units of language according to the knowledge of the language the listener possess such as sounds, words, chunks



and grammar. He underscores the fact that sounds and words are not present as "independent units in the speech stream" because "it is the listener who brings form and meaning to the input by drawing upon her knowledge and experience of the language being used" (128). After the matching process, the listener obtains a "string of words with meanings and intonation attached" to which he/she adds grammatical patterns in order to have the final product which is an abstract idea (128). Field also contends that decoding is not a "simple sequential operation" because listeners do not always follow each step of the process and most of the time they manage to understand the meaning of what is being said before the end of utterances (129).

On the other hand, a top-down process occurs when listeners rely on their prior knowledge, such as what they know about the topic, the speakers, the situation and what has been said so far, in order to understand the meaning of a message (Field 130). According to this view of listening, as Byrnes points out, knowing the context of a text or an utterance facilitates listening considerably because "listeners can activate prior knowledge and make the appropriate inferences essential to comprehending the message, which significantly reduces the burden of comprehension for the listener" (qtd. in Vandergrift 4).

A factor that can be said to highly regulate the way something is listened to is the purpose of listening. In fact, people tend to listen in different ways according to their needs. For example when listening to get the gist of something, top-down processes are more likely to be activated, and when listening for specific information bottom-up processes take place (Vandergrift 4).

It has been agreed that listening comprehension is neither bottom-up nor top-down but a combination of these two processes. However, it seems that teachers and researchers have focused too much on comprehension and thus, have favored only top-down processes, which has resulted in the "perception that using contextual information is more central to L2 listening than recognizing words and phrases accurately" (Field 127). According to Vandergrift, these two processes "interact freely" to help listeners to construct meaning; therefore, teachers should help students become effective listeners by teaching bottom-up and top-down strategies in a balanced way because a top-down approach will help listeners develop real-life listening skills, but it will fail to develop word recognition skills. In the same vein, a bottom-up approach will "help learners develop word recognition skills, but it must be



used judiciously at early levels of language learning so that learners do not develop an inefficient online translation approach to listening" (Vandergrift 14-15).

Listening can be classified according to the purpose for listening, the role of the listener, and the type of text being listened to. Depending on each variable a particular strategy is needed on the part of the listener (Nunan qtd. in Richards 240). According to Richard, there is an interactional and a transactional purpose for communication. The first one, or two way listening, involves interaction between speaker and listener and it tends to satisfy the social needs of the participants (for example a small talk and casual conversations). On the other hand, a transactional use of language, or one-way listening, is used primarily to communicate information and it requires accurate comprehension of a message with no opportunity for clarification with a speaker (for example news broadcasts and lectures) (qtd. in Vandergrift 3).

According to Anderson, when listening occurs, three cognitive processing phases take place: perceptual processing, parsing, and utilization. In the perceptual processing stage, sounds are translated into words. In the parsing stage, input is encoded to establish a meaningful representation in short-term memory, in other words, the words from the first stage are put into grammatically correct informational units, chunks or propositions. Finally, the utilization stage concerns using background knowledge to interpret the input for storage (qtd. in Chen 4). During these three phases, learners might face several problems. For example, Goh identified the following problems (qtd. in Chen 4) during the perception stage: students do not recognize words they know; neglect the next part when thinking about meaning; cannot chunk streams of speech; miss the beginning of texts; concentrate too hard or unable to concentrate. During the parsing stage the author found that students quickly forget what is heard; are unable to form a mental representation from words heard and do not understand subsequent parts of input because of earlier problems. In the last stage students understand the words but not the intended message and confuse about the key ideas in the message (qtd. in Chen 4).

Vandergrift points out that even though knowledge about the complex processes involved in listening comprehension strategies is limited, the following findings that derive from research on this field might be very helpful for content and methodology:



- Metacognitive strategies are reported more frequently by more skilled listeners.
- More skilled listeners tend to use more effective combinations of cognitive strategies.
- More skilled listeners seem to be more flexible in strategy use, combining strategies in effective combinations.
- The three phases of the listening process (perception, parsing and utilization) can be identified in listeners' think-aloud protocols, as well as strategies associated with each phase.
- Think-aloud procedures appear to be a productive methodology for studying strategy use (470-471).

There are many authors who state that one way to help students overcome the setbacks they face when listening is by using strategy-based instruction. "Such an approach is particularly important in classrooms where students are exposed to substantial amounts of authentic data because they will not (and should not expect to) understand every word" (Nunan qtd. in Richards 243).

From the Oxford strategy classification system described on page 13, the author states that except from the strategies of recombining; overcoming limitations in speaking and writing; and asking for correction, all of the strategies are suitable for developing the listening skill.

Vandergrift contends that if students are to become skilled listeners, they "should be taught how to listen, to reflect on the process of listening and consciously focus on using the metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring and evaluation" (488-489). Moreover, O'Malley, Chamot & Küpper reported that the strategies that mostly differentiate effective from ineffective listeners were self-monitoring, elaboration, and inferencing (qtd. in Vandergrift 480). As it can be seen, Vandergrift, as many others, considers metacognitive strategies as essential in developing listening competence because when students know "how to analyze the requirements of a listening task, activate the appropriate listening processes required, make appropriate predictions, monitor comprehension, and evaluate the success of the approach", successful listening comprehension is very likely to occur (489). Therefore, the author suggests a pedagogical cycle to teaching listening (especially one way listening) which



involves three steps: planning, monitoring and evaluating or pre-listening, during listening and after listening activities. During the planning step, students need to be taught how to activate prior knowledge of the topic that is going to be listened to; identify the purpose of the listening activity so that they know exactly what to listen to; and make predictions to anticipate what they might hear. During the monitoring stage, students need to continually evaluate what they are comprehending and "check for consistency with their predictions and for internal consistency with the ongoing interpretation of the oral text or interaction" (489). In order to do this, teachers might encourage students to verify their initial hypothesis, correct them if necessary and note additional information understood. Then students can compare what they have with partners in order to agree, modify, establish what needs resolution and decide on details that still require special attention. Then the teacher can encourage class discussion in which all contribute to reconstruction of the text main points and to analyze how they arrived at the meaning of certain words or parts of the text. At the end, students listen for information that they could not decipher in the class discussion. Finally, during the evaluating stage, students evaluate the strategies used, the decisions they made, the results of the listening task and they also state goals for next listening activities.

Berman emphasizes the importance of the following strategies during pre-listening activities (3):

- Creating predicting questions: ask who, what, when, where, why, and how based on clues such as title, photos, etc. and think of possible answers for the questions. Then share the ideas with a partner. This will help listeners to be focus during the listening activity because they will be interested in knowing if they were right or not.
- Predicting vocabulary: based on clues, students anticipate to the vocabulary they may hear in the listening activity.

During the listening activities he also suggests the following strategies:

- Predicting: what the speaker will say next
- Maintain focus: avoid distractions



- Identifying main ideas: the author mentions four keys to identifying main ideas: discourse markers, rhetorical questions, repetition and pace. In addition, he mentions that identifying pronouns referents is very important for comprehension.
- Note taking: according to the author, language, speed, organization and accuracy are crucial for successful note-taking.
- Inferencing
- Guessing vocabulary from context

Hulstijn argues that bottom-up skills are crucial to develop "so that all the components of the acoustic signal become meaningful units for the listener" (qtd. in Vandergrift 13). He states that tasks that help listeners automatize bottom-up processing skills for word recognition are highly important to develop the listening skill. Therefore, he suggests a six step procedure by which students can practice word acquisition skills:

- a. Listening to the recording
- b. Ask themselves if they understood what they hear
- c. Replay the recording as often as necessary
- d. Consult the written text to read what they have just heard
- e. Recognize what they should have understood
- f. Replay the recording as often as necessary to understand the complete oral text without written support (qtd. in Vandergrift 14).

Since listening is a skill that allows people to learn, teachers have the enormous responsibility of teaching students how to listen, so that they can listen to learn (Vandergrift 15).

## **2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCABULARY IN LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE**

### **2.3.1 The role of Vocabulary in Language Teaching**

Vocabulary appears to be an essential element of second language teaching and learning as it can be seen from the following quotations:



- "Without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (Wilkins qtd. Singleton 9).
- "Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write" (Richards et al. 255).
- "Words are the building blocks of language, and without them there's no language" (Milton 3).
- "Lexis is where we need to start from; the syntax needs to be put to the service of words and not the other way round" (Widdowson qtd. Nunally 1).
- "No linguist today would seriously contest the fact that, quantitatively, vocabulary dominates in the language field and that vocabulary acquisition is the main obstacle to language acquisition" (Ma 21).

Although there are many authors who agree with the crucial role of vocabulary in the process of learning a language, the teaching and learning of vocabulary seems to have been neglected or undervalued for a long time (Coady 274). Laufer states that before the 1980s, there had been some interest in vocabulary teaching and learning; however with the appearance of generative linguistics, the attention given to lexis diminished significantly, and it was only since the 1990s that the interest in vocabulary research, teaching and learning has experienced a high increase (Laufer 341). In the grammar-translation method, for example, vocabulary was "typically in the form of text-linked glossaries as aids to translation (typically from L2 to L1) and little support is given to help learners retain new lexis for active usage" (Boers 2). In the same vein, the audiolingual method focused on the L2 sound system and morpho-syntactic teaching points; therefore, it "offered a severely limited repertoire of techniques and strategies for promoting the retention of FL vocabulary". Since this method highly emphasizes oral drills, consistent association of lexical forms and particular meanings are obstructed (Boers 2). As Galisson states, there has been a "marginalization of the lexical dimension in L2 language teaching which resulted from the widespread adoption of audio-lingual methodology" (Galisson qtd. in Singleton 3). Finally, in early forms of the Communicative Approach to language teaching, functional exponents or high frequency phrases such as "Would you like to..." were



given special attention and were expected to be accurately grasped while there was tolerance for errors related to whatever else students would say.

It was during the mid-1980s that the interest in vocabulary acquisition started to take off and there were many authors who recognized its importance for language learning and started doing research on this field (Boers 3). However, "the matter of helping students remember target vocabulary long-term has remained a sporadically addressed, minority concern" because of the assumption that incidental learning would be enough for language learners. As Boers states:

"it has generally been assumed that FL learners pick up most of their new words and expressions incidentally, much like small children acquire the vocabulary of their L1 and that, therefore, the best way for teachers to promote vocabulary learning is to encourage learners to deploy their preexisting ability to infer word meanings from context and from the meanings of constituent morphemes. In cases where such inferencing fails, students have often been expected simply to tolerate the vagueness and wait for unguessed words to turn up again in richer context. An underlying assumption here is that the non-recurrence of an un-guessed word suggests it is too infrequent to be worth learning anyway" (Boers 3).

According to Milton, there are three reasons for the neglecting of vocabulary in teaching and learning. The first one is a product of the structural approach to language teaching and refers to the fact that "there seems to be a long-standing idea that words are just words and that learning words is unsystematic"; therefore, "vocabulary is unchallenging as a pedagogical or an academic issue" (Milton 1). It is important to remember that in the structural approach language rules are emphasized and vocabulary is reduced to only the necessary words that serve to present the structures. The author also points out that this approach has had a high influence, and thus, has affected new approaches such as the Notional-functional approach and the communicative approach, which should have a great emphasis in vocabulary (Milton 1).

The second reason refers to the belief that proficiency in a foreign language can be achieved with "only very limited vocabulary resources". This belief is



grounded on previous works (such as Ogden 1930) that claim that a language can be learned with 850 to 950 words (Milton 2). However, corpus studies have revealed that thousands of words are needed to achieve even basic knowledge of a language. For example, there are authors who contend that for communication in daily conversation 2,000 to 3,000 word families are needed while others believe that it is 6,000 to 7,000; for reading authentic material 8,000 to 9,000 and for operating in a technical field 10,000 word families are needed (Chacon et.al. 29-30).

The third reason that Milton points out is the belief that incidental vocabulary learning is the best way to learn vocabulary and that explicit vocabulary learning is a waste of time because learners only pick up a few words that are taught like this (Milton 2). However, research has demonstrated that "successful learners acquire large volumes of vocabulary from the words explicitly taught in the classroom and supplement their learning by targeting vocabulary in activities, like learning the words of songs, outside class" (Milton 2).

Even though there are several researchers and authors that acknowledge the key importance of vocabulary in learning a language, "there is still no solid consensus about whether vocabulary should be deliberately targeted for teaching or not" (Boers 4). However, it seems to be agreed that language acquisition begins with word learning rather than syntax triggering (with words gradually "grammaticalized" through experience on a largely associative basis); that vocabulary skill and knowledge are the precondition for most other language abilities and, in addition, the main source of variance in the final state of such abilities; and that vocabulary acquisition does not happen by itself to any satisfactory degree, and therefore, lexical growth must be provisioned in language instruction (Boers 5).

### **2.3.2 What is vocabulary?**

Takac points out the difficulty that linguists have had to come up with the definition of "vocabulary" because the one given in dictionaries (a set of words or a dictionary) is too simple for their purposes (4). Defining what a "word" is seems quite complicated. For example, based on orthography, a "word" is defined as a string of letters "bounded on either side by a space or punctuation mark" (Carter qtd. in Takac



5). This definition is considered incomplete, limited to the written language, and as a neglect of issues such as differences in meaning, polysemy, homonymy, and grammatical functions (4). Based on semantics, a word can be considered as the smallest meaningful unit of a language (Carter qtd. in Takac 5); however, since there is not a consensual definition of "meaning", this concept is regarded as not reliable because, for example, some units of meaning can consist on one word (such as "cat") or more than one (such as bus driver) (5). Other attempts to define what a word is are based on other features such as phonology, morphology, stress, among others. In order to try to solve the problem, the terms lexeme, lexical unit, or lexical item have been coined and all of them refer to "an item that functions as a single meaning unit, regardless of the number of words it contains" (Schmitt 2). This definition includes inflections, polysemy, phrasal verbs, idioms and some phrases. Since there is not an universal definition of "word", linguists have agreed that "vocabulary is made up of a variety of forms" such as morphemes; derivatives; compounds; idioms; binomials and trinomials (such as "sick and tired" and "ready, willing and able"); prefabricated routines (such as "if I were you"); catchphrases (such as "they don't make them like that anymore"); collocations, greetings and proverbs (Takac 6). As it can be seen, there is quite a variety of categories which also are not "complete and absolute" and most of the times overlap. Therefore, vocabulary is placed "on the boundaries between morphology, syntax and semantics" (Takac 6).

### **2.3.3 What does it mean to know a word?**

In order to explain what vocabulary knowledge is different proposals have come forward; therefore different terms such as "lexical knowledge", "vocabulary knowledge framework" and "vocabulary knowledge scale" have appeared (Ma 27). In general, the following criteria have been used to define word knowledge: meaning, contextual use, frequency, register, syntax, derivation, association, semantic values, polysemy, pronunciation, spelling, and collocation (Ma 27). Moreover, different frameworks have been proposed for categorizing learners' vocabulary knowledge such as vocabulary size, knowledge of word characteristics, lexicon organization, lexical access, depth of vocabulary knowledge, and automaticity of receptive/productive knowledge (Ma 28).



According to Nation, since words are not isolated units, but "fit into many interlocking systems and levels", many different things are needed in order to know a word, and there are also many degrees of word knowledge (Nation 23). Knowing a word involves several different aspects that can be summarized into three major categories such as form, meaning and use (Nation qtd. in Ma 28). Word form refers to the spoken form (recognize the word when it is heard and being able to produce the spoken form in order to express a meaning; therefore, knowledge about pronunciation, stress, phonology, etc. is required), the written form (spelling) and the word parts or affixes. Meaning refers to the connection between form and meaning of a word, concepts and referents and associations. Finally, word use refers to the knowledge of grammatical functions, collocations and constraints on use such as register, frequency, etc (29). All of these aspects are known as types of word knowledge and they cannot be acquired at the same time, but in a gradual manner and at various degrees of mastery (Schmitt 6).

To reach complete knowledge of a word is a very difficult task and sometimes unattainable because it requires item knowledge (individual word knowledge) and system knowledge (the various features of the word, and the relationship with other words in the mental lexicon along with progressive changes in the two) which might take a long time (Ma 29). Since vocabulary acquisition is an incremental process, the first stage of this process consists on connecting the word form with one of its meanings fixing the two in the mind, leaving the acquisition of other aspects to a later stage; therefore, different aspects of word knowledge will be mastered at different stages and at different rates (Ma 29).

#### **2.3.4 Receptive and productive vocabulary**

It seems that when learning a second language two types of vocabulary come into play—receptive (or passive) and productive (or active). In general, receptive vocabulary refers to the words that learners understand but don't use yet while productive vocabulary refers to the words that learners understand and use in speaking or writing. As it can be seen receptive/productive vocabulary are directly related to the distinctions of the receptive skills of reading and listening and the productive skills of speaking and writing. However, the concepts of reception and



production do not appear to be a simple matter and have not been clearly or satisfactorily defined; therefore, "many other terms such as passive/active vocabulary, comprehension/production, understanding/speaking are used to replace these two notions" (Melka qtd. in Ma 39). There are some authors who sustain that productive vocabulary requires receptive knowledge and expands it; therefore, they assume that the receptive vocabulary is larger than the productive one; that reception precedes production; and that production is more difficult than reception (Ma 40). There are also some empirical studies which point out that the gap between receptive and productive vocabulary changes during the course of language study and that receptive vocabulary seems to be easy to enter controlled productive vocabulary (which is the vocabulary that can be recall with the help of cues), but that it seems to be a bigger gap between controlled vocabulary and free vocabulary (use of words without any cues) because of the difficulty for controlled vocabulary to enter free vocabulary (Ma 44).

According to Takac, there is not an adequate definition of the two notions (receptive and productive vocabulary) and the definitions that exist are too simplistic because they imply that the mental lexicon is a static unit consisting of two separate compartments (12). There are some scholars who believe that reception precedes production and that these two processes are different and have a fairly large distance. On the other hand, other scholars contend that, in fact, reception may precede production, but the distance between the two notions is not significant and it may vary (Melka qtd. in Takac 13). Consequently, there are some researches who believe that receptive vocabulary is double the size of productive vocabulary; others believe that the distance between reception and production is always present, but decreases with the development of knowledge and there are some who think that the gap between the two is not significant at all (Takac 13).

There are some authors who consider receptive and productive vocabulary as a scale of vocabulary knowledge, while there are others who consider the two notions as strongly based on the idea of use and not only on degrees of knowledge. Corson, for example, contends that passive vocabulary entails "active vocabulary, words that are partly known, low frequency words not readily available for use and words that are avoided in active use"; therefore, even though some words can be well known, they will never be active if they are never used (Corson qtd. in Nation 25). The active



and passive vocabulary of a learner seems to be in constant change because learners start using words, try new meanings, forget words, abandon words that have no use, revise words, etc., and it seems that advanced learners often have an extremely large passive vocabulary, but a considerably smaller active one.

### **2.3.5 Approaches to vocabulary learning**

Two main approaches to vocabulary learning are usually mentioned – incidental and explicit. It is said that incidental learning (or implicit) occurs when learners do not have the intention of learning new words and rather, they are focused on comprehending what they read or listen; therefore, they are unconscious and unaware. During incidental learning, “the meaning of a new word is acquired totally unconsciously as a result of abstraction from repeated exposures in a range of activated contexts” (Ellis qtd. in Chacon et.al 3). On the other hand, explicit vocabulary learning involves paying direct, intentional and conscious attention to words in order to learn them. According to Ellis, explicit vocabulary acquisition occurs when learners notice novel vocabulary, selectively attend to it; and use a variety of strategies to guess the meaning from context, remember new vocabulary and consolidate it (Ellis qtd. in Chacon et.al 4).

There has been some debate about which vocabulary approach is the best. Some authors favour incidental learning because it is assumed that as in L1 vocabulary acquisition is largely based on picking up words from contexts, it should be the same in L2 (Kersten 67). Incidental learning requires minimal attention from teachers because they just have to make sure that students read extensively and that appropriate reading material is been provided (Kersten 67). During incidental learning based on reading, learners have to guess the meaning of unknown words; therefore it is considered a good strategy only if the number of the unknown words is not too high (Chacon et.al 4). Learners infer the meaning of the words they do not know using linguistic and non-linguistic clues from the context, and thus, are likely to make correct guesses. By doing this, they may retain the meaning of the new word. If the new word is not remembered after the student's first encounter with it, or if only



partial information about the word has been acquired, "additional encounters with the same word will increase the probability of retaining it and expanding its knowledge. Even if very few words are retained after one communicative activity or text, the cumulative gains over time may be quite remarkable if the learner reads regularly" (Boers 5).

This approach has been favoured for a long time and there are some authors who believe that "most vocabulary known to any person, either in the L1 or the L2, has been acquired incidentally through reading and the inference of meaning through context" (Huckin & Coady qtd. in Chacon et.al 5). These authors also mention some advantages of incidental vocabulary learning such as:

- The amounts of information that learners receive on each lexical unit is high since words are contextualized.
- New vocabulary is always present and previous vocabulary is fixed with more contextualized information on it.
- It stimulates reading.
- It encourages autonomous learning

On the other hand, the authors who favour explicit vocabulary learning point out that lexical items cannot be totally learned spontaneously by occasional exposures through reading because vocabulary learning is a complex process which requires "various forms and levels of mental processing" (Chacon et.al 5). In addition, guessing words from context is not an easy task, and there is the risk that learners tend to overestimate their understanding of the words guessed from context (Boers 5). They also argue that incidental learning might be useful only to develop reading skills and receptive vocabulary, but not to develop a deep processing of vocabulary or productive skills (Chacon et.al 5). In order to develop proficiency, low-frequency words are necessary, but these words are not very likely to occur in a communicative task-based approach that emphasizes incidental learning; therefore, when good proficiency is the objective, many low frequency words (including a great number of multiword expressions which tend to occur with low frequency) must be explicitly taught (Boers 5). Explicit vocabulary learning helps to "speed up the elaboration of knowledge" about the aspects that are necessary in order to know a word (such as



denotations, connotations, register, syntagmatic relations, etc.), and "this is important because the more elaborated one's knowledge of a lexical item becomes, the more likely it is that one will achieve command of it" (Boers 6). Elaboration of knowledge seems to be impeded in wholly communicative, task-based classrooms because the occurrence of the focused words is rather sporadic, and thus, they are likely to be forgotten during the intervals (Boers 6). Boers also points out that

"Lexis that is hard to learn is particularly likely to remain inadequately learned in the absence of explicitly form-focused instruction... .. It is true especially of low frequency lexemes that learners may be able to produce them in response to elicitation but not use them in free production either owing to lack of confidence in the accuracy of their knowledge of these items or because they cannot retrieve them from memory fast enough. Explicit instruction has been shown to help in such cases. Not surprisingly, exercises which promote speed of access promote fluency. Thus, strictly communicative instruction – a prominent broad aim of which is promotion of fluency – is, in at least this one respect, actually not ideal for fostering fluency". (Boers 6)

According to Nation, once an L2 learner has acquired a certain amount of basic vocabulary, word frequency starts to decrease and extensive reading becomes an unproductive way to learn vocabulary; therefore, he recommends teachers spend time in promoting the "development of strategies for L2 learners to learn vocabulary on their own" (Nation qtd. in Chacon et.al 6).

According to Schmitt, both incidental and explicit approaches are necessary because they complement each other. For example, intentional learning is "focused and effective, but limited in the number of words it can address, while incidental learning is slow and untargeted, but can fill in the contextual types of word knowledge and provide recycling for words already partially learned" (Schmitt qtd. in Chacon et.al 6). A combination of the two approaches seem to be considered effective by many authors, but more research seems to be needed in order to put this combination into classroom practice considering class time limitations and teachers' available resources (Chacon et.al 6).



### 2.3.6 Vocabulary acquisition

There appears not to be a generally accepted theory of vocabulary acquisition because the fields of psycholinguistics and applied linguistics have not cooperated with each other in the development of one. Instead of that, they have made research based on different points of view, which has created a bigger gap (Takac 4).

Among the most important factors that seem to affect the acquisition of second language vocabulary, Takac mentions the following: linguistic features of lexical items; the influence of first and other languages; the incremental nature of vocabulary acquisition; the role of memory; the organization and development of the second language mental lexicon; the source of vocabulary; individual learner differences; and the role of the teacher and vocabulary teaching strategies (4).

Regarding the first factor, certain linguistics features such as pronunciation (including phonetics, phonology, stress, intonation, and so on); orthography; length; inflectional and derivational morphology; parts of speech and semantic features (e.g. abstractness, idiomaticity, multiple meaning) seem to "affect the learnability of lexical items" (Laufer qtd. in Takac 7).

Considering the influence of first and other languages, one's L1 has a high influence on learning an L2 because the L2 learner, especially at the first stages of learning, tends to relate the new language with the concepts of the world previously acquired in his or her L1 (Takac 9). It seems that learners use the "equivalence hypothesis", in other words, "learners tend to assume that the system of L2 is more or less the same as in their L1 until they have discovered that it is not" (Ringbom qtd. in Takac 9). Therefore, "depending on the degree of equivalence between languages", the L1 can sometimes facilitate the L2 learning, but it can also be an obstacle (Takac 9). Even though the equivalence hypothesis helps learners to acquire a new language without having to learn to categorize the world again, it can also fail and lead to erroneous conclusions because lexical units in two languages are not exact equivalents (there is more than one translation) and equivalent lexical units in related languages have different permissible grammatical contexts, belong to different word classes, are false friends or there are not equivalents at all (Takac 9). Therefore, there is a learner's tendency to avoid difficult items because "there is no



foundation on which L2 knowledge may be built" (Gass qtd. in Takac 9). In addition, it is difficult to expand L2 vocabulary in a significant way (as it occurs with L1) only through input because this input is most of the time (especially when learning in a EFL context) limited to the classroom context (Takac 9).

In regard to the incremental nature of vocabulary acquisition, Takac contends that the knowledge of a lexical item is not an "all or nothing proposition", instead it is considered as a "continuum of knowledge" from receptive knowledge to productive one (10). This is because knowledge of an L2 lexical item is made up of various components such as phonological, orthographic, syntactic, semantic, usage, among others, which cannot be acquired at once but rather "gradually over a period of time after several exposures" (Schmitt 4).

Taking into account the role that memory plays in vocabulary acquisition, Takac states that memory plays an essential role in any kind of learning, let alone vocabulary learning and that one important problem is the issue of forgetting, which seems to occur immediately after new information has been learned and then it slows down (10). This fact is of paramount importance for teachers who have to use several strategies to teach vocabulary if they want students to learn more efficiently and retain more lexical items (10).

Another factor that seems to affect vocabulary acquisition is the mental lexicon, which is "a memory system in which a vast number of words, accumulated in the course of time, have been stored (Hulstijn qtd in Takac 11). This system is believed to be organized and structured because memory is "very flexible and it can process a large quantity of data, but only if it is systematically organized" (Takac 11). It seems not to be one clear theory about how the mental lexicon is organized and how it develops; however, some researchers have made important contributions about these issues. For example, some researchers have considered the mental lexicon as a printed dictionary only because it contains a list of lexical items. According to Aitchison, the mental lexicon differs from a printed dictionary in that lexical items seem to be organized by initial sounds, but not necessarily in alphabetical order. Suffixes and stress also influence the placement of lexical items in the mind. Words stored in the mind are believed to be connected in semantic networks (collocation and coordination being the most complicated). In addition, some important features of the mental lexicon are fluidity and flexibility which have been demonstrated when



learners apply new knowledge in a creative way and when they interpret new situations based on previous knowledge. Moreover, the mental lexicon seems to offer multiple accesses to information because "processes of word recognition and word production activate more words than necessary, only to make a final selection and suppress the unnecessary information" (Aitchison qtd. in Takac 12). But the most important difference between the mental lexicon and a book dictionary seems to be the "amount and range of information on every single entry" (Aitchison qtd. in Takac 12). These researches consider that "the place of a word in the mental lexicon should be represented by a three-dimensional model with phonological nets crossing orthographic ones and criss-crossing semantic and encyclopaedic nets". These nets appear to be very fragile and easy to break which is demonstrated when sometimes people cannot say a word even though they have said it before and know its meaning (McCarthy qtd. in Takac 12).

McCarthy argues that even though the processes of storing, memorizing and recalling L1 vocabulary share certain similarities with the ones that involve the L2, they are not identical (qtd. in Takac 13). One of the main differences that this author suggests is that the dynamism of the mental lexicon is more prominent in L2 learning because lexical items are constantly added and the information of existing ones is expanded and completed over the time. As Hulstijn points out, two lexical items can be stored without any interconnection and later can be linked "via some formal or semantic features. Later on they can be linked with other types of links (qtd. in Takac 13). These links appear to have different degrees of strength which can "increase or diminish in the course of time" – for instance, memory strategies such as the "Keyword Method appears to facilitate the formation of such links" (Hulstijn qtd. in Takac 13). There is no agreement about the similarities and differences between L1 and L2 lexicon. There are some scholars who think that L1 words and L2 words are stored in a single store; others who believe that words are stored in separate stores; there are some who think that similar words are stored in a common store and language-specific words are stored in separate stores; and finally, those who believe that L1 and L2 words are stored in two relatively separated subsets, but both subsets are stored in a common store (Hulstijn qtd. in Takac 14). Many authors claim that "attending to form precedes attending to meaning" and that low-proficient students code vocabulary based on sounds while higher proficient students rely more on



meaning than sound (Takac 15). Takac points out that "the relationship between an L1 and an L2 word in the mental lexicon is likely to vary from individual to individual". Therefore, "organizational resources (such as L1 and L2 connections) available in the mental lexicon are used by every individual in a different way, depending on the way the word has been acquired, on the level of the word's acquisition, and on the perception of formal and / or semantic similarity between the L1 and L2 word" (Takac 15). This author also suggests that researchers should consider individuality when trying to come up with universalities in L2 learning. Finally Takac mentions that there are some studies that associate the organization of the mental lexicon with the concept of prototypes which refer to "central and more prominent concepts, or best-fit members of a conceptual category" (Gass qtd. in Takac 15). For instance, given the category of "vehicle" native speakers are very likely to mention "car" as the prototype of this category followed by other items such as bicycle, motorcycle, scooter, and so on. Gass argues that prototypes are "the foundation for L2 vocabulary development" because learners are more ready to learn the prototypical meanings of lexical items, while non-prototypical meanings are learnt later. Besides, errors tend to occur with non-prototypical words, that is, when L1 meanings do not overlap L2 meanings (qtd. in Takac 16).

Regarding the source of vocabulary, although native speakers acquire a great deal of vocabulary through exposure to many different sources and thus, through incidental learning, acquiring L2 vocabulary does not seem to be that easy. L2 learners might also be benefited from that kind of learning, but in order to "accelerate the process; the learner must have critical strategic knowledge that will enable him or her to turn the incidental learning into an explicit learning process" (Takac 17).

Considering the individual learner differences, Takac points out that even though vocabulary learning strategies seem to improve the acquisition of vocabulary, individual features such as motivation, attitude, fear, and so on must be taken into account (Takac 17).

The last factor that Takac mentions as affecting vocabulary learning is the role of the teacher and vocabulary teaching strategies. She points out that teaching practice has been influenced by current trends in linguistic and psycholinguistic research. For example, implicit incidental vocabulary learning (which emphasizes guessing from context and the use of monolingual dictionaries and the avoidance of translation) was



promoted by the naturalistic approach (18). Other studies, however, have reflected that since guessing is a complicated skill and that most of the time it could lead to wrong guesses that will be very difficult to rectify, "implicit incidental learning seems to be a slow and inefficient process which does not necessarily imply long-term retention" (Sökmen qtd. in Takac 18). Therefore, there are many authors who favour explicit vocabulary teaching which, they argue, "would ensure that lexical development in the target language follows a systematic and logical path, thus avoiding uncontrolled accumulation of sporadic lexical items" (Takac 18). Takac concludes by saying that the contemporary approach to vocabulary teaching should give equal importance to both implicit and explicit teaching. Considering teaching strategies, Hatch and Brown points out that they are "everything that teachers do or should do in order to help their learners learn" (authors qtd. in Takac 19). The use of different vocabulary teaching strategies depends on many factors such as time available, content, value for the learner and so on. Vocabulary teaching strategies can be divided into unplanned and planned. Unplanned strategies refer to improvised teacher actions according to the students' vocabulary needs while planned vocabulary teaching "refers to deliberate, explicit, clearly defined and directed vocabulary teaching" (Takac 19). The latter involves the use of teaching strategies that can be classified into two main categories: "(1) presentation of meaning and form of new lexical items and (2) review and consolidation (recycling and practicing) of presented lexical items" (Takac 19). During the presentation phase, meaning and form are presented to students. Meaning can be presented using the following strategies: connecting an L2 item with its equivalent in L1; defining the meaning (using synonyms, antonyms, giving examples, giving superordinate terms, giving full dictionary definition, etc); presentation through context; directly connecting the meaning to real objects or phenomena; and active involvement of learners in presentation (where teachers encourage students to discover the word's meaning from its parts or from elicitation). In addition, the knowledge of the orthographic and phonological form of a word is crucial to establish a connection between meaning and form. Teachers can present form by using oral drills; phonetic transcription and graphic presentation; presentation of the graphic form; and by encouraging the learners to spell the word (Takac 21). The goal of the review and consolidation phase is that learners review lexical items in order to consolidate them in the long-term



memory. It is crucial that teachers provide students with "opportunities for practicing and connecting words in various ways and to stimulate them to retrieve words from memory and use them for all language skills" (Takac 21).

## 2.4 VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES

Vocabulary learning strategies are a part of language learning strategies. They are likely to increase the efficiency of vocabulary learning and use when learners not only know about them, but also have skill in using them (Nation 217). This is an aspect of paramount importance considering the fact that "vocabulary is by far the most sizeable and unmanageable component in the learning of any language, whether a foreign or one's mother tongue" (Lord qtd. in Oxford 39).

Different taxonomies of vocabulary language strategies have been developed. For example, Schmitt developed one based on Oxford's strategy taxonomy (memory, cognitive, metacognitive, and social) while Gu and Johnson's taxonomy includes beliefs about vocabulary learning, metacognitive regulation, guessing strategies, dictionary strategies, notetaking strategies, memory strategies (rehearsal and encoding) and activation strategies (authors qtd. in Nation 217).

Nation's taxonomy separates aspects of vocabulary knowledge from sources of vocabulary knowledge, and learning processes. Therefore, he divides strategies into three main categories: planning vocabulary learning, sources (finding information about words) and processes (establishing knowledge).

The first category (planning) involves the strategies of:

- choosing words: learners should learn to identify their vocabulary goals and choose what vocabulary to focus on according to these goals. Therefore, it is important that learners have access to high-frequency words and academic words.
- choosing aspects of word knowledge to focus on: even though the most important aspect of vocabulary learning is knowing the meaning of a word, learners should be conscious that there are also many other aspects that are involved in word knowledge.



- choosing strategies: learners should know how to choose the appropriate strategy from a wide range of strategies and also when to switch to another one.
- planning repetition: learners should plan a schedule to review previously studied items because "one of the most important strategies than encourages remembering is the use of increasingly spaced retrieval" (Nation 219).

The second category (sources) involves the following strategies:

- analyzing word parts: the knowledge of word parts (affixes and stems) can help work out the meaning of a word.
- using context: guessing from context based on background knowledge of linguistic cues.
- consulting a reference source: formal sources (dictionaries, glossaries, word lists, etc.) or informal sources (asking teachers, native speakers or other learners).
- using parallels with other languages:

The last category (processes) contains three strategies:

- Noticing: involves seeing the word item to be learned. Strategies at this level include putting the word in a vocabulary notebook or list; putting the word onto a word card and orally and visually repeating the word. He argues that although these strategies are all of recording type, they are useful steps resulting in deeper processing of words (Nation 222).
- Retrieving: involves recalling the items met before. It contains recalling knowledge in the same way it was originally stored.
- Generating: these strategies include "attaching new aspects of knowledge to what is known through instantiation (i.e., visualizing examples of words), word analysis, semantic mapping and using scales and grids" (Nation 222). They include rule-driven generation such as, creating context, collocations and sentences containing the new word. Moreover, the mnemonic strategies and using the word in different context through four skills are also defined as generating strategies.



In accordance with Oxford, memory strategies (listed in chapter two) help learners to cope with the very difficult task of remembering large amounts of vocabulary which are necessary to achieve fluency. Oxford's memory strategies are:

- Grouping: means "classifying or reclassifying language material into meaningful units, either mentally or in writing, to make the material easier to remember by reducing the number of discrete elements" (Oxford 40). It is advisable to label the groups and use different colors to represent different groups.
- Associating/elaborating: means to relate new language information to concepts already in memory, or relating one piece of information to another, to create associations in memory. It is important that any association must have meaning to the learner, even though it might not make sense to someone else.
- Placing new words into a context: means to link new information with a context such as placing a word or phrase in a meaningful sentence, conversation, or story.
- Using imagery: means to associate words with a visual symbol or them or create a mental image of them.
- Semantic mapping: consists on "making an arrangement of words into a picture, which has a key concept at the center or at the top, and related words and concepts linked with the key concept by means of lines or arrows" (Oxford 41).
- Using keywords: means "remembering a new word by using auditory and visual links" (Oxford 41). The Keyword method has two steps. The first one is to identify a familiar word in one's own language that sounds like the new word, this familiar word functions as the auditory link. The second step consists on generating an image of some relationship between the new word and the familiar one, which will be the visual link. It is very important that both links are meaningful to the learner.



- Representing sounds in memory: means remembering new language information by making sound-based associations between the new material and already known material.
- Structured reviewing: means "reviewing in carefully spaced intervals, at first close together and then more widely spaced apart" (Oxford 42). This strategy is also called spiraling because students spiral back to what was already learned at the same time they learn new information. Oxford suggests reviewing after 10 minutes, then 20 minutes, an hour later, two hours, a day later, 2 days later, a week later, and so on. The goal of this strategy is overlearning, and thus, the information becomes automatic.
- Using physical response or sensation: means "physically acting out a new expression or meaningfully relating a new expression to a physical feeling of sensation" (Oxford 43).
- Using mechanical techniques: means "using creative but tangible techniques, especially involving moving or changing something which is concrete, in order to remember new target language" (Oxford 43).

#### **2.4.1 Teaching vocabulary**

Many authors agree on the fact that it is not possible to talk about the best vocabulary teaching methodology and that the effectiveness of certain method depends on a variety of factors (Chacon et.al 38). Three important factors are mentioned by these authors: the words themselves, the learners themselves and the teaching approach. In regard to the first factor, different teaching strategies such as definition or explanation, demonstration or gesture, synonym or antonym, giving examples, and definitions in situational contexts are needed according to the type of word or phrase. For example, gestures can work well with verbs, while giving synonyms or antonyms might be better for explaining adjectives (Chacon et.al 39). Considering the second factor, different learners favour different vocabulary learning strategies, and it is very important to mention that the most important factor in strategy use is not the number of strategies being used, but how well learners use them in order to achieve the learning goal. There are authors who believe that deeper strategies (strategies that require more extensive engagement with



vocabulary) are better than shallow strategies (like rote memorization). However, there are others who believe that either one can be effective if "learners know how to apply them well, are diligent in their use, and are mainly interested in the initial form-meaning connection" (Chacon et.al. 39). Finally, the third factor refers to the teaching approach either incidental or explicit already mentioned before.

In addition, Nation points out that vocabulary teaching activities should have certain conditions if they are to be effective. These conditions can be checked by asking the following four questions (Nation 60):

- What is the learning goal of the activity?

To answer this question it is important to remember all the aspects that are required in knowing a word such as word form linked to its meaning, pronunciation, spelling, etc. Each aspect may constitute a learning goal.

- What psychological conditions does the activity use to help reach the learning goal?

Three conditions are necessary to remember a word: noticing, retrieval and creative use. Noticing is the first step for learning and it occurs when learners are aware of the usefulness of a word or phrase. For example, when students look up a word in a dictionary, deliberately study a word, guess from context or have a word explained to them. Noticing can be affected by many factors such as the salience of a word, previous contact with the word, learner's realisation that the word fills a gap in their knowledge of the language, motivation and interest. Retrieval occurs when a word that has been noticed is retrieved several times in a given task. Retrieval may be receptive or productive. The first one involves perceiving the form or having to retrieve its meaning when the word is met in listening or reading, while productive retrieval means communicating the meaning of the word in speaking or writing. At this point it seems important to mention that repetition plays an important role in incidental vocabulary learning, but it is not simple repetition but having repeated opportunities to retrieve a word or phrase (Nation 67). Moreover, time is another crucial factor. "If too much time has passed between the previous meeting and the present encounter with the word, then the present encounter is not a repetition but like a first encounter" (Nation 67). Finally, creative or



generative use "occurs when previously met words are subsequently met or use in ways that differ from the previous meeting with the word" which "forces students to reconceptualise their knowledge of that word" (Nation 68).

- What are the observable signs that learning might occur?

These signs could be the following: students are interested and paying attention, they are trying to find an answer, and that they do find an answer but not too soon.

- What are the design features of the activity which set up the conditions for learning?

These features are: having a positive attitude to the activity, noticing the item several times and thoughtfully processing its meaning, repetition of the word and its context, and a variety of rich contexts (Nation 61).

It is significant to point out that Nation emphasizes the importance of keeping in mind the place that the teaching and learning of vocabulary should have. He states that it is only one sub-goal of the total number of goals that a successful language program needs to have; therefore, the teaching and learning of vocabulary should always be considered as a part of listening, speaking, reading, writing and discourse (1). This author points out that a balanced language program needs to include four major strands: meaning-focused input (learning new language items from listening and reading), language-focused learning or form-focused instruction (direct teaching and learning of language items such as grammar and vocabulary); meaning-focused output (from speaking and writing activities) and fluency development (practice the items that are already known). Each strand should be given the same amount of time, which is a 25% of the language class (Nation 2-3).



### CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH

This qualitative study was designed with the purpose of helping students improve their vocabulary learning and listening skill, and it aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does explicit instruction in language learning and use strategies affect the acquisition of vocabulary and the listening skill?



2. Is the increase of strategy use related to a similar increase in task performance for both the more and less proficient learners?

In order to do that, this study was conducted with third level Tourism students at the University of Cuenca. This chapter describes in detail all aspects of the study including the participants, the materials, and the procedures.

### 3.1 Methods

#### 3.1.1 Participants

Tourism students of level 3A at University of Cuenca were selected to be the participants of the current study. The reason for this selection was due to the fact that I was assigned to be their teacher during the semester from September 2010 to February 2011. These students have to take English classes as a career requirement, and they also have to complete and pass six levels of English in order to get their degrees. The students of the third level A of Tourism attend English classes for two hours from Monday through Friday, and they are expected to learn the English they need in order to follow a career in tourism, especially in areas of tourism related to the creation, promotion and selling of typical tourism products such as flights and package holidays. They also have to learn specialist vocabulary and interpersonal skills for customer relations.

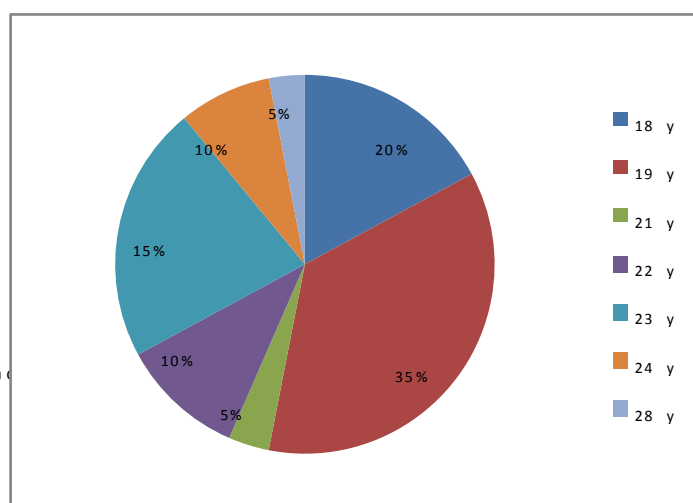
At the beginning of the course there were thirty four students, but not all of them attended on a regular basis; therefore, only twenty students were selected for the study – the ones that did not constantly miss classes.

In order to know the students' background, a background questionnaire (see appendix A) was administered. It revealed the following information:

➤ The students' age varies from 18 to 24, and only one student is 28 years old. The

19  
seen

Mónica Abad



majority of students are  
years old, as it can be  
in the following graph:

Figure 1: Participants' ages

- Ninety percent of the students have attended primary school at a public institution, and eighty percent have studied high school at a public institution. At this point it is important to mention that in public schools in general students receive from two to five hours of English a week, while in private schools the amount varies from six to ten hours a week. Some schools in the country or in some provinces do not even offer English classes.

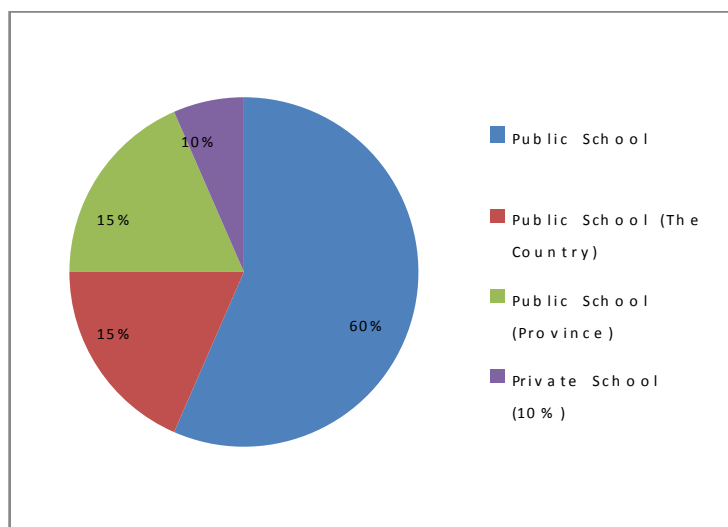


Figure 2: Participants' primary education.

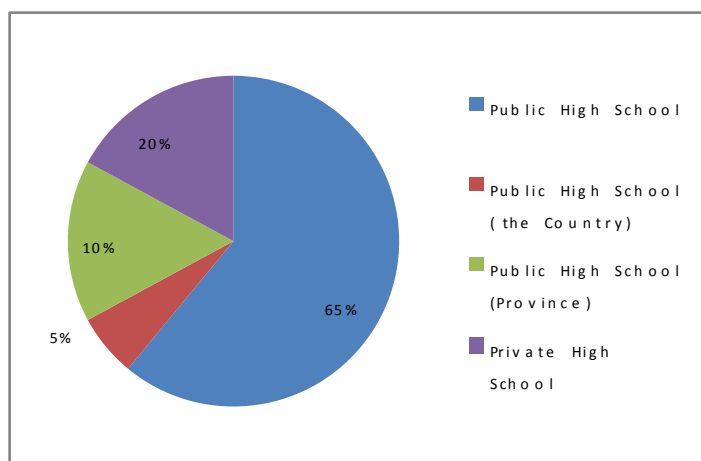


Figure 3: Participants' secondary education.

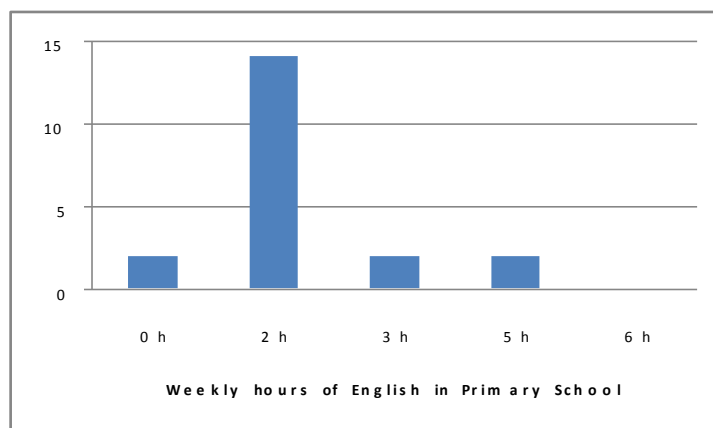


Figure 4: Hours of English classes in primary school.

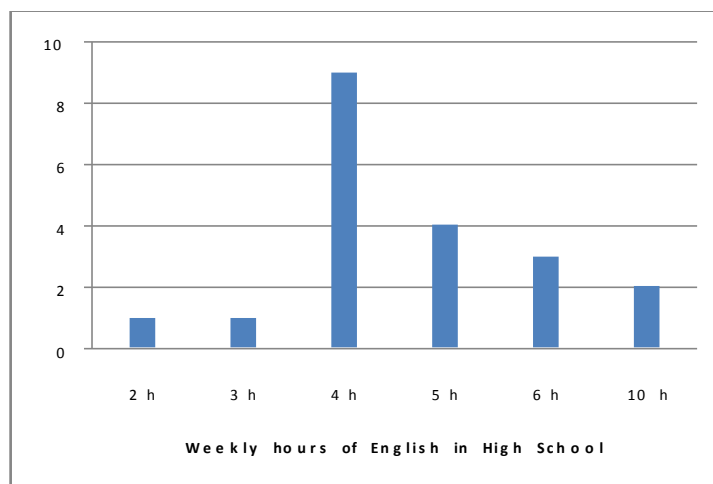


Figure 5: Hours of English classes in high school.

- The majority of the students have already taken two semesters of general English, and it is at the third level that they start learning English for Tourism. Only four students have taken three semesters of English because they had failed one of them.
- Thirty five percent of the students have taken extra English classes at private academies, and ten percent have traveled to an English speaking country for tourism.
- The majority of the students consider that they have a fair English proficiency when comparing with other students in the class and with native speakers of English.

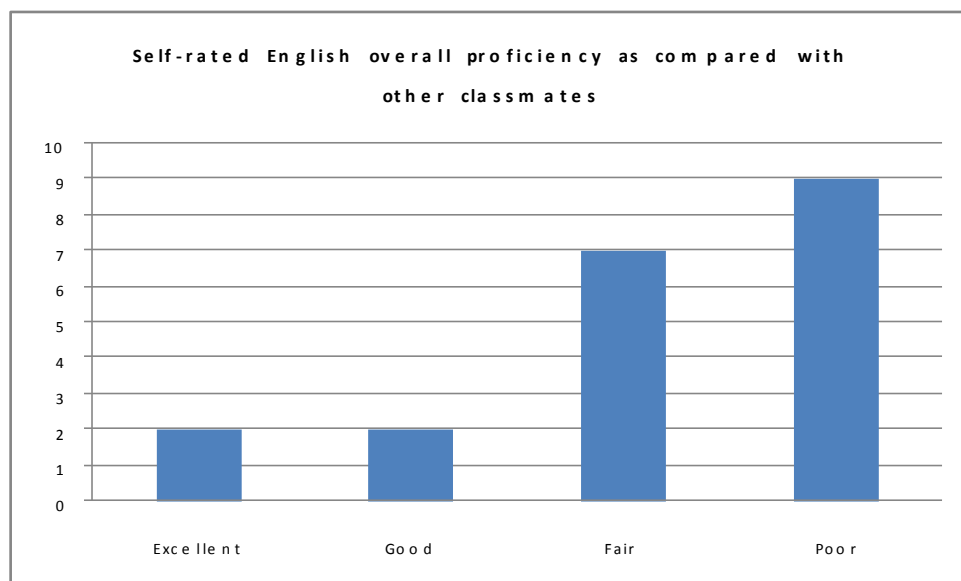


Figure 6: Participants' self-evaluation of proficiency compared with classmates.

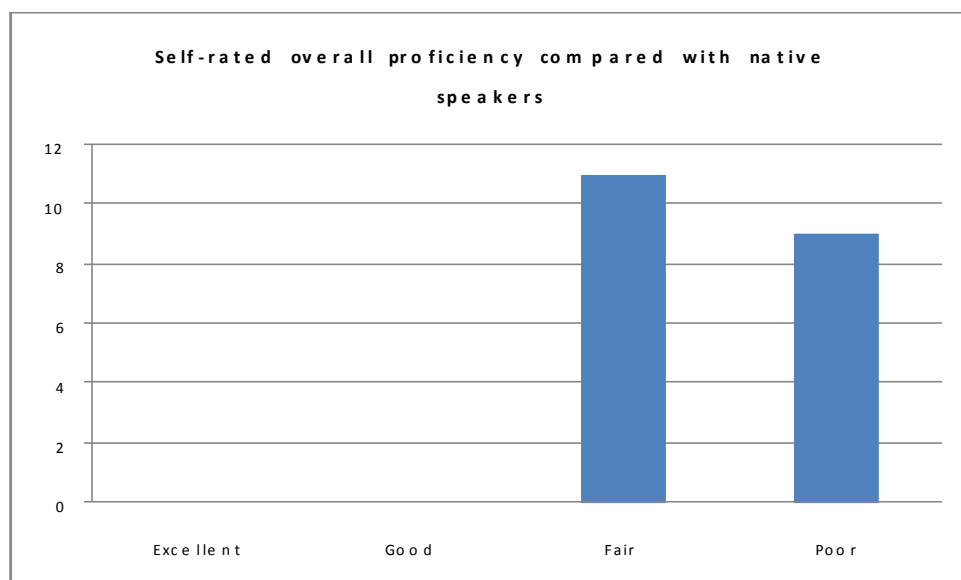


Figure 7: Participants' self-evaluation of proficiency compared with native speakers.

- The majority of the students believe that becoming proficient in English is very important.

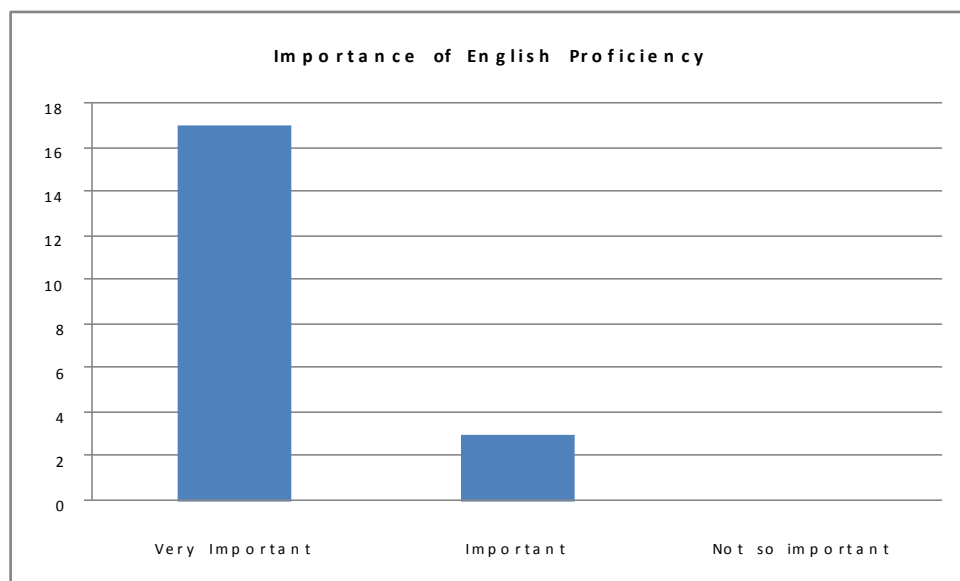


Figure 8: Importance of English proficiency for the participants

- All of the students seem to be interested in learning English even though it was not a requirement for their graduation.
- The majority of the students want to learn English because they are interested in the language and culture, although some of them have different reasons.

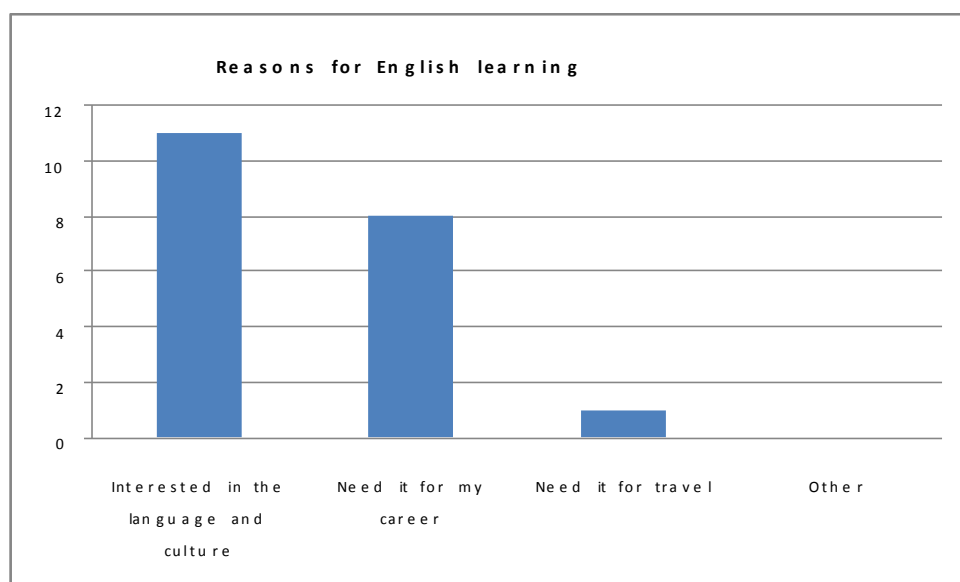


Figure 9: Participants' reasons for learning English

- All of the students appear to enjoy learning English.
- The majority of the students agreed with the fact that their best experience in learning English was when they could understand songs, movies or native

English speakers, and that their worst experience has been when they do not understand conversations, recordings or native speakers, or when other people do not understand them because of their mispronunciation.

- Ninety percent of the students think that listening is the most difficult aspect when learning English followed by pronunciation and vocabulary learning.

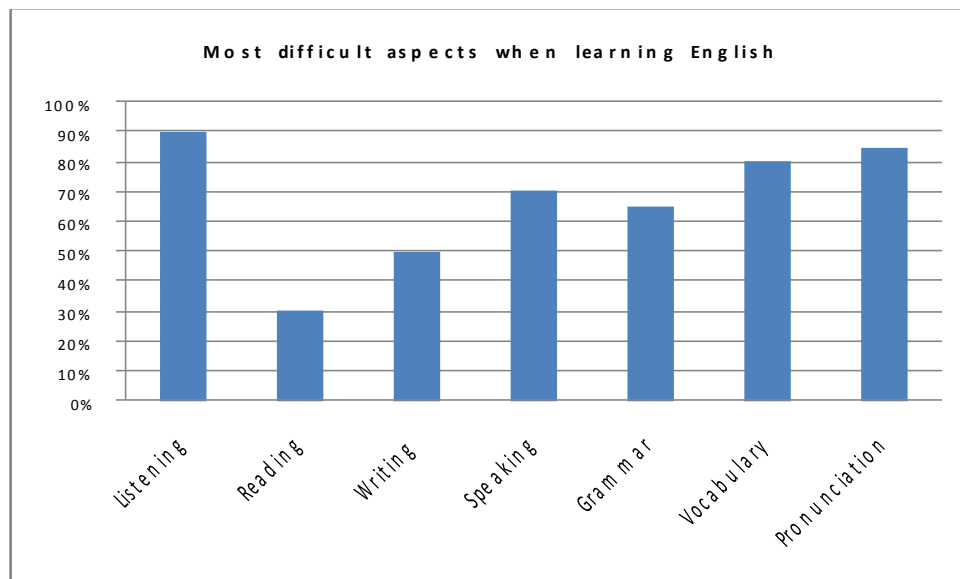


Figure 10: Participants difficulties when learning English.

- Finally, the majority of students expect to learn a lot during the course.

### 3.1.2 Materials

In this section, a description of all the materials that were used to conduct the current study is presented in detail.

- Course Book

The book that was used for teaching third level tourism students is called Tourism 1, which belongs to the series Oxford English for Careers. This book is divided into twelve units that deal with a variety of tourism related topics such as jobs, industry sectors, attractions, tour operation, marketing and advertising, transportation, accommodation, holiday types, reservation systems and the airline industry. Each unit has the following sections:

- Take off: which is a warm-up activity to the unit that often introduces key vocabulary or concepts.



- **Vocabulary:** this section usually occurs twice in each unit. It provides useful activities to practice the introduced vocabulary such as filling blanks using the words or classifying words into categories. In the first unit it suggests the elaboration of a Personal Learning Dictionary in which students should record new words along with their translation, phonetic transcription, part of speech, grammar features, sentence examples, related words and any other important information.
- **Speaking:** students usually work in pairs or groups to discuss learned topics, forcing students to use the language learned in the unit.
- **Language spot:** there are usually two in each unit and it focuses on grammar and its practical application. At the end of the book there is a Grammar reference for each unit where further explanation of each grammar point is provided.
- **It's my job / Where in the world?:** which occur in alternate units to provide students with examples of people working in different tourism areas and the skills needed for each job, or to present different places with tourism attractions around the world.
- **Listening:** the two listening sections in each unit provide students with input and practice of tourism situations. The activities mainly focus on listening for specific information. At the end of the book there are the listening scripts of each unit.
- **Reading:** it presents interesting tourism topics. The texts "cover basic tourism concepts that students may be familiar with already from other tourism subjects they are studying" (Walker et.al 5).
- **Top Margin:** at the top of one or two pages in each unit there are some important tourism facts, statistics, definitions and quotes
- **Pronunciation:** it practices pronunciation aspects which are "of maximum importance for intelligibility" (Walker et. al 5).
- **Customer care:** it provides sound advice on how to deal with customers.
- **Find out:** it presents ideas for research projects or homework assignments.



- **Writing:** provides structured and meaningful writing tasks in order to consolidate the topic learned in the unit. There's also a writing bank in the middle of the book which has recommendations and models for different writing activities.
- **Checklist:** at the end of each unit there is a checklist so that students can evaluate their progress by checking the items they have achieved.
- **Key words:** at the end of each unit there's a list of the main items of the unit. These items are defined at the end of the book in the Glossary section.
- **Next stop:** provides questions to discuss and reflect upon which introduce the topic of the following unit.

As it can be seen, the book is very well organized and appealing; therefore it can be considered as a great guide for teachers working with students who want a career in tourism. Moreover, it emphasizes pair work and group work so that students are encouraged to participate actively in the learning process without depending on the teacher all the time. However, regarding vocabulary learning strategies, it can be said that besides the Personal Learning Dictionary and the strategy of categorizing vocabulary, there is not more advice on how to learn words effectively. In addition, in regard to listening strategies, the instructions cover only implicitly the strategies of listening for specific information, listening for main ideas, and making predictions before a listening task.

➤ **Background Questionnaire**

In order to know the participants' background, a background questionnaire (see Appendix B) was elaborated based on a model questionnaire that appears on Oxford's book (Oxford 282). It was translated into Spanish (as the majority of the material in order to avoid misinterpretations and obtain more reliable data) and modified a little in order to suit the study's needs. For example, certain questions such as sex, mother tongue, language you speak at home that appeared in the original questionnaire were not considered because the answers were obvious. On the other hand, other questions (like how many hours of English did you have in primary school, high school?, Have you taken extra English courses?



What do you expect from this course?) were added because of the value of the answers for the study.

➤ Informed Consent

Due to the fact that participants in a study have the right to be informed about all the aspects of the study such as the purposes, procedures, risks, benefits, confidentiality issues, and so on in order to decide, or not, to be part of it, an informed consent form was designed for this study (see appendix B). This form was taken from a model that appears on the book *Second Language Research* (Mackey et.al 323) and it was translated into Spanish and a little modified.

➤ Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (version for speakers of other languages learning English) (Oxford 293) was used in this study in order to find out about the strategies that the participants use when learning English (see Appendix C). This inventory is different to the original one because students could check their answers in the same sheet where the items were, while in the original one, students have to write their answers only in the answer sheet. Moreover, the parameters (1. Never or almost never true for me; 2. Usually not true for me; 3. Somewhat true for me; 4. Usually true for me; 5. Always or almost always true for me) were translated into Spanish to avoid misunderstandings. In addition, a worksheet for scoring the results was elaborated based on Oxford's worksheet and profile of results (Oxford 298-300) (see Appendix D).

➤ Pre-test and Post-test

A teacher-made test was elaborated to gain information about students' performance in vocabulary and listening before and after treatment. This test was based on the topics of Unit 3 of the book described before (see Appendix E). The first part of the test evaluates vocabulary and it consists of two fill-in-the-blank tasks comprising seventeen items in total. Students were asked to choose the appropriate word for each blank out of a list of words which had more words than needed. The second part of the test deals with listening. Students had to listen to a description of a tour in Burma and complete two parts. On the first part, students were asked to answer two questions while on the second part they had to complete four sentences; therefore, there were nine items to be



graded. Each item was worth one point, so that the vocabulary part was graded over seventeen points while the listening section was over nine points.

➤ Lesson Plans

The lesson plans that follow were elaborated based on the five steps of strategy-based instruction described by Cohen in chapter two. The listening strategies that were chosen to be taught are both top-down and bottom-up strategies, while the vocabulary learning strategies were selected from Oxford's memory strategies (these strategies are described in Chapter two).

**Lesson Plan 1**

**Topic:** Listening Strategies: Pre-listening and during listening **Date:** Oct.26/2010

**Objectives:**

- To raise students' awareness of the three steps that lead to successful listening (pre-listening, during listening, and after listening).
- To teach students how to activate prior knowledge of the topic that is going to be listened to.
- To teach students how to identify the purpose of the listening activity so that they know exactly what to listen to.
- To teach students how to make predictions to anticipate what they might hear.
- To teach students how to stay focused during a listening activity.
- To teach students how to take notes.

**Materials:** listening activities taken from the book "Hemispheres 1" pg.33

**Time:** 1 hour 20'

**Procedure:**

Steps	Activities
1. Strategy Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ask students what they do before doing a listening task and what comes to their minds.</li> <li>- Ask students how they take notes.</li> </ul>
2. Strategy-awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make students aware of the strategies that they usually use and of the fact that there are a great variety of strategies that might help them become better learners. Tell students that listening strategies can be divided into three steps: pre-listening, listening, and after listening and that each step includes</li> </ul>



	different strategies.
3. Strategy Training	<p><b>Activating prior knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Teacher describes, models, and gives examples of how to relate a topic that is going to be listened to with already known knowledge about the topic.</li><li>- Teacher shows the pictures and title of three listening activities and asks questions such as: What do I know about the topic? Is this familiar to me? Has this happened to me before?</li></ul> <p><b>Identifying the purpose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Teacher describes, models and gives examples of how to identify the purpose of a listening task by focusing and underlying the verbs in the instructions.</li></ul> <p><b>Making predictions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Creating predicting questions: teacher asks who, what, when, where, why, and how based on clues such as title, photos, etc. and thinks of possible answers for the questions. Then share the ideas with the class.</li><li>- Predicting vocabulary: based on clues, students anticipate to the vocabulary they may hear in the listening activity.</li></ul> <p><b>Paying Attention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Teacher emphasizes that students need to commit to avoid distractions and models how to do it (eg. Avoid sitting next to a friend who likes to talk a lot, trying to concentrate a lot)</li></ul>
4. Strategy Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Students practice the learned strategies with a listening activity from the book.</li><li>- Students compare their answers in groups and discuss about them.</li></ul>
5. Personalization of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Students reflect on what they have learned about these strategies, evaluate to see how they are using the strategies, and then consider ways that they can transfer the use of these strategies to other contexts for example in a real listening situation.</li></ul>



After following the 5 steps of strategy-instruction procedure to teach pre-listening strategies, repeat the steps to teach how to take notes.	
Steps	Activities
1. Strategy Preparation	- Ask student students how they take notes.
2. Strategy-awareness raising	- Tell students that note-taking is a very important strategy, and that there are certain techniques to make it easier and more organized. One of these techniques is the T-formation
3. Strategy Training	<p>Taking notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher describes, models and gives examples of how to take notes using the T-formation technique which consists of drawing a large T on a piece of paper, taking up the whole sheet. Then writing the title on the crossbar of the T. On the left side of the vertical line, writing the basic categories or topics and on the right side writing details, specific examples or comments.</li> <li>- Teacher uses the board to show how to use both techniques with a listening activity while students look at her.</li> </ul>
4. Strategy Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students practice note-taking with a listening activity.</li> <li>- Students practice note-taking in a real listening situation where a native speaker of English was invited to the class to talk about her impressions of Ecuador and Cuenca.</li> <li>- Students compare their answers in groups and discuss them.</li> </ul>
5. Personalization of Strategies	- Students reflect on what they have learned about note-taking, evaluate to see how they are using the strategy, and then consider ways that they can transfer the use of this strategy to other contexts for example in a real listening situation.

Table 2: Lesson Plan: Pre-listening Strategies and Taking Notes

**Lesson Plan 2****Topic:** Listening Strategies: Bottom-up strategies**Date:** Oct.28/2010

**Objectives:**

- To teach students how to develop word recognition skills.

**Materials:** listening activities taken from the book "Tourism 1"

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Procedure:**

Steps	Activities
1. Strategy Preparation	- Ask students what they do when they do not understand some of the words from a listening activity.
2. Strategy- awareness raising	Tell students that word recognition is very important in the listening process and that they can develop this skill by using a six step procedure.  1. Listening to the recording  2. Ask themselves if they understood what they heard.  3. Replay the recording as often as necessary.  4. Consult the written text to read what they have just heard.  5. Recognize what they should have understood.  6. Replay the recording as often as necessary to understand the complete oral text without written support.
3. Strategy Training	- Teacher describes, models and gives examples of how to perform the six steps above with a listening activity.
4. Strategy Practice	- Students practice the six steps with a listening activity from the book.  - Students compare their answers in groups and discuss about them.  - Students practice these steps at home.
5. Personalization of Strategies	- Students reflect on the usefulness of these steps and write an entry on their journals.

Table 3 Lesson Plan: Bottom-up Strategies

**Lesson Plan 3**

**Topic:** Listening Strategies: Identifying main ideas

**Date:** Nov. 5/2010



<b>Objectives:</b> - to teach students some clues that might help them to identify main ideas. <b>Materials:</b> listening activities taken from the book "Tourism 1" <b>Time:</b> 30 minutes <b>Procedure:</b>	
Steps	Activities
1. Strategy  Preparation	- Ask students how they identify main ideas
2. Strategy-  awareness  raising	<p>Tell students that speakers tend to signal main ideas using the following signposts:</p> <p>1. Discourse markers: are certain words or phrases that indicate the main idea is coming. For example:</p> <p>The point I want to cover here is... ; The main point is... ; The important thing here is... ; What I'm trying to show is... ; What I'm going to talk about today is... ;</p> <p>This afternoon I'd like to explain/focus on, etc.</p> <p>Here are some common discourse markers and the relationships of ideas they indicate:</p> <p><b>Markers of Addition:</b> Also, furthermore, in addition, moreover.</p> <p><b>Markers of Cause:</b> because; because of.</p> <p><b>Markers of Consequence:</b> As a result; because of this; consequently; so; therefore.</p> <p><b>Markers of Clarification/Explanation:</b> In fact,. In other words,.</p> <p><b>Markers of Classification/Categorization:</b> There are 2 (3, 4, several, many, etc.) types / kinds/ forms of.</p> <p><b>Markers of Comparison:</b> Like; similarly.</p> <p><b>Markers of Contrast:</b> Although/though; however; on the other hand.</p> <p><b>Markers of Exemplification:</b> For example, For instance, such as.</p> <p><b>Markers of Sequence of Events:</b> Next/Then/Later/After that, etc.</p> <p>2. Rhetorical questions: are questions that the speaker asks out loud, and that the speaker plans to answer in his/her presentation. Therefore, rhetorical questions are important</p>



	discourse markers to pay attention to.
3. Strategy Training	- Teacher shows students how to identify main ideas using a listening activity taken from the book. Teacher stops the recording immediately after hearing the signposts. Teacher writes on the board the discourse markers that helped her to identify main ideas.
4. Strategy Practice	- Students practice identifying main ideas using a listening activity from the book. - Students compare their answers in groups and discuss them.
5. Personalization of Strategies	- Students reflect on the usefulness of this strategy and evaluate themselves if they have problems or not doing it. Then they write an entry in their journals.

Table 4 Lesson Plan: Identifying Main Ideas

Lesson Plan 4	
<b>Topic:</b> Listening Strategies: During-listening: predicting; After-listening: summarizing and self-evaluation.	
<b>Date:</b> Nov. 8/2010	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
- To teach students how to make predictions during listening.	
- To teach students how to make summaries.	
- To teach students how to evaluate themselves after a listening activity.	
<b>Materials:</b> listening activities taken from the book "Tourism 1" and the book "Hemispheres 1" pg. 56	
<b>Time:</b> 30 minutes	
<b>Procedure:</b>	
Steps	Activities
1. Strategy Preparation	- Ask students what they think about during a listening activity. - Ask students what they do after finishing a listening activity.
2. Strategy-	- Tell students that during the listening activity it is very important



awareness raising	<p>to confirm the predictions made before listening and to try to predict what kinds of information might come next because this strategy will help you stay focused and give you a better chance of general comprehension.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- In addition, tell students that after a listening activity it is crucial to make a simple summary of what they heard based on the notes they took. This way they show that they really understood the main ideas of the listening passage.</li><li>- Finally, tell students that it is crucial to evaluate how they did in the listening activity in order to set purposes for incoming listening activities.</li></ul>
3. Strategy Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Teacher shows students how to make predictions during a listening activity taken from the book Hemispheres 1. She does this by stopping the recording and making a prediction of what she thinks the speaker is going to say next.</li><li>- Teacher shows students how to make oral summaries based on key points.</li><li>- Teacher shows how she evaluates herself after the listening activity. She asks herself if she fulfilled all the strategies during the three steps for listening and ticks the top-down listening checklist (see Appendix F). Also she says out loud what she plans to do for the next listening activity in order to improve this skill.</li></ul>
4. Strategy Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Students practice making predictions, summarizing and evaluating themselves with a listening activity taken from the book "Hemispheres 1"</li><li>- Students complete their listening checklists.</li><li>- Students compare their answers in groups and discuss about them.</li></ul>
5. Personalization of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Students reflect on the strategies learned and write an entry in their journals.</li></ul>



Table 5 Lesson Plan: Predicting during listening and After-listening Strategies

Lesson Plan 5	
<b>Topic:</b> Vocabulary Strategies: Learning notebook <span style="float: right;"><b>Date:</b> Nov. 9/2010</span> <b>Objective:</b> To help learners create a learning notebook. <b>Materials:</b> notebook and textbook "Tourism 1" <span style="float: right;"><b>Time:</b> 20 minutes</span> <b>Procedure:</b>	
Steps	Activities
1. Strategy Preparation	- Ask students if they have a notebook for English and what they write in it.
2. Strategy-awareness raising	- Make students aware of the fact that a learning notebook could be very useful for organizing and managing learning. This notebook could have as many different sections as the learner wants. For example it could have a grammar section, vocabulary, goals, mistakes, and so on. Explains students that they are going to focus on vocabulary learning, therefore their notebooks must have at least two sections: vocabulary and journals. The notebook should be taken everywhere if possible in order to constantly review the words that have been recorded.
3. Strategy Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher explains that whenever students come across a new word, phrase, or expression in their books, they should underline it. Then it should be transferred to their vocabulary notebook.</li> <li>- Teacher explains different ways of organizing the vocabulary notebook. For example in alphabetical order, parts of speech, units, and so on. Teacher emphasizes that the organization is up to the learner.</li> <li>- Teacher indicates that they can include different clues every time a word or phrase is recorded in the vocabulary notebook, but that at least they need to have the following things: the word in English; the part of speech; its definition in Spanish; a sentence showing how the word is used, which can be taken</li> </ul>



	<p>from the book or from a dictionary; and the way students listen to its pronunciation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Finally, teacher tells students to save at least the 20 last sheets of the notebook to write journals. In these journals students will comment about new strategies for learning vocabulary, if they are using successfully or unsuccessfully; problems that they have when learning; amount of time they have spent to learn; how they plan to improve their learning, and so on.</li> </ul>
4. Strategy Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students start to create their own vocabulary notebooks in class using the words and expressions that they learned in Unit 3, and they continue at home as homework.</li> </ul>
5. Personalization of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students reflect on what they have learned and give their opinion. Then write an entry in their notebooks.</li> </ul>

Table 6 Lesson Plan: Vocabulary Notebook

Lesson Plan 6	
<b>Topic:</b> Vocabulary Strategies: Using Keywords <span style="float: right;"><b>Date:</b> Nov. 10/2010</span>	
<b>Objective:</b> to teach students how to use the Keyword Method to remember vocabulary	
<b>Materials:</b> textbook "Tourism 1 Unit 5" <span style="float: right;"><b>Time:</b> 20'</span>	
<b>Procedure:</b>	
Steps	Activities
1. Strategy Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ask students what they do to remember the meaning of a word and how useful they think their methods are.</li> </ul>
2. Strategy-awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explain to students that you are going to show them how to use the keyword method, which is a very useful strategy for remembering the meanings of words and which may lead to significant improvement in students' recall of new vocabulary words.</li> <li>- Tell students that this strategy combines sounds and images and that it has 2 steps: 1. Think of a keyword for the new word</li> </ul>



	<p>which is a familiar word in one's own language or another language that sounds like the new word. 2. Generate a visual image of the new word and the familiar one interacting in some way.</p>
3. Strategy Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Teacher models the strategy twice. The first time using the word "barrister". The teacher tells students that in order to remember this word it is necessary to find a word that sounds like it (remind students that the keyword does not have to sound exactly the same as the new word). For example the word "barrer" sounds like it, so it is chosen as the keyword. Then tell students that you imagine a lawyer sweeping clients' money. Also, remind students that the associations need to make meaning for the person who is making the association even though they could not make sense for other people.</li><li>- The second time using a word taken from the students' textbook "browse". Again teacher finds a keyword such as brownie and tells students that she imagines a brownie in a travel agency browsing through brochures.</li></ul>
4. Strategy Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Students practice the strategy with 3 words taken from the textbook.</li><li>- Students compare their associations in groups and discuss about them. Then they do it as a whole class.</li></ul>
5. Personalization of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Students reflect on what they have learned about the Keyword method (if they think it is useful or not, if they are going to use it every time they learn a word, if they think is easy/difficult to use, etc. They write an entry in their notebooks.</li></ul>

Table 7 Lesson Plan: Keyword Method

**Lesson Plan 7****Topic:** Vocabulary Strategies: Grouping using Semantic mapping**Date:** Nov. 11/2010**Objective:** To teach students how to elaborate semantic maps to group related



concepts visually	
<b>Materials:</b> notebook	
<b>Time:</b> 20 minutes	
<b>Procedure:</b>	
Steps	Activities
1. Strategy Preparation	- Ask students if they know how to make semantic maps and when to use them.
2. Strategy-awareness raising	- Tell students that a semantic map is a diagram which links key concepts with related concepts via arrows or lines. The diagram visually shows how ideas fit together. These diagrams are very useful for grouping related vocabulary words visually, therefore making the concepts easier to remember.
3. Strategy Training	- Teacher makes a semantic map on the board using words from Unit 4 (Reasons for Travel; leisure; business; VFR; sightseeing; trek; pilgrimage; familiarization trip; incentive tour; wedding)
4. Strategy Practice	- Students make a semantic map in their vocabulary notebooks using the words that they recorded from Unit 5.
5. Personalization of Strategies	- Students reflect about this strategy. They comment on the usefulness of it and also on the problems they had when using this strategy. They write an entry on their journals.

Table 8 Lesson Plan: Semantic Mapping

Lesson Plan 8	
<b>Topic:</b> Vocabulary Strategies: Placing new words into a context	
<b>Date:</b> Nov. 12/2010	
<b>Objective:</b> To teach students how to place words into a different context.	
<b>Materials:</b> notebook	
<b>Time:</b> 20 minutes	
<b>Procedure:</b>	
Steps	Activities
1. Preparation	- Ask students if they remember words better when they are placed into a meaningful context than if they are alone.



2. Strategy- awareness raising	- Make students aware of the fact that they are already using this strategy when they write a sentence on their vocabulary notebooks. In addition, tell them that if they put words into different meaningful context they will be easier to remember.
3. Strategy Training	- Teacher models how to make a funny story using some words taken from unit 4 (incoming, in bulk, wholesaler, overnight). "Once upon a time, an incoming tour operator bought rooms in bulk from a wholesaler who happened to stay overnight at one of these rooms."
4. Strategy Practice	- Students make up their own stories using words from their vocabulary notebooks.
5. Personalization of Strategies	- Students reflect on what they have learned about this strategy, evaluate to see how they are using the strategy, and write an entry on their journals.

Table 9 Lesson Plan: Placing new words into a context

Lesson Plan 9	
<b>Topic:</b> Vocabulary Strategies: Reviewing Well <span style="float: right;"><b>Date:</b> Nov. 29/2010</span>	
<b>Objectives:</b> To teach students how to review material at carefully spaced intervals.	
<b>Materials:</b> notebook <span style="float: right;"><b>Time:</b> 20 minutes</span>	
<b>Procedure:</b>	
Steps	Activities
1. Strategy Preparation	- Ask students what they do to review material and when they do it.
2. Strategy- awareness raising	- Make students aware of the fact that looking at new target language once is not enough to remember it and that the goal of reviewing is that students can be so familiar with the information that it becomes natural and automatic. In addition, students keep spiraling back to learned information at the same time that they are learning new information (Oxford 67).
3. Strategy Training	- Teacher makes a spiral diagram (Oxford 67) to show students that they have to review information after 15 minutes, 1 hour, 3



	hours, 1 day, 2 days, 4 days, 1 week and 2 weeks until the stage of automatic use is reached. Moreover, teacher points out that the reviewing should be done using meaningful strategies such as the keyword method, grouping, etc.
4. Strategy Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students make the spiral diagram in their notebooks to keep track of the words they review.</li> <li>- After a week students talk in groups about their experience.</li> </ul>
5. Personalization of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- After a week, students reflect about this strategy, evaluate if the strategy is helping them to remember vocabulary better or not and write an entry in their journals.</li> </ul>

Table 10 Lesson Plan: Reviewing Well

➤ Student Checklists

A listening strategy checklist (see Appendix F) and a vocabulary learning strategy checklist (see Appendix G) were designed for students to self-evaluate their strategy acquisition. These lists focus on the strategies taught.

➤ Teacher's checklist

A checklist taken from the National Capital Language Resource Center (see Appendix H) was used in order to make sure that the procedure was followed correctly. This checklist was chosen because it resembles the five steps of strategy-instruction suggested by Cohen.

➤ Students Journals

Journals were written by students since the beginning of the study. They were told to write about the strategies learned and how they felt about them. Students needed to include the answers to the following questions: What do you think about the strategy? What problems did you have when using the strategy? Do you think the strategy will help you improve your English? Are you planning to use the strategy from now on?

➤ Teacher's Journal

A journal (see Appendix K) was kept in order to record the impressions, feelings, observations and any useful information about the study.

➤ Survey



A survey was designed to gather information about students' beliefs and reactions to the strategies learned during the semester (see Appendix I).

➤ Interview

An interview (see Appendix J) was prepared in order to get data related to the two research questions. However, students were encouraged to say everything they thought about the study.

### 3.1.3 Procedures

The semester started on September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010. During the first week of class students were asked to complete the Background Questionnaire (see Appendix A) and then discuss about some of the answers as a whole class. Then on the first week of October 2010, participants were asked for their consent. Before handing out the informed consent form (see Appendix B), I started talking about some of the answers given in the Background Questionnaire, especially the ones about the importance of English and the difficulties students have when learning this language. I emphasized the crucial role of English knowledge at the time of dealing with tourists from other countries and when wanting to succeed in this competitive industry, and the fact that the majority of students seemed to agree with the significant role of the English language for their careers. Next, I told them that since the majority of them thought that it was very important to become proficient in English and that listening, pronunciation and vocabulary was reported to be the most difficult aspects for them, I wanted to help them overcome these problems; therefore, I explained to them that according to research, certain strategies could help them become successful learners, and that I was going to carry out a study with them. After answering all participants' questions about the study, students were given the informed consent form to sign. To my surprise, all of the students in the class signed the form.

On the second week of October/2010, students completed the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (see Appendix C). In order to prevent boredom, to keep students interested in providing true answers, and to avoid falling behind with



the regular course, this inventory was not completed in one day (nor in one hour as it was suggested in Oxford's book pg. 277), but in four days spending about fifteen to twenty minutes each day. On the first day, participants were told that they were going to be assessed on how they learned English; therefore, they had to respond in terms of what they did to learn English and not in what they thought was a desirable way. In addition, they were told that there were no right or wrong answers. The Strategy Inventory was given to the students and they were told to complete only Part A and B. I wrote on the board that number 1 meant very rarely, number 2 less than half the time, number 3 about half the time, number 4 more than half the time and number 5 almost always (Oxford 293). I read each item out loud, translated it into Spanish and waited until students wrote their answers. Then I continued with the next one and so on, and after that, I collected the papers. On the second day, I followed the same process, but this time students had to complete Part C and D. The third day students responded to Part E and F. On the fourth day, students transferred their answers to the result worksheet, did the calculations (they had to calculate the average of each Part and the overall average) and completed their own profile (students had to transfer their averages and make a graph). After that, I wrote Oxford's key to understanding averages (see table 11) on the board so that students could understand how often they used these learning strategies.

Key to Understanding your Averages		
High	Always or almost always used	4,5 to 5,0
	Usually used	3,5 to 4,4
Medium	Sometimes used	2,5 to 3,4
	Generally not used	1,5 to 2,4
Low	Never or almost never used	1,0 to 1,4

Table 11 Oxford's Key to Understanding averages in the SIIL (Oxford 300)

Next, there was a general discussion about each of the categories of language learning strategies (remembering more effectively, using all your mental processes, compensating for missing knowledge, organizing and evaluating your learning, managing your emotions, and learning with others) based on the following questions (Oxford 280):



- Which language strategies do you think people use the most and why?
- Which kinds of strategies do you think are the most effective in general for most people?
- Which kinds of strategies might help you personally become a better language learner?

After this, all the papers were collected in order to evaluate the results. Based on these results, strategy training was designed and therefore, the nine lesson plans described on the former section were made. Before starting with strategy-based instruction, students had to take the pre-test (see Appendix E) described in the previous section as well. As it can be seen from the lesson plans, the last one was applied on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010; however, during the rest of the semester (until January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011) all the learned strategies were practiced over and over again with each unit of the book. For example, when there was a listening activity students were asked and reminded about the top-down strategies and then they had to complete the listening strategy checklist (see Appendix F). Moreover, the bottom-up strategies were practiced in class, but students were also told to do it at home as homework since I provided one student with a copy of the course CD and the other students had the responsibility of getting their own copies. In regard to vocabulary strategies, when a new word appeared, most of the time it was practiced in class using the Keyword Method and then was recorded in the vocabulary notebook with all the necessary information about it. When a unit was finished, students had to make semantic maps with the words they had in the vocabulary notebook and they also had to make a creative sentence or short story including at least four words from the vocabulary notebook. Since it was not possible to correct all students' sentences and semantic maps, students were told to compare them in groups or pairs and then read them out loud, so that everybody could hear and make comments. In order to make students do all the activities, the notebook was graded over twenty points. Ten points were given on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and the remaining ten points on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011. In addition, students were always reminded about the importance of the strategy of reviewing well. On January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011, students had to complete the checklists for listening and vocabulary (see Appendix F and G) checking how well they had done the mentioned strategies



during the semester. In regard to the teacher's checklist (see Appendix H), I completed it after each lesson plan. As it can be seen from the lesson plans, students were required to write a journal entry after learning a strategy, and I also kept a journal (see Appendix K) to record valuable information after strategy instruction and during the whole process. Finally, a survey (see Appendix I) followed by an interview (see Appendix J) were carried out. The survey took place on January the 20<sup>th</sup> and since it was in Spanish, no especial instructions had to be given. The interview was done the next day. The students were interviewed one by one and were encouraged to explain what they thought about the whole study.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this section, a description of the data that were collected during the study is presented and analyzed in light of the research questions. It further presents a discussion where the data are interpreted.

Firstly, in regard to the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (see Appendix C), class averages for each category and for the overall inventory were figured out from the students' profiles. It is important to mention that the lowest score that can be checked is number 1 (meaning very rarely) and the highest is number 5 (meaning almost always), and that each category corresponds to Oxford's Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective and Social strategies described on chapter two. Taking into consideration Oxford's Key to Understanding Averages (see Table 11), it is shown in the following graph (Fig.11) that when learning English the students do not generally use memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies and that they sometimes use compensation, affective and social strategies. Moreover, looking at the overall average, it can be said that in general, the students have a medium use of strategies, which means that they sometimes use learning strategies to learn English. These results were considered to design strategy instruction and thus, the lesson plans described before.

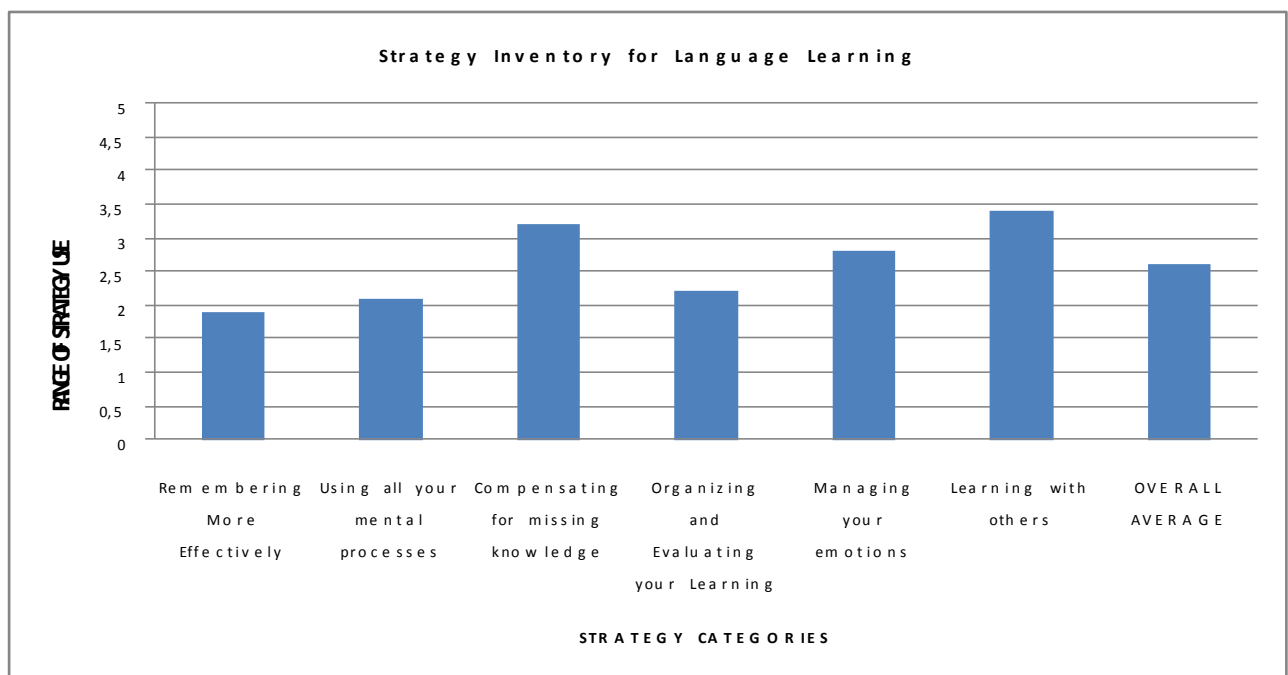


Figure 11 Results obtained from the application of Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Secondly, regarding the students' checklists (see Appendix F and G) which were completed on the last week of class about the strategies they had frequently used during the semester, it can be said that after strategy instruction students reported the use of the following strategies:

- Pre-listening strategies: as it is shown on Figure 12, the majority of the students at least tried to use the strategies learned and only a very small proportion never used them. In fact, 60% of the students used the strategy of relating topic with prior knowledge before doing the listening activities of the semester, while 40% tried to use it, but had some difficulties; 80% of the students did not have any problems with making predictions of what the topic was going to be about while only 20% tried it, but had some problems; only 30% could predict some vocabulary before a listening activity while 50% tried, but with some difficulties, and 20% never did this; finally, 45% of the students committed themselves to avoid distractions while 55% tried it, but could not do it completely.
- During-listening strategies: figure 13 shows that the major difficulty students had was making predictions during a listening task, while in the rest of the strategies only a small percentage of students reported that they never did them.
- After-listening strategies: as it can be seen from Figure 14, 25% of the participants could make a summary without difficulties, 50% had problems when

making a summary and only 25% never made a summary after a listening task. Moreover, 25% self-evaluated after a listening task, 45% tried it, but did not do it well and 30% never did it. Finally, only 30% made a commitment to improve in the next listening activity.

- **Bottom-up strategies:** It is important to remember that these strategies are steps of a process. The checklists reported that only 35% of the students did the bottom-up strategies at home (Fig.15). From this percentage, none of the students followed the process correctly because as it is shown on Figure 16 none of them listened to the recording as many times as necessary until reaching complete understanding.
- **Vocabulary strategies:** figure 17 shows that even though all of the participants elaborated their vocabulary notebooks, 70% think that they did not do it as it was expected. Only 5% reviewed the words on the notebook as it was indicated (after 15 minutes, 1 hour, 3 hours, 1 day, 2 days, 4 days, 1 week, 2 weeks). 30% never used the Keyword Method when studying vocabulary; only 15% made semantic maps successfully; and only 25% were successful in making sentences or short stories using new words.

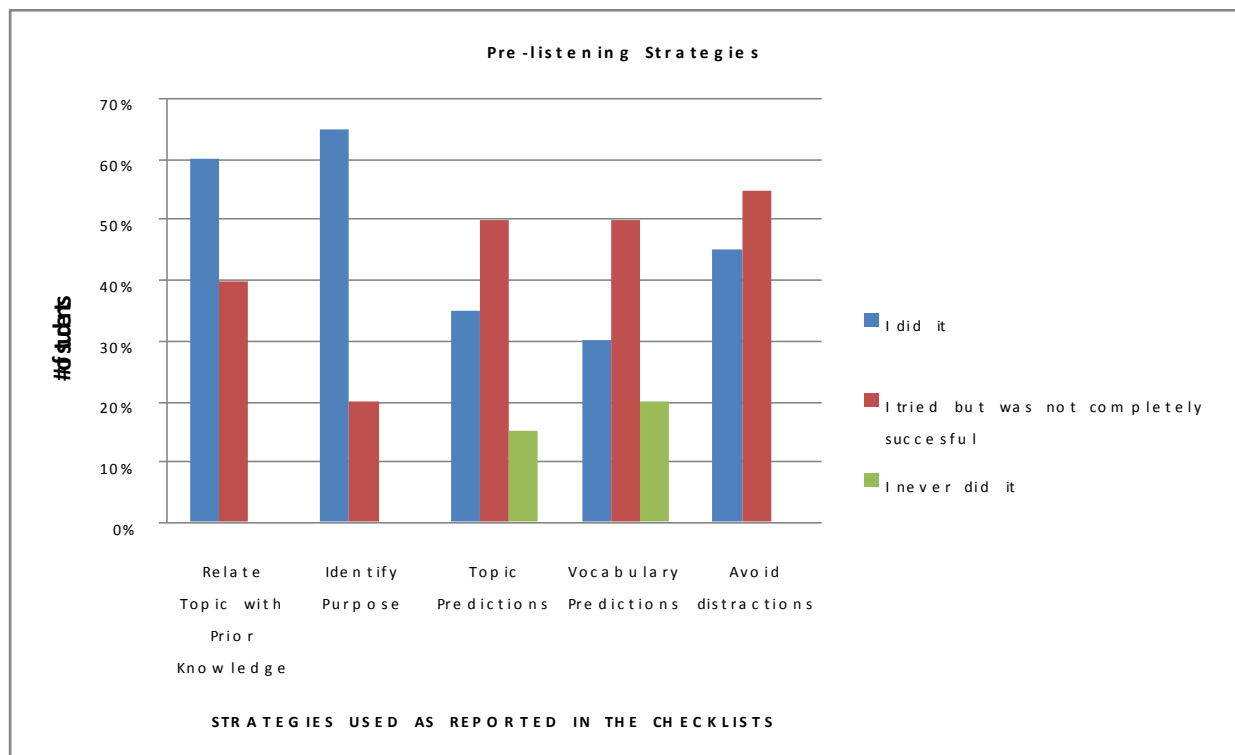


Figure 12 Pre-listening strategies used by the students.

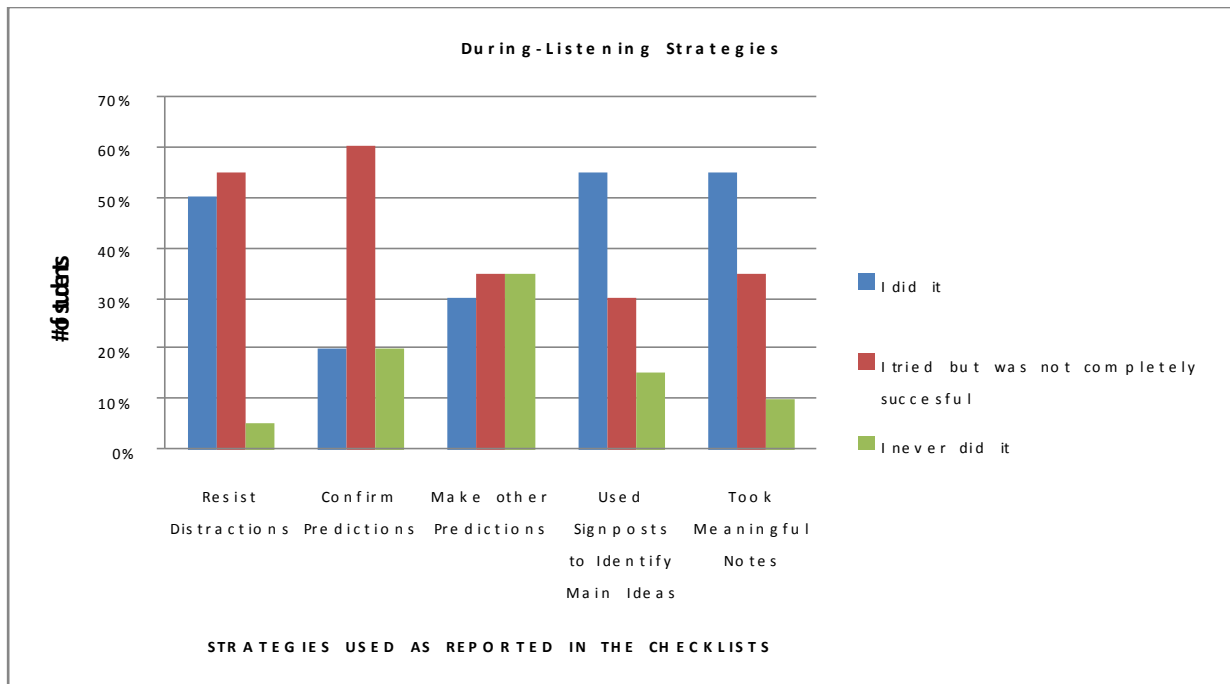


Figure 13 During-listening strategies used by students

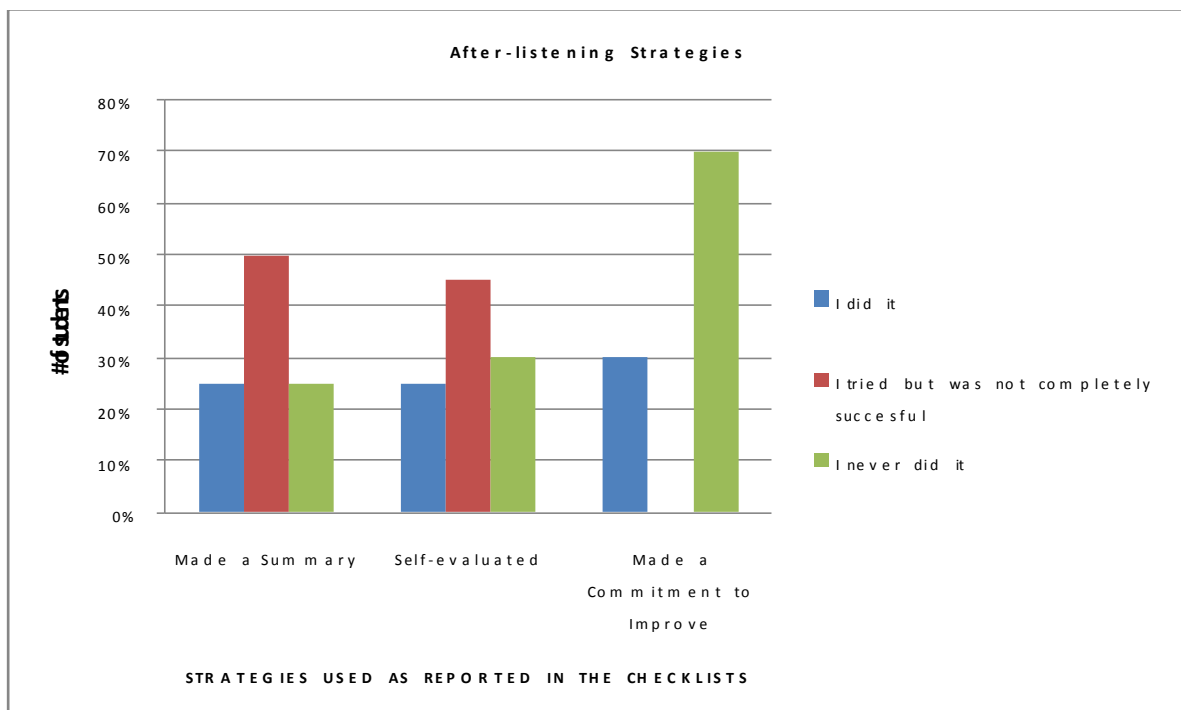


Figure 14 After-listening strategies used by students

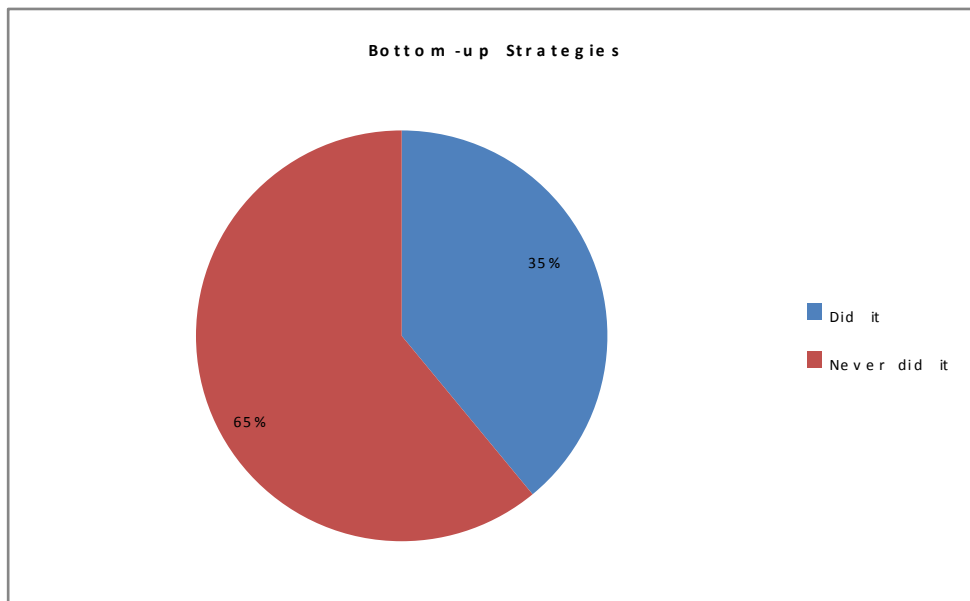


Figure 15 Bottom -up strategies for listening used by students

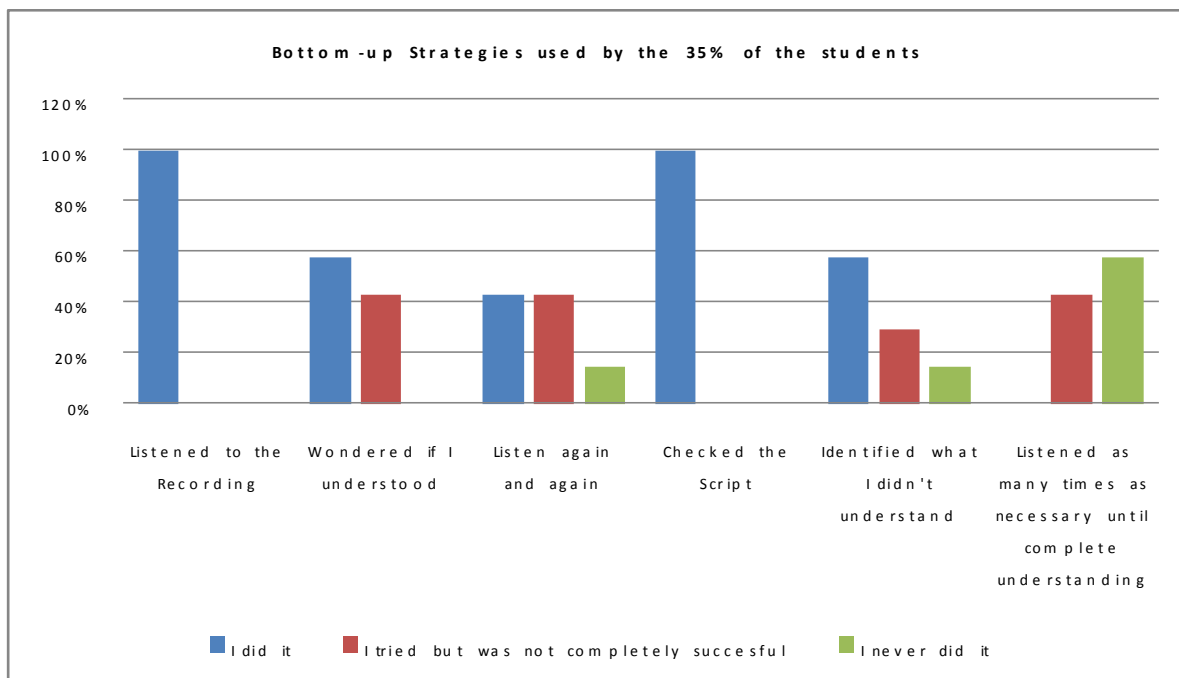


Figure 16 Bottom -up strategies used by some students

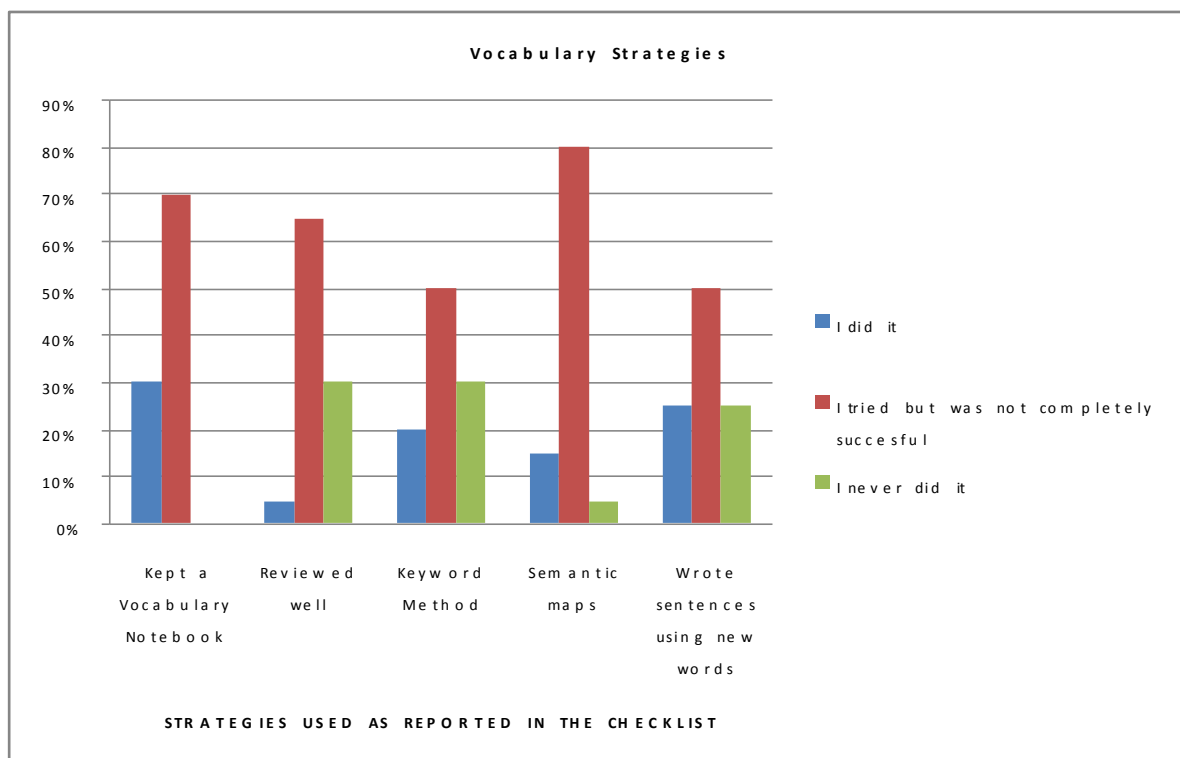


Figure 17 Vocabulary strategies used by students

To sum up, it seems that after explicit strategy instruction, the students increased the use of some memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies when learning vocabulary and when doing listening activities because before this instruction they reported not to generally use the mentioned strategies, as it was shown on the SILL.

Thirdly, the grades obtained from the pre and post-tests were expressed in percentages (therefore, 17 points correspond to 100% in the vocabulary test while 9 points correspond to 100% in the listening test) in order to be compared. As it can be seen in Figure 18, there was an increase in task-performance in the vocabulary test in almost all the students because none of them got a lower grade than the one received in the pre-test and only three students maintained the same grade in both tests. Comparing the average grades in the vocabulary pre and post-tests, there was a 17% increase as it is shown on Figure 19. In the same vein, Figure 20 shows that there was also an increase in task-performance in the listening test because only one student maintained the same grade while the rest got higher grades. This increment corresponds to a 19% as it can be seen on Figure 21. Since the second research question of this study involves a comparison between less and more proficient students, participants were considered "less proficient" if they obtained a grade of 45% or lower in both the vocabulary and the listening pre-tests, while the participants



who got a grade of 80% or more in the vocabulary pre- test and 70% or more in the listening pre-test were regarded as “more proficient” (this difference is because the listening test has fewer items than the vocabulary one and thus, it is a little more complicated). As it is shown on Figure 22, according to the vocabulary pre-test eight students were considered less proficient and five more proficient. Even though there was an increase in task-performance for all the less proficient students in the vocabulary test, it cannot be said that this increase is similar to the one that the more proficient students had because the average grade that less proficient students could reach was only 53% , while the more proficient students obtained an average grade of 94% (Fig. 23). Likewise, considering the grades of the listening pre-test (Fig.24), eleven students were regarded as less proficient and four as more proficient. Although all the students got a better grade in the listening post-test, it can also be said that task-performance in both type of students is not the same because less proficient students obtained an average grade of 47% in the post-test, while more proficient ones could reach 94% (Fig. 25).

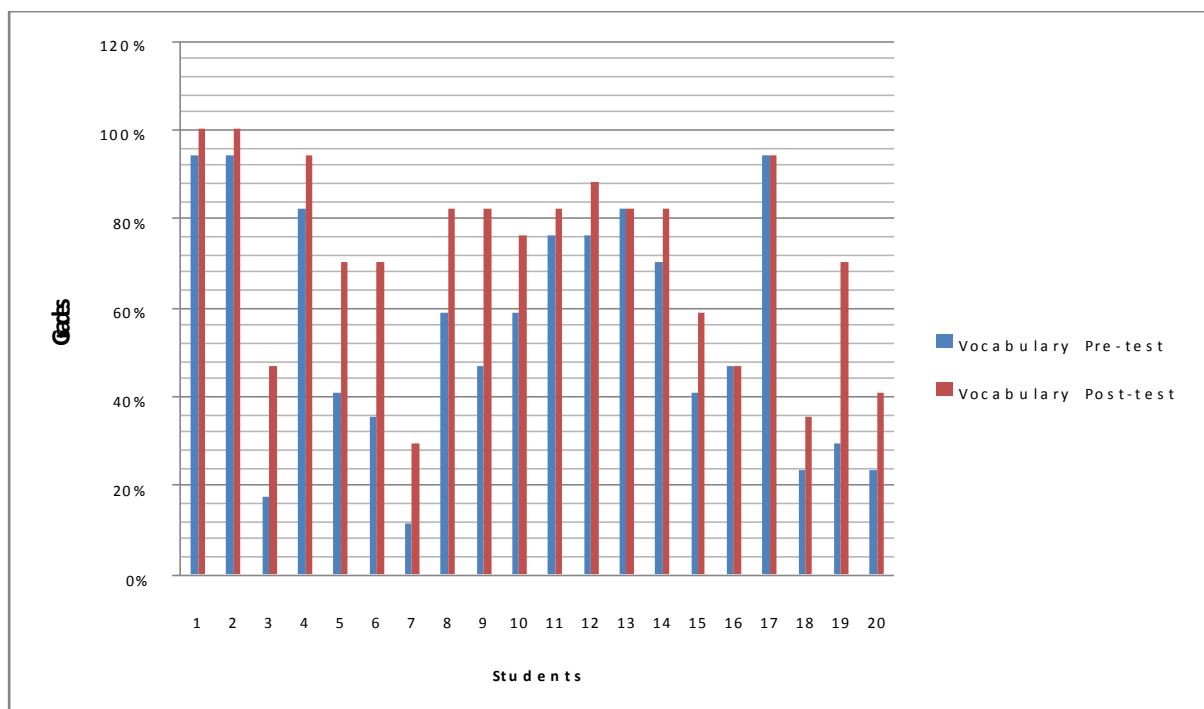


Figure 18 Comparison of grades in the Vocabulary Pre and Post-Tests

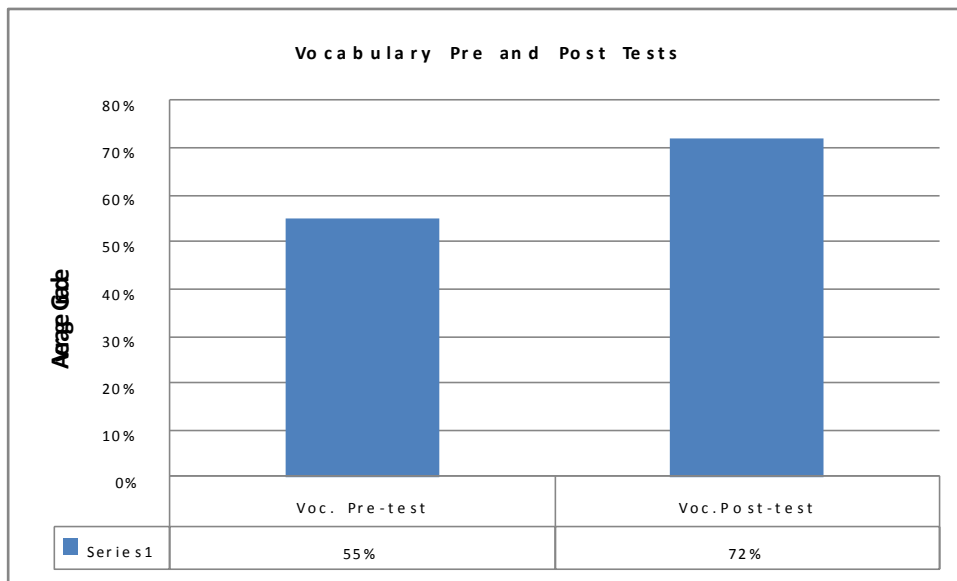


Figure 19 Comparison between average grades in the Vocabulary Pre and Post-test

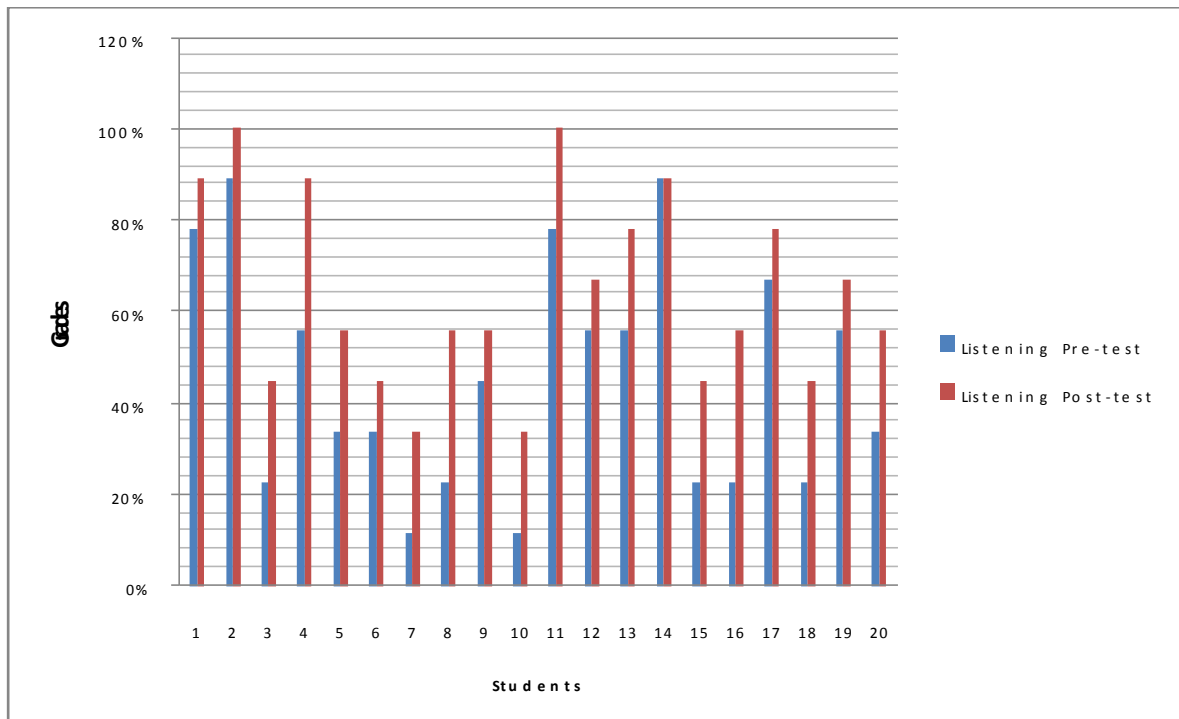


Figure 20 Comparison of grades obtained in the Listening Pre and Post-tests

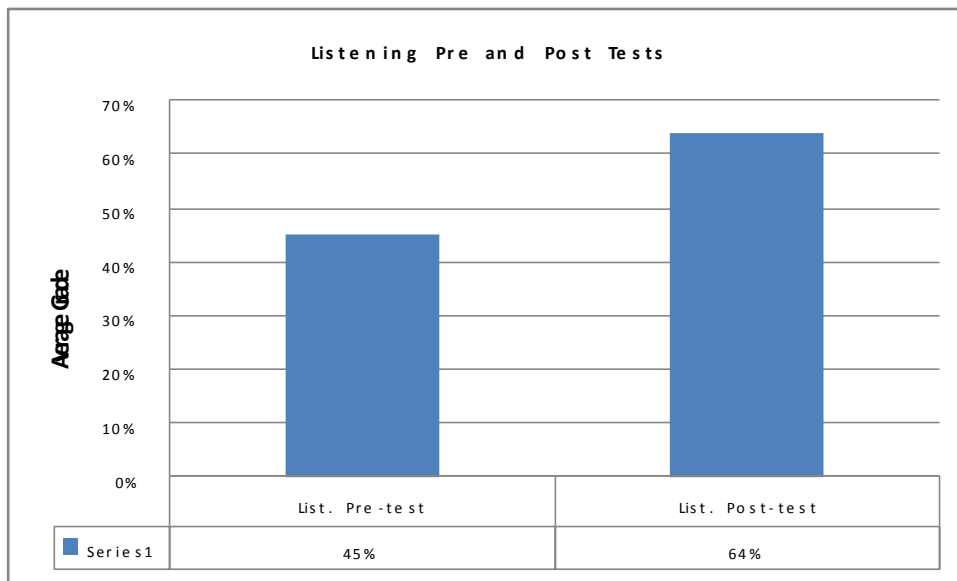


Figure 21 Comparison between average grades in the Listening Pre and Post-test

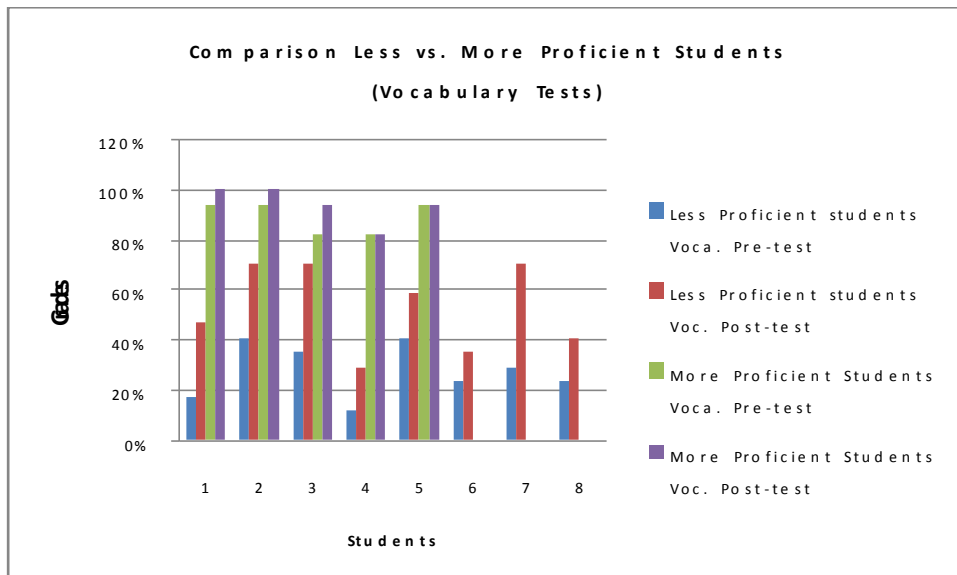


Figure 22 Task-performance comparison between less and more proficient students (vocabulary)

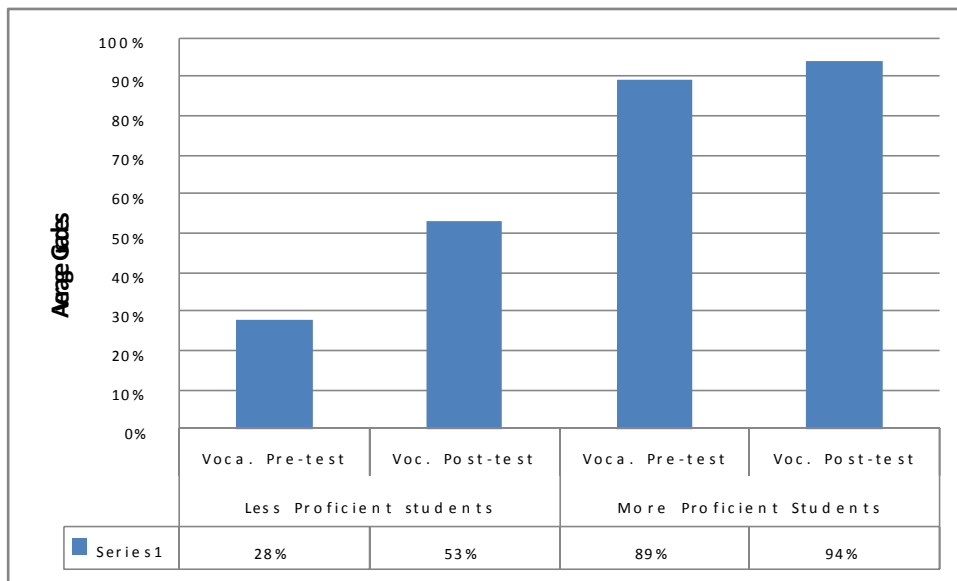


Figure 23 Average grades comparison between less and more proficient students (vocabulary).

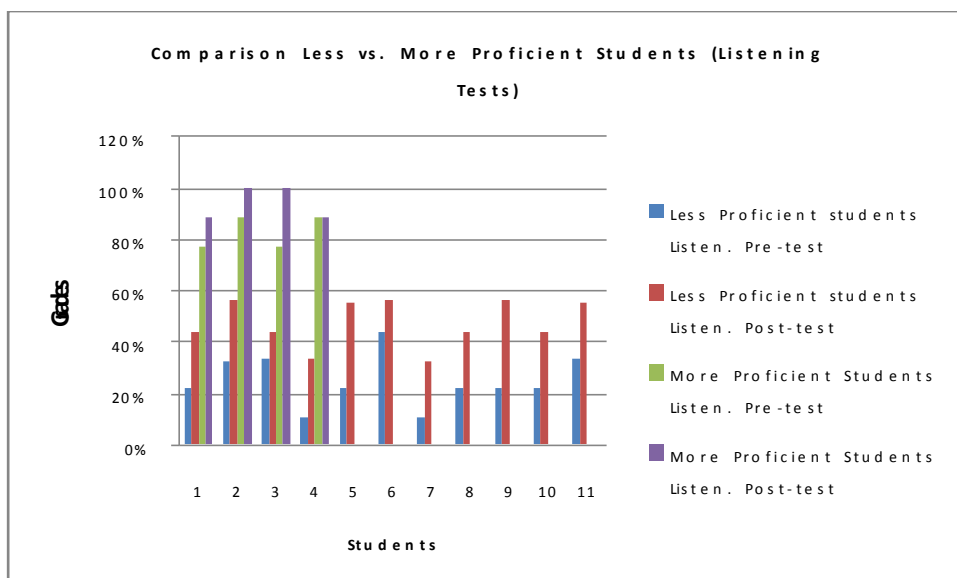


Figure 24 Task-performance comparison between less and more proficient students (listening)

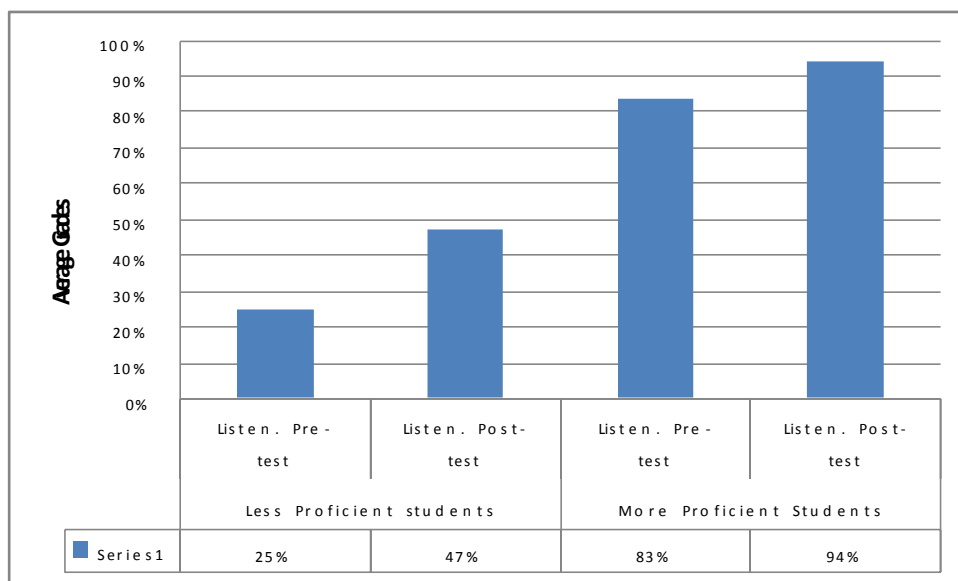


Figure 25 Average grades comparison between less and more proficient students (listening).

Regarding the survey (see Appendix I), 60% of the participants believe that the listening strategies they learned during the semester helped them a lot to improve this skill; whereas 40% think that they have just helped a little (Fig.26). The reasons for these answers are summarized as follow:

Reasons why the listening strategies helped a lot	Reasons why the listening strategies helped a little
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learned how to concentrate and what to focus on</li> <li>- can identify main ideas easier</li> <li>- learned that a listening activity has three stages and know what to do in each one</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it is not easy to apply all the strategies when the recording is playing with people speaking too fast.</li> <li>- Get desperate when something is not understood and thus, forget about the strategies.</li> </ul>

Table 12 Participants' reasons for the helpfulness of listening strategies.

In addition, 55% of the participants think that the listening top-down strategies are the most useful, while 45% believe that the bottom-up strategies are (Fig. 26). Their reasons are the following:

Reasons why Top-down strategies are more useful	Reasons why Bottom-up strategies are more useful
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You are aware of what to do during a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- you can concentrate better at home,</li> </ul>



<p>listening activity instead of just listening without knowing what to do, especially when you do not understand something.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- there is not time to do the bottom-up strategies at home.</li> <li>- did not get the CD.</li> </ul>	<p>stop the recording when necessary, and listen as many times as you want.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- you become familiar with a lot of words and then when you listen to them it is easier to recognize them.</li> <li>- they help pronunciation.</li> </ul>
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Table 13 Participants' reasons for the usefulness of listening top-down and bottom-up strategies

In the vocabulary survey, 80% of the students consider that the vocabulary strategies they learned helped them a lot to learn and remember vocabulary, whereas only 20% believe that they helped them a little (Fig.27). They gave the following reasons:

Reasons why the vocabulary strategies helped a lot	Reasons why the vocabulary strategies helped a little
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Because it was funny and easier to remember new words using the strategies in class.</li> <li>- Because now we know different ways to study a word and not only memorize them.</li> <li>- Because we are in contact with the new words all the time and not only before the exam.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We did not practice as it was supposed to because after class there is not time to do it.</li> </ul>

Table 14 Participants' reasons for the helpfulness of vocabulary strategies

Moreover, students had to choose the most useful vocabulary strategy and they could mark up to two strategies. As it can be seen in Figure 27, 80% of the participants think that it is the vocabulary notebook; 70% the Keyword Method; and 45% Reviewing Well. They provided the following reasons:

Strategy	Reasons why each vocabulary strategy is useful
Vocabulary Notebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When you do it, you practice at the</li> </ul>



	<p>same time, so it is easier to remember the words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is easier to review the notebook instead of reviewing the book.</li> </ul>
Keyword Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is a great help to remember difficult words</li> <li>- It is funny to do it in class because everybody does different associations and some of them are hilarious; therefore, you will never forget that word.</li> </ul>
Reviewing Well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is the best way to avoid forgetting</li> <li>- You forget a word when you do not use it, but if you are checking the words every time, you will not forget them.</li> </ul>

Table 15 Participants' reasons for the usefulness of vocabulary strategies

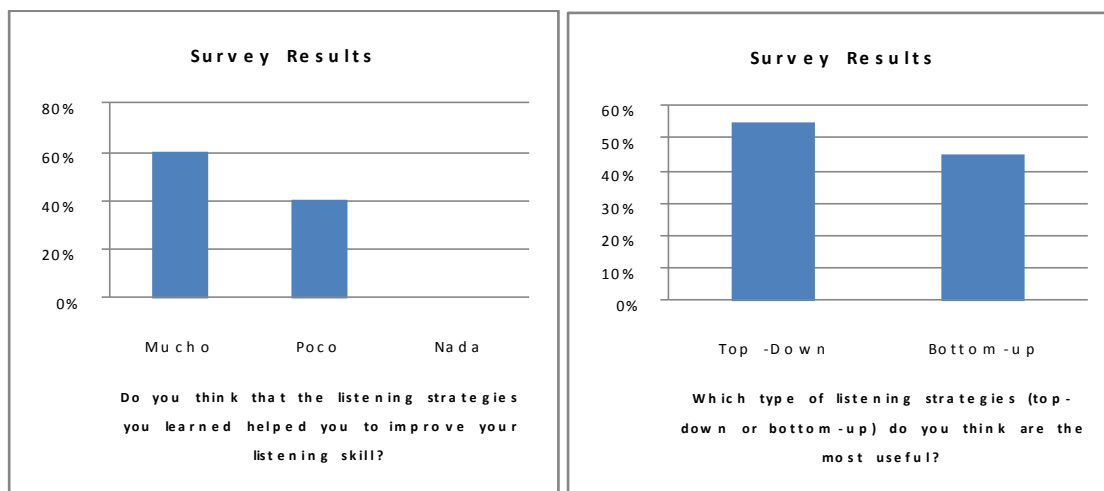


Figure 26 Results of the survey (listening)

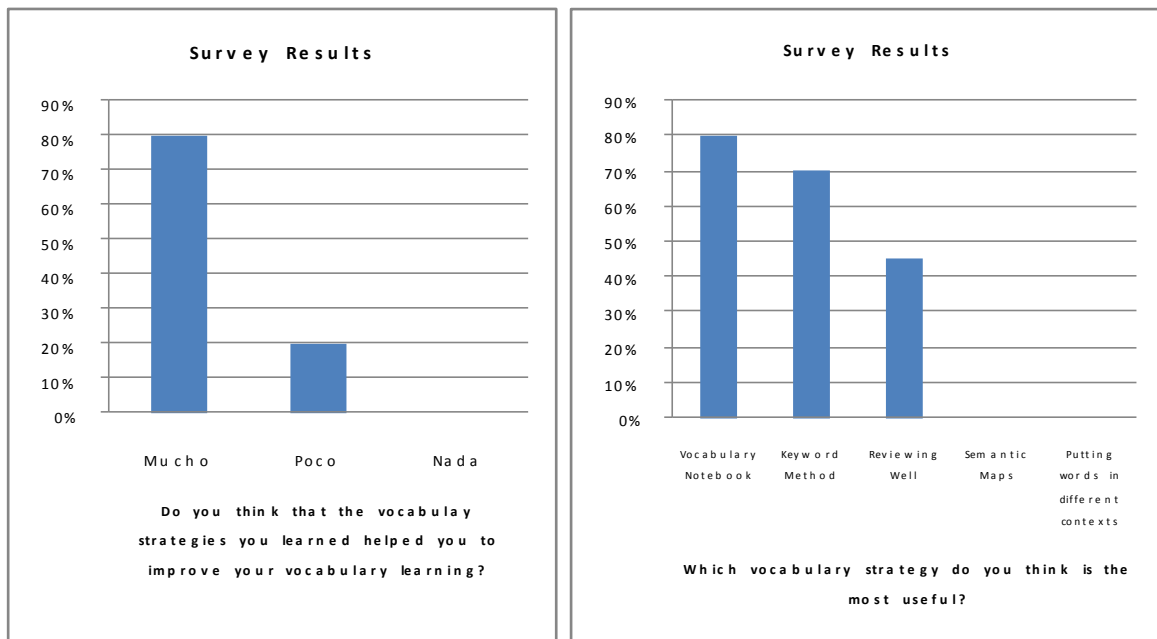


Figure 27 Results of the survey (vocabulary)

Finally, in regard to the second question of the survey for both the listening and vocabulary part, three students reported they used the strategy of making predictions before a listening activity (because in some books the instructions tell to do it), but they had never done it as it was practiced during the semester. Moreover, two students had done a vocabulary notebook, but only by recording words and their translations.

Lastly, the results obtained in the interview (see Appendix J) revealed that all the participants think that the strategies learned during the semester have influenced their way of studying vocabulary and doing listening activities because now they know that there are different effective ways to learn them; because they have helped to improve their performance in these activities; and because some of the students plan to use certain strategies in the future. In regard to the second question of the interview, less proficient students said that even though they notice they have incremented the use of certain strategies, their performance in both strategy use and vocabulary and listening tasks is lower than the performance of more proficient students.

#### 4.1 Discussion

It is crucial to mention that in order to assure the validity of this qualitative study, at least three sources of data (triangulation) have been used to answer each



research question. The first question will be answer by taking into consideration the results of the Pre and Post-tests, the Survey, and the Interview, while the data obtained in the Pre and Post-tests, the Interviews and the Teacher's Journal will be used for answering the second question.

Regarding the first question, it can be said that explicit instruction in language learning and use strategies aid the improvement of vocabulary learning and the performance in listening activities because as the pre and post-tests results show the majority of the participants improved their grades and only very few maintained the same grades. Moreover, the results of the survey and the interview confirm that all the students feel that they have benefited by strategy instruction.

In regard to the second question, if the results of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning and the ones of the Students' Checklists are compared, it can be seen that in fact, there is an increase of strategy use in all the participants. However, this increment is not the same in less and more proficient students because the more proficient ones tend to use more strategies and in a more effective way as the observations in the Teachers' Journal and the answers from the interview reveal. In addition, the results of the pre and post-test show that the more proficient students achieved better task performance than less proficient ones, which can be also confirmed with the results of the Interviews and the observations recorded on the Teachers' Journal. Therefore, it can be said that since less proficient students appear to use the strategies in a lower degree and number than the more proficient ones and that their performance is also lower than the proficient students, the increment of strategy use is similar to the increment in task performance.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, certain implications for the teaching-learning process of English as a Foreign Language (in contexts similar to the one described in this study) seem worthy to be drawn.

Firstly, the outcomes of this study appear to agree with the fact that there seems to be a relationship between strategy use and learners' success, and that



ineffective learners could be in a better position to solve language problems if they use effective strategies (Macaro 322). They also seem to reject Kellerman's belief that learner strategy instruction is irrelevant on the basis that learners have already developed strategic competence in their first language (L1) and can therefore simply transfer it to their L2 (Kellerman qtd. in Macaro 322) because the participants reported not to use strategies generally. Therefore, students could benefit if teachers do not take it for granted that university students (because they are adults and have finished primary and secondary education) already know how to learn a foreign language and consider explicit strategy instruction as a very important tool for their daily planning and teaching chores, especially to attempt the development of memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies in the students who seem not to be familiar with, as the results of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning revealed. In the same vein, it would be advisable for instructors to remember that strategy-based instruction can be embedded into any kind of program and that even the best textbook could be improved by this type of instruction.

Secondly, it is significant to remember that the effect of learning strategies depends on a lot of factors, such as motivation, age, learning style, aptitude, stage of learning, just to name a few. In this study it could be seen that even though all of the students seemed to be pretty motivated to learn English (as it was reflected in the background questionnaire), when the time of making effort came some students appeared not to be willing to do it because some of them expected to learn and do everything in class without bothering to do any activities at home, while others did not seem interested. Notwithstanding, all of the participants estimated that they had benefited by strategy instruction (as the results of the survey and pre and post-test indicate). Therefore, since the goal of strategy-based instruction is to help students develop more confidence, more awareness, more motivation, more efficiency, and more independence and thus, help them to become autonomous learners, teachers should not give up strategy training only based on the fact that certain students seem not to be improving at all because they might be in the process of reaching autonomy which could take time but would pay off when eventually, students are willing to go the extra mile and do extra activities that were not asked by the teacher, but were voluntarily done only for their own sake.



In addition, it seems crucial for teachers to be aware of the fact that listening and vocabulary might be troublesome areas for students (as the results of the Background Questionnaire reflected). Since listening and vocabulary appear to be crucial in language learning because on one hand, listening provides input without which any learning simply cannot begin (Rost qtd. in Richards et.al 239) and on the other hand, vocabulary provides "much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write" (Richards et al. 255), it would be sensible for teachers to consider putting a little more emphasis on these two areas (without neglecting speaking, reading, writing and discourse) in order to make the teaching-learning process more efficient.

Moreover, regarding listening strategies, theory states the fact that listening is a combination of top-down and bottom-up processes which interact freely to help listeners construct meaning (Vandergrift 14). The results of the study revealed that both top-down and bottom-up strategies seem to be helpful for students to improve this skill (since 55% of the participants favored top-down strategies and 45% bottom-up strategies). However, some students favored top-down strategies only because they believe that they do not have time to practice bottom-up strategies at home. Since bottom-up strategies are better practiced by oneself not only because each student can go at their own pace until mastering comprehension of the recording, but also because it can sometimes be time consuming doing them in class until achievement of complete understanding by every student, it might be advisable for teachers to assign the practice of bottom-up strategies as homework (of course after teaching how to do them in class following strategy-based instruction) and to give extra credit to students who actually did it or grade them accordingly, while top-down strategies can be easily practiced in class with any kind of listening activity in order to make sure that both kinds of listening strategies are being nailed.

Another important implication relates to vocabulary strategies. As it can be seen from the findings of this study, memory strategies (which are directly related with vocabulary learning) are the least used by students. Due to the importance of vocabulary in language learning and the fact that many authors recommend teachers spend time in promoting the "development of strategies for L2 learners to learn vocabulary on their own" (Nation qtd. in Chacon et.al 6), students could reap more benefits from the teaching-learning process if instructors first use strategy-based



instruction to teach students different memory strategies (especially the Vocabulary Notebook, the Keyword Method and Reviewing Well which were reported to be the most useful for the participants of this study) and then encourage them to use these strategies in a regular basis. This could be done by for example, grading the vocabulary notebook regularly, using the Keyword Method in class with as many new words as possible, and giving extra points to students who show that they are reviewing new words constantly. In addition, semantic maps and the strategy of putting words in different contexts can be practiced at the end of a unit using as many new words from the unit as possible because as Takac points out it is crucial that teachers provide students with "opportunities for practicing and connecting words in various ways and to stimulate them to retrieve words from memory and use them for all language skills" (Takac 21).

Lastly, this study appears to contribute a little to the controversial field of language learning strategies; however, a similar quantitative study can be recommended in order to produce more evidence of the findings and in addition, similar studies in other contexts such as high schools or private universities would also be worthy.

When I first started this overwhelming research journey I wanted to find a magic formula that help my students overcome their listening and vocabulary learning problems. It would not be appropriate to state that I actually did find this formula because in the field of education (since it deals with human beings with different background baggage) it is not possible to talk about one method to suit everybody; however, it is fair to say that I found light at the end of this journey with strategy-based instruction.

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## APPENDIX



## APPENDIX A

## Background Questionnaire

Nombre: .....

Fecha: .....

Edad: .....

1. Nombre de la Escuela Primaria donde estudió y su ubicación.

.....

2. Nombre del Colegio donde estudio la Secundaria y su ubicación.

.....

3. Recibió clases de inglés en su escuela? **SI** **NO**

Si lo hizo cuántas horas semanales tenía? .....

4. Recibió clases de inglés en su colegio? **SI** **NO**

Si lo hizo cuántas horas semanales tenía? .....

5. En la Universidad, cuantos ciclos de inglés ha tomado?

.....

6. Ha tomado cursos de inglés por su cuenta, esto es fuera de lo obligatorio en la escuela, colegio y universidad? **SI** **NO**

Si lo ha hecho, en que institución ha tomado esos cursos.

.....

7. Ha viajado a un país en donde la lengua nativa es el Inglés? **SI** **NO**

Si lo ha hecho, cual fue el motivo de su viaje.

.....

8. Como considera su destreza o habilidad para el inglés en comparación con la destreza o habilidad de los otros estudiantes de la clase? Encierre en un círculo solo una respuesta.

**Excelente****Bueno****Aceptable****Malo**

9. Como considera su destreza o habilidad para el inglés en comparación con la destreza o habilidad de nativo hablantes? Encierre en un círculo solo una respuesta.

**Excelente****Bueno****Aceptable****Malo**

10. Que tan importante es para usted el llegar a ser muy competente en el manejo del inglés tanto para la comunicación oral como para la escrita? Encierre solo una respuesta.

**Muy importante****Importante****No importante**11. Si no fuera obligatorio estudiar inglés para poder graduarse, lo estudiaría de todas maneras? **SI** **NO**

Si escogió SI por qué lo estudiaría:

a. Porque me interesa aprender el idioma y la cultura

b. Porque es necesario para mi carrera

c. Porque lo necesito para viajar



d. Otras razones:

.....

12. Ha estudiado otros idiomas aparte de inglés?      **SI**      **NO**

13. Le gusta aprender inglés?      **SI**      **NO**

14. Cual ha sido su mejor experiencia aprendiendo inglés.

.....  
.....  
.....

15. Cual ha sido su peor experiencia aprendiendo inglés.

.....  
.....  
.....

16. Cuáles su mayor dificultad para aprender inglés. Puede señalar más de una opción pero no más de tres.

- a. Listening
- b. Reading
- c. Writing
- d. Speaking
- e. Grammar
- f. Vocabulary
- g. Pronunciation

17. ¿Qué es lo que espera de este curso?

.....  
.....  
.....

**APPENDIX B****CONSENTIMIENTO PARA TRABAJAR EN ESTUDIO INVESTIGATIVO**

**Nombre del Proyecto:** "Analyzing the Impact of Strategy-based instruction on vocabulary acquisition and the listening skill"

**Investigador:** Lcda. Mónica Abad.

**Introducción:**

Usted está invitado a considerar su participación en este estudio de investigación el cual analizará el efecto que tiene una instrucción basada en estrategias sobre la adquisición de vocabulario y la destreza de escuchar. Este documento describe el propósito y naturaleza del estudio así como también sus derechos como participante del mismo. Si usted decide participar, por favor firme en la última línea de este documento.

**Explicación del estudio:**

Este estudio intenta encontrar como la aplicación de estrategias de aprendizaje influyen en la adquisición de vocabulario y en la destreza de escuchar, para lo cual el investigador enseñará el uso de ciertas estrategias y luego mediante observación, entrevistas, encuestas, verificará como los estudiantes aplican las estrategias y como les ayuda. Es posible que ciertas clases sean observadas por otros profesores, grabadas en video o que ciertas entrevistas también sean grabadas.

**Confidencialidad:**

Toda la información recolectada será confidencial y sólo será usada para este estudio. Su identidad se mantendrá anónima, esto es sólo el investigador conocerá su nombre. Si los datos de este estudio se publicaran, su nombre no será usado.

**Su Participación:**

La participación en este estudio es absolutamente voluntaria. Usted no tiene que ser parte de este estudio si no lo desea. En ese caso, usted participará en las mismas actividades pero nada de lo que diga o haga será parte de la recolección de datos para el presente estudio.

**Declaración del investigador:**

He explicado completamente el propósito y las características de este estudio y he respondido todas las preguntas que los estudiante han tenido sobre el mismo.

**Firma del investigador:** ..... **Fecha:** .....



**Consentimiento del estudiante:**

He leído toda la información de este documento. Todas mis preguntas han sido respondidas satisfactoriamente y por lo tanto acepto voluntariamente participar en este estudio.

Firma del estudiante ..... Fecha: .....



## APPENDIX C

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

1. Nunca o casi nunca 2. Usualmente no. 3. De alguna manera sí 4. Usualmente sí. 5. Siempre o casi siempre sí

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Part A</b>					
1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.					
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.					
3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.					
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.					
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.					
6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.					
7. I physically act out new English words.					
8. I review English lessons often.					
9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.					
<b>Part B</b>					
10. I say or write new English words several times.					
11. I try to talk like native English speakers.					
12. I practice the sounds of English.					
13. I use the English words I know in different ways.					
14. I start conversations in English.					
15. I watch English language TV shows or go to movies spoken in English.					
16. I read for pleasure in English.					
17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.					
18. I first skim an English passage (read it quickly) then go back and read carefully.					
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.					
20. I try to find patterns in English.					
21. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.					
22. I try not to translate word-for-word.					
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.					
<b>Part C</b>					
24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.					
25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.					
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.					
27. I read English without looking up every new word.					
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.					
29. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.					
<b>Part D</b>					
30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.					
31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.					
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.					
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.					
34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.					
35. I look for people I can talk to in English.					
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.					
37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.					



38. I think about my progress in learning English.					
<b>Part E</b>					
39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.					
40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.					
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.					
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.					
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.					
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.					
<b>Part F</b>					
45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or to say it again.					
46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.					
47. I practice English with other students.					
48. I ask for help from English speakers.					
49. I ask questions in English.					
50. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.					



## APPENDIX D

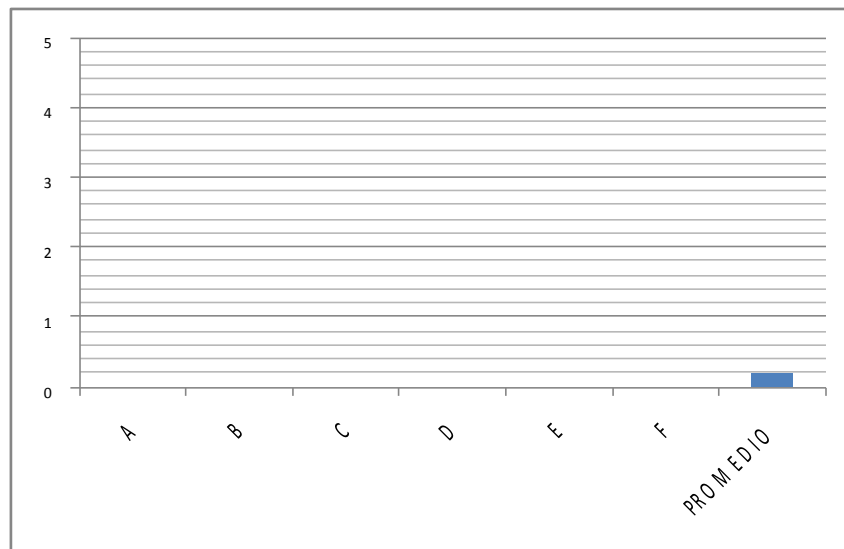
## HOJA DE RESULTADOS

Por favor transfiera sus repuestas del Inventario de Estrategias a esta hoja de resultados.

PART A	PART B	PART C	PART D	PART E	PART F	TOTAL	
1.	10.	24.	30.	39.	45.	Suma Part A __	
2.	11.	25.	31.	40.	46.	Suma Part B __	
3.	12.	26.	32.	41.	47.	Suma Part C __	
4.	13.	27.	33.	42.	48.	Suma Part D __	
5.	14.	28.	34.	43.	49.	Suma Part E __	
6.	15.	29.	35.	44.	50.	Suma Part F __	
7.	16.		36.				
8.	17.		37.				
9.	18.		38.				
	19.						
	20.						
	21.						
	22.						
	23.						
							Suma Total
/9 =	/14 =	/6 =	/9 =	/6 =	/6 =	/50 =	Promedio

## PERFIL DE RESULTADOS

Part	Estrategias	Su promedio en cada parte
A.	Recordar más efectivamente	
B.	Usar todos los procesos mentales	
C.	Compensar falta de conocimiento	
D.	Organizar y evaluar su aprendizaje	
E.	Manejar sus emociones	
F.	Aprender con otros	
Prom		



## APPENDIX E

### Pre-test and Post-test

NAME: ... .. DATE: ... ..

#### A. VOCABULARY

A1: Choose the appropriate word to complete the sentences. Some words are not necessary.

in bulk; souvenir; bow; escorted; floating; below; brochure; chains; abroad; glimpse; former; dawn; length; coach; overnight; advantage; advertise

1. We talked until \_\_\_\_\_.
2. He wanted to go \_\_\_\_\_ for a year to study a second language.
3. On Asian airlines, flight attendants always \_\_\_\_\_ when passengers enter the plane.
4. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an object that you keep to remind yourself of a special occasion or a place that you have visited.
5. She's staying \_\_\_\_\_ at a friend's house.
6. Buying food \_\_\_\_\_ is not a good idea when you don't have enough space to store large portions of food.
7. Prisoners usually have heavy \_\_\_\_\_ around their legs to prevent them from escaping.
8. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the tour is six days.

A2. Complete the paragraph. Choose from the following words. Some words are not needed.

reps; commission; travel agents; direct selling; chain of distribution; inclusive; incoming; specialist; tour operators; mass; domestic

Mónica Abad



Package holidays, also known as \_\_\_\_\_ tours, are put together by \_\_\_\_\_ who can be of different types. For example, \_\_\_\_\_ market operators create packages for the most popular and economical destinations. \_\_\_\_\_ operators offer packages to people with specific interests. \_\_\_\_\_ operators specialize in packages for people travelling inside their own country and finally, \_\_\_\_\_ operators produce packages to people coming into a country from abroad. When the packages have been put together, they are marketed through \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_. This last way reduces the final cost because no \_\_\_\_\_ is needed to be paid.

**B. LISTENING. Listen to Begona describing one of the tours she organizes in Burma.**

**B1. Answer the following questions.**

1. What two features of Burma interest people?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the main problem Begona has when she tries to get people to go to Burma?

\_\_\_\_\_

**B2. Complete the sentences.**

3. The most common reason for visiting Burma is \_\_\_\_\_

4. Bagan has \_\_\_\_\_ temples.

5. In Lake Inle tourists can do a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ by Inle and also in the mountains, which are about \_\_\_\_\_. Also people always like to go to the \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Mandalay is in \_\_\_\_\_ of Burma.



## APPENDIX F

## Student listening strategy checklist

Student Checklist (Top-down strategies)

Etapas del proceso de escuchar	Realizó las siguientes estrategias para escuchar.	Lo hice	Intenté pero no con mucho éxito	Nunca lo hice
Pre-listening (antes)	¿Relacionó el tema con su conocimiento sobre el mismo?			
	Identificó claramente el propósito de la actividad?			
	¿Hizo predicciones acerca del tema?			
	¿Hizo predicciones del vocabulario?			
	¿Se comprometió a evitar distracciones y a concentrarse en escuchar?			
During Listening	Si su mente intentó dispersarse, ¿se esforzó en mantener la atención en la actividad?			
	¿Confirmó sus predicciones?			
	¿Realizó otras predicciones mientras escuchaba?			
	¿Identificó ideas principales basándose en señales?			
	¿Tomó notas importantes y de una forma ordenada?			
After Listening	¿Revisó sus notas y realizó un resumen?			
	¿Analizó las estrategias utilizadas y se autoevaluó en lo que hizo bien y en lo que hizo mal?			
	¿Hizo un compromiso para mejorar su forma de escuchar para la siguiente actividad?			



(Bottom-up strategies)

Realizó las siguientes estrategias para escuchar.	Lo hice	Intenté pero no con mucho éxito	Nunca lo hice
Escuché la grabación			
Me pregunté si entendí lo que escuché			
Escuché nuevamente las veces que fue necesario			
Consulté el texto escrito para leer lo que acabé de escuchar.			
Identifiqué lo que no pude entender			
Escuché las veces que fueron necesarias hasta que pude entender todo la grabación sin tener que recurrir al texto escrito.			

## APPENDIX G

## Students' vocabulary strategy checklist

Vocabulary Checklist

Realizó las siguientes estrategias para aprender vocabulario	Lo hice muy bien	Lo hice pero pude haberlo hecho mejor	Nunca lo hice
Elaboré el cuaderno de vocabulario de acuerdo a como me indicó la profesora.			
Revisé las palabras o frases del cuaderno de vocabulario constantemente (15', 1 h, 3 h, 1 day, 2 days, 4 days, 1 week, 2 weeks)			
Utilicé el método "Keyword" cuando revisaba el vocabulario			
Elabore semantic maps para relacionar el nuevo vocabulario aprendido			
Escribí breves historias interesantes usando palabras del vocabulary notebook.			



## APPENDIX H

## TEACHING LEARNING STRATEGIES CHECKLIST

SELF-EVALUATION			
Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Preparing
			1. I ask students about the strategies they already use
			2. I include activities such as think alouds and discussions to help students be aware of their strategies
			Presenting
			3. I choose strategies to teach by matching them with the task.
			4. I give the strategy(s) a name and explain it.
			5. I tell students why and when to use the strategies
			6. I model how to use the strategies on a task.
			Practicing
			7. I choose challenging tasks for students
			8. I give students opportunities to practice the strategies.
			9. I remind students to use a strategy they've just learned or to choose from the strategies they know.
			10. I emphasize students' thought processes by asking them how they figured something out.
			11. I point out any strategies I see students using.
			12. I praise strategic thinking more than correct answers.
			Evaluating
			13. I encourage students to evaluate their own strategies use.
			14. I discuss with students which strategies they find most useful with the tasks practiced.
			15. I encourage students to independently choose strategies.



			16. I fade explicit learning strategies prompts when students take responsibility for the strategy.
			17. I evaluate how I teach strategies and revise appropriately.
			<b>Extending</b>
			18. I talk with students about how they can use the strategies in other subjects and life situations.

The Learning Strategies Instructional Resource

[http://www.nclrc.org/teaching\\_materials/assessment/assessment\\_tools/ls\\_instructional\\_resource.pdf](http://www.nclrc.org/teaching_materials/assessment/assessment_tools/ls_instructional_resource.pdf)

## APPENDIX I

### SURVEY

Name: .....

Conteste las siguientes preguntas con la mayor honestidad.

#### Listening Strategies

1. Piensa que las estrategias aprendidas durante el curso le ayudaron para mejorar su destreza de escuchar.

Mucho ..... Poco ..... Nada .....

Por qué? .....

2. Había utilizado conscientemente estas estrategias antes? Si..... No.....

Si respondió que sí cuáles de las estrategias había utilizado? .....

.....

- 3.Cuál de las estrategias (top-down or bottom-up) le parece la más útil o le ayudo más para mejorar su destreza de escuchar?

Top-down ..... Bottom-up .....

Por qué? .....

Mónica Abad



## Vocabulary Strategies

1. Piensa que las estrategias aprendidas durante el curso le ayudaron para aprender y recordar vocabulario

Mucho ... .. Poco ... .. Nada ... ..

Por qué? ... ..

2. Había utilizado conscientemente estas estrategias antes? Si... .. No... ..

Si respondió que sí cuales de las estrategias había utilizado? ... ..

... ..

3. ¿Encierre en un círculo cuál de las siguientes estrategias le parece la más útil o le ayudó más para el aprendizaje de vocabulario? Debe señalar mínimo una y máximo dos.

a) vocabulary notebook

b) reviewing well

c) keyword method

d) semantic maps

e) putting words in different contexts

Por qué? ... ..

## APPENDIX J

## INTERVIEW

1. ¿Cree que las estrategias aprendidas durante el semestre han influido en su forma de aprender vocabulario y en su forma de escuchar? ¿de qué manera?

2. Si compara su desempeño en actividades de listening y en recordar vocabulario con el de otros estudiantes de la clase podría decir que gracias a las estrategias aprendidas su desempeño es igual, mejor o más bajo. ¿Por qué?



## APPENDIX K

### Teacher's Journal

- September 16, 2010

Today, after students took the Background Questionnaire and during the discussion that took place about it, I realized that it is not a homogeneous class because some students seem to be more proficient than others and there are some who have great difficulties to express basic ideas in English. Anyway this activity let me know my students better and also helped my students to realize the difficulties they have when learning English. In addition, the students seemed to enjoy the activity.

- October 6, 2010

Today I started reviewing some answers from the Background Questionnaire and then explained to students everything about the study. After answering their questions, I gave them the informed consent form. Students seemed very motivated to participate in the study because all of them signed the informed



consent form. All of them appeared to understand the importance of English in their careers and wanted to improve.

- October 11, 2010

Students completed Part A and B of the SILL. I think they enjoyed doing something different from the book. All of them seemed very interested in the activity.

- October 12, 2010

Today they completed Part C and D of the SILL. Again they seemed to like this activity very much because everybody was concentrated to provide their answers.

- October 13, 2010

Parts E and F of the SILL were completed. Even though the students were told to do it individually and that there were not right or wrong answers I noticed the students' interest in comparing their answers with the ones of their friends to discuss about them. I let them do it because they seemed to be having fun.

- October 14, 2010

It took almost half an hour for the students to complete their profiles. They had a great time making the graph and also comparing their profiles with other students in the class. I think that the discussion as a whole class was very productive because it helped students realize that there are a lot of strategies that they can use to become better learners and that not all the strategies work for everybody.

- October 22, 2010.

Students took the pre-test and I think that maybe some of them are not interested in improving their grades because even though they were told to study Unit 3 (because they did not do it very well in the units 1 and 2), I think they did not do it because their grades are still very low. I also think that for the students who had low grades English is more difficult.

- October 26, 2010.

Today, I started strategy instruction. The students were very interested in the strategies because the majority were taking notes of the explanation. They really loved listening to the native American guest and they applied the strategies they learned. I could see that most of the students used the strategies well, especially taking notes. After the presentation, I gave them feedback and I consider that the majority of them have a clear idea of these



strategies. During the discussion I could see that none of the students had practiced the strategies in this way and the majority said that they loved the new way of taking notes because they always had problems to do it in an organized way. I ticked the teacher's checklist and I think I did most of the steps.

- October 28, 2010.

Today students learned how to use listening bottom-up strategies. Some students said that they believed this is the best way to improve listening because you practice and practice until you become so familiar with all the words and phrases. I gave one student a copy of the teacher's CD and told students to make their own copies so that they can use this strategy at home. I hope students do it.

- November 5, 2010.

Students realized how helpful signposts are to identify the most important ideas when doing listening activities. They didn't seem to have any problems with this strategy and I think they are more conscious of the fact that there are many things to do that can help them become better listeners. During the practice most of them did it very well.

- November 8, 2010.

Today I finished teaching listening strategies. I could see that good students are doing very well and are applying the strategies consciously and of course I can see their improvement, but I cannot say the same about the students who have low grades. Even though they do the activities they do not do it as they are supposed to because they get distracted and want to talk with their classmates, and of course they do not get the same performance in the listening tasks. I asked these students individually what the problem was and they said that they did not understand certain expressions, so I reminded them to practice the bottom-up strategies at home, I hope they do it. In the reflection part, most of them said that they need more practice, so I told them that we were going to practice these strategies until the end of the semester with each listening activity of the book.

- November 9, 2010.

I could see that only 3 students had a notebook for English (even though in unit 1 the book suggests students to make their Personal Learning Dictionary). The rest of them preferred using the book to write their notes. The students who had a notebook had written the answers of some exercises, explanation and examples of certain grammar points and some words. Now all the students must have their vocabulary notebook very well organized because it



is going to be part of their grades. Students started making their notebook with words taken from Unit 3 and I could see that the majority of students decided to organize their notebooks by unit.

- November 10, 2010.

Today's class was a little bit different because my thesis tutor showed up to give me feedback. The students were told about this and I could see that they were a little bit excited. I taught how to use the Keyword Method and we really had a good time. The students were very engaged and we laughed a lot with the majority of students' associations. Some students did not understand that the keyword had to sound the same and they thought it had to spell the same, so I explained again. All of the students wrote on their journals that they really liked this strategy because is very useful to remember new words. At the end I was really happy because my tutor told me that I had covered the majority of strategies of the Teacher's checklist.

- November 11, 2010.

Students learned to make semantic maps. They seemed not to have difficulties. I told them that they had to make at least one semantic map at the end of each unit using some of the words they had recorded in the vocabulary notebook. Some students wrote in their journals that this strategy helps them review the words of each unit again.

- November 12, 2010.

Making funny stories with the words recorded in the notebooks was motivating. Students read their stories and commented about other stories. They were told to make a short story after each unit with the words on the vocabulary notebook. Some students commented that they are not very sure if their stories are written correctly and that they needed the teacher to check them to make sure they are using the words in the appropriate way. Some students really made an effort to come up with a good story, while others just copied what other students said.

- November 29, 2010.

I met students after a week because they took a school field trip. I taught them the last strategy that was reviewing well. I requested students do this strategy for one week and that after this time we would talk about it. Students seemed to understand the value of this strategy and they said they were going to do it.

- December 6, 2010.

I was kind of disappointed because only 4 students (the good ones) had practiced the strategy of reviewing well. These students told me that they think



that this strategy is crucial to remember words forever. I asked about some words and they could remember them easily. The students who hadn't done it told me that they didn't have time to do it.

- December 13, 2010.

Today I checked the students' vocabulary notebook and graded it over 10 points. The good students had done it very well and they remembered most of the words because I asked them about many from past units. However, the students who really needed to improve their grades (because they are in risk of failing the semester) did not do it as well and also did not remember a lot of words. Anyway, I told them that they could improve their grades if they did it as they were supposed to. I hope they do it.

- January 4, 2011.

Classes will be over soon and I can see that the good students use the strategies for listening and that they are doing better in the unit quizzes. Some students who had very low grades at the beginning have improved a little. At least they know about the strategies they have to use. However, there are some students who seem not to be interested in studying; they are still having very low grades. One student told me that when she practices the bottom-up strategies they do it good in the listening quizzes. Other students said again that they do not have time to review the vocabulary notebook. I told them again to take it with them wherever they go, so they can check it.

- January 18, 2011.

Students got their vocabulary notebook graded over 10 points to have a total of 20 points. Some notebooks were very well organized while others not so well.

- January 19, 2011.

Students completed the checklists about the strategies they had used during the semester. I asked them to be very honest with their answers.

- January 20, 2011.

The students completed the survey about the study.

- January 21, 2011.

Students were interviewed one by one. It took me about 2 hours to finish the 20 interviews, but it was worth it because I got good insights about the whole study. Good students said that they have learned a lot during this semester and that the strategies helped them a lot. They love the vocabulary notebook and said that they are going to continue using it for the next semester.



Average students also said that the strategies are useful, but they had not improved a lot because they had not used them as it was supposed to and because they didn't dedicate enough time to study. Poor students also said that the strategies were good, but they expected to learn everything in class and not to do it at home because they do not have time.