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Language Learning Strategy Use by Colombian Adult English Language Learners: A Phenomenological Study

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LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY USE BY COLOMBIAN ADULT ENGLISH

LANGUAGE LEARNERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the

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by

Elsie Elena Paredes

2010

To: Interim Dean Delia C. Garcia
        College of Education

This dissertation, written by Elsie Elena Paredes, and entitled Language Learning Strategy Use by Colombian Adult English Language Learners: A Phenomenological Study, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Date of Defense: June 22, 2010

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University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2010

DEDICATION

To my father, Santiago Paredes, for having instilled in me the value of education and for being my guide and inspiration throughout my life. To my mother, Elsie Nassi, for showing me the real meaning of love and for dedicating her whole life to the care of her children. Thank you both for your faith in me. I love you!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY USE BY COLOMBIAN ADULT ENGLISH

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by

Elsie Elena Paredes

Florida International University, 2010

Miami, Florida

Professor Tonette S. Rocco, Major Professor

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe how Colombian

adult English language learners (ELL) select and use language learning strategies (LLS).

This study used Oxford's (1990a) taxonomy for LLS as its theoretical framework. Semi-

structured interviews and a focus group interview, were conducted, transcribed, and

analyzed for 12 Colombian adult ELL. A communicative activity known as strip story

(Gibson, 1975) was used to elicit participants' use of LLS. This activity preceded the

focus group session. Additionally, participants' reflective journals were collected and

analyzed.

Data were analyzed using inductive, deductive, and comparative analyses. Four

themes emerged from the inductive analysis of the data: (a) learning conditions, (b)

problem-solving resources, (c) information processing, and (d) target language practice.

Oxford's classification of LLS was used as a guide in deductively analyzing data

concerning the participants' experiences. The deductive analysis revealed that

participants do not use certain strategies included in Oxford's taxonomy at the third level.

For example, semantic mapping, or physical response or sensation was not reported by

participants. The findings from the inductive and deductive analyses were then compared to look for patterns and answers to the research questions. The comparative analysis revealed that participants used additional LLS that are not included in Oxford's taxonomy. Some examples of these strategies are: using sound transcription in native language and help from children.

The study was conducted at the MDC InterAmerican campus in South Florida, one of the largest Hispanic-influenced communities in the U. S. Based on the findings from this study, the researcher proposed a framework to study LLS that includes both external (i.e., learning context, community) and internal (i.e., culture, prior education) factors that influence the selection and use of LLS. The findings from this study imply that given the importance of the both external and internal factors in learners' use of LLS, these factors should be considered for inclusion in any study of language learner strategies use by adult learners. Implications for teaching and learning as well as recommendations for further research are provided.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Language learning strategies used by Colombian adult English language learners (ELL) in the United States were explored in this study. This chapter presents the background of the study, problem statement, purpose, research questions guiding the study, and significance of the study followed by the definition of terms and organization of the study.

Background of the Study

Manuel is a systems engineer who came to the United States from Colombia in search of political asylum like many others who could afford to flee the violence in his country. In the last decade, Colombians have been migrating to "escape the increasing violence and personal security threats (such as, extortion, kidnapping, and murder) to themselves and their families from the Colombian guerrillas, paramilitaries, common criminals, and government security forces" (Collier & Gamarra, 2001, p. 5). Just like the many other immigrants who come to the U.S. in search of better opportunities for jobs and education as well as a better standard of living, Manuel and his wife were determined to start their lives all over again. Things were not easy. Manuel and his wife were not able to find jobs in their fields of expertise (i.e., systems engineering and accounting) simply because they did not speak English. Instead, Manuel found a job at a local supermarket as a janitor, and his wife got hired at a prestigious hotel doing housekeeping. Six months later, Manuel was hired for a position that required his knowledge of computer software at the same supermarket. After a couple of weeks, his supervisor informed him that the employees were complaining about his lack of fluency in English,

so she warned him that if he did not become proficient in English in 1 month he would be fired. And he was. At that time, Manuel had been taking adult ESL classes at a non-profit organization for Spanish-speaking immigrants in Broward County, where I was one of the instructors.

This is just one of the thousands of cases of talented and educated professionals who come from different countries in Latin America in search of better opportunities for themselves and their families, who encounter the greatest barrier to employment success: the lack of proficiency in the English language.

Bliss (1990) defines Limited English Proficiency (LEP) as a limited ability to listen, speak, read, and write in English. According to the 2000 Census, 45% of the adults who spoke a language other than English reported that they spoke English less than "very well." Such language minority adults may have limited English reading, writing, and speaking skills, which may limit their ability to function effectively in the workplace and in society.

Adult English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, also called English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), are educational programs designed to help language-minority adults develop the English language skills necessary to pursue further education, enter or advance in the job market, or enrich their personal and family lives. In addition to language skills, many ESL programs also provide instruction in cultural norms in order to help participants better adapt to American society (The National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2003).

Population trends and projections for the next 10 years indicate that the number of adult language learners in the United States will continue to grow (Pew Hispanic Center,

2008). In Florida, approximately 16.7% of the population is foreign-born and people of

Hispanic origin account for 16.8% of the population, making Florida the fourth largest

Hispanic-populated state. The U.S. Census Bureau (2004) reports that at the beginning of

the 21st century, 12% of the U.S. labor force were foreign born. The workers of the U.S.

labor force primarily held jobs in the service industry (22%); in factories as laborers

(18.3%); and in construction, mechanics, and repairs (12.6%). Statistics further showed

that immigrants were under represented in managerial and high-level sales positions and

that their salaries remained lower than those of native-born workers: 54% of the foreign-

born population working full time held low-income jobs compared to only 38% of native-

born individuals working full time.

Literacy and fluency in English seem to be related to economic self-sufficiency.

Immigrants who are literate only in a language other than English are more likely to have

non-continuous employment and to earn less than those literate in English (Greenberg,

Macias, Rhodes, & Chan, 2001). An analysis of the 2000 U.S. Census data on immigrant

earnings revealed a positive relationship between earnings and English language ability

(Chiswick & Miller, 2002). The need for adequate ESL training is evident. The effective

provision of services to adult ELL is a primary challenge to expanding and improving the

adult education system in this country. Adults come to ESL classes with a range of native

language skills, formal education, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and life

experiences that affect their learning. They need to develop English language skills that

will allow them to understand and be understood in both oral and written English.

Research studies with children reveal that it takes from 2-5 years to become

socially adept in a second language and from 5-8 years to become academically on a par

with native speakers (Cummins, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 1997). Clearly, there is a need to keep the learners' motivation high throughout this lengthy process and implement humanistic methodologies in which the learner becomes an active creator, not a passive participant in the learning process (Grognet, 1997). One way to achieve this is by helping students become more aware of the range of possible strategies that they can consciously select during language learning and language use (Chamot & O'Malley, 1990; Cohen, 1998; Nyikos, 1991; Nyikos & Oxford, 1993; Oxford, 1990a, 1993, 1996). Metacognition or reflection on one's own thinking and learning, is the hallmark of the successful learner (Taylor, 1999). Language learning strategies are the means through which students develop an awareness of their own metacognition and thus control of their own learning. Learners who are aware of their own learning processes, strategies, and preferences are able to regulate their learning endeavors to meet their own goals; they become increasingly independent and self-directed learners (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins, 1999).

Problem Statement

As a result of the lack of English language proficiency, typically adult Colombian immigrants are not able to find jobs that fit their professional backgrounds and work experiences. This lack limits them to entry-level jobs that do not require proficiency in the English language, diminishing their opportunities for career advancement, completing further education, or obtaining access to other social and economic opportunities in the U.S.

To gain a moderate degree of proficiency adult ELLs face a difficult task given the length and complexity of study required. The process of language learning can be

greatly facilitated by making students aware of the range of language learning strategies (LLS) from which they can choose during language learning and use. If learners have a well-functioning repertoire of LLS, then these strategies will facilitate the language learning process by promoting successful and efficient completion of language learning tasks, as well as by allowing the learners to develop their own individualized approaches to learning. By selecting information, organizing the information, relating it to existing knowledge, retaining what is considered important, retrieving it in appropriate contexts, and reflecting on the success of their learning efforts, learners become conscious of their own learning and learn to evaluate their efficiency (Shuell, 1986).

To date, most studies on the strategies of students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have concentrated on cultural backgrounds such as, Japanese (Brown, 1996), Korean (Park, 1997), and Chinese (Bremer, 1998; Goh & Foong, 1997; Wang, 1999). Studies conducted in the U. S. with ELL have used samples with a combination of cultural backgrounds, such as Arabic, Hispanic, Thai, Korean, Chinese, and Japanese (Brown, 1996; O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Küpper, & Russo, 1985; Oxford, Talbott, & Halleck, 1990; Phillips, 1991; and Reid, 1987).These populations, with the exception of Hispanic, are labeled based on national origin and have the status to be categorized individually. Conversely, Spanish-speaking individuals are referred to as "Hispanic", which is an umbrella name that homogenizes different people under the same identity label (Mendez, Astiz, & Beltran, 2000). However, in each of these groups, there are sub-populations. Not only do these sub-populations differ with regard to socioeconomic status, educational achievement, and geographical concentration, but they also vary greatly in terms of language background and length of residence in the United

States (Mow & Nettles, 1990). It is pertinent, therefore, to study cultural groups independently in order to do justice to the variety of backgrounds and conditions of these populations.

The present study was conducted on Colombians, who make up the largest South American born-population in Florida (Migration Policy Institute, 2007), yet are virtually invisible in the adult education research literature. Despite their exclusion in research and scholarly works, Colombians are well represented as "consumers" of adult education. This is reflected by the growing market for ESL books and materials and the rise in enrollments in ESL classes (Jeria, 1999).

It is claimed that learners from different cultures learn in different ways, and that they differ in cognitive styles, self-expression and communication styles (Bennett, 2006; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Furthermore, previous studies in LLS have suggested conducting further research with learners from particular cultural backgrounds to examine ways in which culture influences the use and reporting of strategies (Braxton, 1999; Lunt, 2000; Oxford, 1989, 1996). It becomes apparent that Colombian learners deserve to be studied independently to find out their particular ways of using LLS in their learning process.

Colombians differ from other Spanish-speaking immigrants by the level of education and socio-economic status attained in their country of origin. The education level of foreign-born Colombians is higher than any other Spanish-speaking group in the U.S. (e.g., Mexicans, Cubans, Dominicans). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2004), 85.6 % of foreign-born Colombians in the U.S. attained at least a high school diploma and 29.4% a Bachelor's degree in their country of origin, compared to 59.6%

and 12.7% of all Hispanics in the U.S., respectively. In fact, the *en masse* exodus of Colombia's most educated in the mid 1980s has been characterized as a "brain drain" (Collier, 2004; Rosselli, Otero, & Maza, 2001).

Colombians who live in the U.S. also have a higher socio-economic status than any other Spanish-speaking group in the U.S. other than Ecuadorians and Peruvians. They represent a larger percentage of persons from the middle and upper-middle classes, including professionals from all sectors of Colombian society (Collier & Gamarra, 2001). The median income of Colombians was $41,566 compared to $35,929 of all Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Despite their educational and socio-economic advantages, Colombian immigrants face a number of frustrations and difficulties when looking for work. The lack of a permanent work visa and of sufficient English language skills often results in the inability to obtain proper licenses and job opportunities (Collier, 2004).

Studying the preferred LLS of Colombians may contribute to their language learning endeavors and successful incorporation in U.S. society. A few studies on the LLS of Colombians have been conducted in Colombia (Abella & Salinas, 2006; Posada, 2006; Villegas, 2005), but I have found no studies on Colombians' LLS in the U.S. Hence, the need to study this particular group of immigrants became imperative as more research is needed to look beyond the pan-ethnic "Hispanic" label and examine individual nationalities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of Colombian adult ELL in selecting and using LLS and the meanings these learners make of their own experiences. Further, the study identified the types of learning strategies that these

students use when learning English and found out how these experiences compare with the existing literature on LLS.

Research Questions

The primary research question for this study was:

What are the experiences of adult Colombian learners in using LLS? Subsidiary questions included the following:

1. What insights about their experience in selecting LLS do adult Colombian learners reveal?

2. What insights about their experience in using LLS do adult Colombian learners reveal?

3. How do the strategies that adult Colombian learners use compare with the existing literature on LLS?

Conceptual Framework

Language learning strategy research and cognitive theory constituted the conceptual framework for this study and were used as a lens to analyze the data.

Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies are defined as "steps or actions taken by learners to improve the development of their language skills" (Oxford & Cohen, 1992, p. 1). These strategies have the power to: (a) increase attention essential for learning a language; (b) enhance rehearsal that allows linkages to be strongly forged; (c) improve the encoding and integration of language material, and (d) increase retrieval of information when needed for use (Mayer, 1988; Oxford, 1990a). Thus, the use of LLS may facilitate second

language acquisition by making learning easier, faster, more effective, more self-directed, and more transferable to new situations (Oxford, 1990a, p. 8)

Since the first attempts at studying effective language learners (Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978; Rubin, 1975), research on LLS has proliferated on the theoretical foundations of language learning strategies in terms of variables underlying strategy choice such as beliefs about language learning, learning style/personality, purpose for language learning, motivation, gender, proficiency level, and national origin (Oxford, 1989), and strategy training (Chamot, 1993; Wenden, 1987).

Types of Learning Strategies

LLS affect "the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or integrates new knowledge" (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986, p. 315). However, LLS do not just deal with the cognitive domain. Strategy use is also intended to "affect the learner's motivational or affective state" (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986, p. 315). In addition to the cognitive aspects of language learning, LLS involve social (interpersonal, interactional), affective (emotional, motivational, attitudinal, and personality-related) and metacognitive (planning and evaluation related) aspects (Oxford & Cohen, 1992).

LLS have been categorized employing different criteria. O'Malley and Chamot (1990), for example outline a scheme which includes cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective strategies. Cognitive strategies work with information in ways that enhance learning; metacognitive strategies are described as "higher order executive skills" that could involve the planning, monitoring, or evaluation of an activity, and social/affective strategies entail "interaction with another person or ideational control over affect" (pp. 44-45).

Oxford (1990a) has also produced a classification system that takes account of research conducted over the preceding years, including much of her own work. In this classification system, strategies are grouped into two types: direct (i.e., strategies that directly involve the target language) and indirect (i.e., strategies that support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language). These in turn are divided into categories: memory, cognitive, and compensation (direct); metacognitive, affective, and social (indirect). Memory strategies relate to the storing and retrieval of information; cognitive strategies, although varied, are described by Oxford as being "unified by a common function: manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner" (1990a, p. 43). Compensation strategies "enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge" (p.47). As for the indirect group, metacognitive strategies "allow learners to control their own cognition" (p. 135), affective strategies are concerned with the regulation of feeling and attitudes, and social strategies are those which take account of the fact that language is a form of social behavior, involving communication with other people (See appendix A for more detailed definitions of Oxford's categories of LLS).

Cognitive Theory

The cognitive model of learning indicates that learning is an active, dynamic process in which learners select information from their environment, organize the information, relate it to what they already know, retain what they consider to be important, use the information in appropriate contexts, and reflect on the success of their learning efforts (Gagne, 1985). This type of learning is often conscious and deliberate, although individuals who are highly accustomed to learning in this manner may do so

rapidly and without a great deal of immediate awareness of their thoughts. The description of learning strategies hinges on the distinction between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge consists of what we know or can declare and procedural knowledge consists of the things that we know how to do (Anderson, 1985). Once learned, learning strategies become just like procedural knowledge. In the cognitive view of learning, strategies have a prominent role because they represent the dynamic mechanisms underlying learning (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994).

To better understand the mental processes involved in learning, cognitive researchers compare the performance of expert learners on specific types of tasks to how novices approach the same learning activities. Researchers obtain information about strategies by asking individuals to report on the things they do that help them learn both retrospectively and concurrently while working on specific tasks (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Another approach taken in cognitive research on learning strategies is to instruct individuals about the importance and use of specific strategies, and determine whether or not the students' learning is improved as a result of strategy use. This research approach has been tried with a number of different kinds of first language tasks, including vocabulary, reading, math, science and problem solving (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986).

Language Learning Strategy Use and Learners' Characteristics

Social psychologists have added to the theory of language learning and of LLS. For instance, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) found that characteristics of the language learner, situational variables, and types of learning strategies interact to influence proficiency in a second language. Although Oxford (1989) showed gender and ethnicity,

two learner characteristics, as determinants of strategy use, MacIntyre (1994) asserts that the influence of these two factors "may be more clearly understood through the attitudinal, motivational, and learning style differences generally associated with gender and ethnicity" (p. 187). MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) observed that the use of certain affective (emotion or motivation-related) learning strategies reduces the level of language anxiety, thus freeing up cognitive resources to be applied to the use of learning strategies.

Age is another factor that is often mentioned as an influence on language learning success (Ehrman, 1987; Singleton, 1989) and on choice of LLS (Oxford, 1982, 1989; Oxford & Ehrman, 1993). Younger learners are more likely to attain fluency and native-like pronunciation through communicative practice strategies. Because of their more developed abstract thinking capabilities, older language learners often use strategies that allow them to analyze the grammatical system and to apply greater world knowledge to the language learning context. Advantages of language learners at different ages are attributed to: (a) one or more critical periods for language learning, (b) prior experience in language learning, (c) onset of formal operations, (c) cognitive maturity, (d) kind of input, (e) affective factors, and (f) sociocultural factors (Oxford & Ehrman, 1995, p. 363).

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the fields of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and Adult Education by presenting the perspectives of Colombian adult ELL in the U.S. Program designers, human resource development practitioners, academic coordinators, and ESL practitioners may find this research useful for improving curriculum design and classroom methodology related to the language learner strategies used by participating Colombian ELL. Adult educators, in particular, may be cognizant

of the preferred learning strategies used by these Colombian students that have the potential to empower learners in order to become more independent and aware of their learning behaviors.

This study is also significant because it supports Oxford's (1990a) taxonomy for LLS which constitutes an important and accurate framework to classify learning strategies of language learners such as the adult Colombian learners in this study.

The rationale for learner strategy research is that if researchers can identify a list of strategies that successful language learners use, then less effective learners may benefit from applying the same strategies in their own learning, making their language learning process easier and more effective. Workplace language programs may also benefit from this study by gaining insights on worker-centered learning that addresses the needs of the learners to enlarge and enrich their capabilities as individuals, family members, and citizens

Definition of Terms

Adult education. Activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults (Merriam & Brockett, 1997).

English as a foreign language (EFL). Language instruction for nonnative speakers that takes place in a country where English is spoken only as a foreign language (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages [TESOL], 2004).

English as a second language (ESL). Also, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) are terms used interchangeably to describe English language instruction for nonnative speakers (TESOL, 2004).

English language learner (ELL). Students who have limited or no English skills and who are in the process of learning English (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009).

ESL program. A structured language acquisition program designed to teach English to students whose native language is not English (Center for Adult English Language Acquisition [CAELA], 2004).

Hispanic. Also, "Latino" or "Latin" refers to a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term "Spanish origin" can be used in addition to Hispanic or Latino (Office of Management and Budget, 1997).

Language learning strategies (LLS). The conscious thoughts and behaviors used by learners with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge and understanding of a target language (Cohen, 1998).

Organization of the Study

In Chapter 1 an introduction to the study was provided, including the background of the problem, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, and theoretical framework. The significance of the study and definition of terms was also discussed. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature that supports the study. Chapter 3 is the phenomenological research method that was used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 is a presentation of the findings based on the inductive analysis. Chapter 5 presents the findings based on the deductive and comparative analyses. Chapter 6 is the discussion of the findings and the implications for research and practice in adult education and English as a Second Language

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study focuses on the experiences of Colombian adult ELL in selecting and using LLS and the meanings these learners make of their own experiences. A review of literature for this study included the empirical and theoretical research regarding LLS use among adult ELL. The literature review is divided into five parts: (a) learning strategies in second language acquisition (definition, classification and factors affecting strategy choice); (b) cognitive theory in language acquisition and learning; (c) self-directed learning theory in adult education; (d) the context of the Colombian culture and society for the purpose of providing an overview of the participants' heritage; and (e) a summary of the findings from the literature review related to the research questions for this study.

Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition

There is little scholarly agreement upon an exact definition for LLS. These have been referred to as various types of behaviors (Oxford, 1990a; Politzer, 1983), classroom activities (Elbaum, Berg, & Dodd, 1993), knowledge (Wenden, 1986), and other learner characteristics that have been called strategies (Rubin, 1975). Particular characteristics, primarily learner behaviors frequently called LLS, can have positive effects upon learning (Cohen, 1990, 1998; Oxford, 1990a, 1993, 2002; Wenden, 1991, 2002).

Definitions of Language Learning Strategies

The term *strategy* in the context of language learning refers to a specific type of action or behavior used by a language learner to improve performance in both using and learning a language (Naiman, Frolich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978; Oxford, 1990a; Wenden & Rubin, 1987). Some researchers define strategies as special thoughts or behaviors that

individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Others state that "strategies are distinguished from other cognitive processes through the element of choice" (Cohen, 1998, p. 83) and that they are mental processes that students consciously choose to use in accomplishing a task. Furthermore, strategies can be distinguished from skills in that a skill is an overall behavior or a general class of behaviors, while a strategy is a specific means for realizing that behavior (Cohen, 1998).

A different, but related word to strategies is *tactics*, defined as tools to achieve the success of strategies (Seliger, 1984). Many people use these two terms, strategies and tactics, interchangeably. The two expressions do share some basic implied characteristics: planning, competition, conscious manipulation, and movement toward a goal. Thus, the meaning of strategy can be equated to that of a plan, step, or conscious action toward achievement of an objective, as in language learning, while the term tactics can be equated to that of the means to execute strategies (Oxford, 1990a). A more recent definition explains this concept more cohesively: "Language learning strategies are the conscious or semi-conscious thoughts and behaviors used by learners with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge and understanding of a target language" (Cohen, 2003, p. 280).

Good Learner Studies

The concept of LLS has grown out of learner-centered research and is usually attributed to an outgrowth of what are called *good learner* studies, studies which describe characteristics of good language learners (Naiman, et al., 1978; Rubin, 1975). These

studies attempted to identify traits that distinguished successful from unsuccessful learners.

The first good learner study (Rubin, 1975) based on interviews with language learners found the following seven principles:

> The good learner is (a) willing and accurate, (b) has a strong drive to communicate or to learn from communication, (c) is often not inhibited, (d) is prepared to attend to form, (e) practices by using a variety of behaviors, (f) monitors his own and the speech of others, and (g) learns to attend to meaning. (p. 45)

Several of Rubin's principles included the need for both active use of learning strategies and relevant knowledge needed for the task of learning. The goal of Rubin's research was to enhance the success record of the less successful students by teaching them the strategies of the more successful learners.

At around the same time that Rubin published her *good learner* study, Stern (1975) identified ten LLS used by good language learners. These included experimentation, planning, organization, revision, search for meaning, practice, real-life language use, self monitoring, and developing the second language (L2) into a separate reference system and learning to think in L2. In another study on the commonalities of good language learners, five strategies were identified as essential for successful language learning: (a) being actively involved in learning; (b) seeing the second language as a means of communication and social interaction; (c) coping with affective aspects of language learning; and continual (d) monitoring and (e) revising of the language being learned (Naiman et al., 1978, p. 225). The good learner studies began to help researchers understand differences between successful and unsuccessful learners, and stimulated further research into learner differences.

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Since 1978, researchers' focus shifted more to the behaviors of successful learners and methods of classifying those behaviors (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, & Russo, 1985; Wong Fillmore, 1982). Attempts to investigate the relationship between language learning and success in language development by speakers of other languages have produced mixed results. One study revealed the importance of social strategies as good language learners "spent more time than they should have during class socializing and minding everyone else's business… they were constantly involved in the affairs of their classmates" (Wong Fillmore, 1982, p.163).

Another study showed that although students at all levels reported the use of an extensive variety of learning strategies, advanced students used more metacognitive strategies (i.e., strategies used to manage their own learning). This suggests that the more successful students exercise greater metacognitive control over their learning (O'Malley et al. 1985).

A more recent publication (Griffiths, 2008) commemorating Rubin's seminal work, attempted to condense 30 years of research on the *good language learner* since 1975. It was concluded that in order to situate good language learners within the intricate landscape of language learning, a large array of variables should be considered. These include: individual characteristics such as age, aptitude, gender, personality, culture, style, beliefs, and motivation. This learner, must employ behaviors such as learning strategies, metacognition, or autonomy, and employ available opportunities in the learning environment, such as teaching/learning method, strategy instruction, error correction, or task in order to succeed in his or her learning endeavor (p. 314-315). Therefore, it could be argued that good language learners are those who successfully

manage this arduous journey. Besides defining LLS, early research was also concerned with the classification of strategies into common categories.

Classification of Language Learning Strategies

Classification systems of LLS differ based on contrasting criteria (Cohen, 1998; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990a; Rubin, 1981). Each existing classification system in and of itself involves an implicit theory about the nature of L2 learning strategies, and even to some degree, about L2 learning in general. For the purpose of this study, the Oxford's (1990a) taxonomy of LLS was used. This taxonomy is systematic in linking individual strategies as well as strategy groups, with each of the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing), which are gained incrementally during the language development process.

Oxford's Taxonomy

Oxford (1990a) divided strategies into two main groups: direct and indirect. Direct learning strategies directly involve the target language. Indirect learning strategies support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language (Oxford, 1990a).

Direct strategies. Oxford's direct learning strategies can be further divided into the following subgroups: memory, cognitive, and compensation. Memory strategies reflect very simple principles, such as arranging things in order, making associations, and reviewing. These principles all involve *meaning,* therefore, for the purpose of learning a new language or for learning to take place, the arrangements and associations must be personally meaningful to the learner, and the material to be reviewed must have significance (Krashen, 1981, 1982, 1985; Littlewood, 1984). An example of this type of

strategies is when Spanish speakers learn new vocabulary based on the fact that so many *cognates* exist between their native language and English (i.e., words in two different languages that share common ancestors, e.g., definition = definición; intolerant = intolerante, etc).

Cognitive strategies are essential in learning a new language; these strategies range from repeating to analyzing expressions to summarizing (Oxford, 1990a). With all their variety, cognitive strategies are unified by a common function: manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner (Dansereau, 1985; Rigney, 1978). These types of strategies are typically found to be the most popular strategies with language learners (Chamot, 1987; Wenden, 1987). An example of a cognitive strategy is comparing elements (sounds, vocabulary, grammar, etc) of the new language with elements of one's first language to determine similarities and differences.

Compensation strategies, such as guessing a word, are intended to make up for an inadequate repertoire of grammar and, specifically, of vocabulary. Beginners are not the only ones who use guessing: advanced learners and even native speakers use guessing when they have not heard something well enough. These compensation strategies for language production help learners to use the language by overcoming knowledge gaps and continuing to communicate authentically, thus becoming more fluent in what they already know (Oxford, 1990a). For example, Spanish speakers use compensation strategies to make up for missing knowledge by reverting back to Spanish and coining new words (e.g., Spanglish).

Indirect strategies. Oxford's (1990a) indirect learning strategies can be divided into the following subgroups: metacognitive, affective, and social. Indirect strategies

support and manage language learning often without involving the target language directly. Metacognitive strategies help learners to regulate their own cognition and to plan, focus, and evaluate their language learning process as they move toward communicative competence. For example, learners seek out or create opportunities to practice the new language in naturalistic situations (e.g., joining a conversation club). Affective strategies develop the self-confidence and perseverance needed for learners to involve themselves actively in language learning (Oxford, 1990a), such as, lowering anxiety levels by laughing at their own mistakes. Social strategies provide increased interaction and more empathetic understanding, since they occur among and between people (Canale, 1983). An example of a social strategy is asking the speaker to repeat, paraphrase, and slow down, and so forth to aid comprehension. Language is a form of social behavior, a communication; learning a language, therefore, involves people, and appropriate social strategies are important in this process (Canale, 1983). Despite disagreements in classifying LLS, these strategies help language learners take control of their learning, be more competent and most important, become autonomous (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Vandergrift, 2002).

The Aim of Learning Strategy Research

Learning strategy research can help identify a list of strategies that successful language learners use; thus, less effective learners may benefit from applying the same strategies in their own learning. Other very important practical implications of learning strategy research lie in the area of learner training (i.e., teaching learners how to use strategies to learn more efficiently). Insights from research can usefully "guide the development of learner training activities so that learners become not only more efficient

at learning and using their second language, but also more capable of self-directing these endeavors (Wenden, 1987, p. 6).

Factors Affecting Strategy Choice

Factors that affect the use of LLS include the following: learner beliefs, gender, proficiency level, cultural background, learning style, and motivation (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985; Reid, 1987).

Beliefs. The beliefs that learners have about language learning influence the extent and type of learning strategy use. Learners have a philosophy of how language is learned. That philosophy guides the learner's approach to language learning situations, the consequent strategy use, and the degree of success in language learning (Abraham & Vann, 1987).

A study of 25 learners (Wenden, 1987) found that the learners who believed in the importance of using the language reported greater use of communication strategies and attended mainly to meaning and social purpose (not language form) in social interaction. In contrast, those who believed in learning about the language used more cognitive strategies and were more conscious of form in social settings.

Gender. Several studies found that women reported a greater use of LLS than men (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). In researching 90 undergraduate foreign learners through a self-report questionnaire, Politzer (1983) found a relatively minor difference between men and women on the variable of social interaction with women making a greater use of social strategies. Similarly, in their study of 78 subjects which included language trainers, native-speaker language teachers, and students,

Ehrman and Oxford (1989) found women made significantly greater use of LLS than men.

In another study of 1200 undergraduate learners of foreign languages, women reported more frequent use of cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies than men (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Conversely, two studies (Nyikos, 1990; Tran, 1988) have revealed a greater use of particular strategies by men. Tran (1988) examined the level of acculturation of immigrant Vietnamese; aged from 40 to 92, in the U.S. Responses to interview questions revealed that men made greater use of strategies to learn and to improve their English language skills: enrolling in classes, practicing English with American friends, and watching television or listening to the radio in English. However, MacIntyre (1994) argued that in Tran's study "the employment situation of the individual seems to be the key variable influencing strategy use rather than his/her gender…" (p. 187). Tran's explanation went further. He explained these differences by the inherited cultural difference in traditional Vietnamese society; older women depended on men and were not encouraged to interact with foreigners. Thus, they did not have the chance to interact with Americans and to improve their level of English language proficiency.

Nyikos (1990) also found that men made greater use of a specific strategy. In the investigation of a possible test type bias in tests for recall of university level beginner learners of German, men performed better when a visual-spatial stimulus of color plus picture was used. However, another specific set of subskills seemed to favor women; the recall of women was greater when color was the mediator. Nyikos suggested that such strategies were dependent on the socialization of men and women and that such

differences should be taken into account when the use of strategies was encouraged in language learning.

Proficiency level. Researchers have equated language proficiency with success in learning and imply that higher language learning strategy use has had a causative effect upon language learning (Chesterfield & Chesterfield, 1985; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Park, 1994). However, no firm conclusion can be drawn on the causality between greater strategy use and higher proficiency.

Lower proficiency high school ESL learners reported using more cognitive and socio-affective strategies on average than intermediate level students (O'Malley et al., 1985). A similar study with Spanish and Russian learners found that lower proficiency learners used fewer strategies than those of higher proficiency learners (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

A study of mixed English proficiency level Chinese learners concluded that high proficiency students made significantly more use of social and metacognitive strategies. These included: "speaking with other students and native speakers, listening and reading for comprehension, attending lectures, watching films and TV programs, and thinking and talking to oneself in English" (Huang & van Naerssen, 1987, p. 289).

On the other hand, *poor* learners did make use of *good learner* strategies. Following interviews in English language schools in London with 15 underachieving learners, it was found these students were using strategies for dealing with new vocabulary that were very similar to those of the *good language learner* (Porte, 1988). Similarly, the strategies of two unsuccessful ESL learners enrolled in an intensive

program in the U.S. were studied. While these learners lacked certain metacognitive strategies essential to the assessment and completion of a task, the unsuccessful learners were, contrary to expectation, actively using strategies similar to those of good learners (Vann & Abraham, 1990).

Cultural background. First language (L1) background and/or ethnicity relate to the strategies of the language learner. A questionnaire was administered to 37 learners preparing for graduate study in the U.S. Eighteen of the learners were Asian, mainly Japanese, while 19 were described as Hispanic, "mainly Latin American Spanish speakers, with one from Spain" (Politzer & McGroarty, 1985, p. 104). Asian learners scored lower than the Hispanic students on all three scales of presumed good learning behaviors. Such behaviors they concluded

> Represent certain types of social interactions which Asians are less likely to engage in than are Hispanics (and probably any other representative of Western culture). Classroom behaviors such as correcting fellow students, asking the teacher all kinds of questions, any kind of volunteering, several social interaction behaviors such as asking for help, asking others to repeat, and asking for confirmation are apparently more a part of the Western rather than the Asian learning behavior repertoire. (Politzer & McGroarty, 1985, pp. 113-114)

Asian learners, however, showed greater gains in competence.

Differences in strategy use between groups of Asian and Hispanic learners were found also in a later study of the strategy training of 75 high school ELL in the U.S. (O'Malley, 1987). Despite training in the use of particular metacognitive and cognitive strategies in the learning of vocabulary, Asian students "were noted to persist in using rote repetitive strategies, whereas Hispanics in the treatment group more readily adopted the strategies presented in training" (O'Malley, 1987, p. 141). However, the previous

learning behavior rather than ethnicity may have influenced strategy use. Indeed, the highly efficient Asian rote learners of vocabulary lists may have been "negatively affected by the introduction of grouping and imagery strategies" (O'Malley, 1987, p. 142), strategies that were unfamiliar to them. Similarly, the influence of ethnicity as a determinant of strategy use may be more clearly understood by examining the differences generally associated with the variable rather than with the variable itself (MacIntyre, 1994).

One major conceptual and methodological limitation to current treatments of cultural diversity in social science research is the tendency to treat race, ethnicity, and culture as fixed and often essentialized categories rather than as multifaceted, situated, and socially constructed processes (Orellana & Bowman, 2003). Often, researchers merely label their populations (e.g., "working-class Hispanic women") or use pan-ethnic labels such as *Asian* and *Hispanic.* These labels lump together individuals and groups that vary widely in histories, languages, immigration status, cultural practices, and political and religious affiliations (Conell, 1987; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Thorne, 1993).

Another problem with focusing on static differences between groups is that such differences are easily interpreted as deficits (Orellana & Bowman, 2003). The cultural learning styles approach (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003) is a way of talking about cultural differences rather than deficits among different ethnic groups. It arose as an attempt to leave behind deficit-model thinking, in which cultural ways that differ from the practice of dominant groups are judged to be less adequate without examining them from the perspective of the community participants (p. 19). Work on cultural learning styles, however, is sometimes used in ways that are overly static and categorical. Treating

cultural differences as traits makes it harder to understand the relationship between individual learning and the practices of cultural communities, and this in turn sometimes hinders effective assistance to student learning. Therefore, ethnic and other cultural descriptors "may fruitfully help researchers examine cultural practices if they are not assumed to imply the essence of the individual or group involved, and are not treated as causal entities (Gutierrez & Rogoff 2003, p. 23).

Previous research has called for the inclusion of first language and cultural background to examine how cultural norms and prior experiences influence the selection and use of learning strategies (Braxton, 1999; Lunt, 2000; Tamada, 1996). Braxton (1999) conducted a case study on four adult ELL, two of which were Colombian, one Japanese and one Arab. The findings suggested that learners favored strategies that resemble their prior education and their expectations on teacher's roles. Lunt (2000) studied the strategies used by adult immigrant learners in Australia and found that certain items in the instrument, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford, 1990b), might have been culturally inappropriate for the Chinese learners in the study (e.g., self-reward). In his study on Japanese learners, Tamada (1996) found that learners tended not to use strategies not learned in their prior learning experiences in Japan. Conversely, strategies they had learners from their teachers in Japan were more widely used. This explains the influential power that culture and educational experiences have on language learning.

Learning style. Reid (1987) studied the learning styles of adult ELL in an intensive English program. Using a five-point survey, student self reports showed significant differences between some language groups concerning preferences for

learning in the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modes, and for learning individually or in a group. Visual learning refers to the preference of reading and a great deal of visual stimulation. Auditory, refers to the preference of oral directions and interactions. Kinesthetic (or tactile), refers to the preference of physical action, and hands-on activities. Kinesthetic learning ranked top for most groups. Of all language backgrounds, Korean students were the most visual in their learning style preference. Arabic and Chinese language groups were also strong visual learners. Thai, Malay, and Spanish language groups identified auditory learning as a minor learning style; whereas Chinese, Korean, Indonesian and English speakers expressed a strong preference for auditory styles. Native English speakers were less tactile in their learning style than all language backgrounds and were significantly less tactile than Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and Spanish speakers. Of all the groups, Spanish speakers were definite in their choice of preferences: they chose kinesthetic as major learning styles; group learning as a negative style; and visual, auditory, and individual learning as minor learning styles (Reid, 1987).

Motivation. Several studies have shown the influence of motivation in LLS (Lunt, 2000; Oxford, 1989; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989 Politzer and McGroarty, 1985). Nyikos and Oxford (1993) conducted a study of 1200 university language learners in the U.S., the majority of whom were taking a language to fulfill a curriculum requirement. The study showed that the students aiming at obtaining good grades concentrated on formal, rule related processing strategies and academic study strategies, rather than on strategies which developed skills for authentic and communicative language use. Along the same lines, Oxford (1989) suggested that students might be learning foreign or second languages for different purposes and this could influence their choice of strategies.

Other studies have suggested that highly motivated students used learner strategies more frequently than less motivated students in all different categories of LLS (Mochizuki, 1999; Wharton, 2000). Motivation is considered by many to be a major learner variable relating to success in language learning. However, Okada, Oxford & Abo (1996) argued the causality of the results obtained by these studies by prompting a question of whether motivation spurs strategy or, otherwise, strategy use leads to better language performance, which in turns increases motivation and therefore leads to increased strategy use. Further research is needed to ascertain causality.

Colombians' Language Learning Strategies

After conducting the literature review, no studies on Colombian learners' use of LLS in the U.S. context were found. However, I extended my search including Latin American databases, and I found a few studies done in Colombia with learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Two studies focused on LLS. One of them was an evaluation of a Self-Access Centre (SAC) for language learning at the language institute of a private university in Bogota where fifteen adult EFL learners participated (Posada, 2006). The study sought to identify the most common learning strategies using the SILL (Oxford, 1990b) and a survey. The results showed that students used indirect strategies (metacognitive strategies) more frequently, followed by affective and social strategies, which might show some autonomy in managing their language learning. The students, however, reported that they needed some counseling besides the SAC (p. 65).

The second study focused on reading comprehension strategies in a Virtual Learning Environment or VLE (Villegas, 2005). Unlike the previous study, this project

was on 18 subjects enrolled in a specialization program in management that requires students to prove a basic understanding of English in order to graduate. Results suggested that a VLE might facilitate the students' learning styles with reading strategies. VLE also "provides the tools for becoming an autonomous learner" (p. 6). An observation was made that this is true for learners who have expertise in the use of technology, but might become a burden for people who do not.

The other three studies found did not look specifically at LLS; instead they focused on two other aspects of language learning that are closely related to learning strategies (i.e., learning styles and autonomy in language learning). One study explored the learning styles of low-achieving students when learning English (Abella & Salinas, 2006). This study was conducted on 22 eighth-graders at a private school in Bogota. The study used the learning style framework of field dependence vs. field independence and it incorporated Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Hofstede (1999) classifies cultures into several dimensions. In his work, he identifies individualism and collectivism as characteristics of some of the countries he studied. He observed that the Colombian culture is characterized as being highly collective (p. 53). Similarly, the participants in this study showed a preference for field dependence which means that they are sociable and like to join others when working. They are also emotional and receptive to the feelings and opinions of others. The study concluded that providing students with different learning environments allow them to explore their learning styles, and that the incorporation of learning styles facilitated the learning process (p. 125).

Another recent study of college students in a public university in Colombia focusing on autonomous language learning (Lagos & Ruiz, 2007), found that the "lack of

learning goals and learning strategies, and the lack of learning strategy training results in a negative attitude of the learners toward programs that promote autonomy", contributing to the learners' resistance to learner autonomy (p. 42). Even though this study did not focus on LLS, it implied that these strategies would enhance the language learning process and learner autonomy.

Luna & Sanchez (2005) studied four undergraduate students in a Foreign Language Program at a university in Colombia. They also focused on autonomy in English language learning. The results suggested that "the use of learning strategies from the start of the learning process helps learners to be directors of their own learning, to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning tasks" (p. 139). The study further indicated that in order to "promote and educate people about autonomous learning within Colombia implies a pedagogic approach which focuses on specific socio-cultural needs in and out of the classroom" (p. 139). This translates into innovations where students and teachers are capable of (a) discovering their needs and individual learning styles; and (b) using them to develop autonomy, master new learning strategies, and to enhance cognitive, social and reflective processes required in the learning of a new language (p. 139).

Cognitive Theory in Language Acquisition and Learning

Second language acquisition (SLA) refers to the subconscious or conscious processes by which a language other than the mother tongue is learned in a natural or tutored setting and the factors that influence those processes (Ellis, 1985, p. 6). SLA research examines how communicative competence-- the ability to interpret the underlying meaning of a message, understand cultural references, use strategies to keep communication from breaking down, and apply the rules of grammar-- develops in a

second language (Savignon, 1997). It also studies nonlinguistic influences on SLA such as age, anxiety, gender, motivation, attitude, aptitude, among others (Ellis, 1997; Pica, 2003).

Several theories have tried to explain SLA. These theories are very closely related to first language acquisition theories. Innatist theories (e.g., Bickerton, 1981; Chomsky, 1965; Krashen, 1985; Pinker, 1984) give primary importance to the learners' innate characteristics. Interactionist theories (e.g., McLaughlin, 1987, 1990) emphasize the essential role of the environment in shaping language learning. Constructivist theories (e.g., Long, 1985, 1996) highlight the learners' ability to construct internal representations as "mental pictures" of the target language.

These theories explain the process of language acquisition from a top-down perspective, where it is assumed, just as for first language acquisition, that given sufficient input, a second language system develops in the mind automatically. Conversely, the language acquisition process can be understood and explained if it is seen as a bottom-up and usage-oriented process. The cognitive theory of learning (Anderson, 1985; O'Malley, Chamot & Walker, 1987; Shuel, 1986) provides this approach and lays the foundations for the theoretical framework behind LLS. The cognitive theory of learning indicates that learning is an active and dynamic process.

Cognitive theory is based on an information processing view of human thought and action. Two fundamental principles underlying this theory are that (a) behavior can best be explained by reference to how individuals perceive and interpret their experiences and (b) the way in which individuals think and reason parallels the manner in which computers process information (Shuell, 1986). In cognitive theory, individuals are said to

process information, and the thoughts involved in this cognitive activity are referred to as *mental processes*.

Ausubel (1965, 1968) contended that learning takes place in the human organism through a meaningful process of relating new events or items to already existing cognitive concepts or propositions. Meaning is not an implicit response, but a "clearly articulated and precisely differentiated conscious experience that emerges when potentially meaningful signs, symbols, concepts, or propositions are related to and incorporated within a given individual's cognitive structure on a nonarbitrary and substantive basis" (Anderson & Ausubel, 1965, p. 8). This ability to relate accounts for a number of phenomena: the acquisition of new meaning (knowledge), retention, the psychological organization of knowledge as a hierarchical structure, and the eventual occurrence of forgetting (Ausubel, 1968).

Cognitive psychologists tend to see SLA as the building up of knowledge systems that can eventually be called on automatically for speaking and understanding. At first, learners have to pay attention to any aspect of the language that they are trying to understand or produce. Gradually, through experience and practice, learners become able to use certain parts of their knowledge so quickly and automatically that they are not even aware that they are doing it. This frees them to focus on other aspects of the language that, in turn, gradually become automatic (McLaughlin, 1987). Thus, learning strategies are special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of the information (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Self-Directed Learning Theory

The prevalence of self-directed learning (SDL) is now well established. Scholarly interest in this form of learning has grown considerably since the late sixties and early seventies. Although more recently there has been some decline in the number of studies and articles on the subject (Brockett, et al., 2000), SDL continues to be one of the focal points for scholarship in the field of adult education (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). SDL is defined as "a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating goals, identifying human and material resources, choosing and implementing learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes" (Knowles, 1975, p. 18).

The plethora of literature available on the subject of self-directed learning indicates the level of educational interest in the concept (Song & Hill, 2007; Rager, 2003; Roberson & Merriam, 2005). Indeed, no area of adult education has received more attention, in terms of investigative research (Boekaerts, 1997). Emphasis has been on the development of theory that has led to the generation of models to explain the meanings and contexts of self-directed learning. Research suggests that self-directed learning can play an important role in learning within institutions and highlights the variance in levels of readiness for self-directed learning in individual students (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Grow, 1991).

Different scholars have presented different perspectives on SDL. Some scholars see SDL as a *process* of organizing the instruction (Harrison, 1978), focusing their attention on the level of learner autonomy over the instructional process. Others view self-direction as a *personal attribute* (Guglielmino, 1977; Kasworm, 1988), with the

education's goal being to developing individuals who can assume moral, emotional, and intellectual autonomy (Candy, 1991). Several models have been proposed to understand SDL (e.g., Brockett and Hiemstra, 1991; Candy's model, 1991; Danis's model, 1992; Grow's model, 1991) to a more recent one, Garrison's *Three Dimensional Model* (1997).

Garrison's three-dimensional model views SDL as a personal attribute as well as a learning process. SDL is accomplished by three dimensions interacting with each other: self-management, self-monitoring, and motivation. In educational settings, self-management involves learners' use of learning resources within the learning context (Garrison, 1997). The focus of Garrison's (1997) model is on resource use, learning strategies use, and motivation to learn. It is explained that self-management involves learners taking control of the learning context to reach their learning objectives. Garrison's model has not been studied within the context of second language learning.

Colombia

The fifth largest country in South America with the second largest population after Brazil of approximately 43 million people (CIA World Factbook, 2010), the Republic of Colombia is located in the northwestern part of South America, touching both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. It borders Ecuador and Peru on the south and Brazil and Venezuela on the east. Seventy-four percent of the population lives on urban areas. Roman Catholic is the major religion (90% of population) and the official language is Spanish (CIA World Factbook, 2010).

Background of Colombian Migration to Other Countries

During the 1990s the conflict between government forces and anti-government insurgent groups, principally the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)

heavily funded by the drug trade, escalated. Since the year 2002, violence has been decreasing due to the insurgents' lack of military or popular support necessary to overthrow the government. Nevertheless, insurgents continue attacks against civilians and large areas of the countryside are under guerrilla influence or are contested by security forces. Decades of violence in Colombia resulted in a large-scale migration, especially between 1999 and 2001. Political, social, and economic problems, coupled with widespread insecurity, fueled both voluntary and forced migration. Currently, one out of 10 Colombians lives in another country, mainly in the U.S. Colombia constitutes the largest immigrant group from South America in the U.S. (Berubé, 2005).

Society

Social classes are distinguished by occupation, life-style, income, family background, education, and power. Within each of the classes, there are numerous subtle gradations in status. Colombians tend to be extremely status-conscious, and class membership is an important aspect of social life because it regulates the interaction of groups and individuals (Collier, 2004). Social class boundaries are far more flexible in the city than in the countryside, but consciousness of status and class distinctions continue to permeate social life in both sectors. The population is divided into six major ethnic/racial groups: mestizo 58%, white 20%, mulatto 14%, black 4%, mixed black-Amerindian 3%, and Amerindian 1%. The upper class, constituting 5 percent of the population, is overwhelmingly White; the middle class, 20 percent, is mostly mestizo; and the lower class, 75 percent, is proportionately mestizo, Afro-Colombian, and indigenous (Library of Congress, 2007).

Colombians share traditional elements of trust and mutual dependence among relatives. Ties with relatives and compadres (Godparents) are strong and important in political and business activities provide the low-status person with a wide circle of mutual assistance. The nuclear family unit tends to be authoritarian, patriarchal, and patrilineal, despite the fact that legislation has extended equal civil and property rights to women (MundoAndino.com, 2010).

European influence permeated the Colombian culture following independence from Spain in the 19th century. Colombian politicians, intellectuals, and members of elite society turned to France for inspiration. France was perceived as the world center of progressive and republican values, as well as high culture and science, and for these reasons it became the major foreign influence on Colombian culture until WWI. Starting in the 20th century, North American culture had increasing influence on the culture of Colombia. Shopping malls and tract housing in the style of North American suburbs are very popular and are considered status symbols. Hollywood films, American fashions, and English-language popular music are also popular. Influences from elsewhere in the Spanish speaking world are also present, especially in music and television (Mundoandino.com, 2010).

Education

The educational system in Colombia comprises two sectors: formal education and non formal education. Formal education is carried out following a regular sequence of instruction in either private of public schools that runs from pre-school through university. Non formal education takes place outside schools and does not lead to degrees or certifications and is complementary to formal education (Library of Congress, 2007).

Formal education comprises four progressive levels: (a) pre-school, (b) basic education (primary and secondary), (c) vocational education, and (d) higher education. A child may enter pre-school at age four and continue through age six. Primary schooling begins with five years of elementary education followed by four years of secondary education. After this basic cycle, students proceed to a second level of secondary education, lasting two years. Generally, these six years of secondary education appear together. Upon finishing that level, the students may pass on to some kind of technical training or commercial studies, or they can attend university and eventually pursue graduate studies (Wellington, 1984).

Foreign Language Instruction

Foreign languages such as English, French and German are mainly taught in secondary schools in the public sector. Each school decides the foreign language the students will take (French and English are the most common). Students are required to take three years of foreign languages, four hours per week. These classes are taught by Colombian language teachers and the language of instruction is usually Spanish. Few hours of instruction coupled with large classes of approximately 35 students and the use of Spanish for instruction are not sufficient for learners to acquire proficiency in a foreign language. Colombians posses a basic level of knowledge in English (or other language) by the time they graduate from high school. In college, the teaching of a foreign language is not compulsory. It is determined by each academic program and it is oriented to the development of skills for use in specific fields, such as science, technology, medicine, and academic learning (i.e., English for Specific Purposes). Again, students are required

to take a foreign language during two semesters with only two hours of instruction per week (Library of Congress, 2007).

The private sector of education is mainly operated by the Catholic Church. Private schools have to be licensed, meet public-school standards, and generally use the public curriculum, and they are subject to supervision by the public inspection system. Private institutions administered by foreign organizations (i.e., bilingual schools) might use the language of the home country for instruction, but they had to employ Colombian teachers to conduct classes in the Spanish language on the country's history and geography (Library of Congress, 2007). Students who attend bilingual schools might have a more advanced level of English language proficiency than public school graduates.

There are also several language schools available for foreign language learning. English is regarded as an important language for education and job opportunities. English as a Foreign Language programs are available in language centers such as the Colombian-American Center (http://www.colombobogota.edu.co), the British Council (http://www.britishcouncil.org/es/ colombia.htm), and Berlitz (http://www.berlitz.com.co). Professional organizations for EFL teachers that provide opportunities for professional development, networking and career opportunities (e.g., ASOCOPI) are also available. Professional journals on English language teaching such as HOW, Colombian Applied Linguistic Journal, and Profile among others serve to maintaining communication among English teachers in Colombia and abroad by offering possibilities to disseminate knowledge concerning English language teaching issues.

The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Colombia

EFL differs from ESL in that it takes place within the confines of a country where English is not spoken therefore with few immediate opportunities for learners to use the language within the environment of that culture (Brown, 2000). In EFL settings like Colombia, courses are designed with distinct objectives, instructional approaches and techniques, and teaching materials and resources that might differ considerably from ESL settings. Instruction is mainly imparted by Colombian teachers who have learned English as a foreign language. These factors have an effect on teacher's and learners' perceptions on language learning. For example, in a study conducted by Schulz (2001), Colombian teachers and learners were more favorably inclined toward traditional language teaching and believed explicit grammar instruction and error correction to be highly effective. This perception could be in part a result of the teaching methodology predominantly focused on grammatical form and structures. This also reflects a teacher-centered approach, where the teacher is seen as the "expert knower whose role is to explain and provide effective feedback" (Schulz, 2001, p. 255).

Another study on autonomy in the classroom conducted on future teachers of foreign languages in Colombia (Luna & Sanchez, 2005) showed that the majority of students preferred to follow the established rules and procedures, the instructions for the completion of tasks and did the necessary work to complete the tasks. This group of students favored group activities and detailed text analysis, but they showed a lack of flexibility when it comes to ideas and consider the teacher or group leader as essential for achieving a successful level of learning. This group of students was characterized as "depending on those who are around them. These students only "dance" when they are

asked to" (p. 138). It was concluded that the mechanism these students operate under is initiated by the teacher by the type and form of input provided, the teaching and learning strategies used and the resources used in the language learning process.

Summary

Language learning is a complex cognitive skill that can be described within the context of cognitive theory. This theory describes how information is stored in memory, how strategies are learned and may become automatic, and why they positively influence learning. Self-directed learning is an umbrella concept that provides a framework to study how adults are involved in the management of their learning process. The context of the Colombian culture was also explained to provide some insights into the cultural group under study. A phenomenological research design was appropriate for exploring the LLS that adult ELL use. The method is described in chapter 3.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This chapter begins with the purpose of the study and research questions as presented in chapter 1. The phenomenological framework is discussed. Then, my autobiography and assumptions related to the study are presented, followed by a description of the participants of the study, and procedures for data collection, data analysis and data management. Integrity measures are also discussed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of Colombian adult ELL in selecting and using LLS and the meanings these learners make of their own experiences. This study provided insight on the types of learning strategies that these students use when learning English and how these experiences compare with the existing literature on LLS.

Research Questions

The primary research questions for this study was: What are the experiences of adult Colombian learners in using LLS? Subsidiary questions included the following:

1. What insights about their experience in selecting LLS do adult Colombian learners reveal?

2. What insights about their experience in using LLS do adult Colombian learners reveal?

3. How do the strategies that adult Colombian learners use compare with the existing literature on LLS?

The Phenomenological Theoretical Framework

Phenomenology is concerned with understanding phenomena from the perspective of those who have experienced them. A phenomenological approach (Creswell, 1998) was used to gather and analyze data on the types of LLS used by adult learners. In phenomenological research, we seek to find the essence of the experience of a phenomenon. Therefore, the goal is to uncover these essences or underlying themes of meaning of shared experience (van Manen, 1997).

Phenomenology is the descriptive methodology of human science, seeking to explore and describe phenomena as they present themselves in the lived world. It has its origins in philosophy. It is a discovery-oriented method where the observer needs to have an attitude of openness to let the unexpected meanings emerge (Giorgi, 1997). Phenomenology deals with persons as opposed to subjects. A person is a whole being, complete with past experiences, attitudes, beliefs and values. Persons live in a world of experience, replete with both cultural and social influence (Caelli, 2000; van Manen, 1990; Willis, 2001).

Humans seek meaning from their experiences and from the experiences of others (Gibson & Hanes, 2003). Phenomenology emphasizes the participants' experienced meanings rather than just on a description of their observed behaviors or actions (Polkinghorne, 1989). For this reason, the experience of language learning and its meaning can better be captured through a phenomenological approach, where meaning is interpreted through language. Participants, provide descriptions as they talk about their specific experiences with the phenomenon under study (Giorgi, 1997). These descriptions include feelings, beliefs and convictions about their language learning process.

Researcher's Autobiography and Assumptions

The first step in phenomenological research is epoché. Epoché is bracketing or setting aside judgments, understanding, and knowing to see the experience with fresh eyes (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher achieves epoché by being aware of his or her own biases and judgments, putting them aside, and looking at the experience as if for the first time. I documented and set aside my biases and judgments before interviewing participants in this study (Patton, 2002). To achieve epoché and approach the phenomenon from a fresh, open perspective, I documented and set aside my preconceptions before interviewing participants in this study (Patton, 2002). I kept a journal throughout the study where I recorded notes, experiences, and thoughts about my biases. Additionally, ongoing discussions with my dissertation chair facilitated the acknowledgement of these biases. This section describes my autobiography and assumptions. My autobiography and assumptions reveal my biases about learning a second language.

Autobiography

I was born and raised in Trujillo, Peru and I grew up in a middle-class Catholic family. My education includes a Bachelor's degree in Education with a specialization in foreign languages from Universidad Nacional de Trujillo, Peru, and a Master's degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) from Florida International University. My experience as a language teacher has been varied and extensive. I started teaching English as a foreign language in Peru when I was still in college, in 1989. I taught children, adolescents and young adults. During the last 2 years at my first job I

was assigned to an Intensive English Program for professionals. This was my first encounter with adult learners.

As a part-time instructor, I taught EFL in several language centers. In 1994 I was hired to work in a private university as an EFL teacher and the academic director's assistant. I taught English to college students from different majors. A year later, I was offered the position of Director of the university's language center and worked there until October 1996 when I decided to come to the U.S. to pursue a Master's degree in TESOL.

In 1999, upon completion of my graduate degree in the U. S., I started teaching ESL to adults in a local community college as well as a language center in a private university. My students were adults of different ethnicities. I gained very valuable experience there which reaffirmed my desire to further my education so I started my doctoral studies in Adult Education and Human Resource Development with a Specialization in International and Intercultural Development Education. I am currently working at FIU as a graduate assistant teaching undergraduate courses in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department. I have also taught two undergraduate courses in TESOL for the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at FIU. I am also tutoring ESL to Spanish-speaking adult students and Spanish to English-speaking adult students.

My experience as a language learner has been extensive. I started to learn English as a foreign language at age 13 and continued throughout my undergraduate education. I also studied German as a second language requirement for my specialization and took 4 semesters of Quechua (the second official language in Peru). Throughout the years of language study I experienced a wide array of language strategies in the process of language acquisition. English was the first foreign language I studied. I remember being

an active learner, always trying to find ways to improve my English. I would spend several hours at home reading, organizing and practicing the new material. At that time, cable TV or the Internet were not available, so I had to be creative as to the type of practice I needed in order to master English. The types of strategies I used ranged from individual practice to gatherings with friends around tourist spots in my hometown in search of English-speaking tourists who would be willing to chat with us.

In college, my English was pretty advanced compared to my other classmates. I was always recognized as the student with the best pronunciation and fluency in the language. My experience with English helped much with the subsequent learning of German and Quechua. I already had a "blueprint" containing the strategies that proved to be the most effective. I believe that LLS not only enhance the language learning process but also contribute in achieving learning autonomy because they did for me. Although my autobiography reveals my bias about LLS, I am open to discovering how LLS impact the language learning process for others.

I wrote a full self-experience to assist in achieving epoché (van Manen, 2005). The self-experience focused on my use of LLS as a student and as a language teacher (see Appendix B).

Assumptions

My autobiography and self-experience revealed my bias that LLS are necessary and very useful in enhancing the process of language acquisition. Furthermore, I assume everybody in some way or another uses strategies to make sense of the subject matter they are learning. As a learner, using language strategies made a difference in my learning. As a teacher, I see how my students benefit from using LLS.

Participants

Adult Colombian ELL enrolled in advanced-level ESL classes at the MDC
InterAmerican campus in Miami, Florida were selected for this study. Experienced
students are those who have been studying ESL for more than a year and belong to an
intermediate or advanced level class and whose proficiency level allows them to
communicate in English. Experience as a language learner is vital so that the participants
can reflect on their past and present learning behaviors as well as their choice of LLS in
diverse settings and educational activities.

Participants were selected for this study using purposeful sampling methods.
Purposeful sampling is a sampling procedure which "focuses on selecting information-
rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (Patton, 2002, p. 230).
This procedure helped identify information-rich informants who have had an extensive
experience as ELLs. Purposeful sampling is used in order to ensure that certain types of
individuals or persons displaying certain attributes are included in the study (Berg, 2004,
p. 36). Specifically, criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to select 12 individuals
who were information rich. The criteria for this study were: (a) being Colombian, (b)
having more than one year of experience as an ELL, and (c) having an intermediate or
advanced level of English proficiency.

Adult Colombian learners enrolled in an ESL credit-program at a local college
were chosen for this study. Community colleges offer a variety of programs to assist
non-native speakers to learn the English language in order to promote educational and
economic advancement for adults. Miami Dade College in Miami, Florida, has the
largest adult ESL programs in the U.S. with more than 10,000 students on its seven

campuses. MDC attracts a large portion of non-native English speakers including international students (over 51%; Miami Dade College, 2003). The Department of ESL and Foreign Languages on each campus offers credit courses known as English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The department's six levels include courses that improve listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities. The full-time program consists of six levels of the following skill areas: speech and listening, reading, writing, grammar, speech lab and writing lab. The MDC InterAmerican Campus in Miami, Florida, holds the largest number of Hispanic students learning ESL. The current number of ESL students enrolled is 1,698, of whom 1,040 (61%) are Cuban, 188 (11%) Nicaraguan, 127 (8%) Colombian, and other, 343 (20%; Odyssey Report MDC, 2005). The vast majority of Latinos in the U.S. come from Mexico (58.3%), Puerto Rico (9.6%), and Cuba (4%). Among the 3.8% of Latinos from South America, Colombians are the largest group, accounting for 1.3% of the overall U.S. Latino population (Guzman, 2000).

It is important to understand that the terms "Hispanic" or "Latino" are both labels used in the U.S. to describe people who come from a variety of countries and backgrounds where the Spanish language is spoken. In their countries of origin, these people would not use either label to describe themselves. Instead, they would use a label that describes their country of origin or their ethnic group identification (i.e., Colombians, Cubans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, etc.; Garcia-Preto, 1996). For the purpose of this research study, the term Colombian was used to refer to the participants of the study. The participants in this study were five men and seven women. Their ages ranged from 20 to 59. All the participants had immigrated to the U.S. as adults. Three of the participants were single, five were married, one was separated and three were divorced. Table 1

provides more details on the participants and they are listed in the order they were

interviewed.

Table 1

Individual Interview Participants' Profiles

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education	Occupation	Level	Yrs. in U.S.
Pedro	43	M	some college	Community work	4	8
Isabel	45	F	some college	Housekeeping	5	15
Memo	50	M	Bachelor's	Valet parking	5	6
Rosa	40	F	some college	Community work	4	8
Salome	44	F	Bachelor's	Unemployed	5/6	7
Javier	32	M	some college	Sales person	4	5
Gilma	57	F	Bachelor's	Teaching aide	6	7
Elvira	49	F	Bachelor's	Caregiver elderly	4/5	9
Eduardo	30	M	High school	Cashier	6	10
Felipe	20	M	some college	student	4	2
Lily	41	F	some college	Private tutor	6	7
Zoraida	56	F	Technical degree	Medical assistant	6	20

Key Informants

The program coordinator and the ESL teachers were used as key informants

(Patton, 2002) to identify potential participants. The key informants were asked to

identify students who met three criteria. The criteria included (a) being Colombian, (b)

having more than one year of experience as an ELL, and (c) having an intermediate or advanced level of English proficiency.

The key informants supplied the contact information for the potential participants. The potential participants received a letter of invitation to participate in a study, through Miami Dade College that was written by the researcher (See Appendix C). The letter explained the study, invited them to be considered for the study and asked to cooperate with 90 minutes to 2 hours of their time for the individual interviews and 2 hours for the focus group session. The program coordinator provided me with a list of 20 students who met the criteria and their contact information. I made a preliminary phone call to the potential participants to ensure that they met the three criteria, and to request an appointment for the interview. Eight of the potential participants did not meet the criteria or were not interested in participating in the study. The 12 pre-screened participants were selected to participate in the study.

Data Collection

This section presents the procedures for the interview guide construction, the interview administration, the focus group guide construction, the focus group interview administration, and participants' journals.

Interview Guide Construction

This study used the general interview guide approach (Patton, 2002). A semi-structured interview involves the preparation of an interview guide that lists a pre-determined set of questions or issues that are to be explored during an interview. This guide serves as a checklist during the interview and provides a more systematic and comprehensive way to obtain the same basic lines of inquiry with each person

interviewed (Patton, 2002). Yet, there is a great deal of flexibility. I used a semi-structured interview guide that contained questions about the use of LLS (See Appendix D). Follow up questions consisted of predetermined questions from the interview guide. Unscheduled probes or unplanned questions were used to elicit additional information or clarify some answers.

A two-stage pilot test was conducted. Initially a draft copy of the semi-structured interview guide, including primary questions and probes, was reviewed by a group of doctoral students and doctoral candidates. Their input was used to modify the questions, probes, and structure of the interview guide, such as the clarification of confusing questions, the rewording of questions and probes, and the addition of demographic questions. Following the initial review, the interview questions were piloted with an international, Spanish-speaker doctoral student currently enrolled in the College of Education at FIU who was formerly an ELL. The student was asked the questions exactly as written, and his feedback on the questions was solicited. The feedback revealed that the questions and probes were clear, explicit, and adequate to elicit rich responses.

Interview Administration

Participants were contacted by phone to set up a mutually convenient appointment at the MDC InterAmerican campus. The program coordinator suggested using a quiet study room at the computer lab for the students' ease of access and convenience. Reservations to use the study room were made in advance in coordination with the program coordinator. Interviews were done face-to-face and were conducted in English. Each participant signed two copies of the informed consent release form approved by the Florida International University Internal Review Board with human subjects (see

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Appendix E). One of the consent forms was left with the informants. Interviews were

recorded with both a digital voice-recorder and a backup cassette tape recorder.

Interviews lasted between 65 and 110 minutes.

All 12 interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The researcher

checked for accuracy by listening to the recordings while reading the transcripts. Spelling

and punctuation errors were corrected. The researcher read each transcript a second time

while listening to the recordings to check again for accuracy.

Each transcript was then sent to the respective participant to check for accuracy.

Participants were also asked to add whatever they thought may shed more light on their

experiences and help the researcher to better understand their experiences in a section

below their transcript. All of the 12 participants approved their transcripts. No additional

information was provided.

Focus Group Guide Construction

After the 12 individual interviews were conducted, participants were invited to

participate in a focus group session. Two focus group sessions of 6 participants each were

initially planned. As with the individual interviews, a semi-structured interview guide

containing probes about the use of the six major types of LLS (memory, cognitive,

compensation, metacognitive, affective and social; Oxford, 1990a) was used to elicit

information from the participants about the activity they took part in and the type of

strategies they used in order to accomplish the task's objective (See Appendix F).

Focus Group Administration

A focus group interview is an interview with a small group of people on a specific

topic (Patton, 2002, p. 385). Groups are typically 6 to 12 people with similar

backgrounds. Unlike individual interviews, in a focus group participants get to hear each other's responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) argue that group interviewing, though not a substitute for one-on-one interviewing, constitutes "another level of data gathering perspective on the research problem" (pp. 53-54) that may not be accessible through individual interviewing. Other researchers state that group interviewing of participants who were individually interviewed before could be a source of validation of previously collected data by providing additional data to expand and enhance the research findings (Lofland & Lofland, 1984).

The 12 participants previously interviewed individually were invited to take part in the focus group interviews and then assigned to one of the two groups. They were notified of the time and place of this group interview a week in advance. A conference room was requested at the FIU Green Library for the focus group sessions. Two of the participants who took part in the individual interview never replied to the invitation for the focus group interview and were not located by phone or email. The program coordinator provided me information of two additional students. These two students were contacted by phone and because they met the three criteria for participation in the study, they were invited to join the focus group. Unexpectedly, on the day of the focus group interviews, only 8 participants attended. For this reason, a decision was made to conduct only one focus group interview with 8 participants. The focus group was conducted in English. Table 2 provides details of the participants who took part in the focus group.

Table 2

Focus Group Participants' Profiles

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education	Occupation	Level	Yrs. in U.S.
Pedro	43	M	some college	Community work	4	8
Memo	50	M	Bachelor's	Valet parking	5	6
Rosa	40	F	some college	Community work	4	8
Eduardo	30	M	High school	Cashier	6	10
Zoraida	56	F	Technical	Medical assistant	6	20
Lily	41	F	some college	Private tutor	6	7
Yiya	55	F	some college	Medical assistant	6	13
Gina	29	F	Bachelor's	Interior Designer	6	13

Focus groups can be structured or unstructured, depending on the purpose of the research. Structured focus groups follow a script, or a pre-determined set of questions to guide the interview (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). For the present study, a structured approach allowed a more flowing discussion for controlling dominant group members, and for drawing out reticent respondents (p. 89).

A communicative activity, known as "strip story" was used to encourage participants' use of LLS (see Appendix G). A strip story (Gibson, 1975) is a learning procedure which utilizes real communication activities to help students gain communicative abilities (p. 149). A strip story is a story or anecdote divided into segments (strips of paper), which has the same number of sentences as there are students. The strips are distributed at random to the students, who are then asked to memorize their

sentences. Next the students are instructed to put the story together strictly through verbal interaction (Gibson, 1975).

The strip story that was used for this interaction was called, "The Cafeteria". This story described some of the frustrations that foreign students have as they learn English and start to negotiate American culture. The reason that a strip story activity was used as an instructional strategy that preceded the focus group interview is because these activities promote interaction while displaying learning strategies. ESL teachers use strip stories so that their learners have a chance to interact in English using authentic language (non-scripted) while resolving a task (Nunan, 1999). Task-based and information gap activities have been shown to be among the most effective activities to elicit verbal interaction among learners (Nunan, 1991). These activities are widely used in communicative based language teaching.

For the purpose of this study, the interaction among the participants in the focus group was video-taped by a professional and recorded with a digital voice-recorder in order to explore how the participants used learning strategies to complete the activity. Although the objective of the activity was not to elicit learning strategies, but rather to elicit interaction, the nature of the activity allowed learners to realize the learning strategies they used to complete the task. The attention of the participants to the learning strategies they used was a topic of discussion during the focus group interviews immediately following the activity. It was expected that learners would reflect on their participation and how this participation was mediated by their use of learning strategies. For example, some learners may rely heavily on memory strategies through mental repetition or rehearsal of their own sentence preceding group interaction, or through

asking others to state their sentences repeatedly. Other learners may favor the social strategy of cooperating with others to seek mutual support or the cognitive strategy of analyzing and reasoning deductively in order to complete the task.

A colleague of the researcher conducted the activity and acted as the focus group facilitator. This person is a bilingual (Spanish/English) college professor with graduate degrees in Education and a vast experience in the field of TESOL and Bilingual Education (See Appendix H for the facilitator's C.V.). A focus group facilitator is able to deal tactfully with outspoken group members, keep the discussion on track, and make sure every participant is heard (Simon, 1999, p.5). The activity was conducted in English and lasted 15 minutes. After the activity, the participants took part in the focus group interview. This session lasted 60 minutes. The researcher participated as an observer taking notes during the strip story activity and the focus group session. An observational protocol including both descriptive and reflective notes was used. These field notes were used to augment and compare transcribed data analyses from the focus group interview with additional contextual information for the researcher's interpretation. Through this observation, the researcher was able to capture the specific actions, interactions, and strategies used by the participants while in participating in the communicative activity.

The focus group interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The researcher checked for accuracy by watching the video recordings while reading the transcripts. The researcher read the transcript a second time while watching the video recordings to check again for accuracy.

Participants' Journals

At the time of the individual interviews, each participant was asked to keep a journal of notes, experiences, and reactions based on a set of questions provided by the researcher (See Appendix I). Each participant was given a notebook and asked to keep a daily journal for three weeks. They were given a choice to use English and/or Spanish (or both) as the preferred language. The aim of collecting this type of solicited personal document was to obtain the subjects' own definitions of the situation, along with the ways they make sense of their daily living routines. This allows the researchers to "draw out complete pictures of the subjects' perceptions of their life experiences" (Berg, 2004, p. 221).

The response rate for the reflective journals was very low. Participants were supposed to turn in the journal on the day of the focus group; however, only three participants completed the journal as requested. The other participants stated that they had either forgotten about or did not have time to do it. Participants wrote their journals in English. The three reflective journals were typed using a word processor to facilitate the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using (a) inductive analysis, (b) deductive analysis, and (c) comparative analysis. Inductive analysis involves discovering patterns, themes, and categories in the data (Patton, 2002). Findings were organized by themes to make meaning from the data.

After completing the inductive analysis, a deductive analysis of the data was done. Deductive analysis involves analyzing the data according to an existing framework

(Patton, 2002). The deductive analysis was done using Oxford's taxonomy (1990a) of

LLS. The findings from the inductive and deductive analyses were then compared to look

for patterns and answers to the research questions. This *methodological triangulation*

(Denzin, 1978) or use of multiple methods to analyze the data, tests for consistency in the

findings (Patton, 2002).

Inductive Analysis

Inductive analysis involves discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one's

data (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Findings emerge from the data through the researcher's

interactions with the data. The initial process of coding began with the second reading of

the transcripts to identify patterns that were turned into "meaningful categories and

themes" (Patton, 2002, p. 463). The following steps were completed for each participant:

1. The verbatim transcript of the participant's experience was read and relevant

statements were underlined.

2. All non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements were listed in a Word document. Then

a list of topics was created from the statements. Similar topics were clustered and

organized into meaning units.

3. The meaning units were coded. A code is a label, a definition, or a description of the

units of meanings (Boyatsis, 1998). Coding is done to organize the data (Miles &

Huberman, 1994).

4. After coding all units of meaning, I checked for consistency among the codes. For

example, the code "disappointment" was changed to "frustration" because the code

"frustration" was used for similar meaning units for other participants. Minor changes

were made when necessary. Codes were examined for relationships and then clustered into themes. Themes were then checked for consistency.

5. Thereafter, the themes were compared across all transcripts to check for consistency. For example, the sub-theme "interaction with others" was changed to "social interactions", to ensure consistency with the themes in other transcripts.

The same five steps were completed for the other sources of data: (a) the focus group interview transcript, (b) the observational protocol, and (c) the participants' journals. Once all four sources of data had been coded, the data for all participants were sorted by codes to check for consistency. Thereafter, the data were sorted by themes to check for consistency of themes across participants and changes were made when necessary. The themes were analyzed once more to determine which themes were more relevant. This was achieved by going back to the research questions in order to remind myself of what was important and then to review the themes that best captured the phenomenon of language learning strategy choice and use. To accomplish the inductive analysis, a list of all the themes that emerged from the data was created in an Excel spreadsheet.

The list of themes and some of the data in the Excel spreadsheet were reviewed by my dissertation advisor. My dissertation advisor suggested that some of the themes were similar and could be collapsed. I analyzed the data, the codes, and the themes again, and created another list of themes. To determine the most relevant themes, the number of meaning units attached to each theme was counted and recorded next to that theme as well as the number of participants for whom this theme was used. There were four

relevant themes: (a) learning conditions, (b) problem-solving resources, (c) information-processing, and (d) target language practice. These themes are discussed in chapter 4.

Deductive Analysis

For the deductive analysis, data were analyzed using Oxford's taxonomy (1990a) of LLS. A list of a priori codes was created for the LLS in Oxford's taxonomy to see if the LLS of participating adult Colombian ELL mirrored the literature. The a priori codes are concepts from language learning strategy theory including memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social. A coding rubric was used to code the data (see Appendix J). It contained the data analysis code, the name of the code, a definition, and evidence of each code. Each participant's transcript was analyzed to identify the LLS in Oxford's taxonomy.

The following steps were completed for each participant's transcript:

1. The verbatim transcript of the participant's experience was read and relevant statements were underlined.

2. The a priori code that corresponded to the type of learning strategy learning that the participant reported was written in the left margin on the transcript. For example, when the participant discussed the memory strategies, those statements were underlined and the code MEM was written in the left margin near to those statements.

3. After identifying all six types of LLS that the participant reported, I listed the statements corresponding to those strategy categories in an Excel spreadsheet then sorted those statements by category. For example, all the statements related to the participant's metacognitive strategies were grouped together. This was necessary because participants discussed the various categories of LLS at different points during their interview.

4. Once all statements were organized into categories, each category was further classified into sub-categories. For example, all statements related to the participant's cognitive strategies were then sorted into practicing, analyzing and reasoning and so on. Then the corresponding a priori code was written in the left margins near to those statements. This was done for each of the six categories of LLS. After completing these four steps for each participant; I sorted the data for all the participants by the categories of LLS and checked for consistency in coding across participants.

Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis was done on the findings from the inductive and deductive analyses to check for consistency in the findings and to look for patterns and answers to the research questions. I compared the four themes with the findings on the deductive analysis. For example, using the Excel spreadsheet, I examined the findings for *memory strategies* for the participants as a group, to determine if the theme "language practice" was reflected in that group. I then examined that category for the other three themes. This was done for each category and sub-category of strategies and I listed the themes that were reflected in each category on a separate Excel spreadsheet. This comparative analysis was done to augment rigor and thoroughness in the study. The findings of this study were interpreted in the context of language learning strategy theory and adult learning theory.

Data Management

Data were managed according to the guidelines in the *Florida International University Regulations for Thesis and Dissertation Preparation Manual* (2009). Participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity and to report all findings.

The transcriptions, interview recordings, and reflective journals were organized and stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office. Electronic files were password protected and stored on my personal computer and on a USB flash drive as a backup. The USB flash drive was stored in a locked cabinet in my home. All data will be kept for 3 years after the end of the study.

<p align="center">Integrity Measures</p>

Integrity of qualitative research is determined by its trustworthiness, or value to the audience. The criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of a qualitative study are: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Patton, 2002). Credibility of data collection was established using member checks (Creswell, 2003). After the transcripts were checked for accuracy, they were sent to the participants via email to review for accuracy and clarity, and any additional comments. Data were triangulated from individual interviews, focus group interviews, observations of the strip story activity during the focus group session and the participants' journals to validate the findings of this study (Creswell, 2003).

Transferability of results is important for readers to make connections to their experience and knowledge base. Transferability represents the applicability of the findings to other cases. The transferability of the findings is increased through the inclusion of "thick descriptions" or information rich data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), enabling readers to determine if findings are relevant to their situation.

Dependability refers to a consistent application of data analysis procedures (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Dependability was enhanced by my dissertation advisor, the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) and my peer group who provided feedback throughout the

study. My peer group was especially beneficial for their feedback and discussions during our monthly dissertation meetings as well as the individual review of my chapters and interview guide. During data analysis, four experienced ESL instructors were used for their expertise with the language learning process, and specifically with Spanish-speakers. These ESL instructors reviewed the first three transcripts to check coding in order to establish a consistent process throughout the 12 interviews. When there was a disagreement on the codes, we discussed the differences until we reached consensus. I took notes during this discussion to record changes or alterations in the codes.

Confirmability was augmented by the availability of an audit trail consisting of objective, thorough, and organized records safely stored as described in the data management section.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

This chapter described the phenomenological research design used for the study. Colombian ELL were purposely selected and interviewed about the LLS they use when learning English as a second language. Semi-structured individual interviews and focus group interviews were conducted. Reflective journals were also obtained from participants. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data were analyzed using inductive analysis, deductive analysis, and comparative analysis. Integrity measures that were used in this study were also discussed in this chapter. The findings of the study are presented in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF FINDINGS

This phenomenological study explored the experiences of adult Colombian ELL in selecting and using LLS and the meanings these learners make of their own experiences. LLS are defined as "steps or actions taken by learners to improve the development of their language skills" (Oxford & Cohen, 1992, p. 1). This chapter presents the description of the themes that emerged from the inductive analysis based on the data gathered in the individual interviews, focus group and participants' reflective journals. When quotes are used to support the findings, the participant's pseudonym and line numbers from his or her transcript (e.g., individual interview, focus group interview or reflective journal) are cited (e.g., Elvira, lines 298-300).

Inductive Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to inductively analyze the data. Four themes emerged: (a) learning conditions, (b) problem solving resources, (c) information processing, and (d) target language practice.

Learning Conditions

Learning conditions refer to existing circumstances that make learning possible. Spolsky (1998) explains that there are conditions available in the social context (e.g., opportunities for language learning) and conditions of the learner (e.g., motivation, aptitude, age). These conditions are described by the participants in two ways: (a) external learning conditions and (b) internal learning conditions.

External learning conditions refer to the social context where learning takes place.

Languages are learned in social contexts; therefore, the social context plays an important

role in developing in the learner a set of attitudes towards the target language. It also

provides a number of learning situations and opportunities (Spolsky, 1998). The

participants external learning conditions are grouped into three sub-themes: (a)

acculturation, (b) social interactions and (c) legal status and work.

Acculturation. Acculturation is adopting or taking on the culture of a new group

(Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). It is a causal variable in second language acquisition because

it constitutes the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target

language (Spolsky, 1998). Schumann (1986) argues that "the learner will acquire the

second language only to the degree that he acculturates" (p. 385). Participants expressed

that it is important to know about the American culture because they respect the U.S.

They said that they mainly learn about it in school, on TV, in the movies and in their

daily lives. However, they admitted knowing little about it. Memo explained

> It is important for me [to learn about the American culture] but there are other
> priorities… in this case the time is again an obstacle; it's important to know about
> the idiosyncrasies of this country of course very important…I would like to know
> more about it. (Memo, lines 361-362)

Participants also contended that even though they respect and value the American

culture, they have kept their Colombian culture and traditions. Salome described

> I may not celebrate their traditions because they are unknown to me, like
> Thanksgiving, St. Patrick's, and Fourth of July. I may observe those holidays
> despite the fact that they don't mean much to me, but I respect them, I show
> respect for their traditions, because I am very grateful to this country for
> everything they have provided me, the opportunities to work, to study. I respect
> this country very much. (Salome, lines 448-451)

Salome, Gilma, Isabel and Rosa agreed that American holidays do not mean much to them because they have kept their Colombian traditions. On the other hand, Javier highlighted that taking on some elements of the American culture is beneficial to him: "Yes, it's important because we live here and it's now our country; you need to adapt" (Javier, line 418). Some participants showed a desire in preserving their Colombian culture despite the number of years they have been residing in the U.S. Felipe stated: "Well, the culture itself… I really don't [learn the American culture]. I keep my culture. When you are a child you kind of melt into the American culture but when you are older, it's harder. I'm 100% Colombian" (Felipe, lines 341-342). In spite of their decision to maintain their Colombian identity, it is clear that the participants acknowledge that it is important to acculturate by learning the language and the way of life of the U.S.

Some participants felt that in South Florida it was easier to learn about other cultures than to learn about the American culture itself. Javier explained: "In South Florida, the culture is Hispanic; you learn more about the Cubans or the other islands Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, than the American life. It's more different in the north, but in South Florida it's more the Hispanic culture" (Javier, lines 415-416). It is important to note that participants mostly live close to MDC InterAmerican campus which is located in "Calle Ocho", a predominantly Cuban-American neighborhood.

Social interactions. Social interactions refer to the exchange of information among members of a community. For the participants, social interactions mostly take place in school, because they find it very difficult to find opportunities to speak English in their daily lives. This lack of opportunities is also perceived as obstacles to learning

English. All participants agreed that living in Miami is detrimental to their language learning success. Javier described his experience learning English:

> Difficult, very difficult, for me yeah because really in South Florida everybody talks in Spanish when you need something "press 2" … if I don't have enforcement for speaking English I can't learn the language. (Javier, lines 91-93)

Due to the immigration from Latin America mainly, South Florida presents a different cultural landscape, where Spanish is a widely spoken language compared to other states and cities. Pedro, who had previously lived in New Jersey, explained: "I think in this city is very difficult … because a lot people speak Spanish and it's a problem ...in NJ it was better because I in my work I spoke English" (Pedro, lines 76-78). Participants also said that being surrounded by relatives and friends who speak Spanish mostly was not beneficial to their learning. Isabel explained:

> The work, the time my…friends, my family, my sister my brother don't speak English and I spend most of my free time with them … if I knew American people too maybe my English would be better. (Isabel, lines 170-173)

Another common issue shared by the participants is the attitude of English speakers when interacting with them. Bilingual English speakers tend to switch to Spanish or end the conversation if they sense a person's foreign accent. As Pedro explained: "American people, some persons don't like to speak English with people with no good English" (Pedro, line 438).

These sentiments were corroborated during the focus group. Eduardo, Memo, and Rosa agreed that Miami offers very few opportunities for English practice, at least in the environment they live, work and socialize. Language learners need opportunities to practice with English-speakers on a daily basis. Unfortunately, people lack the time or the

patience to deal with a person whose English is poor and think they are helping them by switching to Spanish.

Legal status and work. Legal status refers to legally recognized residence in the U.S. which enables a person to lawfully reside and work in the country (U.S. Citizen & Immigration Services, 2009). Participants described having a legal status in the U.S. as a favorable learning condition. Being legally in the country represents (a) enjoying full benefits in education and (b) being able to have a stable job. Jose expressed his gratitude for the educational opportunities in the U.S.: "I am very happy because I have the opportunity to study English and it's wonderful because the government help people to study different than in our countries, because the countries are very poor" (Pedro, lines 126-127). Isabel explained how difficult it was at the beginning when she did not have a legal status: "I had no papers and no money. You don't need legal papers but you need money, visa, I didn't have nothing" (Isabel, line 71). And after her legal situation was resolved things changed radically, as she explains: "and then when I received my residency card, OK this is my opportunity! Then I started studying English here" (Isabel, lines 66-67). She further added: "when I came here and apply for help [financial aid] they said you are low income, come in! That's why I love this country" (Isabel, lines 90-91). In the same way, Pedro revealed the hurdles he experienced at the beginning: "When people have your [their] legal status is better because without status you can't… you feel the pressure and the pressure is a wall to learn anything" (Pedro, lines 106-107).The pressure he refers to is the stress and anxiety to provide for their families and without a good job it becomes a big challenge for them. Pedro further explained how he felt after resolving his legal issues: "because now I am more tranquilo; before I used to be

depressed, now I can learn more, my progress maybe 2 years ago is better now since I got

papers" (Pedro, lines 113-114).

Certain immigrant groups (e.g., political asylees) enjoy many benefits of society

which include the availability of resources for education and work. Pedro explained how

this advantage has a direct influence in the acquisition of English as a second language:

> It's hard to be under pressure. Look Mexican people without papers without
> opportunities living here maybe 20 years but they can't speak English. Why?
> Because the pressure and frustration, no opportunities…But others like Cubans,
> Puerto Ricans no pressure, more opportunities, they can make money, only they
> need to think in study English and they can study the process is very quickly.
> (Pedro, lines 523-528)

External learning conditions constitute an important factor that can enhance or

hinder the acquisition of English as a second language as described by the participants.

These conditions might have a direct impact not only in their language learning progress

but also in the types of learning strategies they select and use.

Internal Learning Conditions

Internal learning conditions or conditions of the learner refer to the individual

characteristics or capabilities the learner brings to the learning task (Spolsky, 1998).

These capabilities are specific to each learner's background and personal experiences.

The participants' internal learning conditions are grouped into four sub-themes: (a)

motivation, (b) emotions, (c) metacognition, and (d) beliefs about learning and teacher's

roles.

Motivation. Motivation is concerned with the factors that stimulate or inhibit the

desire to engage in a behavior. All 12 participants mentioned that getting better job

opportunities constitutes the most important motivator to learn English, followed by

getting a degree or furthering their education. The third motivator was being able to fit in society and the last one was to be able to help their children with school.

Getting a better job is equated to "having a better life" (Memo, line 115). Javier also explained "I need English, I want to learn because sometimes people try to talk with me and I can't understand and this is the first thing and I need it for better life, a better job" (Javier, lines 54-55). Salome corroborated: "To be bilingual is the way to get a better job in this country" (Salome, line 106). For participants, better salaries constitute a powerful extrinsic motivator as they wish to achieve their goals through achieving proficiency in English.

Participants desire to further their education is an important motivator to learn English, which in turn relates to the desire to get a better job. They value education and they stressed the importance of getting a college degree. Pedro, Eduardo, Felipe, and Zoraida intend to continue their education as soon as they finish their ESL program at MDC. Participants not only have the desire to better themselves professionally but also acknowledge the importance of learning the mainstream language and culture in order to adapt to society.

Fitting in society constitutes another important drive for participants to become proficient in English. The need to be understood by English-speakers plus the need to belong in society is described in different ways. To Lily:

> …fitting in society, because it was so hard at the beginning, working as a baby-sitter even was so hard to find this opportunity because people do not want to deal with this people are in a rush all the time and they do not want to have to teach you to have this rough time trying to explain something, to keep simple commands they don't have time. So, it was very hard for me to understand people here, even if it was to take care of a child, it's very bad… you try to talk on the phone and they hang up on you. (Lily, lines 137-140)

The frustration of being rejected or not be given an opportunity might have a negative

effect on a person's self-esteem and motivation to learn.

Emotions. Emotions permeate every aspect of human life. Cognitive

psychologists argue that emotion is essential to human cognition (Harris, Gleason, &

Aycicegi, 2006). Participants expressed different emotions that associate with their

language learning experiences. These emotions range from positive (i.e., fulfillment) to

negative (i.e., anxiety). Positive emotions were described in terms of pride,

accomplishment, fulfillment, satisfaction, and excitement. As Salome described:

> I feel proud of myself more inside. I feel proud of myself. That's when I see my
> efforts are paying… studying late at night, it pays. When I'm sitting somewhere
> and someone asks me and I can answer well I feel well. That's why I need to
> change my strategies to improve more. (Salome, lines 422-424)

Being able to talk about one's emotions is a way to monitor one's affective states.

The affective domain constitutes an important variable in the second language learning

process. Pedro talked about his feelings when he accomplishes a difficult task. He said:

"Pride. Because it's hard to learn another language it's a challenge…and when you learn

it's very pride" (Pedro, line 407). Isabel also explained how her emotions are tied to a

sense of accomplishment: "I feel very happy! Oh yes, very happy, very… fulfilled … like

my dreams are fulfilled" (Isabel, line, 410). Salome described her emotions in terms of

her professional goals: "I feel excited, I like it. Because I'm learning because I want to do

a short career; I feel I'm taking my steps to continue my studies when I finish my

English" (Salome, lines, 234-235). In the same vein, Lily talked about achieving her

professional goals:

I feel that I am accomplishing something that I want and I'm working for that goal so I'm in the 6th level and I feel like a new challenge to start my college education. I have to study hard to take my CPT test. (Lily, lines 332-334)

It is apparent the need and desire of the participants to become proficient in English so that they can attain their personal and professional goals. Feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment show the progress the participants are making towards those goals.

Anxiety plays an important role in second language acquisition (Brown, 2000). It is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension or worry (Scovel, 1978). Even though participants did not directly report anxiety as an obstacle to language learning, they spoke about the feelings associated with it. These negative emotions were described in terms of frustration, embarrassment, stress, and fear. Salome expressed her frustration: "Yes I feel frustrated, most of the time I feel frustrated... "excuse me let me explain this better" and I start to find ways how to express this in other words in other ways..." (Salome, lines 336-338). Javier also spoke about his frustration: "But when I have a conversation when someone speaks very fast and I don't understand. I feel frustrated because I think I'm taking the classes and I don't understand nothing now" (Javier, lines 371-372). These feelings of frustration and worry stem from the learners' inability to adequately express mature thoughts and ideas which in turn increase their anxiety level.

Another common negative feeling related to language learning among the participants is embarrassment. When describing English use at work, Memo said: "I'm enjoying that job but sometimes I feel embarrassed because sometimes I don't understand what they say" (Memo, lines 55-56). Participants' fear of negative social evaluation

arises from their need to make a positive social impression on others. Elvira explained her embarrassment when someone acknowledged her lack of proficiency in English:

> I was very upset when she told me "How come you don't speak English?" so right there I decided that I couldn't keep on postponing it… I felt embarrassed and offended so I had an impulse… that one day I will be able to show her that I can speak English very well. (Elvira, lines 60-64)

In this case, feelings of embarrassment or rejection can have an opposite effect and act as motivators for the learners to want to become proficient in English. Felipe also mentioned how feeling embarrassed empowered him to keep trying: "Sometimes I feel embarrassed that I'm going to make a mistake, so I have to force myself (Felipe, line 312).

Conversely, Zoraida explained that she usually avoids situations when she has to speak to native speakers: "Because I don't have the confidence and I'm embarrassed to show I don't understand" (Zoraida, line 332). She also added: "Usually when I speak English I feel nervous, anxious, I have the sensation that I can't do it" (Zoraida, line 377). Zoraida's feelings of apprehension hinder her learning process and by avoiding communication with English speakers she denies herself the opportunity to improve her spoken English.

Stress was also reported by participants as a negative emotional and physical state that has an impact in their learning. Elvira talked about her stress:

> Learning English stresses me out, especially when I feel I "have" to do something like when I have assignments or tests, so I organize my time well, study in advance I don't like the pressure, for an exam for example. (Elvira, lines 163-165)

Elvira revealed that it was very important to manage stress in her life, especially when it comes to her studies. Eduardo explained how stress affects his ability to think and speak in English:

> Sometimes I speak and I don't have to think [in Spanish]. This interview is not difficult, but if this were an interview for a job it wouldn't be like this; because right now I'm relaxed, in a job interview I immediately start thinking in Spanish. Maybe the stress or the responsibility…. (Eduardo, lines 314-316)

A stressful situation raises the learner's affective filter which results in a disruption of communication. Conversely, for Felipe stress can produce two different responses. He explained: "When I'm under pressure, I feel stressed, but I have to do it" (Felipe, line 298). When asked what the effect of pressure was on his use of English he said: "Well it could be good and bad. Bad because you get nervous and stressed, but good because it motivates you to continue learning, leave your fears aside and move on" (Felipe, lines 300-301). The level of stress plays an important role in learning. A little stress can be actually beneficial to some individuals who use it to speed up their performance (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Santiago-Rivera, Bernstein & Gard, 1995). On the other hand, too much stress might overwhelm and demotivate a person.

Fear was among the negative feelings that participants experience in their language learning process. Gilma talked about her fears: "Sometimes I feel helpless 'cause I would even ask a question fearing that someone would laugh at me. I would love to see more understanding towards older adult learners like me. That would be excellent, things would be different" (Gilma, lines 213-215). Elvira also talked about fear in terms of the little progress she has made in some areas: "Well, speech and speaking… you have to lose fear…" (Elvira, line 100). Learners experience fear when they are aware they will make mistakes causing them to refrain from taking risks and trying out the language they are learning.

Participants were asked about the things they do in order to deal with the anxiety they experience in learning or using English. They reported several strategies they have found useful. Pedro explained that he likes to volunteer to go first when it comes to a presentation in front of the class (Pedro, line 441). Eduardo also explained his strategy when giving a presentation: "When you have to give a presentation, if you learn everything about the presentation and you know everything you are going to say that will lower your anxiety" (Eduardo, lines 384-386). Being prepared and feeling knowledgeable about the material helps learners control their anxiety. Salome deals with her anxiety in a similar way:

> I play around with the material, I split it in sections, I read it again and if finally I don't understand I look for help but I have to understand it because if I don't I feel more anxious…. (Salome, lines 430-432)

Preparing oneself for class was a strategy reported by Elvira: "I try to go to class without problems, fresh ready to learn as much as I can. Try to avoid things that tire me. I leave all those things aside" (Elvira, lines 292-293). Being ready and prepared to learn effectively lowers her anxiety.

Breathing deeply was also reported as a strategy for dealing with anxiety (Rosa, line 391; Eduardo line 378; and Isabel, line 425). Other strategies used to deal with anxiety were playing classical music (Isabel, line 348); and praying (Memo, line 334). These strategies are concerned with some sort of physical action that learners perform to calm down and relax when they experience anxiety.

Metacognition. Metacognition refers to higher order thinking which involves active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning (Livingston, 2003). Metacognitive strategies for language learning are important because they involve

planning for learning, thinking about the learning process, monitoring of one's

production and comprehension and evaluating learning after an activity is completed

(Purpura, 1997). Participants reported their metacognitive strategies in terms of their self-

encouragement, self-reward, and self-monitoring.

Self-encouragement is what a person does to make him or herself feel better,

function more effectively, and have greater self-confidence. Participants reported the use

of self-encouragement strategies in several ways. To Isabel:

> When I look in the future, I see myself with my career and I put in my mind the
> picture of me speaking in front of people speaking English, court people, or the
> government. I need to improve my speaking because I can't talk with the judge,
> with the lawyers. (Isabel, lines 433-435)

Determination to achieve his goals encourages Felipe to persist:

> Sometimes I feel embarrassed that I'm going to make a mistake, so I have to
> force myself. If I don't do it now, I will never do it! I try to do my best. I make
> sure I practice what I want to say mentally first. (Felipe, lines 312-314)

Self-encouragement allows learners to put their inhibitions aside and urge themselves to

persevere in their learning efforts.

Self-reward refers to incentives for personal accomplishments. Self-reward was

manifested by the participants in several ways. To Pedro, Lily and Zoraida, the best way

to reward themselves for a positive outcome in their learning or the successful

completion of a task is by going out to a nice dinner. To Lily and Zoraida, going

shopping was another way to reward themselves. Gratification was not only expressed in

terms of material rewards. Reward also comes from close relatives as in the case of

Isabel. She said her best reward is when her children are proud of her accomplishments:

I give myself a pat in the back, good job! And I show my boys my grades, nice! Who wants to give me a kiss? And they both kiss me…My sons, when my sons are proud of me that's my gift. (Isabel, lines 439-441)

Emotional reward can have a long-term effect on the learners' motivation. Elvira talked about feelings of satisfaction for her goals accomplished:

I feel satisfied. It's when I feel it's been worth it. So much effort, so many struggles, because it's not been easy. Because I've come a long way…since I started and I didn't know anything. That's what keeps my motivation going. (Elvira, lines 302-304)

Likewise, Eduardo explained that the reward for him would be to become aware of the things he is capable of doing (Eduardo, lines 394-395). Contentment and fulfillment are feelings that generate self-encouragement which constitutes an important affective learning strategy.

Self-monitoring refers to checking the outcomes of one's own language learning against an internal measure of completeness and accuracy (O'Malley et al., 1985). Participants reported several self-monitoring strategies. Pedro said: "My brother-in-law is American and I speak with him in English, and he tell me you are better now, your English is better now… And my listening is better now, too" (Pedro, lines 322-323). Isabel also relies on the feedback from native speakers:

And I have one friend from Guyana …when I say something wrong, and she corrects me. And I ask the people in English, the lawyer he knows elite words, and I ask Mr. Leo how do I speak? Oh you speak very well, you use good words…. (Isabel, lines 341-342)

Pedro and Isabel feel confident when they receive positive feedback about their performance from native speakers. Another way of monitoring oneself is by exposure to the media by the degree of comprehension attained. Memo explained his self-monitoring strategies: "When I watch TV and I understand a little more, then I can establish that I'm

improving (Memo, lines 296-298). In the same way that Memo described understanding

TV programs in English, Felipe reported:

> Well when I'm watching TV and I understand, then I hear a word and I realize I just learned that in class, so when you become aware of certain words or structures on TV or people it's because you have learned them. (Felipe, lines 160-162)

Learners are constantly evaluating their learning in terms of the tasks they are

capable of completing as is the case of understanding other people or enjoying a TV

program or movie in the target language.

Grades obtained in class were also reported as measures of improvement. To

Eduardo: "If I see I get an A I know I am learning… if I see I didn't get a good grade I try

harder" (Eduardo, lines 306-307). Lily explained: "Grades, it's something concrete that I

can see, but I need to feel comfortable with what I'm really doing" (Lily, line 318). Good

grades are a reflection of satisfactory performance in school. Participants also talked

about testing that knowledge in real situations. For example, Zoraida talked about being

able to put in practice what she had learned in class: "When I'm studying I can see I

make progress. When I use new words, rules, when I see I can say things right I know

I'm making progress" (Zoraida, lines 356-357). Likewise, Felipe remarked: "When it

becomes automatic for me to use it and I use it in the right way and I know when to use

it" (Felipe, line 274). To participants, using the language successfully in their daily lives

is a way of testing their performance and progress in their learning.

Beliefs. Beliefs are individual subjective understandings, idiosyncratic truths,

which are often value related and characterized by a commitment (Alexander & Dochy,

1995). A learner who believes that knowledge is a resource provided by an authority will

have a different approach to learning from a learner who believes he can create his own understanding (Svinicki, 1999).

Participants reported their beliefs about age and learning and about teachers' roles. Some participants discussed age as an obstacle to their learning. Pedro compared himself to his son: "For adults it's more difficult, for younger people, it's better. My son is seven, he was born here and he speaks English perfect, fluent" (Pedro, line 131). Isabel discussed how being adult poses some challenges: "…age is not easy first of all you may have many other things, to pay bills, the kids, you don't have your mind empty for English only" (Isabel, line 128). On the other hand, Salome explained that she does not see age as an obstacle. She said:

> I don't feel like an old person. I just feel I'm a person learning a language. I might feel I have a little more advantages.... I have more maturity, I go to class to study not socialize so that's why I think I have more advantages…. (Salome, lines 241-244)

Rosa agreed that English and learning is not only for younger people; "it's for everybody, only when you want you can do it" (Rosa, line 72). To Salome and Rosa being an adult learner is a positive experience. They both believe that learning transcends age, and they realize the life experience, knowledge and expertise they bring to the learning task.

The other aspect of beliefs that was reported refers to teachers' roles. Specifically, these beliefs refer to what the participants deem as good teaching practices and they provided examples of "bad teaching" based on their experiences and also advise they would give their ESL teachers.

Participants believe that teachers should care about student learning. As Isabel said:

> I prefer my teachers to try to put more effort in the students learning, sometimes the teacher is not very sure the students learn, but other teachers say the book is very boring and they bring more information when they think it's better for their students. (Isabel, lines 476-479)

Salome also commented on how teachers do not care much about students' learning:

> Some teachers just come in, sit at the desk all they want is rush to cover all the chapters of the book… sometimes I wish they would cover less material and make sure we learn that material well before we move on. (Salome, lines 456-459)

Gilma voiced her complaint about teachers not fulfilling her expectations. She recalled an instance with one of her instructors:

> I told my lab instructor: "I sat in your class and didn't understand anything; I'm not going home empty …. I'm staying until you explain to me and I understand". He tried to explain but then I had to drop the class because everyone was complaining [about her]. (Gilma, lines 386-389)

In this particular case the outcome of her complaint was adverse because it resulted in Gilma's withdrawal from the class.

Participants also felt their teachers should have more realistic expectations in terms of their performance. "We are not machines" Gilma said (Gilma, line 394). Elvira also commented: "sometimes teachers think we are here just for a grade, but we are not" (Elvira, line 329). Lily expressed some sympathy about the teachers' heavy load, but complained about teachers' stereotyping: "they believe we are a homogeneous group that we learn the same way" (Lily, line 425). It is clear that participants challenged a one-size fits all approach to teaching and they demanded a more individualistic approach. Zoraida said: "I'd like more individual time, they are supposed to follow up with each student, come to my office, tell me what you like what you don't like, they can tell us about our

learning, our progress" (Zoraida, lines 426-427). Adult learners have the maturity to understand their priorities and often have little patience with classes they perceive are not furthering their own educational agendas.

Another observation made by the participants was that teachers should be more active and engaging in their lessons. As Salome described:

> they need to be more active, include more practice exercises besides the textbook, make us work in class, give us role-play exercises, simulate job interviews, give us dialogues to study at home and practice in class taking turns. The textbook isn't everything, sometimes is boring. (Salome, lines 459-462)

Participants were asked about a request they would make to their teachers. Zoraida complained about teachers not motivating their students enough. She said: "More motivation, less directives, bring interesting things" (Zoraida, lines 414-416). To participants, when adult educators come to class underprepared and unmotivated it might generate a serious flaw in the learners' pursuit of their needs and aspirations.

Discipline was also believed to be an essential component in classroom management. Memo explained his thoughts about it:

> There are teachers that impart discipline so they manage the classrooms that is important so that when we end a class we feel we are learning but only very few teachers do that…. (Memo, lines 378-381)

These adult learners have previous schooling experience in their countries and they use it as a frame of reference. The order and discipline Colombian learners are used to might not compare to the classroom management strategies used by teachers in the U.S.

Another aspect reported by participants is that of respect. Lily feels teachers should be more respectful to students. She explained:

Respect for the class. I have a teacher who doesn't respect us. When she is talking to us she is chewing gum. She speaks so loud, she has no manners. She dresses like she's at home and I consider this a lack of respect towards us. As a teacher you need to be a model. The leader, the teacher, dressed like that? (Lily, lines 431-434)

Gilma also commented on teachers' respect towards students: "…Also respect us so that we can respect you. Let's work together as a team! When there is a good relationship between teacher and students then things are easier" (Gilma, lines 391-392). These adult learners seek to develop a bond with their teachers based on mutual respect and professionalism.

As far as good teaching is concerned, Memo described one of his teachers in one of his reflective journal entries. He wrote:

The professor is one of the best that I have seen or I have had. He knows the [first] names and last names of all students, knows who was absent the last class and if that person sent him e-mail or not, and answers the emails. The class is very good, the time goes fast, he is always talking humorous [he uses humor]. (Memo, lines 9-13)

To participants, a good teacher cares for his or her students. Care is demonstrated by showing respect, professionalism, discipline, clear and realistic expectations, and by not making generalizations about their learning styles.

The beliefs that participants have about teaching and teacher roles reflect their cultural and educational experiences in Colombia. Participants showed they have clear expectations about the performance of their teachers.

Problem-solving Resources

Problem-solving resources refer to the means through which one deals with a difficult or troublesome learning situation effectively. Participants reported four resources for solving problems they deal with when learning ESL: (a) learning tools, (b) help from

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significant others, (c) coping with communication problems, and (d) error correction resources.

Learning Tools

Learning tools refer to any resource used to accomplish a learning task. Participants reported the use of learning tools as ancillary resources they use outside their ESL classes. Two main learning tools were reported: (a) dictionary/electronic translator, and (b) Internet and texting. In this section, I describe the use of learning tools in general terms. In a later section, I will report the use of these resources in specific learning tasks (i.e., grammar, vocabulary, writing).

Dictionary/Electronic Translator. The most common learning tool reported by participants was the dictionary. Its use varies from being a reference resource to look up new words to helping accomplish more complex tasks such as writing an essay or reading a text for comprehension. All 12 participants reported the use of the dictionary for learning purposes. For example, Gilma explained the many purposes her dictionaries serve:

> …and if I don't know something I use the dictionary. It's a very important tool...I have a collection, pocket dictionary, guide to pronunciation, thesaurus...I also have an electronic dictionary. I use it to look for words and synonyms so that I use different words when I write. (Gilma, lines 217-219)

Some participants reported using an electronic translator besides a hard copy dictionary. Eduardo recalled using an electronic translator to practice vocabulary:

> I remember that I used to use a translator, and in the translator you put your favorite words for vocabulary and then like shuffle the words and the translator starts to ask you about the words, and you have to give the meaning of those words. (Eduardo, lines 223-224)

In its varied formats, from the standard pocketbook to the electronic version, the dictionary is one of the most commonly used tools for language learning.

Internet and Texting. Among the youngest participants in this study (Javier and Felipe), the use of the Internet and texting was more prevalent. When asked "who do you ask for help"? Felipe said "like at home? Well, the computer" (Felipe, line 334). He remarked: "When I need help with a word, I look it in a webpage dictionary.com and they have the definitions" (Felipe, line 281). Lily also mentioned that she uses the internet to look up new words (Lily, line 373).

Javier reported using Google to find websites containing grammar help and online dictionaries (Javier, line 283). Felipe was the only participant that reported using text messaging as a resource when he needs help: "Sometimes my step brother, I text him. Because sometimes I hear slang you know, and he knows all that street language" (Felipe, lines 338-339). This could be explained by the degree of familiarity with recent technology. New generations are much more familiar with the use of computers, texting, blogging and the like; therefore, younger learners might show a tendency to use these technologies in every aspect of their lives.

Help from Significant Others

Family members, friends and co-workers play an important role in providing guidance, opportunities for practice and help to the language learner within an informal setting (outside the classroom). For example, in one of her reflective journal entries, Rosa explained whom she asks for help. She wrote: "When the communication becomes difficult, I usually seek help from people that speak more English than me" (Rosa, lines

7-8). She revealed that in her case, her 7 year-old son is the main resource available when needed.

Participants reported several scenarios where their significant others contribute positively in their language learning. As Isabel explained:

> I do my homework always but after that I ask my son, or this woman [employer] is it OK? Sometimes they teach me words, the meanings sometimes I confuse the words, for me that's the good conditions work with the people and my two sons. (Isabel, lines 166-168)

Children play an important role in their parents' language learning efforts. Parents are aware of the importance of being able to help their children with school work and at the same time children are a handy resource. Rosa elaborated on this topic: "Sometimes he [my son] helps me. For example if I am doing my homework, "Sammy what is the meaning of this word? Oh mommy this is this…" (Rosa, lines 331-332). Elvira also talked about how her daughter helps her:

> When I need help with my assignments, especially for speech class, I ask my daughter to help me. I read it aloud in front of her and she corrects me, because she speaks perfect English. I transcribe the sounds in Spanish as I understand it. (Elvira, lines 121-123)

Elvira's comments illustrate how school-aged children who are already proficient in English serve as a convenient problem-solving resource for their parents.

Other relatives or co-workers were also reported as valuable resources. For example, Rosa and her husband are both enrolled in the ESL program. Rosa said that she asks her husband to ask her questions about the lesson or read a dictation for her, such as a reading passage from the textbook (Rosa, line 184). Salome reported asking her ex-boss for help: "My ex boss, he speak English fluently. Also I go to the lab that helps a lot, I ask my teachers too…" (Salome, line 434). Felipe usually asks his step-brother (line

338); while Zoraida asks her husband and daughter for help (Zoraida, line 391). Eduardo and Lily coincided in that they look for "educated people" when they need help. As Eduardo said:

> I look for someone to help me, a professor. I look for people that I think know how to speak English very well. I look for people that not only speak English but someone with an education; a bachelor's degree or a master's degree. (Eduardo, lines 397-399)

This might imply that education is highly valued by the participants and that they trust feedback from proficient English speakers and professionals.

Coping with Communication Problems

Language learners are faced with many challenges, especially when it comes to understanding spoken and/or written language. Because they have not acquired full proficiency in the language yet, they need to negotiate meaning using different strategies. Participants reported several strategies they use to cope with communication problems.

There are two situations in which participants reported strategies for coping with communication problems: (a) not being able to understand what an interlocutor is saying during a conversation, and (b) not being able to find the right word to express themselves during a conversation.

Compensating for incomprehensible input. Language learners often find themselves in situations where the input they receive from their interlocutors is incomprehensible due to their lack of competence in the language, the level of complexity of the interlocutor's lexicon, or the inability of the learner to decode the sounds of certain words. Participants reported using several strategies to cope with this problem.

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All participants mentioned that they would ask their interlocutor to slow down or speak more slowly. As Eduardo said: "I ask that person if they could speak a little bit slower, or if they can repeat what they said…" (Eduardo, line 290). Another common strategy among the participants is asking the interlocutor for the meaning of the word or words they did not understand. Lily usually asks questions such as: "When you said this word…. What did you mean? What I understood is this…. Am I correct or not?" (Lily, line 295). By asking questions, Lily checks her comprehension and verifies the meaning of new words used by her interlocutor. Zoraida reported using a very interesting strategy when confronted with situations where she needs to compensate for incomprehensive input: "Sometimes I say "yes", people talk to me and if I didn't understand I say "yes" and I look at the expression on the face and if the expression is like surprise then I say, "oh no I'm sorry, no" (Zoraida, lines 319-320). This goes even further than just ignoring the piece of information; she would try to accommodate her response to please the interlocutor. When asked why she would do this, Zoraida replied: "Because I don't have the confidence and I'm embarrassed to show I don't understand" (Zoraida, line 325). It is evident how the affective factors of learning play an important role in influencing the type of strategy the participants use and also the decision to ask for further explanation.

Compensating for lack of vocabulary. Often language learners face the uncomfortable situation of trying to express themselves and not being able to find the right word or expression to do so. Learners find their way to negotiate meaning when faced with this situation. The most common strategy used by the participants is using a synonym or rephrasing the sentence in order to get their message across. Salome explained how she feels when she confronts this situation: "Yes I feel frustrated …

'Excuse me, let me explain this better' and I start to find ways how to express this in other words in other way" (Salome, lines 336-337). Participants counteract the lack of lexicon to express their ideas by approximation that is using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target lexical item as closely as possible.

Communicating in writing is another strategy used by the participants. Memo explained how he uses this strategy when he is not being understood by his interlocutor: "I have to write down and sometimes writing helps me and gets me out of trouble at this moment" (Memo, line 287). In a similar way, Gilma uses her electronic dictionary to help her in situations when she cannot find the right word: "I carry my electronic dictionary everywhere I go; I look it up and give it to the person to read" (Gilma, line 298). Participants make use of various strategies when it comes to compensating for missing information, especially when the need and desire to communicate their ideas is of utmost importance.

The use of non-verbal clues was also reported as compensation strategies. For example, Elvira makes sure she negotiates meaning by using non verbal communication as well: "I try at least. For example with the gentleman I work with, he's American, so I try to explain by using gestures, or signaling something, or pointing at something… objects. I try to explain things like that" (Elvira, lines 252-253). Eduardo and Zoraida also reported using non verbal language when needed. Zoraida explained: "Sign language, gestures, mimic, pointing at things, I'm a little actress…" (Zoraida, line 333). Speakers also convey meaning through body language in a regular basis. Language learners instinctively rely on the use of non-linguistic signals to compensate for lack of words or structures and they find it an effective means to get their message across.

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Circumlocution, an indirect way of speaking, is a strategy used to compensate for missing knowledge. For example, Lily contended that she would use examples in order to be understood: "They ask me to say that again and I repeat slowly, but if they do not understand, I need to give examples or go around" (Lily, lines 300-301). Salome also explained this strategy: "I give an example…if I need the drugstore I'd say 'the place you go when you are sick'. Ahh the pharmacy! The drugstore. I try to associate things that help me with trying to make myself understood" (Salome, lines 336-337). Describing or exemplifying the target object of action is an indirect way for learners to convey information. These strategies for communication are a reflection of the universality of human experience and the desire of those who feel the desire to convey their messages.

Error Correction Resources

Learning a language involves the making of errors. In their effort to getting their messages across, learners make errors when using the target language. Learners can either self-correct or be corrected by others (i.e., teachers, significant others). Once learners are aware they have made an error, they use several mechanisms in trying to correct them. Participants reported several ways in which they correct their errors.

All participants agreed that their teachers constitute the primary resource for correcting their errors. Teachers are constantly providing feedback on their oral and written production.

For example, Elvira explained how she uses teacher's feedback to make sure she does not make the same mistakes again: "Well the teacher corrects our errors, so I redo the assignment following his corrections. If you want to learn things, you have to correct your errors, if not, you will always make them" (Elvira, lines 271-272).

Likewise, Eduardo likes to use the track changes function in his word processor.

He said:

> The teacher points it out, she uses Word… so I keep a file of all my work and the things I've been doing that need to be corrected and in that way I realize what I need to fix and correct. (Eduardo, lines 347-348)

Similarly, Felipe explained that he likes to keep the file with the teacher's feedback and the file with the corrections. In that way, when he needs to study for an exam, he reads and compares both versions so that he doesn't make the same mistake again (Felipe, lines 281-282). Most of the participants' error correction occurs in the context of their ESL classes and they value the input they receive from their tutors and instructors.

Besides the feedback learners get from their teachers, they also rely on specific strategies to correct the deficiencies they are conscious about. For instance, Memo reported using the phonetic transcription of problematic words to correct his errors in pronunciation. He said:

> When the professor corrects me one word, if there is time I write it down the way I hear it in parenthesis, and then I look in the dictionary the phonetic transcription. It's the only way I'm sure the word is correctly pronunciation. (Memo, lines 313-315)

Salome explained that she needs to visualize the new words and when she makes mistakes in pronunciation she has to write the words down in order to memorize the right way to say it (Salome, line 377). She further explained how she practices these new words:

> I talk to my pillow, I talk to my mirror, I stand in front of the mirror and I make sentences with those words and I repeat them and repeat them and then when I need to use them again in conversation I do that many times over and over. (Salome, lines 379-381)

By rehearsing the new information repeatedly, participants are able to correct erroneous usage of words and expressions. During the focus group interview, the repetition of information as a strategy to understand the story was mentioned several times. For example, Pedro explained: "because at first I thought the student went only one day to the cafeteria not two, but then I understood two times: the first and the second day. And I only realized that from repeating the story several times" (Pedro lines, 109-111). Participants came to the conclusion that they had made the same mistake repeatedly and by having each participant read their scripts several times they finally found their way to sequence the story.

Recording their own voice was also reported as a strategy to self-correct errors. Gilma for example, uses a tape recorder to record herself as she reads aloud. She also attends tutoring sessions at schools where she asks her tutors for feedback on her pronunciation (Gilma, lines 322-323). She explained that she would bring the tapes to her tutoring sessions and ask her tutor to record the corrected models for her. These examples of strategies show that learners are well aware of the errors they make and that they realize the urgency to correct those errors in order to improve their language usage.

Information Processing

Cognitive information processing theory emphasizes using strategies that focus the learner's attention, promote encoding and retrieval, and provide for meaningful, effective practice across learning environments and curriculum (Gagne, 1985). Participants reported using information processing strategies in language skills and linguistics skills. The four language skills reported were: (a) speaking, (b) listening, (c)

reading and (d) writing. The three linguistic skills reported were: (a) grammar, (b) vocabulary, and (c) pronunciation.

Language Skills

Language is an integration of the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. These four skills although independent are interrelated and work in conjunction with the cognitive process of learning. Thus, oral language (speaking and listening) and written language (reading and writing) depend on and support each other.

Speaking. The speaking skill is used to convey information to our listeners. Participants agreed that one of the major issues they face in their language learning process is the lack of opportunities to speak English in Miami, even in the workplace. Most of their speaking exchanges occur during their formal language learning setting which is the classroom. Regardless of this disadvantage some participants reported using strategies that would help them with their speaking. Isabel explained: "I don't ask somebody, 'do you speak Spanish?' no, I speak in English whatever I assume that person speaks English" (Isabel, lines 253-254). Isabel is determined to seek as many opportunities as possible to speak in English as is Gilma:

> I find someone who speaks English. I go to the priest since I do a lot of volunteer work or sometimes I see my teachers during office hours 15 minutes before class so that they would talk to me in English. (Gilma, lines 254-256)

Salome also explained the strategies she uses to find more opportunities to speak English:

> When I call any office I always choose English I never Spanish. In the beginning I had to hung up and dial again I remember it was so hard to try to write a phone number I had maybe 20 times but I did it … I never gave up. (Salome, lines 82-84)

Salome not only forced herself to use English at all times, but also was very persistent even when she faced difficulties. However, for some like Javier, who is constantly seeking opportunities to speak English, it gets even more problematic when he starts a conversation and once his interlocutor perceives a foreign accent they immediately switch to Spanish (Javier, line 251). Javier explained that it becomes frustrating not to have opportunities to practice English outside of class.

Eduardo talked about the use of rehearsal before he has an oral presentation in class: "I prepare pretending I'm talking to someone, but in reality I'm talking to myself aloud, pretending there's people around" (Eduardo, lines 326-327). By talking to himself, Eduardo is compensating for the lack of an interlocutor to speak to.

Felipe uses a different strategy to enhance his speaking skills:

I pay attention when people talk, and I focus on the things I'm learning and when I hear the person using a word, an expression or a grammar form I pay attention to how the person is using it in context. Then I try to use it when I speak. (Felipe, lines 234-236)

By doing this, he is establishing a connection with what he is learning in class and the actual use of the structures in real life, and then he emulates these sentences when he speaks.

Zoraida is the only one who speaks English at home, because her German/Polish husband does not speak Spanish well. However, they find themselves speaking half English, half Spanish because he wants to learn Spanish (Zoraida, lines 274-274). Like Zoraida's husband, many people in South Florida find it important to learn Spanish, not only for personal reason but also for professional advancement.

In terms of the strategies used in school, all participants agreed that the use of certain software packages like "Tell me more", available in their language lab was of great value in providing them with opportunities to use their spoken English and receive feedback on it. Participants rely on this resource much more when the opportunities to use English in a realistic situation are scarce.

Listening. Listening comprehension is an act of information processing in which the listener processes auditory input available in our daily surroundings. Participants reported several strategies to enhance their listening comprehension skills. Rosa explained that she would ask her husband, who is also an ESL learner, to ask her questions in English or to dictate phrases from the book for her to write down (Rosa, line 185). In this way, Rosa makes sure she understands the input. Elvira, in a different way, purposefully listens to her teenage daughter when she speaks with friends:

> My desire to know what they are saying forces me to try really hard to pay attention and   understand what they are saying. She is talking on the phone, when she is done; I say, "So you guys are going to the movies eh? Who else is coming?"And she goes "Mom how do you know". "Mom is learning" I say. (Elvira, lines 219-221)

It is evident that having a purpose for understanding a piece of information motivates these learners to keep learning and practicing.

Several participants (Salome, Javier, Elvira, Eduardo, Felipe and Lily) reported that they watched English movies and TV programs and listened to English radio stations to increase their listening comprehension. They also reported using the closed-caption function (in English) on TV and DVDs to aide with difficult words and structures. Felipe watches old episodes of The Simpsons that he used to watch in Spanish when he was younger: "I've seen the episodes in Spanish so when I see them in English I compare and

understand better because I have already seen them" (Felipe, line 224). This tells us that when the context is familiar, comprehension becomes easier. Eduardo does something similar when he is looking for information about a particular topic for school. He goes to YouTube and watches the Spanish version of what he has been reading about. He gave the example of some research he did on the biography of Napoleon: "…so I start reading about Napoleon in English, but when I want to know about his life I go to YouTube and look for it in English and in Spanish" (Eduardo, line 409). This shows that Eduardo makes more sense of the story by comparing the English version to the Spanish version.

In the focus group interview, participants reported using strategies to comprehend the events of the story and finally putting it together. One strategy was the use of imagery. Eduardo said: "I tried to imagine what this story was about; it was not only the words to find out who was next" (Eduardo, line 74). Visualizing the events of the story, and not only listening to them, helped Eduardo understand the sequence. Another strategy was paying attention to details. Lily explained: "I paid close attention to the tense of the verbs so I could understand to put in order what was first what came next" (Lily, lines 77-78). Lily used the verb tenses as clues to help her decide the correct order of the events. Likewise, Yiya said that she looked for keywords that would signal a logical order of the story (Yiya, line 79). Finally, Memo added that it was important to listen to the story segments several times. "It's repetition; listen to it several times" (Memo, line 142). This activity called for the use of the whole context of the story, not just the single parts, in order to accomplish the task. Once participants looked at the whole picture and after listening to the parts several times, they were able to fit the pieces of the puzzle.

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Reading. The process through which the reader accurately and efficiently decodes a string of printed letters into meaningful communication (Hawkins, 1991, p. 169). Participants reported using several strategies to enhance their reading comprehension. All participants admitted that they only read books written in English for their classes at MDC. Lack of time was the main reason for this. However, Salome, who works at a hotel, is always collecting books that the guests leave in their rooms. She takes them home and reads them. She explained:

> I make associations, always take one paragraph and now I know more grammar so I apply the tenses, to what I'm reading, I understand much better now, before I would guess, but now it's not a guess anymore, it's knowledge. (Salome, lines 254-257)

This exemplifies the cognitive process of associations and scaffolding. By looking at the verb tenses, she can situate the story and make sense of it. The use of a past tense would signal a past event, and so forth.

Javier explained that he is a casual reader. He would read a couple of paragraphs from any magazines while making a line in Publix or while checking his email (Javier, lines 235-236). It is apparent that Javier tries to find something to read in accordance to his comprehension level so that this reading is meaningful to him.

Gilma explained that besides reading two books per week, one in Spanish and one in English (Gilma, line 125), she also pays attention to the street signs and writes down on a note pad that she always carries in her bag, new words and expressions that she looks up in a dictionary later (Gilma, line 235). This shows a self-directed attitude towards learning.

Eduardo wrote in his reflective journal about reading the newspaper in English first and then in Spanish (Eduardo, lines 4-6). He explained that by doing that he is capable of making connections and compensate for unknown words or expressions in English to better grasp the message. It is evident that these adult learners rely heavily on their first language and use it to establish comparisons and connections with English. Also, it is important to note that Miami provides the opportunities to find all types of resources and services both in English and Spanish, which constitutes an advantage to Spanish-speakers who are learning ESL. Felipe mentioned that learning about the structure of paragraphs and sentences in English helps him in reading comprehension (Felipe, line 235). This is evidence that learners not only need to learn the structure of the target language, but also the writing style (English vs. Spanish). Rosa said that she practices reading comprehension while she helps her son with school work (Rosa, lines 199-200). Parenting constitutes a motivator for these adult learners since they want to help their kids succeed in school. This serves a double purpose, where the child and the mother both benefit from it. Zoraida explained that she not only reads the text but also likes to discuss it with others (i.e., classmates): "I like to ask people what they understand. I like to listen. For me in order to read it is important to write, to listen to other people" (Zoraida, lines 251-252). This strategy proves that the four language skills are interrelated and depend on one another in order for learners to become competent in the target language.

Writing. This skill is used to communicate in written form a variety of messages to a close or distant, known or unknown reader or readers (Olshtain, 1991, p. 235). Participants agreed that one of the most problematic areas for them, besides speaking,

was writing. They said that a lack of an extensive repertoire of words represented an obstacle in their writing, thus, they rely on the use of a dictionary. Gilma also said that it is particularly difficult for Colombians to write in English because they think in Spanish when they write (Gilma, line 150). Zoraida also made a comment in that respect: "…because in English it's different to Spanish so my tendency is to use the Spanish structure, the word order I think I have to fight against that, to force myself" (Zoraida, lines 265-266). This is clearly an example of how the first language interferes with the production of the second. As a result, these learners compose their pieces using the framework of their first language causing them to translate expressions and use incorrect structures in their writing.

Both speaking and writing are productive uses of language where the speaker or writer must create the message for an audience. Salome described a strategy she uses to practice both reading and writing. She copies an entire reading passage into a notebook, then she asks herself what she understood from the reading and finally she checks it for correct spelling and punctuation (lines 295-296). This type of rehearsal helps her not only with spelling but also with writing style and grammatical structures. Salome also explained a similar, but more complex strategy when it comes to write reports about her workers:

> At the hotel I had to do evaluations of the employees under my supervisions, so I would do all types of tricks. I would take the old evaluations and adapt them to the new situation changing words around in order to express what I wanted to say. (Salome, lines 298-300)

By doing this, she adapts the information editing the content so that it makes sense.

Pedro uses brainstorming to help his writing. He learned how to brainstorm and cluster ideas in school and he finds it a very effective strategy (Pedro, line 346). The participants of this study are required to write extensively for their classes. Most of what they write is for school. Gilma is the only participant who talked about keeping a journal of free writing. As she explained: I spend a lot of time but I write, and I like it. Each day I choose a topic. Today I'm going to write about Miami Beach, tomorrow about my teachers (Gilma, lines 128-130).This strategy can be very useful because students are able to establish meaningful connections between what they are learning in school and their personal lives. Gilma explained that she asks her teachers or lab instructors for feedback on her journal entries during office hours or tutoring sessions (Gilma, lines 135-136).

Javier and Eduardo talked about the use of technology to improve their writing skills. For his job, Javier is required to read and quickly respond to emails from customers who request information about his company's services (Javier, line 256). Eduardo reported using his Blackberry to write down to-do lists in English for his personal things (Eduardo, line 240). This is an example of how the use of technology can enhance language learning in everyday contexts.

Linguistic Skills

Linguistic skills refer to the knowledge of language structures necessary for communication. Participants reported using information processing strategies in (a) grammar, (b) vocabulary, and (c) pronunciation.

Grammar. Also known as syntax, refers to the knowledge we have of the order of elements in and the structure of a sentence (Gass & Selinker, 1994, p. 6.). Knowledge of grammar enables language learners to use linguistic forms accurately, meaningfully and

appropriately. All participants agreed that grammar constitutes the foundation of the English language and as such it needs to be formally taught and studied. They also agreed that the best way to study and learn grammar is by doing homework every day which allows them to practice all the structures and rules learned in class. Having a good teacher is considered an asset; if they are not able to understand the explanations then they will fail to learn grammar.

Pedro equated the study of grammar to the study of math. He said he learns grammar by learning the rules and applying the logic (Pedro, line 210). By learning the rules he meant memorizing them. Memo also relies on memorization of the rules to learn grammar (Memo, line 231). This helps him with homework and tests, but he admits having trouble to use good grammar when he speaks because he relies too much on translation from Spanish (Memo, lines 235 -236). Conversely, Zoraida said that memorization alone does not work for her. She explained: "Everything has to make sense and have an explanation why this is like that" (Zoraida, line 228). Lily agreed that memorization alone does not help her with grammar. She noted the importance of applying the new rules in real life situations, not just the exercises on the book (Zoraida, line 281). Grammar needs to be learned within a context, where the learner not only understands the form but also the meaning and the situations in which it is used in regular communication. In his reflective journal, Eduardo wrote about learning and practicing grammar by using closed-caption on TV or movies (Eduardo, line 10). Zoraida and Eduardo make more sense of grammar when it is being used in a communicative context because they can figure out not only the structures but also the correct usage in real contexts.

Zoraida explained how visuals help her with structures that are harder to grasp. She makes posters where she writes the rule and an example of how it is used next to it. She uses different colors for different elements (Zoraida, lines 285-287). In a very similar way, Gilma explained how she learned action verbs used for daily activities by using visuals:

> I drew a picture of a human body and wrote the verbs related to the head next to it for example "to think", the ones related to the hands like "touch" "feel" etc. I put it up on the wall and I study all the verbs until I learned them all. (Gilma, lines 270-273)

By using imagery, these learners are capable of making visual connections of what they are learning and how it can be used.

Vocabulary. It refers to the knowledge about the form and meaning of words and phrases. All second and foreign language learners agree that they need to increase their vocabularies. The three most common strategies to learn vocabulary among the participants were underlying or highlighting new words as they read and then searching for them in the dictionary, writing down lists of new words and memorizing them and writing down new words several times in order to practice correct spelling.

Pedro explained that besides writing down new words, he uses his knowledge of Spanish and looks for synonyms of the new word in English that are similar (cognates) in Spanish (lines 198-199). Isabel explained that she would use an English-only dictionary to find the definition of a word in addition to the Spanish translation found in an English-Spanish dictionary. Also she identifies the word as a verb, noun, adjective and so on (Isabel, line 373). Learners heavily rely on their knowledge of vocabulary in Spanish and

feel it is important to know the exact translation of it so that they feel comfortable using it. For this they use dictionaries and electronic translators.

The use of visual aids was also reported. Gilma uses paper, index cards and Post-its® that she sticks on objects around the house in order to learn new vocabulary. She writes new words (nouns, verbs, adjectives) on index cards and reads them while she rides the bus to school. Once she learns their meaning, she uses them in sentences that she writes on her notebook (Gilma, lines 133-136). This strategy is particularly useful with visual learners.

Pronunciation. It refers to the production of sounds that speakers use to make meaning. Participants reported using two main categories of strategies when it comes to practice pronunciation. The first one refers to the use of online dictionaries, electronic translators, and tape recorders (including some software available to them in the lab). Eduardo and Felipe both use online dictionaries and electronic translators. Salome said she records her own voice as she reads aloud and then listens to it to monitor her pronunciation (Salome, line 306). Technology proves to be very helpful in providing diverse ways for students to monitor and practice their pronunciation. In his reflective journal, Eduardo explained how he uses the closed-caption function on TV to improve his pronunciation (Eduardo, lines 9-11). The use computers, translators and online dictionaries as well as the closed-caption feature appear to promote autonomy in the learners as they learn to monitor their own errors by comparing their performance against that of the model.

The second strategy that was reported by participants was that of transcribing the phonetic sounds of the words they are learning or "translating" them into a more familiar

set of sounds, in this case Spanish. Memo explained how he prepared for his citizenship exam:

> I translated the pronunciation in every line in every phrase I translated all and when I was home or driving my car I listened. Gave me 100% success. (Memo, lines 205-207)

In the same vein, Elvira reported asking her daughter for help with her pronunciation as she reads aloud, and then she transcribes the sounds in Spanish as she understand it (Elvira, lines 122-123).

Correct pronunciation is a common goal among English language learners, but at the same time acquiring a native-like pronunciation for adult learners is an almost impossible task. Learners become self-conscious of their foreign accents and they know for sure as soon as their interlocutors perceive this accent they would immediately switch to Spanish, leaving them without a chance to practice and better their spoken language.

Target Language Practice

Practice is one of the events of instruction. Eliciting performance or practice provides an opportunity for learners to confirm their correct understanding, and the repetition further increases the likelihood of retention. Practice of the target language occurs either in the classroom or in daily life activity. Participants were asked about these opportunities for practice and they reported on the procedures they use and the opportunities they have to rehearse what they are learning or have learned in school.

Participants reported two types of procedures based on their experiences as language learners: (a) effective procedures, and (b) ineffective procedures.

Effective Procedures

Effective procedures refer to those actions or efforts that have proved to be successful in accomplishing a learning task. Participants were asked to describe what has worked for them in terms of their learning outcomes and they reported several strategies they considered to be effective. Isabel explained that she tries to use the new information learned in class in her daily activities (Isabel, lines 282-283). It is important to note that for the participants finding opportunities to practice the language constitutes a big challenge being that they live and work in a mostly Spanish-speaking community like Miami. However, one strategy that has been mentioned several times is that of looking for these opportunities so that they can put in practice what they are learning in school.

For others, like Elvira and Gilma, the only form of practice they have is by studying their books and doing assignments. Gilma said: "I have to understand what the teachers explain in class and then come home, sit down and do the homework, write it again, go online, download information where I can practice what I learned" (Gilma, lines 244-245). It is apparent that learners rely on their teachers' explanations and their learning resources, such as textbooks, labs, and homework to enhance effective practice of the new knowledge.

Isabel said that she only learns when the content makes sense for her so, she creates her own rules for future reference. For instance, when learning the verb "to be", she thinks of it as an "independent" verb because it does not require the auxiliary verb "do/does" (Isabel, lines 226-227). She does the same when remembering to use singular verb forms with collective nouns such as "nobody or everybody" because they contain the word "body" which is singular (Isabel, lines 230-231). This is an example of

elaborating on prior knowledge where the learner relates new to known information and makes personal associations.

Javier talked about immersion in the language as the best way to practice it and eventually acquire it (Javier, line 219). He explained: "Speak all time in English, at home, at work, everything in English only. If I lived in another state where they speak English all the time, for sure my English would be better" (Javier, lines 221-222). Even though immersion is not a strategy in itself rather an external condition beyond the learner's control, it is clear that the learners are constantly looking for opportunities, scarce for many, to expose themselves to an English-only environment. This scarcity of opportunities leaves these learners depending solely on the structured practice offered by their ESL programs.

Zoraida argued that the best kind of practice is the one that resembles real life situations (Zoraida, line 215). She explained that most of the time the controlled practice in class is meaningless because it is not realistic. She continued:

> We need, real situations like real life, like having a conversation with a doctor, or the store, supermarket, basic life skills the experience with daily routines, how to solve problems. (Zoraida, lines 216-217)

This obviously translates in a need for learning that is more meaningful, especially when the opportunities for practice in a real environment are not available.

Ineffective Procedures

Ineffective procedures refer to those actions or efforts that have proven to be unsuccessful in accomplishing a learning task. Participants were asked to describe what has not worked for them in terms of their learning outcomes and they reported on what they considered ineffective procedures.

Salomé contended that she just cannot memorize grammar rules like some of her classmates do (Salome, line 452). She explained:

> When I read a text or I talk to someone I recognize the rules and structures in the sentences, but I need to understand in order to learn them. (Salome, lines 453-455)

It seems that communicative activities help learners develop the ability to understand and communicate real information, rather than uncontextualized drills that focus strictly on accuracy and rely on memorization and repetition only.

Memo explained that the lack of time to study and practice English has been detrimental to his learning efforts (Memo, line 367). His lack of perseverance and preparing just for the "occasion" and not keeping a regular study schedule have yielded negative results and made his learning process too slow (Memo, lines 368-369). For adult learners who have other responsibilities like work and family besides school, time constitutes a valuable commodity and often times the lack of it results in a prolonged language learning process or even in dropping out of school.

Gilma described a barrier in her learning: "Trying to compete with younger students; I admire the capacity to learn so fast and I tell them don't waste your time, take advantage of your age, of your fresh mind" (Gilma, lines 383-384). Competing with younger learners in the same classroom was reported as being an unfavorable learning condition for the participants. Not so much because they feel less capable of learning than their younger classmates, but because younger learners have the experience of schooling in the U.S., which gives them a higher level of language proficiency in academic settings. These young learners sometimes take ESL classes because they are in need of remedial classes; not because they do not speak English well.

Summary

This chapter contained a description of the themes that emerged from the inductive analysis based on the individual interviews, focus group, and two participants' reflective journals. The description of the findings from the deductive analysis followed by a comparison of the findings from the inductive and deductive analyses is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

DESCRIPTION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the deductive and comparative analysis based on the data gathered in the individual interviews, focus group and participants' reflective journals and is divided into two sections: (a) description of the findings from the deductive analysis, and (b) comparison of the findings from the inductive and deductive analyses. When quotes are used to support the findings, the participant's pseudonym and line numbers from his or her transcript are cited (e.g., Elvira, lines 298-300).

Deductive Analysis

After completing the inductive analysis, a deductive analysis was conducted to analyze the data using Oxford's classification of LLS (1990a). The data were analyzed using Oxford's classification of LLS in order to determine what types of strategies the participants use in their language learning process. This classification system includes three levels. At the first level, LLS are divided into direct and indirect strategies. Then, at the second level, direct and indirect strategies are sub-divided. For example, direct strategies are divided into three sub-categories: (a) memory, (b) cognitive, and (c) compensation. Indirect strategies are divided into three sub-categories: (a) metacognitive, (b) affective, and (c) social. At the third level, each sub-category is divided again into more specific strategies (e.g., association, self-monitoring, transferring). The analysis at the third level revealed no evidence of certain strategies. The type of strategy reported by the participants is illustrated using excerpts of their experiences.

Direct Strategies

LLS that directly involve the target language are called direct strategies (Oxford, 1990a). The analysis of the data revealed that the overall use of direct strategies (memory, cognitive, and compensation) was predominant over the use of indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective, and social).

Memory Strategies

Memory strategies help learners link a new item with something known (Oxford, 1990a). The participants in this study used several memory strategies. Eight participants (Pedro, Isabel, Memo, Salome, Gilma, Felipe, and Zoraida) reported using memory strategies in one way or another. The use of memory strategies will be discussed using some examples. Participants used imagery as a strategy to memorize new information. Isabel explained how she memorizes information when she studies for a test or for a speech: "I make a little history in my mind like a movie, a story in my mind" (Isabel, line 268). Isabel uses mental pictures and sequences them to make up a story using the information she needs to memorize for future retrieval.

Pedro uses the strategy of association when he needs to memorize new words. He said: "because the topic is about environment and I remember bacteria live with other organisms then I remember "depend" I can use depend on others… "rely" on others…" (Pedro, lines 216-217). Association is a useful strategy especially to adult learners because they not only bring a wide repertoire of knowledge to the learning task, but also learning strategies in other subjects such as math, science and others. Gilma also uses visuals to aid memorization and she explained that she likes to organize the verbs into categories and then writes them in alphabetical order with the definition and

pronunciation next to them (Gilma, lines 139-140). Learning and retrieving in an orderly

string is a useful strategy that allows the storage of new information in a meaningful way

(i.e., learning the verbs in present, progressive, past tense and so on). Gilma's comment

illustrates an acknowledgement of her visual learning preference and a conscious use of

this strategy when she needs to learn new information. Memory strategies at the second

level mostly used by participants were *reviewing well*, *creating mental linkages*, and

applying images and sounds. However, at the third level, no evidence was found for the

memory strategies of *semantic mapping*, or *use of physical response* (Oxford, 1990a).

Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies help learners make and strengthen associations between new

and already known information and facilitate the mental restructuring of information

(Oxford, 1990a). All 12 participants reported using cognitive strategies. For instance,

Pedro talked about using brainstorming when he needs to structure a writing piece. He

specifically mentioned using clustering of ideas in order to develop the main idea, the

supporting details and the conclusion (Pedro, lines 346-347). Likewise, Isabel talked

about how she uses the strategy of *summarizing and synthesizing* when she studies for

school (Isabel, lines 361-362). These learners have found that structuring the information

helps in accomplishing their learning tasks more effectively.

When asked about the best way to learn new material, Javier said that taking notes

is the strategy he finds useful. He takes notes during class, and then at home he reads the

chapter again and compares with his notes (Javier, lines 322-323). By creating structure,

learners organize the information to facilitate input and output.

Zoraida explained how she still relies on Spanish when it comes to writing in English. She said: "my tendency is to use the Spanish structure, the word order; I think I have to fight against that" (Zoraida, lines 270-271). In the focus group, Yiya and Memo agreed that they still rely too much in translating from Spanish. Yiya explained:

> The big problem we have is that we try to translate to think in Spanish and translate in English when we want to say something and that is very difficult because you are organizing in your mind two things at the same time so. (Yiya, lines 214-215)

These learners are using two processes simultaneously; processing the input they are receiving (in English), and translating what they want to respond (from Spanish). Even though translating can be a useful strategy when learners transfer knowledge and structures that are similar in their first language, participants are aware this strategy is interfering with their learning.

The use of the strip story conducted previously to the focus group, elicited several cognitive strategies among the participants. Eduardo found this activity to be "very helpful because it gives you one way to place in order your ideas when you think in English" (Eduardo, line 28). Thinking in English (without translating into Spanish) is deemed desirable among the participants because they realize they are becoming more proficient in the language.

In order to put the story together, participants reported several strategies. Zoraida said: "we have to concentrate; we have to put attention what they [the other participants] say, what they read, the meanings…" (Zoraida, line 30). Lily explained: "I paid close attention to the tense of the verbs so I could understand put in the order what was first what came next" (Lily, line 77).

By analyzing and reasoning deductively, the participants were able to make sense of the meaning of each sequence of the story. Once it made sense, the next goal was to sequence the events. It is also important to note that reading each participant's segment several times facilitated the comprehension of the story. Pedro stated: "With the repetitions we were able to understand; repetition I think is the key to learning something" (Pedro, lines 101-103). Rehearsing or practicing new information is one of the most commonly used strategies reported by the participants.

Zoraida and Eduardo agreed that paying attention to keywords and/or sequence markers helped them put the events in order. Words such as, "one day", "after that", and "next" helped participants to rearrange the story into a meaningful sequence. Finally, Eduardo indicated that this activity was "visual" and said: "this activity is good because it's something you have to imagine, something you have in your mind, to analyze" (Eduardo, line 158). Eduardo's accounts revealed how both inductive and deductive reasoning helped the group accomplish this task successfully.

Eduardo explained in one of his reflective journal's entries how he analyzes information contrastively (in both English and Spanish). He said:

> Reading the news in a Spanish newspaper first and the English version after, has proven to be effective in developing vocabulary through the connection that I would establish between the two languages. (Eduardo, lines 4-6)

By comparing and contrasting the two versions, Eduardo is capable of making associations that help him increase his vocabulary and reading comprehension skills.

The participants reported several cognitive strategies that help them with processing the input by manipulating or transforming it in ways that enhance their learning. Cognitive strategies more commonly used at the second level were *practicing*,

analyzing and reasoning, and *creating structure for input*. However, at the third level, no evidence was found for the cognitive strategies of *recombining* or *transferring* (Oxford 1990a).

Compensation Strategies

Compensation strategies help the learner make up for missing knowledge when using the target language in oral or written communication (Oxford, 1990a). Ten participants reported using compensation strategies in several ways. The most commonly used type of strategy was *guessing the meaning from the context*. For example, when participants were asked how they proceed when they encounter new words while reading or speaking, Elvira replied: "I use the context; I make connections with what's around the word. I try to link meanings with the words I know" (Elvira, line 243-244). The use of context clues facilitates an intelligent guess by the learners that avoids breakdowns or delays in communication.

Another strategy reported by the participants is that of *using a circumlocution or synonym* when they cannot find the word they are looking for to express something. For example, Lily explained:

> … I start again and then I say do I make myself clear? So the person says "no" so I try to use other words or give an example of what I want so that the person understands. (Lily, lines 303-304)

Felipe suggested that he would use Spanish as a strategy to make up for missing knowledge. He said: In other places like New York you have to find a way to make yourself understood, not like here you turn around and there's someone who speaks Spanish" (Felipe, lines 259-260). This implies that the location where one lives has an influence on the type of strategy a learner selects.

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Using mime or gestures is another type of compensation strategies. Zoraida described how she managed to communicate with her husband using "sign language" and gestures when they first met (Zoraida, line 97). As a nurse aide, Zoraida said she would use this strategy at work also, especially when it comes to communicating crucial information.

In the focus group interview, participants never asked for the meaning of unknown words. Instead, as they reported, they used the context to associate the meaning of any word that did not sound familiar (Pedro, line 39; Eduardo, line 42). Yiya also revealed that when she first heard the word "disposable" she did not know what it meant. She said: "With the general idea of the sentence I could understand what it meant but the first time she read I didn't understand, but got it from the story" (Yiya, line 69-70).

The participants reported using several compensation strategies when they encountered limitations in knowledge that would interfere with comprehension or production of the target language. Compensation strategies most widely used at the second level were *guessing intelligently* and *overcoming limitations in writing and speaking* (e.g., gestures, circumlocution, and synonyms). However, at the third level, no evidence was found for the compensation strategies of *avoiding communication* or *selecting the topic* (Oxford, 1990a). Table 3 summarizes the use and non-use of direct strategies.

Table 3

Reported Use and Non-Use of Oxford's Direct Strategies

_____

Types and sub-categories	Participants' use of strategy

_____

I. *Memory strategies*

    1. Creating mental linkages

        a. Grouping   •

        b. Association/elaboration   •

        c. Placing new words into a context   •

    2. Applying images and sounds

        a. Using imagery   •

        b. Semantic mapping   x

        c. Using keywords   •

        d. Representing sounds in memory   •

    3. Reviewing well

        a. Structured reviewing   •

    4. Employing action

        a. Using physical response or sensation   x

        b. Using mechanical techniques   •

II. *Cognitive strategies*

    1. Practicing

        a. Repeating   •

        b. Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems   •

        c. Recognizing and using formulas and patterns   •

        d. Recombining   x

        e. Practicing naturalistically   •

_____

• = use of strategy   x = non-use of strategy

Table 3 *(continued).*

Reported Use and Non-Use of Oxford's Direct Strategies

Types and sub-categories	Participants' use of strategy
2. Receiving and sending messages	
a. Getting the idea quickly	•
b. Using resources for receiving and sending messages	•
3. Analyzing and reasoning	
a. Reasoning deductively	•
b. Analyzing expressions	•
c. Analyzing contrastively (across languages)	•
d. Translating	•
e. Transferring	x
4. Creating structure for input and output	
a. Taking notes	•
b. Summarizing	•
c. Highlighting	•
III. *Compensation strategies*	
1. Guessing intelligently	
a. Using linguistic clues	•
b. Using other clues	•
2. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing	
a. Switching to the mother tongue	•
b. Getting help	•
c. Using mime or gesture	•
d. Avoiding communication partially or totally	x

• = use of strategy   x = non-use of strategy

Table 3 *(continued).*

Reported Use and Non-Use of Oxford's Direct Strategies

Types and sub-categories	Participants' use of strategy
e. Selecting the topic	x
f. Adjusting or approximating the message	•
g. Coining words	•
h. Using a circumlocution or synonym	•

• = use of strategy   x = non-use of strategy

Indirect Strategies

Indirect strategies support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language (Oxford, 1990a).

Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies help learners to regulate their own cognition and to plan, focus, and evaluate their language learning process as they move toward communicative competence (Oxford, 1990a). All participants reported using metacognitive strategies. For example, Isabel explained how she tries to find opportunities to practice the language naturalistically. When asked about how she practices what she is learning in school she said: "I work with American people … and I put music in English maybe my will power and I try to watch TV in English maybe I want to watch the soap opera in Spanish, but I watch in English" (Isabel, lines 156-157). Isabel knows that by using the strategy of *seeking practice opportunities* her language learning will be enhanced.

One type of metacognitive strategy reported by several participants is *planning for a learning task*. Due to their busy lives, participants explained that they need to organize their lives and make time for work, family, and school. Isabel described how she does it:

> Last weekend, my free Sunday my little son said "Mommy, you promised to bring me to Wannado City" and I had a lot of homework, and housework, and tried to change the plans but no… so Sunday I take my books and notebooks, bring him to Wannado city. I sat in the food court with my books and studied. (Isabel, lines 205-208)

Adult learners have to carefully arrange their space and time to do assignments, prepare for class, and study for exams and comply with their responsibilities at work and at home.

When participants were asked about the ways they evaluate their learning, they reported using *self-monitoring* and *self-evaluating* strategies. For instance, Isabel said: "I monitor when I listen to music and I understand the song more, now I understand a little more. The news too; when I understand the news more, I now I learned more" (Isabel, lines 335-336).

Participants reported that they expect their instructors to correct their errors and they use several strategies to correct those errors. As Elvira stated: "If I do a test, when the teacher gives it back, I like to analyze my errors and find out what I did wrong, so that I can fix it and not make the same mistake again" (Elvira, lines 270-271).

Several participants also expressed their desire to be corrected when they make a mistake (Elvira. Memo, Rosa, Salome, and Javier). This indicates that participants value corrective feedback and that they find it necessary and useful in order to improve their proficiency.

Felipe, Eduardo and Gilma indicated that they monitor their learning by the grades they get. In other words, A's and B's are good indicators that they are making progress in their learning and that encourages them to study more. Elvira, on the other hand, relies more on her performance using the language in realistic settings: "I learn a new word and without realizing it, I am using it when I speak or write" (Elvira, lines 260-261). In both cases, it is evident that participants implement various ways to monitor their progress and that by doing so they exert direct control over their learning.

In the focus group, participants indicated that one strategy that helped them accomplish the task was *arranging and planning the activity*. Gina said "it was a good idea to have everybody stand up and move around as we read our strips" (Gina, line 81). Zoraida also mentioned that she was worried about the timing for the task because in class sometimes teachers rush them and they cannot complete the assignment (Zoraida, lines 170-172). Participants are used to the time restrictions when it comes to class activities and assignments. It was important to Zoraida to take time into account when solving this activity.

In his reflective journal, Memo expressed his frustration when in real life situations:

> Although in class all is good, learning after the class on real life is difficult to do conversation in English. I have improved reading and writing but I do not understand why I cannot keep a conversation maybe I need to listen better. (Memo, lines 51-54)

Memo's accounts revealed how he evaluates his success and current limitations. By using this strategy, he can recognize the areas in need of improvement and plan his own learning more effectively.

Participants reported several metacognitive strategies that allow them to take control of their own learning by monitoring their progress and becoming aware of their needs and weaknesses. Metacognitive strategies were more common than affective strategies. *Arranging and planning learning* and *centering learning* were more widely used at the second level. *Evaluating learning* was reported by only a few participants. However, it is important to note that participants preferred receiving monitoring and evaluation from their teachers and proficient users of English than doing it on their own. This might indicate decreased learner control and increased teacher control over learning management tasks. Teacher's level of control over learning goals and activities is a reflection of a country's educational policies and practices such as Colombia. This finding is supported by a study conducted in a college setting in Colombia (Posada, 2006). In regards to the metacognitive strategies at the third level, no evidence was found for the metacognitive strategies of *delaying speech production*, *finding out about language learning*, or *setting goals and objectives* (Oxford, 1990a).

Affective Strategies

Affective strategies include identifying one's feelings and becoming aware of the learning circumstances or tasks that evoke them (Oxford, 1990a). All 12 participants reported using affective strategies in their learning process. For example, *encouraging oneself to continue* was reported as an effective affective strategy. Salome explained how she encourages herself to keep learning:

> I feel proud of myself when I see my efforts are paying… studying late at night, it pays, when someone asks me and I can answer well I feel well. (Salome, lines 422-423)

Felipe explained how self-talk can be effective when speaking in front of the class. He said: "I think I am the expert, I know more that they do in terms of my presentation" (Felipe, line 309). Zoraida also reported this strategy: "I repeat in my mind I have to learn English I have to speak English" (Zoraida, line 383). Motivation plays an important role in learning. For the participants, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is necessary and essential to their progress.

Taking one's emotional temperature and *lowering anxiety* were two affective strategy commonly used among participants. Seven participants reported feeling anxiety and the strategies they use to lower it. Isabel, Rosa, Javier, and Eduardo said that when they feel anxiety they breathe deeply. Isabel listens to classical music. Elvira and Felipe said they use some form of relaxation to clear their mind of worries. Memo admitted being an anxious person so he likes to take a break and pray. When asked to explain the feelings they experience when learning English, the participants revealed feeling frustration (Pedro and Lily), stress (Gilma, Elvira, and Felipe), challenge (Memo and Rosa), fulfillment (Isabel) and pride (Salome).

In the focus group, Pedro corroborated his feelings of frustration when he said: "because we are learning this language many years and it is frustrating because I can't speak fluently and my son he is 7 years old and he speaks fluently, correctly and me not" (Pedro, lines 190-191). He acknowledged that the length of time it is taking him to acquire full proficiency in the language is at times discouraging. The feelings reported by the participants are for the most part negative and are related to anxiety, which plays an important affective role in second language acquisition.

Rewarding oneself for good performance was reported by participants. Only three participants talked about using rewards when they do well in school or when they feel they have accomplished a task successfully. Pedro, Zoraida, and Lily said they reward themselves by dining out at their favorite restaurant. Lily further explained that shopping is another way she rewards herself for a job well done. Participants reported using affective strategies to help them regulate their feelings and attitudes involved in their language learning process. These strategies were more commonly used than social strategies. *Lowering anxiety* was the most widely used strategy followed by *self-reward*. However, participants agreed that reward coming from others, especially significant others, was more meaningful and satisfactory.

At the third level, no evidence was found for the affective strategies of *using laughter*, *listening to your body*, or *discussing feelings with someone else* (Oxford, 1990a).

Social Strategies

Social strategies facilitate learning with others and help learners understand the culture of the language they are learning (Oxford, 1990a). All participants reported using several social strategies. The strategy that was mostly described by participants was that of *asking questions for clarification or verification* when they have difficulty understanding the message. For instance, Felipe described his strategy: "I'd ask to try to explain using with other words, but it depends on who the person is, if I know the person I'd ask, but if I don't, I pretend I understood and continue with the conversation" (Felipe, line 254-255). It is interesting to note that by pretending he understands and moving on he is also using a compensation strategy.

Another strategy commonly used by participants was that of *cooperating with proficient users of the language*. For example, Rosa talked about asking her 7-year old son when she needs help, especially with meanings of new words (Rosa, line 331). Asking family members for help was also reported by Elvira who has a teenage daughter and Zoraida who has a daughter and a husband who are proficient in English. Some participants who do not have family members or relatives to ask look for help at school. Gilma said: "I look for a teacher, my lab instructor, my writing teacher, I email them and I ask for feedback" (Gilma, line 155).

In one of her reflective journal entries, Rosa wrote about seeking help from people who speak more English than her (Rosa, lines 7- 9). Most of these participants do not hesitate to seek help when needed in order to fulfill their needs in school, at work or in their daily lives.

Lily also described how using this strategy has given her good results in her learning endeavors: "I was like a all the time involved with Anglo speakers because I thought if I remained with friends who only speak Spanish I'm never going to be able to learn English" (Lily, lines 77-78). She became aware of the fact that she needed to socialize with English-speakers in order to improve her English. A strategy that has helped her achieve a level of proficiency that presently allows her to work as a school teacher.

Developing cultural understanding is another social strategy that language learners use to become familiar not only with the new language but the culture as well. It was evident that participants acknowledge the importance of learning about the American culture. However, they did not discuss any attempts to adopt the American culture in their

lives. Conversely, they showed a strong desire to keep their Colombian identity.

Participants mostly "learn" about the American culture in school or when they need to

comply with immigration procedures. By interacting with people and the environment,

learners acquire some knowledge about the culture. Rosa said: "I see it in the stores, the

colored eggs and bunnies; 'oh this is the tradition for the people' I say to myself" (Rosa,

line 426). Participants are exposed to the culture on a daily basis, and they learn about it

by directly experiencing it.

The use of social strategies is of much importance because language is a form of

social behavior. Through socialization learners come into contact with the target culture

and language, which enables them to not only learn about it, but also to acculturate them

in the new society. Social strategies more commonly used were *asking questions for

clarification or correction* and *cooperating with proficient users of the language*, such as

their own children, boss, co-workers and teachers.

Among social strategies at the third level, no evidence was found for the social

strategy of *cooperating with peers* or *becoming aware of other's feelings* (Oxford,

1990a). When participants were asked about their preference to study in group or alone,

participants agreed that they preferred to study alone because in group work only one or

two students do the work while the rest benefits from it. It was considered a waste of

valuable time. Interestingly, this finding contradicts findings from research studies

conducted on "Hispanic learners", where it was found that Hispanics chose more social,

interactive strategies (Politzer, 1983). Similarly, Harshbarger et al. (1986) showed that

Hispanic students were highly group- oriented and extroverted. This difference suggests

that generalizations made for a pan-ethnic group, such as "Hispanics" must be avoided in

trying to eradicate stereotypical views about Spanish-speaking groups and provide quality

education for our diverse population. Table 4 summarizes the use and non-use of

Oxford's indirect strategies.

Table 4

Reported Use and Non-Use of Oxford's Indirect Strategies

Types and sub-categories	Participants' use of strategy
IV. *Metacognitive strategies*	
1. Centering your learning	
a. Overviewing and linking with already known material	•
b. Paying attention	•
c. Delaying speech production to focus on listening	x
2. Arranging and planning your learning	
a. Finding out about language learning	x
b. Organizing	•
c. Setting goals and objectives	x
d. Identifying the purpose of a language task	•
e. Planning for a language task	•
f. Seeking practice opportunities	•
3. Evaluating your learning	
a. Self-monitoring	•
b. Self-evaluation	•
V. *Affective strategies*	
1. Lowering your anxiety	
a. Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation	•
b. Using music	•

• = use of strategy   x = non-use of strategy

Table 4 *(continued).*

Reported Use and Non-Use of Oxford's Indirect Strategies

Types and sub-categories	Participants' use of strategy
c. Using laughter	x
2. Encouraging yourself	
a. Making positive statements	•
b. Taking risks wisely	•
c. Rewarding yourself	•
3. Taking your emotional temperature	
a. Listening to your body	x
b. Using a checklist	•
c. Writing a language learning diary	•
d. Discussing your feelings with someone else	x
VI. *Social strategies*	
1. Asking questions	
a. Asking for clarification or verification	•
b. Asking for correction	•
2. Cooperating with others	
a. Cooperating with peers	x
b. Cooperating with proficient users of the new language	•
3. Empathizing with others	
a. Developing cultural understanding	•
b. Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings	x

• = use of strategy   x = non-use of strategy

Summary of the Deductive Analysis

The deductive analysis of the data was done to determine what types of LLS from Oxford's (1990a) taxonomy the participants use in their language learning process. The deductive analysis revealed that participants consistently used LLS at the first and second level: direct and indirect strategies (first level) and: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social (second level). However, subtypes of strategies at the third level were not found consistently (i.e., were not reported by participants). Also, overall use of direct strategies (memory, cognitive, and compensation) was predominant over use of indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective, and social). In the next section, the findings from the inductive and deductive analyses of the data are compared.

Comparative Analysis

The findings from the inductive and deductive analyses were compared to check for consistency in the findings and look for patterns and answers to the research questions. The four themes that emerged from the inductive analysis were compared with the findings from the deductive analysis. The themes from the inductive analysis are: (a) learning conditions, (b) problem-solving resources, (c) information processing, and (d) target language practice. As explained earlier in this chapter, Oxford (1990a) divides LLS into two main categories: direct and indirect. Then, at the second level, direct and indirect strategies are sub-divided. Direct strategies are divided into three sub-categories: (a) memory, (b) cognitive, and (c) compensation. Indirect strategies are divided into three sub-categories: (a) metacognitive, (b) affective, and (c) social. At the third level, each sub-category is divided again into more specific strategies (e.g., association, self-monitoring, transferring).

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Learning conditions were directly related to Oxford's indirect strategies: metacognitive, affective, and social as participants spoke about their experiences learning English. For example, external learning conditions such as acculturation, social interactions and legal status and work revealed the participants' social context in which learning takes place. Memo, Salome and Rosa described the importance of learning about the American culture but at the same time revealed their desire to keep their Colombian identity. Participants described the social strategies they use as they pertain to developing cultural understanding and becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings.

On the other hand, internal learning conditions such as motivators, emotions, metacognition and beliefs revealed the participants' affective and metacognitive domain of their learning. For all participants getting a better job and improving their lives constituted the major motivator to learn English. Pedro, Felipe, Eduardo and Zoraida not only want to improve their English but also plan to pursue a degree. Emotions reflect the learner's affective domain. Participants reported both positive and negative emotions relating to their language learning experience. Salome, Pedro, Elvira, and Isabel talked about pride, fulfillment and happiness when they feel they have made some progress or they have accomplished a learning task successfully. These positive emotions in turn generate affective strategies that deal with self-encouragement such as making positive statements and rewarding oneself. Negative emotions were also reported by participants. For example, Pedro, Zoraida, Gilma, and Lily reported feeling frustration, embarrassment, fear, and stress when they encounter barriers and obstacles in their learning. These negative emotions trigger high levels of anxiety and distress which bring about affective strategies to lower anxiety and control emotional turmoil. For example,

Rosa, Eduardo and Isabel reported breathing deeply as a strategy to reduce anxiety. Playing classical music (Isabel) and taking a break praying (Memo) were also reported as useful strategies to control anxiety levels.

It is interesting to note that both the social and affective context had an effect on the participants' metacognitive strategies they reported using as in the case of self-monitoring and self-evaluation strategies. For example, Pedro, Isabel, Gilma, Eduardo, and Felipe usually monitor their knowledge and usage of English when they actually use it in real situations and they realize they were capable to establish a conversation and get their meaning across. Participants also reported using movies and TV programs to evaluate their listening comprehension skills. Grades were also reported as a measure for success in their learning.

Beliefs was a sub-theme that relates to the participants' internal conditions and revealed important aspects of the participants learning that even though are not part of Oxford's classification, refer to beliefs about age, learning, and teacher roles which are a reflection of the culture of the learners. Previous research has called for the inclusion of culture as an important variable in language learning strategy research.

Problem-solving resources related to two of Oxford's direct strategies: cognitive and compensation. For example, Javier, Felipe, Lily, Rosa, and Eduardo reported the use of dictionaries, translators, the internet and texting which refer to cognitive strategies such as practicing, and using resources for receiving and sending messages. Help from significant others and error correction resources, two sub-themes of problem-solving resources, relate not only to cognitive and compensation strategies but also to social strategies. Rosa, Elvira, Lily, Zoraida, Isabel, Salome, Felipe, and Javier reported asking

family members for help; a social strategy known as asking questions or seeking correction in Oxford's classification. Participants also reported asking their bosses or co-workers for help when needed, as in the case of Elvira, Lily, and Eduardo. However, for most of the participants teachers constitute the main resource when it comes to solving their problems. This is particularly true being that participants acknowledge serious limitations in finding opportunities to use the language outside the classroom.

Coping with communication problems directly relates to Oxford's compensation strategies. For example, all participants reported using strategies for compensating incomprehensible input, such as asking their interlocutor to slow down, repeat the sentence one more time, asking for the meaning of a word, or guessing from the context. Salome, Memo, and Gilma said that when they lack vocabulary to express themselves, they use a synonym or a circumlocution in order to get their message across. Elvira and Eduardo reported using mime or gestures to aid them with communication. These strategies prove to be effective when limitations in speaking and writing arise.

Information processing strategies related to all three Oxford's direct strategies: memory, cognitive, and compensation. Participants reported using these strategies in all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) and three linguistic skills (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation). Memory strategies, such as association, imagery, and using keywords were mostly used in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, while cognitive strategies such as practicing, analyzing and reasoning and creating structure were used for both language skills and linguistic skills as well. Compensation strategies such as guessing intelligently overcoming limitation in input and output were mostly used in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Target language practice strategies related to memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive and social strategies. Participants talked about the actions or efforts that have proved to be effective and ineffective in accomplishing their learning tasks. The effective procedures described by participants were transferring information to real-life contexts (cognitive), finding opportunities to talk to people in English (cognitive, social and metacognitive), using mechanical techniques (memory), reading textbook and doing homework (cognitive and metacognitive), creating own rules (reasoning) cooperating with others (social). The ineffective procedures related mainly to memory, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies. Participants described ineffective procedures such as memorizing information alone without a context or frame of reference as an ineffective procedure (memory), the lack of a scheduled plan to study and practice outside of class (metacognitive) and competing with younger learners (affective).

The findings from the inductive analysis supported the a priori themes from Oxford's taxonomy. Nevertheless, these findings also revealed the use made of strategies not described in Oxford's taxonomy. Participants reported using subtypes of strategies at the third level that expand Oxford's framework. These strategies fall into Oxford's first level categories of direct and indirect strategies. At the second level, these strategies fall into the sub-category of cognitive and compensation for direct strategies, and metacognitive, and affective for indirect strategies. These additional strategies were categorized as "Non-Oxford strategies". Thirteen strategies were identified as belonging to both direct and indirect strategies and to five of the six subscales (cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social). There were no additional strategies in the memory subscale.

Non-Oxford Direct Strategies

Participants revealed the use of seven additional direct LLS that fall into Oxford's cognitive and compensation strategies.

Cognitive Strategies. The cognitive strategies correspond to the sub-categories of *practicing* and *analyzing and reasoning*. For the sub-category of *practicing,* two strategies were found: (a) using the internet and texting, and (b) using the closed-caption. For example, Javier, Felipe, Lily, Rosa, and Eduardo reported *using the internet and texting* for problem-solving and to seek answers when they need information. The internet is used in several ways. Felipe, Lily and Javier said they look up words and expressions online when they cannot find a person to ask. Google and dictionary.com were the most common online resources used by participants. Javier also reported using Google to look for grammatical practice while he reads the news or his email. The use of electronic mail to practice reading comprehension and writing was also reported by the more technologically adept participants. Only one participant, Felipe, who was the youngest, reported using text messaging as a strategy to find out meanings of new words or expressions. Even though this strategy was reported by only one participant, it is evident that younger generations of ELL will be relying more and more on the use of text messaging, blogging, and twitter as a way of communication. Therefore, modern uses of communication and technology should be incorporated in language teaching.

Another cognitive strategy for practicing the target language was *using the closed-caption*, a feature these learners use when watching TV programs and movies. This function facilitates listening and comprehension, vocabulary expansion, grammar reinforcement, and pronunciation practice. For example, Eduardo wrote in his reflective

journal: "using closed-caption on TV or movies helps me improve my grammar" (Eduardo, line 10). He further explained that it becomes easier to make connections when he "sees" how grammar is being used in a realistic context such as a movie, so that he can apply this new knowledge in real situations (Eduardo, line 12).

For the sub-category of *analyzing and reasoning*, participants reported three strategies: (a) using a template, (b) creating formulas, and (c) using the Spanish version followed by the English version. Salome explained how she managed to write employee reports at work by *using a template* of an existing document, and then adapting it to the new situation. This strategy allows learners to write with more confidence because the formatting of the document and the formulaic expressions serve as a guide to compose a customized document.

Creating formulas was another cognitive strategy used to make sense of grammatical rules. Learners not only learn the rules given by their teachers, but they also create their own rules to facilitate understanding of a difficult grammatical structure. For example, Isabel explained that in order to learn the use of the verb "To Be" in interrogative form, she had the tendency of using "do/does" when elaborating a question, so she decided to create her own rule. She explained: "the verb to be is strong, don't need nothing…it's very strong, now when I use it I know is alone no need auxiliary verb" (Isabel, line 230). In this way, Isabel makes better sense of a problematic area and uses this strategy to avoid errors in production.

It is common knowledge that language learners heavily rely on their first language when learning the second. Translation is also a very common strategy used by language learners at the beginner's level. Eduardo and Felipe reported an interesting strategy they

use for reading and listening comprehension. This strategy is *using the Spanish version followed by the English version*, when reading the newspaper or watching videos or movies. Felipe chooses to watch a TV series he is very familiar with, *The Simpsons*, in Spanish first, and then watches the English version (Felipe, line 224). Eduardo does the same with the news, either in the newspaper or online and also with videos in YouTube when searching information for school assignments (Eduardo, line 409). They both explained that the purpose was not to translate from one language to the other, but to facilitate comprehension. This is especially true with detailed pieces of information they might miss when using the English version only. Spanish-speaking learners living in South Florida enjoy the advantage of having immediate access to information in Spanish that other learners might not have available in their learning contexts.

Compensation strategies. Among the compensation strategies, it was found that participants use one additional strategy for overcoming limitations in speaking. This strategy is *writing the message.* Learners are often faced with situations where they cannot get their message across due to mispronunciation of certain words. In order to compensate for correct pronunciation, they put the message (word or sentence) in written form. For example, Memo said: "I have to write down and sometimes writing helps me and gets me out of trouble" (Memo, line 287). He explained that the strategy of *writing down* the message is effective especially when people at work do not understand something he is trying to say. Salome and Gilma reported this strategy when trying to get their message across. Gilma added that her electronic dictionary is very useful in this situation. She explained: "I carry my electronic dictionary everywhere I go, I look the word up and give it to the person to read" (Gilma, line 298). The use of technology is

evidently becoming instrumental in the language learning process as it provides

additional support in developing learners' problem-solving skills. Table 5 summarizes the

non-Oxford direct strategies reported by the participants.

Table 5

Non-Oxford Direct Strategies Reported by Participants

_____

Types and sub-categories

_____

I. *Cognitive strategies*

    1. Practicing

        a. Using the internet (surfing and email) and texting

        b. Using the closed-caption function

    2. Analyzing and reasoning

        a. Using a template

        b. Creating formulas

        c. Watching or reading a Spanish version first, followed by the English version

II. *Compensation strategies*

    1. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing

        a. Writing down the message

_____

Non-Oxford Indirect Strategies

      Participants reported six additional indirect strategies that fall into Oxford's

metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

      Metacognitive strategies. The metacognitive strategies correspond to the sub-

categories of *centering your learning* and *evaluating your learning.* For the sub-category

of *centering your learning,* two strategies were reported: (a) choosing English over

Spanish, and (b) using sound transcription in native language. Salome and Eduardo reported that when confronted with the automated menu option in phone calls to customer service lines, they *choose the English option instead of the Spanish option*. Even though it would be easier to follow the instructions and have the conversation in their native language, they make the decision to seize the opportunity and continue in English. This strategy helps these learners enhance their listening comprehension and their speaking skills.

Memo and Elvira explained how they *use the sound transcription in their native Spanish* to study pronunciation. They explained that using Spanish sounds helps them create a "visual" for the English written version of the words, especially those that are harder to pronounce (e.g., table= téibol). It is important to note that in the Spanish language, the sounds of the letters are mostly constant and very rarely change; something that widely varies in the phonology of English, which constitutes a big challenge for language learners (e.g., the sound of "a" in apple vs. apron).

For the sub-category of *evaluating your learning,* one strategy was found: *using teacher feedback*. This strategy applies mostly to written assignments corrected by teachers that learners use to monitor their progress over time. Elvira, Eduardo, and Felipe reported using teacher feedback for this purpose. They explained that teachers usually use the track changes function in word processors to provide feedback on their writing. They save all the corrected versions in their computers and use them as a future reference to evaluate their progress. This form of feedback is also used as a reference when they prepare for a written test and they want to make sure not to make the same mistakes again. By keeping samples with feedback on their work, learners can monitor their own

progress. Metacognitive strategies are of much importance because they allow the learners to coordinate their own learning process in a more meaningful way rather than using grades and test scores alone.

Affective strategies. The affective strategies correspond to the sub-category of *lowering your anxiety.* For the sub-category of *lowering your anxiety*, two strategies were reported: (a) feeling knowledgeable about material and (b) volunteering to go first. Language learners experience anxiety when using the new language. The strategy of *feeling knowledgeable about the material* was reported by Salome and Eduardo. Eduardo explained: "when you have to give a presentation, if you learn everything about the presentation and you know everything you are going to say that will lower your anxiety" (Eduardo, line 384). Eduardo's strategy helps him to be in control of his anxiety when speaking in public. He thinks of himself as the "expert" in the topic and that gives him self-confidence and assurance. Therefore, he prepares his presentation well in advance.

Another strategy to lower anxiety was reported by Pedro. He said that *volunteering to go first* when the teacher asks for participation helps him keep relaxed and perform his tasks better. He admitted that he tends to block himself when under pressure (Pedro, line 443). This strategy involves a degree of risk-taking, which is also an affective strategy. The difference, though, is that for Pedro, the purpose is to avoid anxiety; not to make a decision to act to encourage himself to participate.

Social strategies. The only social strategy reported by participants corresponds to the sub-category of *cooperating with others.* This strategy was categorized as *help from children.* For the participants in this study, their children's education is highly valued. Mothers in particular typically assume the responsibility to enhance and support their

children's learning, since they tend to spend more time with them at home. Interestingly, this cooperation with the children serves another important purpose; providing assistance in the learning endeavors of the parents. Rosa, Isabel, Salome, Elvira, and Lily reported receiving invaluable assistance from their children. The type of help they receive is both solicited and unsolicited. For Rosa, asking her 7 year-old son for meanings of words or correct pronunciation is of much use while she does her homework. Salome explained how her teenage daughter helps her with vocabulary when they are watching a movie and there are words she does not understand. Isabel explained that her two sons would correct her pronunciation errors which she, otherwise, may have been unaware and so unable to correct. As not much is known of the importance of the strategy *help from children* to parent-learners of a second language, further research into immigrant families from diverse cultural and language backgrounds is called for to increase the body of knowledge in the field. Table 6 summarizes the non-Oxford indirect strategies reported by the participants.

The comparison of the findings from the inductive and the deductive analyses revealed that some of the themes from the inductive analysis were reflected in the findings from the deductive analysis. However, these findings also revealed additional strategies that expand the findings from the deductive analysis.

<center>Summary</center>

This chapter contained a description of the themes that emerged from the deductive analysis followed by a comparison of the findings from the inductive and deductive analyses. The results of the comparative analysis showed additional strategies not included in the Oxford's taxonomy and expands the body of knowledge on LLS. The

findings on the LLS used by Colombian ESL adult learners and the implications for

TESOL, adult education and workplace learning are discussed in the next chapter.

Table 6

Non-Oxford Indirect Strategies Reported by Participants

Types and sub-categories

I. *Metacognitive strategies*

    1. Centering your learning

        a. Choosing English over Spanish (as in telephone menu options)

        b. Using sound transcription in native language

    2. Evaluating your learning

        a. Using teacher feedback

II. *Affective strategies*

    1. Lowering your anxiety

        a. Feeling knowledgeable about material

        b. Volunteer to go first

III. *Social strategies*

    1. Cooperating with others

        a. Help from children

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into three sections: (a) responses to the research questions, (b) implications for teaching and learning, and (c) implications and recommendations for research.

Responses to the Research Questions

Responses to the research questions are provided in this section. The primary research question was as follows: What are the experiences of adult Colombian learners in using LLS? Secondary research questions included the following:

1. What insights about their experience in selecting LLS do adult Colombian learners reveal?

2. What insights about their experience in using LLS do adult Colombian learners reveal?

3. How do the strategies that adult Colombian learners use compare with the existing literature on LLS?

The discussion begins with responses to the secondary research questions to gain a clearer understanding of the participants' experiences and how they compare with the existing literature followed by the response to the primary research question to gain a more holistic understanding of the use of LLS by adult Colombian ELL.

Secondary Research Question 1: What insights about their experience in selecting LLS do adult Colombian learners reveal?

For the 12 adult Colombian learners, LLS constituted a conscious selection of activities and depended on both internal and external factors as well as certain conditions

determined by their learning and community context. Learning strategies have been characterized as "optional means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language" (Bialystok, 1978, p. 71).This characterization suggests that there might be a degree of automaticity in the selection of learning strategies. Cohen (1998) argues that learning strategies are selected by learners with a certain degree of consciousness even if learners are not fully aware they are using them. This was evident among participants as they described the existing adversities of learning English in a society such as Miami, where Spanish is a dominant language. The lack of opportunities for practicing English plus their hectic routines motivate these learners to device creative ways to advance and enhance their learning process by using learning strategies.

Griffiths (2008) contends that strategy choice depends on contextual factors (such as learning environment), individual factors (such as motivation, beliefs, personality), and the nature of the learning goal (p. 86). The participants of this study revealed selecting strategies based on the given learning conditions described in the previous chapter (both internal and external), such as acculturation, social interactions, legal status and work, motivation, emotions, metacognition and beliefs. The reasons to learn English described by participants (such as better jobs, further education, and fitting in society) constitute the learning goals that will be achieved once learners acquire competency in English. The accomplishment of their learning goals is mediated by the learners' choice of learning strategies that will facilitate their learning.

A more recent definition of LLS that emerged after many years of constant debate is "activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning" (Griffiths, 2008, p. 87). The findings of this study corroborate this

definition as it refers to the active role played by learners in the selection of the learning strategies that best accommodate and advance their learning.

Secondary Research Question 2: What insights about their experience in using LLS do adult Colombian learners reveal?

The participants in this study reported using LLS for several purposes, such as to facilitate and enhance their learning, to perform learning tasks, to solve problems and to compensate for insufficient or lack of knowledge. Learning strategies were used thoroughly in different aspects of the participants' learning, including (a) language skills, (b) linguistic skills, and (c) target language practice.

Language Skills

Learning strategies were used by the participants in the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). For speaking skills, the most common strategies involved putting into practice learned material in actual conversations with English speakers, mentally rehearsing the ideas they want to communicate, and orally rehearsing in front of the mirror or while driving or riding the bus. The latter strategy was used in order to practice for an oral presentation or an exam, or a job interview. This is evidence of a self-regulation process where learners acknowledge the need to practice the language in real life settings and the reliance on repeated and constant drilling in preparation for performance. This is a reflection of learned behavior in previous language learning experiences in their home country, where grammar-based and audio-lingual approaches were commonly used at the time participants took English courses in high school.

For listening skills, participants mostly relied on alternative means of language input, due to the scarcity of opportunities to listen to the language in more naturalistic settings. These included watching TV and movies in English; listening to radio programs and music in English; and using the language lab in school. Using the closed-caption feature on TV and in movies provided an effective way to monitor the learners' listening comprehension skills. Teachers, classmates, and co-workers were also valuable sources of input to check and enhance their aural comprehension. When speaking and listening to native speakers, participants pay close attention to the interlocutor's lip movement and to the grammatical structures and expressions. By having models of correct language usage, these learners are able to partially or fully replicate these utterances in future conversations. One interesting strategy was that of watching YouTube videos in Spanish first and then the English version to facilitate comprehension in the second language. This strategy reveals how these learners rely on their knowledge of Spanish and use it as a blueprint in the development of a second language.

The most common strategies for reading comprehension skills were using the context to guess meaning and making associations. These strategies make it easier for learners to read longer passages without having to stop several times to search the dictionary. Another strategy was that of asking questions to themselves about the reading. Participants find it useful to prepare for their reading lessons before class time by reading the material beforehand. This allows these learners to get an overall idea of the topic and the related vocabulary. However, most participants talked about this strategy but complained about the lack of time to do so. Female participants who had school-age children, use their children's books and assignments (while they are helping

their children do homework) to monitor their reading comprehension skills. Parenting brings them a useful opportunity to practice and enhance their English. In the same way, children constitute available resources to provide corrective feedback. The use of a Spanish version of a book or newspaper followed by the English version was also reported as a strategy for reading comprehension. These learners are able to establish connections by looking at the similarities and differences in grammatical structures, vocabulary and usage in their native Spanish and in English. Learners manipulate the second language material to develop stronger schemas, especially to reinforce the similarities or differences that both languages share.

For writing skills, the scarce opportunities to use English in daily life restrict learners to the 2-hour writing lesson at school. The most common task learners are given is the composition of a written text. In order to accomplish this task, learners rely on Spanish in order to plan, write and revise the ideas. According to Manchón, Roca De Larios & Murphy (2007) the first language "allows the learner to think, access ideas, then access words, albeit slowly, then evaluate those words by back-translating to judge appropriateness" (p. 242). The first language is then used as a strategy in itself that allows compensating for poor writing skills. A common flaw in writing revealed by participants is their use of word for word translation and the writing style and essay structure used by Spanish speakers. The strategy used by participants to overcome this flaw, is to apply the new grammatical forms and vocabulary learned in class in their essays. In this way, they can manage their sentence structure and lexical choice. Another strategy is the use of brainstorming and clustering of ideas to develop an essay in their attempt to follow the English format for writing. Spanish speakers need to adjust their essay structure and

writing style as it differs considerably from the way English speakers write. This is an example of how the learners' culture and educational experiences affect their learning. Once a person has acquired a writing style in his/her native language, it becomes a real challenge to develop a different thinking process in a second language in order to express ideas in written form.

Participants indicated that being able to make connections between their essays and their personal lives facilitated the process and provided motivation to write. A strategy mentioned by participants was that of keeping a journal or a to-do list based on their daily needs and wants. It becomes apparent that these learners take interest in learning when the material is meaningful and they can see a practical use of it to solve real life problems. Another strategy used for writing was the use of templates, as in a letter, or a memo, or a report, where data is replaced accordingly keeping the original format. Learners use this strategy to mechanically replicate a document and avoid making mistakes that result from direct translation or lack of lexicon.

Linguistic Skills

LLS were used by participants in three linguistic skills: grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. For grammar, the most common strategies involved doing grammar exercises. Participants believe the more they practice the faster they will learn. It is important for these learners to receive a well-structured and formal explanation of grammatical forms by their teachers. The role of teachers is perceived as being instrumental in their learning. Having a good teacher increases their chances of succeeding at grammar acquisition. Participants indicated that good teachers give good explanations and assign homework on a daily basis. This is again, a belief that stems

from the participants' experiences in Colombia, where a teacher-centered approach dominates the educational practices. These learners are used to be told what to do and how to do it. They expect their teachers to be the main source of knowledge and to constantly monitor their progress.

One preferred strategy for grammar learning is memorization of the rules. Some participants equated the learning of grammar to the learning of math, in that by knowing the rules by heart these can then be applied to construct sentences. However, memorization alone was not regarded as a good strategy. Participants explained that grammatical rules need to be applied to a real context to make sense. A strategy used to achieve this goal was that of trying the new structures in both spoken and written form in their real life use of English. Another strategy for learning grammar was using supplementary tools such as the closed-caption feature on TV, and the use of drawings and diagrams to visualize the grammatical rules. This might relate to a visual or auditory preference for learning.

For vocabulary, the most common strategy was underlining and highlighting new words to be searched later in a dictionary. After the meanings of the words are found, the Spanish translation is written down next to the definition. Words are memorized by constant repetition (in oral and written form). Participants are aware that using synonyms, especially those which are similar to their Spanish counterpart (cognates) are an effective strategy to increase their vocabulary. Vocabulary has a crucial role in the development of a language. Participants showed their dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of instruction geared to developing a varied and extensive lexicon. They agreed that the lack of vocabulary holds them back from attaining their linguistic goals satisfactorily. For this

reason, learners make it a point to use index cards, post-its and extensive lists of vocabulary words to improve their lexicons. Furthermore, a strategy widely used is that of association and inference of contextualized vocabulary. Learning words in context is more meaningful and better remembered than decontextualized rote memorization. Therefore, learning through reading is a more efficient way to learn vocabulary. In this study, participants revealed reading all kinds of materials available to them, from books or magazines, to email and text messages.

These learners are aware of the need to have a good pronunciation in order to communicate effectively. However, for adult learners, who usually develop fossilized pronunciation errors before migrating to the U.S., correct pronunciation becomes particularly challenging. This problematic area was discussed by the participants who agreed that a poor pronunciation leads to emotional issues such as embarrassment, low self-esteem, and inhibition. The strategies used to correct poor pronunciation were related to the use of gadgets such as electronic translators, tape recorders and software (available in the lab). Recording their voice was also a common strategy. The closed-caption feature on TV also constitutes a useful tool to practice pronunciation as learners make connections between the written form of the word and the way these words are pronounced.

One might assume that living in an environment where the language is spoken and/or living with a native speaker and being exposed to the language on a daily basis provides ideal opportunities to acquire the language. However, for the participants of this study it is not the case. It has already been discussed that opportunities to practice and use the language are scarce in the surroundings of these learners. Furthermore, participants

expressed their desire to maintain their Colombian identity by using Spanish only at home with their spouses and/or children and relatives. These two factors greatly affect the rate of progress and improvement of their oral skills. Finally, participants explained the strategy of transcribing the sounds of English into Spanish, as they hear these words being pronounced. Learners who have already acquired the phonology of their first language use it as a frame of reference for the second.

Target Language Practice

The availability, quality and quantity of practice are crucial in the development of a second language. In this study, opportunity is a major factor in the use of LLS. To some participants, these opportunities are rare and infrequent; to others opportunities might be more available at work or at school. Those who find it difficult to practice English in their daily lives, use strategies such as watching TV or movies in English, reading (textbooks, magazines, and newspapers), doing exercises, and practicing in the lab. For the rest, looking for opportunities to practice (while shopping, on the phone, or with neighbors and co-workers) is the most common and effective strategy.

Participants also discussed ineffective strategies when it comes to language practice. Decontextualized drills and exercises are deemed as ineffective. Learners need communicative activities that are meaningful to their lives and purposes. Poor time-management skills and the lack of a schedule for study result in slower progress towards acquiring English. Some participants also talked about the inherent competition that takes place in class with their younger counterparts as having an impact in their learning. They cannot help to compare themselves to these younger students who were schooled in English and are already proficient but in need of remedial work. This is a reflection of the

beliefs that some participants hold that younger learners learn better and faster. On the other hand, to some participants being older was seen as an obstacle only because it represents more responsibilities to their families and work and less time to devote to studying.

Secondary Research Question 3: How do the strategies that adult Colombian learners use compare with the existing literature on LLS?

Overall, adult Colombian learners use all six types of LLS included in the Oxford's taxonomy. However, at the third level, additional strategies were found as well as non-use of some of the Oxford's sub-categories. In a study with adult immigrants in Australia (Lunt, 2000), it was found that participants reported thirty additional strategies than those listed in the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford, 1990b). Furthermore, Lunt (2000) found a similar social strategy found in this study: *help from children*. Both studies used adult immigrants and most of them were married with children. Children of immigrants constitute a valuable language learning resource for their parents. This finding has implications for teaching and learning.

Among the factors affecting strategy choice found in this study that are in concert with the literature reviewed are learner's values and beliefs, cultural background, and motivation. This study did not include factors such as gender, learning style, or language proficiency level. It was found that both individual and contextual factors affect the selection and use of LLS. Individual factors include beliefs about teaching and learning, prior educational experiences in Colombia, motivation, and acculturation. External factors include the learning context (community and school), the availability of

opportunities to use English in a Spanish-influenced community, teaching practices, and learning goals.

Previous studies conducted on Colombian EFL learners (i.e., learning English in Colombia) inform this study in regards to the influence of learners' prior educational experiences. For example, Schulz (2001) found that Colombian teachers and learners were more favorably inclined toward traditional language teaching and believed explicit grammar instruction and error correction to be highly effective. A study by Luna and Sanchez (2005) showed that the majority of students preferred to follow the established rules and procedures, the instructions for the completion of tasks and did the necessary work to complete the tasks. These findings suggest the impact of the educational system and teaching methods on eliciting certain learning strategies and shaping the individual frame of reference in relation to future learning endeavors. Also, learners' beliefs about effective teaching techniques resemble those prior experiences in their countries of origin.

The individuality of the learner was also evidenced in this study. There are several factors that closely relate with strategy choice such as personality factors, gender, age, aptitude and so on. Even though these factors were not investigated in this study, participants' use of novel strategies or non-use of certain strategies might explain individual variation among similar learners sharing similar characteristics including cultural background. Similar findings were obtained in studies with immigrant learners (Braxton, 1999; Lunt, 2000).

Primary Research Question: What are the experiences of adult Colombian learners in using LLS?

All 12 participants reported using LLS in their learning process. Strategies were used for problem solving, information processing in different language skills and linguistic skills, and for target language practice. The study revealed that the selection of LLS is individual to the learner and dependent upon the learner's past experiences and current life context. Furthermore, this choice was conscious, dependent on the need to accommodate and advance their learning efforts.

LLS use by adult Colombian learners is influenced by external and internal learning conditions. The learning context constitutes a major influence in the way that learners use strategies. The availability or absence of certain linguistic resources, such as the scarcity of opportunity to use English in a Spanish-influenced community like Miami, might deter the learners' ability to deploy certain strategies. As is the case of the participants in this study with little or no contact with English speakers who reported few social strategies compared to other groups of strategies. Conversely, participants with English-speaking bosses, co-workers or friends, sought more opportunities to practice and reported more social strategies.

One characteristic of Miami (as well as several other big and ethnically diverse cities) is the presence of ethnic enclaves. Enclaves are groups of immigrants of the same nationality who concentrate in a particular geographic location (Portes & Bach, 1985). Ethnic enclaves revolve around businesses that are run by the members of the ethnic community. Also, opportunities for work, education, recreation, food and other services are found within an enclave. Examples of ethnic enclaves in Miami include "Little Havana" and "Little Haiti". In contrast with other ethnic groups in Miami (e.g., Cubans) and because of their extreme class-consciousness, Colombians living in South Florida do

not favor the enclave; instead they live in scattered small social networks that reflect their social class in Colombia (Collier, 2004). This not only deters from their ability to find employment assistance outside their immediate family or social circle, but also precludes opportunities to immerse themselves in mainstream society. This results in fewer opportunities not only to improve their English but also to learn and adapt to the American society. This might also suggest that Colombians favor a lower American orientation than other immigrant groups. This finding is supported by the literature on Colombian immigrants in Miami. A study revealed that given the strong Latin presence in Miami, Colombians may be less pressured to abandon their original cultural and/or psychological characteristic than they would be in other less multicultural cities (Cislo, 2007). Cislo's study also revealed that Colombian experiences in acculturation and ethnic discrimination resulted in their experiencing significant reductions in stress-levels and overall health. This supports the finding of this study that affective factors constitute important forces not only in the learning process of individuals, but also in their well-being.

Knowledge of the host culture often helps learners understand better what is heard or read in the new language. Specifically, this knowledge helps with the interpersonal and socio-cultural competencies of the learners that are necessary for learning more effectively and applying pragmatics, learning idioms, understanding culturally embedded meanings and communicating effectively with native speakers. This might suggest that the quality and quantity of contact with the host society affects the deployment and/or choice of certain affective and social learning strategies of immigrants.

Internal learning conditions have also the potential to affect the selection and use of LLS and the outcomes of language learning efforts. Motivation to learn English was found to be regulated and controlled by the participants. Their motivators are: getting better life and job opportunities, helping their children with school, advancing their education and fitting in society. Interestingly, the motives these learners reported are merely extrinsic. Extrinsically motivated behaviors are "carried out in anticipation of a reward from outside and beyond the self" (Brown, 2000, p. 164). Thus, these learners are aware of the need to become fully proficient in the language in order to achieve their goals. Motivation is a vital element in Garrison's (1997) Model as it exerts an influence on learners' assuming responsibility and control of their learning. Motivation to learn might stimulate strategy use, which in turn leads to better performance. This finding is supported by the literature in that Colombians residing in Miami consider lack of a permanent job or visa and lack of English language skills the major obstacles in finding employment and consequently getting a better life and opportunities to further their education (Collier, 2004).

Metacognition, the ability to critically reflect on what is known (Anderson, 2008, p. 99), is a fundamental aspect of learning. Language learners with strong metacognitive skills can empower themselves by making conscious decisions about their possibilities to improve their learning. Even though the participants reported the use of metacognitive strategies such as planning for a task and/or practice opportunities, arranging study space and schedule, and monitoring their errors, they did not report specific strategies that demonstrate high metacognitive awareness in self-evaluation and self-monitoring. It was apparent that the motivation of the learners in this study yielded self-encouragement

efforts to persist in their educational and language learning goals. Evaluation usually comes in form of feedback from teachers and significant others. Teacher feedback is a fundamental aspect of self-directed learning (Garrison, 1997), because efficient and effective feedback has the potential to enhance the learners' self-monitoring of the quality of their learning outcomes. However, it is essential that the learner have the ability to integrate this external feedback with his or her own internal meaning assessment. In this study, some learners admitted using external feedback to monitor their progress (e.g., grades, presentations, conversations and overall comprehension of input) but they did not provide any insights as to what actions they take to act upon that feedback.

Beliefs about learning and teacher's roles had an effect on the selection and use of LLS. For example, participants believe that teachers have the responsibility to provide good quality teaching, classroom management skills, and professionalism based on their previous learning experiences in Colombia. As a result, learners might not feel the need to take full action in their own learning since it is expected that the teacher organizes, makes decisions about, and implements what learners should learn. They are also expected to be the ones who evaluate the outcomes of learning. Learners for the most part believe that they are responsible for attending class, doing homework and turning in assignments on a timely manner. Participants complained about the teachers' performance, but no one claimed the need for a more active role of the learners. This supports a belief that the teacher is the decision-maker and the students have the responsibility for the decisions made by the teacher. This finding is supported by the literature (Posada, 2006); where despite the evidence of strategies that denotes learner autonomy, participants reported the need of counseling in their learning.

This section provided responses to the subsidiary research questions followed by a response to the primary research question for a clearer and more holistic understanding of the LLS experiences of adult Colombian ESL learners. The next section is a discussion of the implications for teaching and learning, followed by a discussion of the implications and recommendations for research.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

This study has implications for teaching and learning in the field of adult ESL. It contributes to the understanding of LLS used by adult Colombian ELL and the influence of cultural background on the selection and use of LLS. Language is an element of culture, and as such it reflects and at the same time influences an individual's way of life (Finkbeiner, 2008). An adult learner's native language will have a direct influence on the development and acquisition of both a second language and a second culture. John-Steiner (1985) argues that "learning a second language entails a "weaving" of new meanings into the fabric of verbal thought already existing in the first language" (p. 365). Adults are able to adapt to new cultural models and by doing so they modify their conceptual organization. Past educational experiences also permeate the type of LLS that learners choose to deploy as they reflect their educational system, values and beliefs about teaching and learning, as well as teaching and learning styles. Culture and its influence on second language learning are instrumental to ESL teachers who have students from diverse cultural backgrounds, especially if different from the teacher's. It is the teacher's responsibility to be cognizant of their students' cultures and preferred modes of learning in order to devise more effective instruction and promote learners' autonomy.

The cultural component of LLS should not be understood as learners of a specific cultural group having a "set of language learning strategies", rather this knowledge should serve to affirm how the ESL classroom could be adapted to accommodate and support the diverse LLS of adult ELL.

Teachers also need to be aware of their students' current life and work situation that often accompany immigration, which influence the affective component of learning, such as motivation and anxiety. These factors have shown to be crucial in the learning efforts of the participants in this study. In order to reduce learner anxiety and increase self-esteem, educators also should consider the affective atmosphere in the classroom. If students feel they can learn freely, they may display more positive attitudes, self-confidence, and low anxiety. Stern (1983) contends that good language learners usually have positive attitudes toward themselves as language learners, towards the second language, the culture, and language learning in general. Teaching, therefore, should be aimed at affirming the learners' affective well-being. Some suggestions for enhancing the affective climate in the second language classroom are: encouraging and supporting students at all times by using positive language, being energetic and enthusiastic, creating a relaxed environment, avoiding overly competitive activities, giving students opportunities to talk about themselves, having reasonable expectations about learners' performance and creating suitable challenges.

While motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, must emanate from the learner, rather than be externally regulated by the teacher (Ushioda, 2008), teachers can provide positive interpersonal support and continuous feedback which in turn will help learners reflect on and evaluate their own learning experience. In the same vein, teachers should

raise awareness among their students of the varied language learning resources available outside the classroom. It was found that the children of adult learners play a considerable role in their parents' language learning process by providing immediate feedback and opportunities to practice the language. Teachers could encourage adult learners to interact with their children in English while performing learning tasks at home. Children can serve as useful models of English for the parents particularly in oral skills where children can help the parents with their pronunciation and vocabulary.

Findings of this study also advocate the need to promote metacognitive awareness among adult learners, especially for those who come from more traditional education systems like Colombia and expect teachers to be the sole provider of correction and feedback. Self-monitoring is one of the components of Garrison's Self-Directed Learning Model (1997). A crucial element for this self-monitoring to take place is the availability of both internal and external feedback. While internal feedback is valuable, effective and timely feedback should come from the teacher, who has the responsibility to act as a facilitator and collaborator for their students. It is imperative that teachers not only recognize the importance to define these roles, but also to foster learners' metacognitive awareness in order to maximize learners' autonomy.

Metacognitive knowledge refers to knowledge about learning (Wenden, 1998, p. 516). Through metacognitive knowledge learners are able to plan, evaluate and monitor their learning. One common complaint among language learners is that they do not know how to study effectively and make steady progress in their language learning endeavors. Some learners rely solely on their teachers to tell them what to do and how to accomplish their learning tasks. It is important that learners acquire metacognitive knowledge that

will enable them to manage their own learning and therefore become less dependent on others. For this reason, teachers need to expand their efforts to include metacognitive knowledge among the curricular components essential to learner language development. In this way, learners will become conscious of the array of LLS that have the potential to help them develop a more reflective and self-directed approach to learning a new language.

This study found that learners use innovative LLS that accommodate their immediate learning needs and compensate the lack of resources in their environment. Participants reported using 13 additional strategies to the existent Oxford's taxonomy (1990a). These strategies belong in the cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social domains. Furthermore, some strategies included in the Oxford's taxonomy appeared not to be pertinent to all learners and therefore were not reported by participants. These findings have implications for teaching and learning in that the strategies were chosen because they were those which enabled the learner to take account of affective needs and which the individual learner believed to be the most suitable to the circumstances and goals. It is therefore, evident that this factor be taken into account when planning instruction and learning activities to provide opportunities for learners to regulate their learning.

Several of these additional strategies are related to the use of technology. Technology and Internet have revolutionized and redefined basic factors of life. For example, *YouTube* has now become a venue through which its members and visitors can speak out against oppression, *Facebook* and *Twitter* have re-defined social relationships, and the use of electronic mailing (e-mail), Instant Messaging, and texting have changed

the way we communicate. Educators, administrators, and curriculum writers should incorporate these technologies in the classroom.

The findings of this study suggest that adult learners use a wide variety of learning strategies that might reflect particular learning styles and past learning experiences in their country of origin. Previous research on cultural influences in LLS use by adult learners support this finding (Braxton, 1999; Lunt, 2000).The implication would be that teachers need to look for methods which best suit the needs of their particular learners in a given situation. Teachers need to be resourceful, flexible and ready to adapt and try a variety of teaching styles and techniques in order to help their students achieve success in language learning.

At the workplace level, the implications of this study lie in the implementation of a learner-centered approach where learners become autonomous by becoming aware of the LLS they use and those strategies that have the potential to enhance their learning. The need to prepare workers for a continuously changing and technologically advanced multicultural workforce is no longer an option; it is a requirement (Gallo, 2004). The demands of the workplace require that workers master all three kinds of communication: technical English, nonverbal, and interpersonal English communication (Duff, Wong, & Early, 2002). Consequently, a learner-centered approach that emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity is desirable. This approach could be strengthened to foster the development of LLS that might enable learners to develop their English proficiency and marketable skills, which increases their self-esteem, social identity, independence, and overall integration in society.

The findings of this study suggest the incorporation of LLS instruction in Adult

ESL education. Because LLS have the potential to enhance language learning, then

teachers should dedicate valuable time to strategy instruction. Teachers have the capacity

to persuade learners to use LLS to help resolve their language learning difficulties

(Cohen & Macaro, 2007). The inclusion of LLS in the design of second or foreign

language program curricula would aid learners in "learning to learn" and contribute to

their success by becoming more autonomous in their quest to acquiring a second

language. The ultimate goal of language instruction is not only the eventual acquisition of

the language but also to instill a sense of what it means to be a lifelong learner in an

increasingly global world.

This study yielded valuable information for the field of LLS. The results of this

study suggest that the selection and use of particular LLS might be heavily influenced by

the complexity of the language learning process and the individuality of the learner. As a

result, a framework for studying LLS that considers individual as well as contextual

variables is proposed.

A Framework for the Study of Language Learning Strategies

The findings of this study suggest that by considering both macro and micro

perspectives that is, by exploring not only individual learner strategies but also the

learning context, a deeper and better understanding of strategic performance could be

gained which in turn may strengthen the knowledge base in this field.

The model for the study of LLS described here includes both the external and

internal factors that contribute to the selection and use of LLS (See Figure 1). External

factors are available in the learning context, such as the community, school, and family.

The community plays an important role as it constitutes a broader context in which the learner interacts on a daily basis. The speech community might be heavily influenced by a foreign language as is the case with Miami, where Spanish is the primary language of local business and social interaction in the region's large Spanish-speaking community. Also, the presence of other Latino networks (e.g., Cubans and Nicaraguans) contribute to the availability of job opportunities that require very little or no knowledge of the English language, diminishing the opportunities for learners to practice English with native speakers. Bilingual speakers' attitudes also have an impact on ELL as they might preclude opportunities for practice by switching to Spanish when they sense difficulties in speech and comprehension. These characteristics of the speech community will have a direct impact on the language learning process.

School is where formal learning of the target language takes place and it is mediated by the role of teachers, significant others (friends and classmates) and the ESL program in general (curriculum design, assessment procedures). Lastly, the family, as the basic social unity also influences the learning process of individuals. For example, children of ELL who attend school in the U.S. provide useful guidance, supports and opportunities for practice to their parents.

Internal factors are individual to the learner. These include the self, culture, prior education and immigration and acculturation. The self is manifested through personality traits, feelings, motivation, values and beliefs. Native culture and prior education in the learner's country of origin directly influence learning as it dictates the individual's system of knowing and thinking, acting, feeling and expectations about teaching practices and teachers' roles and performance. Finally, the immigration experience and the degree

of acculturation attained in the new culture will have an effect on the learner's language learning experience. Learners' willingness to keep their cultural identity, native language and customs may result in decreased opportunities for language development, and the adoption of cultural traits that have the potential to enable an individual's integration in the host society.

Both external and internal factors should be taken into account when studying the LLS of adult immigrant learners as the Colombian ELL in this study as they contribute to their strategic performance and ultimately the successful acquisition of the target language.

<div align="center">Implications and Recommendations for Research</div>

Implications for Research

Research on language learning strategy has contributed to the knowledge base about the learners' particular behaviors that enhance their learning. However, there is still more to learn about the selection and use of LLS by adult learners, specifically about particular learners' national origins and cultures and the learning context.

As the findings of this study show, the selection and use of LLS depended upon previous learning experiences, beliefs about good teaching practices, and acculturation process. Because these factors might be essential in adult learners' acquisition of English, more research is needed to explore how individuals from different Spanish-speaking nationalities and other national origins use LLS. Research studies should move beyond the pan-ethnic label "Hispanic" to include all 20 national groups whose first language is Spanish, for example Bolivians, Peruvians, Argentineans (Tienda & Mitchell, 2006).
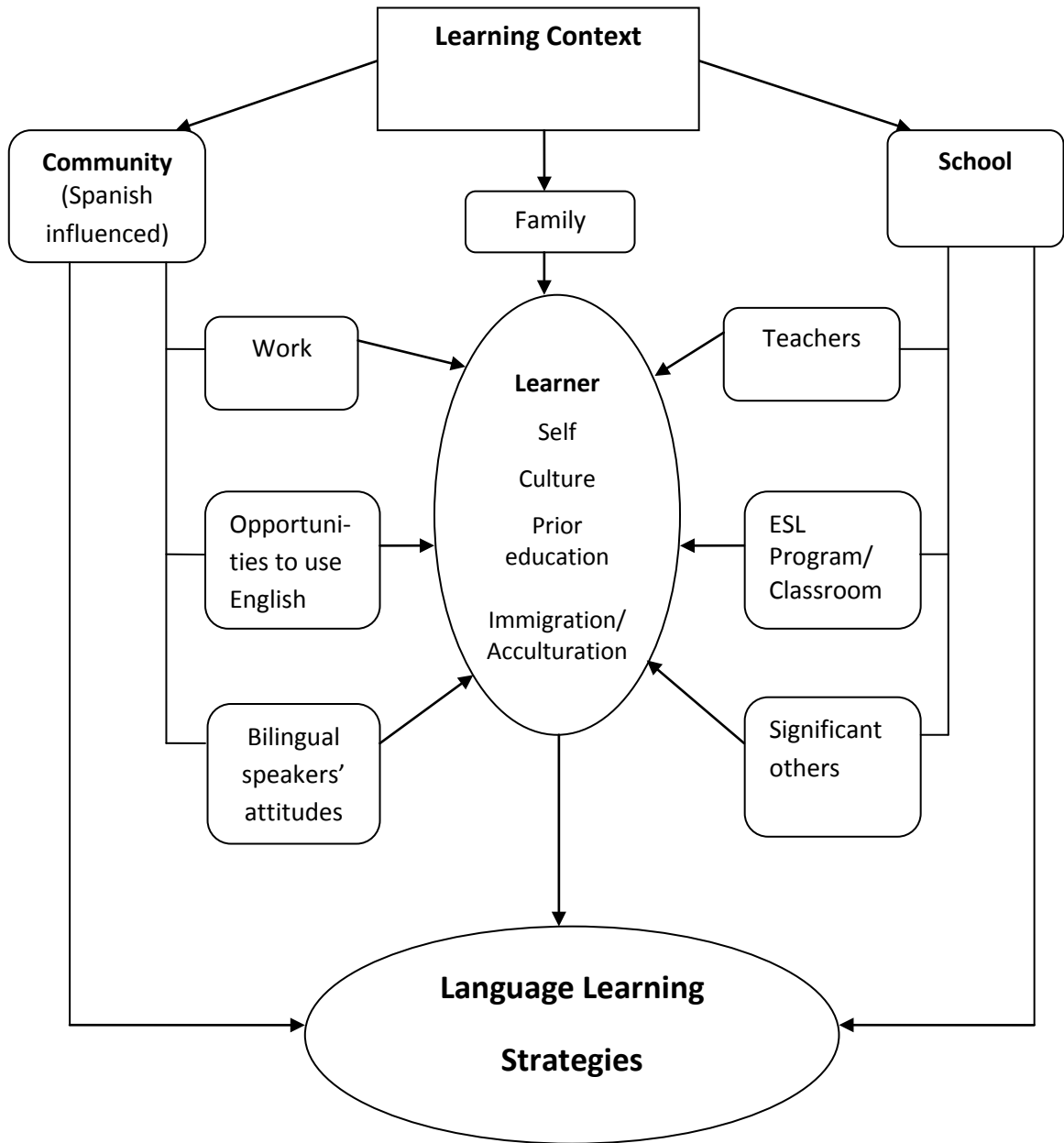
Figure 1. A proposed framework to study LLS.

Furthermore, because individuals' national origin may influence their traditions, customs, values, and beliefs, differences in nationality should be considered in designing research (Paredes, 2009).

Another finding of this study shows that the learning context plays an important role in language learning, as is the case of Miami, where the Spanish language is largely spoken and in many cases the only one. The quality and quantity of available opportunities to practice the target language is crucial in the successful acquisition of a language (Van den Branden, 2007). Similarly, the degree of acculturation in the mainstream culture and the preservation of an ethnic identity will affect the learning outcomes. Learners who only socialize within the boundaries of their social networks and/or enclaves might have less opportunity to learn about the culture and consequently the pragmatics of the target language. Research is needed to explore the learning context and the acculturation processes of adult ELL in similar settings like Miami. Also, research is needed with other non-Spanish speakers to find out to what extent acculturation and ethnic identity preservation play a role in the LLS reported by adult ESL learners.

The findings of this study have yielded qualitative evidence in regards to the selection and use of LLS. A qualitative approach and phenomenology in particular, has provided detailed insights and perceptions of adult immigrant experiences as language learners. The qualitative research design used in this study has been effective in obtaining rich and detailed information from the learners' point of reference and experiences. More qualitative studies should be conducted on the preferred LLS use of adult ELL.

Recommendations for Research

Future research on adult learners' LLS can build on the findings of this study. First, research studies that focus on Spanish-speaking adults of a particular nationality or cultural group, rather than the pan-ethnic label "Hispanics" have not been found to date. Conversely, plenty of studies have concentrated on other nationalities such as Japanese (Brown, 1996), Korean (Park, 1997), and Chinese (Bremer, 1998; Goh & Foong, 1997; Wang, 1999) to name a few. Furthermore, the scarcity of qualitative studies in the field of LLS calls for studies that focus on this phenomenon from the participants' learning experiences. A qualitative approach to data collection and interpretation has been valid for the present study and should be continued in future research. Suggested future research questions are: *What LLS do adult language learners from a particular Spanish-speaking country other than Colombia use? What LLS do adult language learners from non Spanish-speaking countries use?*

Second, future research should look into the learning context characteristics, both at the classroom and the community levels as they might affect the LLS selection and use by adult ELL. In the present study, the characteristics of the speech community or community of practice have shown to exert a direct influence on the selection and choice of LLS (e.g., scarce opportunities to practice the language outside of class, a preference to switch to Spanish when interacting with ELL by bilinguals). A suggested future research question is: *How does the learning context (e.g., Miami) influence the types of LLS used by adult ELL?*

Third, research should be conducted on strategy training and its outcomes on adult language learning. Also, research should look at the role that instruction on LLS

might play in the actual use of strategies by adult learners to complete learning tasks. Suggested future research questions are: *How can we instruct adult ELL on strategy use? What role does strategy instruction play in the adult ELL's actual strategy use?*

Fourth, future research should look into the role of ESL teachers in eliciting or hindering the students' selection and use of LLS, especially with learners that heavily depend on the teacher as decision-maker because of their prior educational experiences. Suggested research questions are: *What role does the teacher play in eliciting or hindering adult ELL's strategy use? What strategies are teacher-initiated? What strategies are student-initiated?*

Fifth, research should examine how the metacognitive knowledge of language learners influences the actual deployment of LLS in various learning tasks and how this knowledge can enhance language acquisition. Suggested research questions are: *What role does metacognitive knowledge play in the selection and use of LLS? How does learner awareness of metacognition enhance the acquisition of a second language?*

For the past three decades, researchers have been studying LLS with the fundamental goal of understanding how language learners learn and improving the teaching and learning of second and foreign languages. Despite the plethora of studies published to date, the field of LLS is still quite immature. The need for further research in this field is imperative, as research and practice have shifted their focus to what the learner can do rather than on what teaching interventions are more effective (Oxford & Lee, 2008). This study found that adult Colombian ELL select and use LLS based on the internal and external factors which are individual to the learner and are permeated by their culture, past educational experiences, and current life circumstances.

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Summary

Chapter 6 concluded the study with responses to the research questions, implications for teaching and learning, and implications and recommendation for research. This phenomenological study sought to describe the experiences of Colombian ELL in selecting and using LLS and the meanings these learners make of their own experiences. Further, the study identified the types of learning strategies that these students use when learning English and found out how these experiences compared with the existing literature on LLS.

Four themes emerged from the data collected that informed the purpose of the study. These themes were: learning conditions, problem-solving resources, information processing, and target language practice. Although the study provided support for the taxonomy of LLS, the study also provided important insights on both the internal and external factors as well as the individual learner's past and current experiences on the selection and use of LLS.

The study provided implications for teaching and learning in the field of adult ESL. Both internal and external factors influence the selection and use of LLS. A framework for exploring the learning context together with individual learner variables was proposed. The findings of this study suggest the relevance of including the learners' culture and past educational experiences as important elements in the design of instruction. Additionally, the study implies the pertinent inclusion of strategy training in order to better equip language learners with viable means to enhance their language learning experience and consequently their successful fulfillment as individuals in society.

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APPENDIX A

Definitions of Oxford's LLS Categories

(Adapted from "Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know" by Rebecca L. Oxford, 1990, Newbury House Publishers)

I. DIRECT STRATEGIES

1. *Memory Strategies*: These strategies relate to the storing and retrieval of information.

1.1 *Creating mental linkages*: These are the most basic memory strategies and the foundation of more complex memory strategies.

a. *Grouping:* it involves classifying or reclassifying what is heard or read into meaningful groups, thus reducing the number of unrelated items.

b. *Associating/Elaborating*: It involves associating new language information with familiar concepts already in memory.

c. *Placing new words into a context*: It involves placing new words or expressions that have been heard or read into a meaningful context as a way of remembering it.

1.2. *Applying images and sounds:* These are strategies useful for remembering new expressions that have been heard or read.

a. *Using imagery:* It involves creating a mental image of a word or expression.

b. *Semantic mapping:* It involves arranging concepts and relationships on paper to create a semantic map, a diagram in which the key concepts are highlighted and are linked with related concepts, via arrows or lines.

c. *Using keywords:* It involves combining sounds and images that learners can more easily remember what they hear or read in the new language.

d. *Representing sounds in memory:* It helps learners remember what they hear by making auditory rather than visual representations of sounds.

1.3. *Reviewing well:* This strategy helps retain the material in long-term memory.

a. *Structured reviewing:* It entails reviewing new material at different intervals, at first close together and then increasingly far apart.

1.4. *Employing action:* It involves physical movement and activity.

a. *Using physical response or sensation:* It involves physically acting out a new expression that has been heard.

b. *Using mechanical techniques:* These strategies are used to contextualize a new expression writing it on a flash card or separating sections of a notebook.

2. *Cognitive Strategies*: These strategies operate directly on incoming information, manipulating or transforming it in ways that enhance learning.

2.1. *Practicing:* It involves actions to rehearse the new language.

a. *Repeating:* It involves saying, writing or reading the same thing several times.

b. *Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems:* It involves focusing on perception of sounds rather than on comprehension or meaning.

c. *Recognizing and using formulas and patterns:* It refers to the use of routine formulaic expressions that can enhance the learner's comprehension and production.

d. *Recombining:* It involves constructing a meaningful sentence or longer expression by putting together known elements in new ways.

e. *Practicing naturalistically:* It involves using the language for actual communication.

2.2. *Receiving and sending messages:* It focuses on the use of skimming and scanning while reading or listening.

a. *Getting the idea quickly:* It is used for listening and reading and it helps learners focus on what they need or want to understand.

b. *Using resources for receiving and sending messages:* It involves using print or non-print resources to better understand what is heard or read.

2.3. *Analyzing and Reasoning*: It involves using logical thinking to understand and use the grammar rules and vocabulary of the new language.

a. *Reasoning deductively*: It involves deriving hypotheses about the meaning of what is heard by means of general rules the learner already knows.

b. *Analyzing expressions*: It involves breaking down a new word or phrase, sentence, or even paragraph into its component parts in order to understand it.

c. *Analyzing contrastively (across languages)*: It involves analyzing elements (sounds, words, syntax) of the new language to determine likeness and differences in comparison with one's own native language.

d. *Translating*: It involves using the learner's native language as the basis for understanding what they hear or read in the new language.

e. *Transferring*: It involves directly applying previous knowledge to facilitate new knowledge in the target language.

2.4. *Creating structure for input and output*:

a. *Taking notes*: It involves writing down what is understood or heard while listening to a class, lecture, or audio recording in an unstructured or structured way.

b. *Summarizing*: It involves making a condensed, shorter version of the original passage.

c. *Highlighting*: It involves emphasizing the major points in a dramatic way, through color, underlining or drawing shapes around words (circles, boxes).

3. *Compensation Strategies*: These strategies enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge.

3.1. *Guessing intelligently*: It involves attempting to understand through systematic guessing.

a. *Using linguistic clues*: It involves using previously gained knowledge of the target language, the learner's own language or any other language in providing linguistic clues to the meanings of what is heard or read.

b. *Using other clues*: It involves using clues from other sources, such as forms of address which imply social relationships.

3.2. *Overcoming limitations in speaking and in writing*: It involves staying in conversations or keeping writing long enough to get sustained practice.

a. *Switching to the mother tongue*: It involves using the mother tongue for an expression without translating it (code switching).

b. *Getting help*: It involves asking someone for help in a conversation by hesitating or explicitly asking for the missing expression.

c. *Using mime or gesture*: It involves using physical motion, such as mime or gesture, in place of an expression during a conversation to indicate the meaning.

d. *Avoiding communication partially or totally*: It involves avoiding communication when difficulties are anticipated or encountered.

e. *Selecting the topic*: It involves choosing the topic of conversation for which learners posses the needed structures and vocabulary.

f. *Adjusting or approximating the message*: It involves altering the message by omitting some items of information, make the ideas simpler or less precise, or say something slightly different that has similar meaning.

g. *Coining words*: It involves making up new words to communicate a concept for which the learner does not have the right vocabulary.

h. *Using a circumlocution or synonym*: It involves using a roundabout expression involving several words to describe or explain a single concept or a synonym.

II. INDIRECT STRATEGIES

1. *Metacognitive Strategies*: These strategies allow learners to control their own cognition.

1.1. *Centering your learning*: It involves finding a focus in order to avoid confusion and noise.
   a. *Overviewing and linking with already known material*: It involves previewing the basic principles and/or material for an upcoming language activity.

   b. *Paying attention*: It involves direct attention and selective attention to the learning task.

   c. *Delaying speech production to focus on listening*: It relates to listening and speaking by postponing speaking in the target language for hours, days, weeks, or even months (silent period).

1.2. *Arranging and planning your learning*: It involves discovering the nature of language learning, organizing to learn, establishing aims and planning for learning.

   a. *Finding out about language learning*: It involves uncovering what is involved in language learning.

   b. *Organizing*: It involves creating the best physical environment.

   c. *Setting goals and objectives*: It involves establishing aims and deadlines.

d. *Identifying the purpose of a language task*: It involves determining the task purpose in order for learners to channel their energy in the right direction.

e. *Planning for a language task*: It involves identifying the nature of the task, the requirements, the available resources and the need for further aids.

f. *Seeking practice opportunities*: It involves creating or seeking chances to practice the new language.

1.3. *Evaluating your learning*: It involves examining one's own learning in terms of errors and overall progress.

a. *Self-monitoring*: It involves noticing and correcting one's own errors.

b. *Self-evaluating*: It involves gauging either general language progress or progress in any of the four skills.

2. *Affective Strategies*: These strategies are concerned with the regulation of feelings and attitudes.

2.1. *Lowering your anxiety*: It involves specific actions to deal with anxiety.

a. *Using relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation*: It involves using any of these techniques to reduce anxiety before any stressful language task.

b. *Using music*: It involves playing music before any stressful language task.

c. *Using laughter*: It involves laughter as a pleasurable technique to reduce stressful language tasks.

2.2 *Encouraging yourself*: It involves finding ways to keep one's spirits up and persevere as one tries to learn the language.

a. *Making positive statements*: It involves talking to oneself using positive statements before a potentially difficult language activity.

b. *Taking risks wisely*: It involves a conscious decision to take a reasonable risk regardless of the possibility of making mistakes.

c. *Rewarding yourself*: It involves acknowledging good performance and acting upon it.

2.3 *Taking your emotional temperature*: It involves getting in touch with feelings, attitudes, and motivations through a variety of means.

a. *Listening to your body*: It involves paying attention to what the body says in order to gain self-control and understanding.

b. *Using a checklist*: It involves using a checklist to assess their feelings and attitudes about language learning.

c. *Writing a language learning diary*: It involves keeping a journal with narrative describing feelings, attitudes, and perceptions about the language learning process.

d. *Discussing your feelings with someone else*: It involves discussing needs and emotional states with peers or teachers.

3. *Social Strategies*: These strategies involve communication with other people.

3.1 *Asking questions*: It involves requesting information from someone else for the purpose of completing a communication task.

a. *Asking for clarification*: It involves asking the interlocutor to slow down, paraphrase, repeat, explain, or clarify what he/she has said.

b. *Asking for correction*: It involves requesting help from others to correct errors.

3.2 *Cooperating with others*: It involves interactions with others.

a. *Cooperating with peers*: It involves a concerted effort to work together with other learners.

b. *Cooperating with proficient users of the language*: It involves taking specific steps to enhance communication with a proficient user of the new language.

3.3 *Empathizing with others*: It involves empathy with other people, especially members of the target culture.

a. *Developing cultural understanding*: It involves gaining knowledge about the new culture.

b. *Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings*: It involves an awareness of fluctuations in the thoughts and feelings of people who use the new language.

APPENDIX B

Self-Experience

My education, my experience as a language learner and as a language teacher gives me a broader understanding of how people learn a language. Since I was a young student I became aware of the different tactics that one could employ to make learning successful. When learning English, my exposure to the language was very limited since internet and cable TV were not popular in Peru at that time. I remember listening to Barry Manilow and Air Supply's songs which were very easy to understand and made it possible for me to write down the lyrics and sing along to improve my pronunciation. My friends and I also used to go to the beach or the main square in search of tourists who would be willing to chat with us in order to see how much we could understand and be understood. Using language learning strategies inside and outside the classroom helped me learn English successfully making learning easier and more fun.

I remember using different kinds of strategies not only when learning foreign languages but also when studying for my college subjects. I did not know anything about learning strategies but know that I look back I recognize many strategies that helped me master the topics I was studying.

As a language teacher, I teach my students different strategies and I always encourage them to use different learning strategies to aid in their learning. I believe language learning should never be a passive event. Learners need to take a very active role in their learning if they are to succeed. By becoming aware of the different strategies, learners can enhance their learning experience in obtaining a high level of proficiency in the English.

APPENDIX C

Letter to Participants

Dear Potential Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate at Florida International University in Miami, Fl. I am inviting you to participate in a research study that I am conducting for partial fulfillment of the requirements of my degree program. The focus of my study is language learning strategy use by Colombian ESL Adult Learners.

You have been identified as a potential participant. The criteria for participation in this study are: (a) being Colombian; (b) having more than one year of experience as an ESL learner; and (c) having an intermediate or advanced level of English proficiency.

You will be asked to participate in an individual interview, which should take between 60-90 minutes to complete. You will also be required to keep a reflective journal for a minimum of 3 weeks. Finally, you will be invited to take part in a focus group session which should take around 90 minutes. All these tasks will be completed during your regular class schedule at MDC. In appreciation for your time, you will receive $25 at the end of the focus group interview.

I will be available for an introductory meeting at your campus on Tuesdays and Thursdays during your class hours. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at (305)409-1870 or send an email to paredese@fiu.edu.
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Elsie E. Paredes

APPENDIX D

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Demographics

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Why do you consider yourself Colombian?
4. If you were born somewhere besides Colombia, where did you grow up?
5. Where do you live now?
6. How long have you been in the U.S.?
7. What was your level of education prior to coming to the US?

Language learning

1. Did you study English when you were living in Colombia? If so, how long? How often? How long ago? What kind of program? Where? Anywhere else outside of Colombia?
2. How long have you been studying English as a Second Language in the US?
3. How long have you been studying English at MDC?
4. Why are you studying English?
5. What do you want to accomplish by studying English?
6. Describe your English language learning experience.

Secondary questions:
    a. Is it difficult for you to learn English?
    b. If so, what is it that makes it most difficult for you?
    c. In terms of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, in which aspect do you think you have made the most progress since you started learning English?
    d. Do you think you have favorable learning conditions to learn English? Explain
    e. What obstacles have you experienced in learning English?
    f. Have you been successful at learning English? Why or why not?
    g. Would you consider yourself a good language learner? Why or why not?
    h. What feelings do you have towards the language learning process?
    i. What does it feel like to be an adult language learner?

7. What do you consider the best method to learn English?

Secondary questions:
    a. What helps you to learn grammar? Why?

  b. What helps you to learn vocabulary? Why?
  c. What helps you to improve reading comprehension? Why?
  d. What helps you to improve writing? Why?
  e. What helps you to improve speaking? Why?

Language Learning Strategies

Memory Strategies
 8. How do you make connections between new knowledge and previous knowledge?
  a. Give examples.
  b. Why do these strategies work for you?
 9. What do you do to remember new information? (e.g., new words, grammar rules, etc).
  a. Give examples.
  b. Why do these strategies work for you?

Cognitive Strategies
 10. Describe how you process and learn new information
  a. Give examples.
  b. Why do these strategies work for you?
 11. Describe how you practice the new information
  a. Give examples.
  b. Why do these strategies work for you?

Compensation Strategies
 12. What you do when you encounter new vocabulary in a written text.
  a. Give examples
  b. Why do these strategies work for you?
 13. What you do when someone is talking to you and you don't understand something.
  a. Give examples
  b. Why do these strategies work for you?
 14. What you do when you are talking to someone and you don't know how to say something in English.
  a. Give examples
  b. Why do these strategies work for you?

Metacognitive Strategies
 15. How do you monitor your own learning?
  a. Give examples
  b. Why do these strategies work for you?
 16. How do you prepare to learn English? How do you study for for your English classes?

      a.   Give examples
      b.   Why do these strategies work for you?

17.   How do you know if you have learned something new?
      a.   Give examples
      b.   Why do these strategies work for you?

18.   How do you know you are making progress in your learning?
      a.   Give examples
      b.   Why do these strategies work for you?
19.   How do you correct your errors?
      a.   Give examples
      b.   Why do these strategies work for you?

Affective Strategies
20.   How do you feel when you are learning English? When you are using English outside of class?
21.   How do you reduce anxiety?
      a.   Give examples
      b.   Why do these strategies work for you?
22.   How do you encourage yourself to speak English?
      a.   Give examples
      b.   Why do these strategies work for you?
23.   How do you reward yourself when you do well in English?
      a.   Give examples
      b.   Why do these strategies work for you?

Social Strategies
24.   What do you do when you need assistance while using English?
      a.   Give examples
      b.   Why do these strategies work for you?
25.   How do you practice English outside class?
26.   Who do ask for help when you need it?
27.   How do you learn the American culture? How do you feel about learning the American culture? Give examples.
28.   What hasn't worked for you? Why?
29.   Is there anything else that I should have asked you?
30.   Are there any other comments you would like to make at this time?
31.   What else do you think I should know or understand?

APPENDIX E

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Miami's public research university
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title: Language Learning Strategies use by Colombian Adult English Language Learners: A Phenomenological Study

You are being asked to be in a research study. The investigator of this study is Elsie Paredes and she is a student at Florida International University. This study will include 12 Colombian ESL students at MDC, InterAmerican campus, Miami, Fl. Your participation will require 1-2 hours of your time to participate in a semi-structured interview and a 90-minute to 2-hour focus group session. We are looking at your use of language Learning Strategies while learning and using English as a Second Language.

If you decide to be a part of this study, you will participate in a digitally recorded individual interview and a focus group interview. The individual interview and the focus group interview will be guided by a list of questions. You will be asked to answer questions about how you learn using language learning strategies. You will also be asked to keep a daily journal for 3 weeks about the strategies you use. We do not expect any harm to you by being in the study. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you get upset or feel discomfort during the interview, you may ask to take a break. You will get no direct benefit from being in the study. However, your help will give us information about ESL learning and the use of language learning strategies.

All your responses to the individual interview will remain anonymous and confidential. Your digital voice file and transcribed interview will be identified with a random number not your name. All of your answers are private and will not be shared with anyone unless required by law. Your data will be compiled with the data of the other participants. I will present the research results as a group. You may ask questions about the study at any time. If you choose not to participate no one will be upset with you. You may choose to stop your participation before you finish the individual interview or the focus group session.

If you would like more information about this research after you are done, you can contact me at 305-409-1870. If you would like to talk with someone about your rights of being a subject in this study you may contact Dr. Patricia Price, the Chairperson of the FIU Institutional Review Board at 305-348-2618 or 305-348-2494. Dr. Price is the designated person to receive calls from all research participants regarding the rights of human subjects.

Your signature below indicates that all of your questions have been answered to your liking. You are aware of your rights and you would like to be in the study.

_____   _____ _____
Signature of Participant   Printed Name   Date

I have explained the research procedure, participant rights and answered questions asked by the participant. I have offered him/her a copy of this informed consent form.

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date

APPENDIX F

Focus Group Semi-Structured Interview Guide

After conducting the learning activity "strip story", participants will take part in a focus group session to describe and discuss the language learning strategies they used during the activity.

1. How did you like the activity you just completed? Why? Or why not?

2. What did you do to understand any unknown words (if any) contained in the segment of the story assigned to you? Did it work? Why or why not?

3. What did you do to memorize the segment of the story assigned to you? What helped you remember this information? Did it work? Why?

4. How did you and your peers organize the segments of the story in a logical sequence? What steps did you follow? Did it work? Why?

5. What did you do to understand the new information provided by your peers? How did you and your peers make sure the story followed a logical order?

6. What other strategies did you find useful in accomplishing this task? Why?

7. What strategies didn't work? Why?

APPENDIX G

Strip Story

"The Cafeteria"

Americans have become used to the convenience of disposable items.
One day a foreign student in an American university sat down at the cafeteria to have some tea.
He poured the boiling water in his cup and then opened his tea bag into the cup.
Right away he saw that he had made a mistake.
A polite American student explained that the tea bag should be dipped, not opened.
The foreign student thanked the American student and then went on his way.
He was too embarrassed to try again that day.
The next day the foreign student went back to the cafeteria.
This time he knew exactly what to do.
After pouring the boiling water into his cup, he carefully dipped his tea bag in the water.
Satisfied that he was learning a lot about American customs, he promptly dipped his sugar packet into the tea.
Soon he realized that he still had a lot to learn about life in the United States.

APPENDIX H

Focus Group Facilitator Curriculum Vitae

Aixa Perez-Prado
12407 NW 7 Lane
Miami, Florida 33182
(305) 905-2273
pereza@fiu.edu

EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Field	Dates
Ph.D.	Florida State University	Social Science & Education / Bilingual Bicultural Title VII Fellow	December 1996
M.A.	Monterey Institute of International Studies	TESOL	May 1986
B.A.	State University of New York at Buffalo	English	August 1985

FULL-TIME ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Institution	*Rank*	*Field*	*Dates*
Florida International University	Assistant	TESOL Professor/ESOL Coordinator	8/99-current
Florida International University	Visiting	TESOL Instructor	8/97-8/99
Florida Atlantic University	Training	TESOL Associate	1/93-4/96
Florida Language Center	ESL Professor/ Training Coordinator	ESL/EFL	1/92-1/93

American Language Center of Casablanca Morocco	EFL Professor/ Coordinator	EFL	9/89-6/91
Centro Cultural Costarricense Norte-Americano	EFL Professor/ Supervisor	EFL	6/87-6/89
Alisal Elementary School	Bilingual Teacher	Bilingual Ed.	9/86-6/87

NON-ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Place of Employment	*Title*	*Dates*
Variable including: Florida DOE, Lynn University, Prentice-Hall	Consultant/Writer/ Editor	4/96-7/97
American Language Center / Off Center	Editor	8/89-6/91
McGraw-Hill	Item Writer	6/86-8/86

PUBLICATIONS IN DISCIPLINE

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A paper presented at the Second Annual Florida International University COE Research Conference, Florida International University, April 26, 2003.

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Pérez-Prado, A. TESOL Issues in Higher Education. Panel presentation at the Sunshine State TESOL conference, West Palm Beach, Florida, May 9, 2002.

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Pérez-Prado, A., Ramos, F., Castro-Feinberg, R. Unz in Florida: Considerations in Bilingual Education . Panel presentation at the Bilingual Association of Florida conference, Miami, Florida, January 2002.

Pérez-Prado, A. Using Online Interactions in TESOL graduate courses. Paper presentation at the Southeast Regional TESOL conference, October 2000.

Thirunarayanan, M.O. and Pérez-Prado, A. (2000). Using web-based course tools to facilitate committee work. Paper presented at the WebNet 2000 - World Conference on the WWW and Internet, San Antonio, Texas, October 30 - November 4, 2000.

Thirunarayanan, M.O. and Pérez-Prado, A. (2000). Comparing web-based and classroom-based learning: A quantitative and qualitative analysis. Paper presented at the SITE (Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education) 2000 conference, San Diego, CA February 9-12, 2000.

Pérez-Prado, A. Living in a State of Infusion. Roundtable discussion moderator at the Sanibel Leadership conference, Sanibel, Florida, June 2001.

Pérez-Prado, A. Teaching and Learning Online. Presentation at the Sunshine State TESOL Conference, St. Petersburg, Florida, May 2001.

Pérez-Prado, A. Reflections on the Linguistic and Cultural Socialization of Language Minority Children in School: Listening to Children's Voices. Presentation at the Conference on Education, Labor, and Emancipation at Florida International University, Miami, Florida October 2000.

Pérez-Prado, A. University Perspectives: infusion and faculty development in TESOL. Presentation at the Sunshine State TESOL conference, Daytona Beach, Florida, May 2000.

Pérez-Prado, A. Infusion of ESOL at FIU. Presentation at the Sanibel Leadership conference, Sanibel, Florida, July 1999.

Pérez-Prado, A. Hearing Immigrant Students' Voices. Paper presentation at the Sunshine State TESOL conference, Daytona Beach, Florida May 1999.

Pérez-Prado, A. Putting a course online. Workshop presented at the Teaching and Learning with Technology Faculty Showcase, Miami, Florida October 1999.

Pérez-Prado, A. Reading and Literature Across Contexts. Workshop presentation at the Bilingual Association of Florida (BAF), March 1999.

Pérez-Prado, A. Cross-Cultural Communication. Workshop presentation at the Art of Teaching conference at Florida International University, Miami, Florida, December 1997.

Pérez-Prado, A. Language, Identity and Discrimination in the Classroom. Paper presented at the Florida State University Parent Network Unification Seminar, Tallahassee, Florida, April 1995.

Pérez-Prado, A. Social Contexts of Language Development: Exploring Language Uses. Paper presented at the Sanibel Leadership conference in Sanibel, Florida, July 1993.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Pérez-Prado, A. (in process) ESOL buddies: creating learning partnerships between pre-service teachers and ESOL children in schools. A paper being prepared for submission to a scholarly journal.

MEMBERSHIPS AND ASSOCIATIONS

President Miami-Dade TESOL Council 2005-2007

Vice President Sunshine State TESOL 2005-2006

Member Sunshine State TESOL Advocacy Committee

Member International TESOL

Bilingual Association of Florida Advocacy Chair 2008

Member Miami-Dade TESOL Council

Member Bilingual Association of Florida

Member BRAZ-TESOL 2003-current

Member Parent Teacher Association New World School of the Arts

Member Parent Teacher Association, Marjorie S. Douglas Elementary School

Member Technology Committee, Florida International University COE

Member Judiciary and Mediation Committee, Florida International University

LANGUAGES

Spanish – fluent
English – fluent
Portuguese – advanced
French - intermediate
German – basic
Moroccan Arabic - basic

AWARDS

Rocco, T. S., Bliss, L., Gallagher, S. Perez-Prado, A., (2002, March). Mixed methods use in HRD and AE. In T. M. Egan & S. A. Lynham (Eds.). *Proceedings of the Academy of Human Resource Development Annual Conference*. (pp. 404-410). Honolulu, HI: AHRD. **(*Winner Defining the Cutting Edge Award Top Ten Best Papers of 2002 AHRD*)**

Language Learning Strategies Coding Rubric

DIRECT STRATEGIES				
Categories	**Code**	**Definition**	**Sub-categories**	**Code**
Memory	MEM	*Memory strategies* relate to the storing and retrieval of information (Oxford, 1990).	Creating mental linkages Applying images and sounds Reviewing well Employing action	LNK IMA REV ACT
Cognitive	COG	*Cognitive strategies* operate directly on incoming information, manipulating or transforming it in ways that enhance learning (O'Malley & Oxford, 1990)	Practicing Receiving and sending messages Analyzing and reasoning Creating structure for input and output	PRA MES ANL STR
Compensation	COM	*Compensation strategies* enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge (Oxford, 1990).	Guessing intelligently Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing	GSS LIM

INDIRECT STRATEGIES				
Categories	**Code**	**Definition**	**Sub-categories**	**Code**
Metacognitive	MET	*Metacognitive strategies* allow learners to control their own cognition (Oxford, 1990).	Centering learning Arranging and planning learning Evaluating learning	CTR PLN EVA
Affective	AFF	*Affective strategies* are concerned with the regulation of feelings and attitudes (Oxford, 1990).	Lowering anxiety Encouraging yourself Taking emotional temperature	ANX ENC EMO
Social	*SOC*	*Social strategies* are those which take account of the fact that language is a form of social behavior, involving communication with other people (Oxford, 1990).	Asking questions Cooperating with others Empathizing with others	ASK COP EMP

APPENDIX J

Participant Reflective Journal

As a valuable participant in this study, you are requested to keep a reflective

journal for no less than 3 weeks. Use the notebook provided to you to write down your

thoughts, experiences, feelings, reflections, and the specific actions you take in order to

learn English. It is strongly suggested that you write something every day or every other

day after class. Write the date for each entry. Use the language of your choice (Spanish or

English or both).

Use the following questions to guide your reflection:

1.   How would you describe your experience of learning English? How do you feel

        as an adult language learner?

2.   What happened to you in class today? How do you feel about what happened?

3.   What do you usually do in order to process the new information?

4.   What do you usually do in order to practice the new material?

5.   Describe your experiences with language use outside the classroom today. What

        are the major obstacles that you encounter when learning or using English? How

        do you overcome those obstacles?

VITA

ELSIE ELENA PAREDES

Born, Trujillo, Perú

1991	Bachelor in Education Track: Foreign Languages, English & German Universidad Nacional de La Libertad, Trujillo, Perú
1991 – 1994	EFL Instructor Instituto Cultural Peruano-NorteAmericano, Trujillo, Perú
1992-1994	EFL Course Coordinator and Instructor Instituto de Administración Universitaria Universidad Nacional de la Libertad, Trujillo, Perú
1993	Assistant Director of Language Center and EFL Instructor Universidad Particular Antenor Orrego, Trujillo,Perú
1994-1996	Director Language Institute and EFL Instructor Universidad Privada del Norte, Trujillo, Perú
1999	Master of Science, TESOL Florida International University, Miami, Florida
1999 – 2000	ESL Instructor Miami Dade College, North Miami, Florida
1999 – 2000	ESL Instructor ELS Language Center, Barry University, North Miami, Florida
2007	Graduate Professional Certificate in Conflict Resolution & Consensus Building: Global Issues & Conflict Resolution Center of Labor Research and Studies Florida International University, Miami, Florida
2000 - 2009	Graduate Teaching Assistant Instructor, Research Assistant Florida International University, Miami, Florida
2000 – Present	ESL & Spanish Instructor Instructional Trainer for Language Teachers The Global Institute of Languages & Culture Plantation, Florida

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Paredes, E. E., Abal, A., & Perez-Prado, A. (2010). Teaching and learning in a virtual world. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 102-108). Miami: Florida International University.

Paredes, E. E. (2009). Hispanics: Does our language (Spanish) define who we are? In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 98-104). Miami: Florida International University

Paredes, E. E. (2009). [Review of the book *Reading the world of work: A learner-centered approach to workplace literacy and ESL*]. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development, 23*(1), 52-55. http://education.fiu.edu/newhorizons