

**Good Language Learning through Cycles of Reflection  
and Strategy Usage**

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Module 2  
Second Language Acquisition  
And  
Pedagogic Grammar

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Do you think that there is such a thing as a ‘good language learner’? To what extent do you think that it is possible for people to become ‘better’ language learners? Discuss with reference to your own students, past or present.

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## **1. Introduction**

The notion of a good language learner (GLL) has long existed in the minds of teachers. However limited the view of the learner's role was in the past, there were still certain expectations to be fulfilled by the learner (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 28). From those expectations, based on different ideas of language and language learning, subjective judgments were made on whether students were 'good' or 'bad'. Over the last few decades, the notion of a GLL has been transformed into a more complex, yet elusive entity, reflecting the natural diversity and reality of learners. This essay will examine the change in perspectives of the GLL and illustrate how students in a communicative classroom can become better language learners.

## **2. Focus on Methods**

The 'Methods Era' was a lively and innovative time as the birth of new approaches to language teaching dominated the field (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 15). The Direct Method, Situational Language Teaching, the Audiolingual Method, and the Silent Way, just to name a few, each foregrounded particular elements based on its underlying theories of language and learning (Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 330). Through all of the differences ran a common vein: 'the belief that if language learning is to be improved, it will come about through changes and improvements in teaching methodology' (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 15).

## **2.1. The Learner in a Method-Focused Classroom**

This method-focused view of teaching did address the role of the learner; however, according to Richards and Rodgers, it could be classified it as a ‘subelement’ of the method (2001: 33) (see Appendix 1). Thus, perceptions of the ‘good language learner’ were dependent on the prevailing method. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s, when Audiolingualism reached its peak in the United States (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 53-54), ‘good language learners gained good linguistic habits through drilling and practice’ (Grenfell, 1999: 13), and were discouraged from making errors (Brown, 2001: 23). In contrast, teachers today are cautioned against drilling students excessively (Thornbury, 1999: 97). Furthermore, taking risks, which involves becoming vulnerable to producing errors, is now an acknowledged affective strategy (Brown, 2001: 63).

## **3. A Shift in Focus**

This change in the expectations held for a GLL was perhaps a natural progression in the expanding field of language teaching (Grenfell, 1999: 148). As researchers and teachers continued to explore the vastness of second language acquisition and attempted to uncover the key to an ‘era of universal success in teaching a second language’, a shift in focus occurred as the realization dawned that no singularly perfect method existed (Brown, 2000: 123). One result of this awareness was a closer examination of the individual. In other words, instead of searching for a good method, the hunt was on for the good learner.

#### **4. Research on the GLL**

In the 1970s, publications on the GLL began to surface as numerous researchers presented discussions on the shared styles or characteristics and strategies of good learners (Norton and Toohey, 2001: 308-309). Among the more historically notable was Naiman et al.'s *The Good Language Learner* (Chamot, 1997: 561), which was in part prompted by the work of Rubin, whose list of GLL characteristics (Brown, 2000: 123) (see Appendix 2) is still echoed in current SLA literature (Lightbown and Spada, 1999: 50).

Continuing research from different perspectives or with different focuses has produced an overlapping deluge of lists of preferred characteristics, categories of strategies, and definitions of a good learner (Siew-Lian Wong, 2005: 246-247). For instance, Padron et al. focused on the relationship between successful learners and their levels of resilience (2000: 3). Norton and Toohey argued 'for approaches to good language learning that focus not only on learners' internal characteristics, learning strategies, or linguistic outputs but also on the reception of their actions in particular sociocultural communities' (2001: 308). Takeuchi studied the culturally preferred strategies of good foreign language learners at different levels in Japan (2003: 386); while Siew-Lian Wong further explored the relationship between self-efficacy and strategy use in ESL pre-service teachers in Malaysia (2005: 249).

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to expound on the many research endeavors of the GLL, it can be said that there is a general consensus in the literature:

‘[There] is no single type of “good language” learner but many variations each with their own characteristics, techniques and approaches’ (Grenfell, 1999: 37), and although more research needs to be done, ‘[there] is a strong relationship between strategy use and L2 proficiency...[and the] ways that effective learners use strategies and combine them makes the distinction between them and less effective learners’ (Anderson, 2005: 759; 762). In sum, a GLL is an effective learner.

## **5. The Process of Becoming an Effective Learner**

One question which must be raised is, ‘How do students become effective learners?’ Based on such aforementioned literature of successful language learning, I believe becoming an effective learner is a process that begins with a purpose:

### The Good Language Learner:

1. creates specific and realistic goals;
2. is aware of external and internal factors that may affect him or her;
3. uses strategies effectively and systematically as part of a continual cycle of learning and reflection in order to optimize or overcome various elements specific to his or her experience;
4. and aims for autonomy or independence.

First, my students have often said that their goal is to become ‘like a native speaker’; however, ‘[few], if any, adult learners ever come to blend indistinguishably with the community of target language “native speakers”’ (Mitchell and Myles, 2001: 19-20).

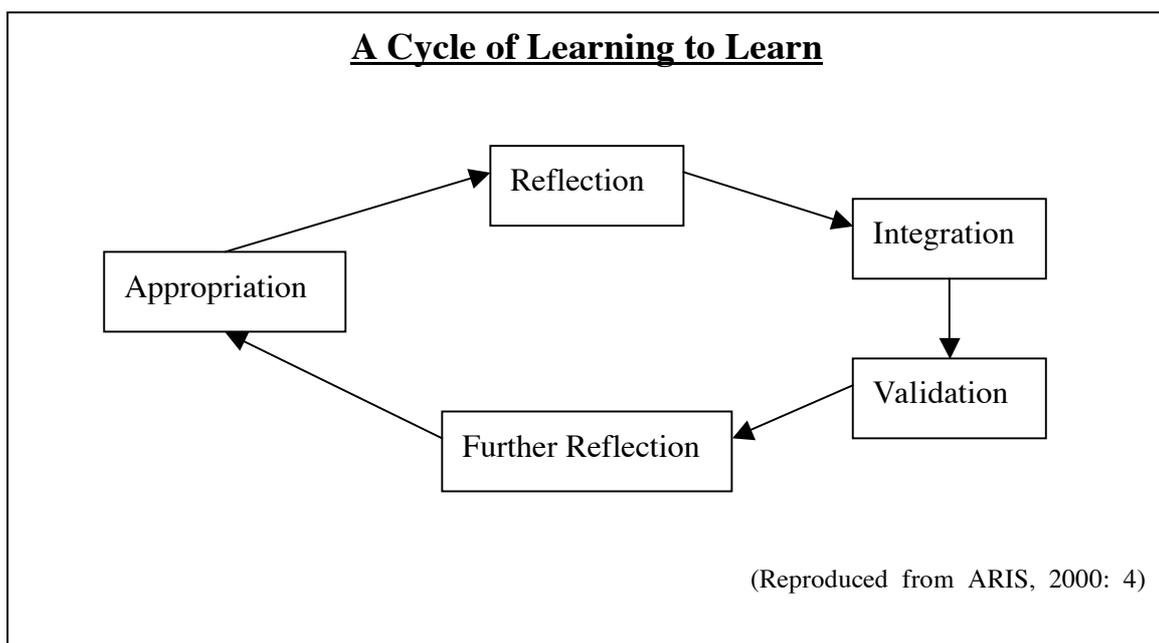
Described as ‘an impossible target’, this unrealistic goal has caused much frustration among students (Cook, 2002: 331). Ultimately, having a clear and attainable purpose is essential to maintaining motivation and encouraging success (Nunan, 1999: 192; Yule, 1996: 195).

Second, learners should be aware of factors that may affect their learning. Externally, learners must consider their environment and ‘the possibilities their various communities [offer] them’ (Norton and Toohey, 2001: 318); this includes factors of accessibility to native-speaker groups and opportunities to use one’s L2. Moreover, they must have an understanding of their own characteristics and styles. A list of such individual factors that affect learning is presented by Lightbown and Spada (1999: 52-60):

1. Intelligence
2. Aptitude for learning languages
3. Personality (e.g. resilience, inhibition, self-esteem)
4. Motivation and attitudes (i.e. reason for learning and views of the L2 group)
5. Learner preferences (e.g. perceptual and cognitive learning styles)
6. Learner beliefs (i.e. beliefs about the best way to learn)
7. Age

It is important to note that these interrelate and overlap, and that research has not definitively explained their relationship to successful language learning (1999: 51-52). Nevertheless, awareness is essential for such elements have been shown to affect the strategies that learners use (Oxford, 1994: 2).

Third, when learners have an explicit aim and a deeper understanding of their situation, they can then more effectively select strategies that most appropriately suit their needs (Watkins, 2000: 37). This can allow them to optimize their strengths and learning opportunities, and effectively deal with limitations and negative contextual ‘positions’ (Norton and Toohey, 2001: 310). Of course, language development is undoubtedly dynamic. ‘As the learner improves his performance in the target language, what we are therefore likely seeing with the attainment of higher levels of language complexity is the attainment of higher levels of processing...capability’ (Rutherford, 1987: 124). This implies a need for the use of different strategies (Takeuchi, 2003: 391), which can be facilitated by a metacognitive ‘cycle of learning to learn’.



‘Boud (1987b) developed [this] schema which systematizes ways in which learners can reflect on and learn from experience’ (ARIS, 2000: 4). Vital to this cycle is the initial act of reflecting. Through reflection and evaluation, learners can continuously monitor

their usage and strive to expand their repertoires of strategies (ARIS, 2000: 3) (see Appendix 3 for further details of Boud's schema).

Finally, knowing how to enlist strategies to aid learning is one major step towards increasing independence, the importance of which cannot be overstated. Asserts Grenfell:

...the dimension of autonomy is so fundamental to the nature of language that successful learning cannot occur without it being present in some degree. In brief, it is inconceivable that someone can develop communicative competence...and not also be operating increasingly within their own semi-independent social, psychological and linguistic-generating structures...Good language learning is about increasing autonomy. (1999: 35).

## **6. The Process of Becoming a Better Learner**

Implicit in this 4-point definition of the GLL is the individual's resolution to become a 'better' language learner. As students continue to reflect upon their learning and use strategies to effectively maneuver through progressively difficult language tasks or situations, they should become more capable and efficient learners as well (Watkins, 2000, 96).

### **6.1. A Learner's Obstacle and Teacher's Role**

One obstacle to becoming a GLL is that traditionally 'learners do not develop their own ability to assess how much they have learned and how much they need to learn' (Nunan, 1999: 85). Many of my students have verbalized frustration because of this and have expressed an eagerness to overcome this limitation. Essentially, they 'want to adopt a

more active role. The problem for them is that they do not know how' (Nunan, 1999: 156). In order to help learners transcend this problem, it is important to examine the role of the teacher. Brown states, '[teaching] is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the conditions for learning' (2000: 7). In adopting such responsibilities, teachers can help students fulfill their potential by teaching students how to become 'better' language learners (Grenfell, 1999: 50).

## **6.2. Teacher-Student Action Cycle**

One way I have tried to assist students in dealing with language learning more effectively is by using a number of stages similar to Breen's set of steps used in a process approach (Skehan, 1998: 263) (see Appendix 4 for further details of Breen's set of steps). Both processes share the aim of trying to help learners 'become more effective, autonomous decision makers' (Skehan, 1998: 262-263); however, while Breen's steps focus on negotiation between teacher and class at the beginning of a course, the teacher-student action cycle used in my class focuses on effective strategy usage to achieve individual short-term goals and can be initiated or terminated at any time.

### **6.2.1. Pre-Interview Preparation**

I keep an ongoing journal of students' strengths and points to improve. It includes objective information, such as dates, names, and transcribed utterances (usually errors), as well as subjective notes (for example, the perceived frequency or nature of an error) (McDonough and McDonough, 1997: 122). This information is compared to the student's most recent Counseling Form (see Appendix 5), on which he or she is asked to

indicate, among other items, what aspect of English he or she wants to improve most. Then, two or three problematic areas are selected to become the probable targets for improvement.

### **6.2.2. Teacher-Student Interview**

The student and I have an informal interview in which the student is asked general and more guided questions (see Appendix 6) in order to prompt introspection and begin raising his or her consciousness about an area that requires attention (Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 109). Preferably, it is the student who offers or raises the area of need, as there may be greater ‘profitability’ when it is topicalized by the student (Slimani, 2001: 297). Once a short-term goal has been specified, our respective roles are discussed and a plan is created. Suggestions on how to improve are elicited from the student and recommendations, in the form of learning or communication strategies (Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 515), are given. Then, a commitment is made by the student to be more attentive and to try different strategies.

### **6.2.3. Action**

For approximately 3 months, while the student continues to actively focus on a particular point, I periodically attend to whether the student is aware of and satisfied with his or her strategy use (i.e. the student is encouraged to refine or revise his or her strategy usage). Further support is given through focused homework or tailored activities, which allow for extra practice.

### **6.2.4. Post-Action Evaluation**

The student and I reflect upon the process, and the student is asked to self-evaluate and

verbalize his or her progress. At this point, he or she is encouraged to continue to address the original short-term goal or to undertake a new focus, depending on his or her confidence that positive development occurred.

## **7. Determining the Possible Effectiveness of the Cycle**

Usage of this teacher-student action cycle has yielded positive student feedback, and based on personal observation, has shown that it is continually possible for students to become better learners. However, attempting to examine the precise degree to which improvement occurs results in a more ambiguous conclusion. Although it is possible to observe the frequency of a cognitive strategy such as note taking during class (Brown, 2000: 125), it may not be possible to accurately interpret how much that strategy improves a student's ability to learn. Even when asked to report their own interpretations, it must be recognized that learners do not have full or conscious access to all of their cognitive processes (McDonough and McDonough, 1997: 191). Notes Slimani on data collected from student questionnaires about uptake, 'I am dealing here with the learners' perceptions of what they believed they have uptaken rather than with "facts"' (2001: 289). On a similar note, when trying to measure factors that affect learning, such as personality and motivation, the same question of 'whether or not self-perceptions are accurate' arises (Brown, 2000: 167). These kinds of difficulties make an interpretive approach more appropriate when dealing with such open-ended queries (Swann, 2001: 340).

## **7.1. Sources of Information**

Information collected from my classroom journal, students' Counseling Forms, and notes from unstructured pre- and post- cycle interviews and periodic mini-interviews led to the deduction that when students actively participate in a cycle of reflection and strategy usage, they are capable of improving their learning skills.

## **7.2. Three Exemplars**

Three former students attended one 45-minute class per week at an English language school in Japan. They were all at a high-beginner/low-intermediate level and all interested in becoming communicatively competent for a variety of reasons. Student X, a male in his early 60s, used social strategies to improve his strategic competence; Student Y, a female in her late teens, used affective and metacognitive strategies to develop her discourse competence; and Student Z, a female in her late 20s, focused on metacognitive and memory strategies to sharpen her grammatical competence.

### **7.2.1. Summary of Teacher-Student Action Cycles**

#### **7.2.1.1. Student X**

##### Pre-Interview Preparation:

*Journal Excerpts:*

Pronunciation: think/sink th/s she/see sh/s base/vase b/v

Listening: T: What're you going to do this weekend?

X: Oh, I went to castle for hanami [cherry blossom] party.

T: No, what're you GOING to do this weekend?

X: No, I went to hanami last week.

T: Wow, it's cold today, isn't it?

X: Yes, I'm fine. Thank you.

*Counseling Form:*

Student wanted to improve pronunciation, listening, and cultural awareness. His main reasons for studying English were to exchange cultural information with foreign friends, to live in Australia for 3 months, and for 'brain exercise'.

Possible areas requiring additional focus identified: listening or pronunciation.

Teacher-Student Interview: Student X recognized that listening was difficult and tried to compensate by using the cognitive strategy of inferencing or guessing from context (Brown, 2000: 126). Unfortunately, his guesses were often inaccurate, which resulted in inappropriate responses. Furthermore, when his interlocutor did not signal Student X's lack of comprehension, the result was the appearance of two separate conversations between two individuals.

Action: It was decided that he should do extra listening practice at home with a focus on understanding reduced forms, such as contractions and assimilations (Brown, 2001: 253). In class, it was recommended that he use the social strategy of asking clarifying questions to ensure he understood what was said (Brown, 2000: 133).

Post-Action Evaluation: After 3 months, we discussed his progress. I commended him on his much more frequent efforts to listen and clarify utterances he did not

understand. This helped to prevent misunderstandings and forced a negotiation of meaning earlier in his conversations. When asked how he felt, he responded that he still thought listening was difficult, but felt he could understand a little more. He also began looking forward to his daily listening homework. Furthermore, his confidence in understanding contractions had improved and he requested more practice understanding assimilations. For his next cycle, he decided to continue focusing on listening with an emphasis on assimilations, elisions, and liaisons.

#### **7.2.1.2. Student Y**

##### Pre-Interview Preparation:

###### *Journal Excerpts:*

Student Y has strong listening skills (listens to tape once and can usually answer all questions correctly), is thoughtful of grammar, and always makes an effort to take notes; however, she is shy and lacks confidence in her ability to speak. She often avoids eye contact and speaks slowly with long pauses or short answers.

Pronunciation: think/sink th/s that/zat th/z plide/pride l/r

###### *Counseling Form:*

Student indicated a desire to improve vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. Her main reasons for studying English were to prepare for a future 'job in international relations, work with refugees, take TOEIC, [and] travel abroad'.

Possible areas requiring additional focus identified: confidence building, fluency, or pronunciation.

Teacher-Student Interview: When asked how she felt about her ability to communicate in English, she replied that she felt nervous when speaking and worried about making mistakes or saying the wrong thing. She studied grammar and vocabulary at home, but was not sure if those exercises were helping her. She also said that it was difficult to respond quickly because she was thinking about her word order or trying to select the ‘correct words’.

Action: Aside from offering a healthy amount of encouragement, I also suggested that she focus on affective strategies (Brown, 2000: 133). For example, she could try writing a language diary and remind herself before class that making mistakes was a natural part of learning (Nunan, 1999: 241). In class, students had time to share ‘What’s new?’ at the beginning of each lesson, so I also asked her utilize the metacognitive strategy of planning ahead by thinking or writing about what she wanted to share before class (Brown, 2000: 125).

Post-Action Evaluation: Initially, mini-counseling sessions were held on a monthly basis. During these sessions, she would share her thoughts about her performance and the strategies she was using. This time would also be used to give her additional reassurance and guidance: for example, ‘You’ve been answering questions more quickly! Keep it up! Now, let’s try to give a little more detail.’

After approximately 5 months, Student Y and I more fully evaluated her development. She seemed much more relaxed in class, her eye contact and reactions were stronger, and when she was struggling with word choice during a conversation, she turned to her interlocutor for assistance, rather than sit silently. When asked how she felt, she said she still became nervous at times, but she did not worry about making errors as often. She added that class was more enjoyable than before and she thought she could talk more fluently about her life. She attributed this development to her lowered anxiety and her efforts to think about and plan her 'What's new?' segment in advance (Skehan, 1998: 74). Finally, with her rising confidence, she decided to begin a new focus on using social strategies, such as cooperation and asking questions (Brown, 2000: 133), in order to develop the interaction between herself and her classmates.

### **7.2.1.3. Student Z**

#### Pre-Interview Preparation:

*Journal Excerpts:*

Student Z has good listening skills, makes eye contact and reacts appropriately; however, she often makes grammatical errors, avoids using complete sentences, and has difficulty forming questions. She also lacks vocabulary and often switches to Japanese when she does not know a word in English.

Questions: 'What mean 'consequence'?'

'What was your weekend in Saturday?'

'Do you Kobe meeting your friend?'

*Counseling Form:*

Student hoped to improve vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Her main reasons for studying English were to communicate by telephone at work and at international scientific conferences, make friends, travel abroad, watch movies, listen to music, talk to foreign co-workers, and take TOEIC.

Possible areas requiring additional focus identified: grammar or vocabulary.

Teacher-Student Interview: When asked about her goals, Student Z said she hoped to be ‘like a native speaker’. After some clarification and prioritization of her goals, she chose to forefront the ability to converse in social situations in order to begin building deeper relationships with her colleagues. Although she was capable of reading and writing in her field of biochemistry, she felt it was difficult to hold casual conversations. She realized she needed to more fully understand the rules of grammar and build more vocabulary in order to overcome the problem of ‘getting stuck’ mid-conversation.

Action: We decided to implement metacognitive strategies to focus her attention on word order in questions (Brown, 2000: 133). She was given extra homework to explicitly review question formation, and during class, she was assigned the more dominant role of discussion leader, which gave her ample opportunities to practice asking questions. In addition, she was encouraged to take notes, review her new vocabulary (Brown, 2000: 125), and apply different memory strategies, such as creating word maps or words in context, to aid vocabulary retention (Brown, 2000: 132).

Post-Action Evaluation: After 3 months, she reported that she felt more confident in her ability to fluently ask questions. She also felt she had retained new vocabulary more effectively, but was still uncertain of how to use it in her conversations. She asked that I continue to note patterns of grammatical errors and agreed to continue working on building vocabulary. Finally, in order to prepare for her upcoming conference in India, she requested more role-plays to practice making introductions and small talk.

### **7.3. Inference from Students' Progress**

In each of these three cases, it has been deduced that using the teacher-student action cycle led to the students becoming better language learners. By reaffirming long-term goals, raising awareness, and creating tangible short-term goals, the students were in a position to reassess their approaches to learning. From there, a variety of strategies were used to enable the students. Reflection allowed the students to reevaluate their progress and pursue progressively more effective ways of learning.

As the students moved through the cycle, they showed greater levels of effort and motivation, that is to say, asking more questions, doing more homework, and taking more risks in class. They also began to show greater levels of awareness by becoming more specific and realistic in their goals and self-evaluations. Furthermore, as students became accustomed to the cycle, they required less prompting. The interviews became shorter and less frequent, while the students became more assertive in initiating new cycles. After some time, the students could often be asked, 'What's your next goal?'

and they would explain what their goals were and why. This is not to say that it was no longer necessary to provide support. As a needs analyst and counselor, I continued to guide and give feedback to the students (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 167-168). Rather as the students became more responsible for their own learning, they became more empowered and autonomous entities (Richards and Lockhart, 1996: 98-100).

#### **7.4. Retrospection of the Teacher-Student Action Cycle**

Retrospection has provided the opportunity to examine how such a process can aid my students in becoming better at learning English; however, it has also brought to light some drawbacks of enlisting such a cycle of growth. Four points that need to be addressed are:

1. Efficiency: Although effective, the process cannot be considered efficient (Thornbury, 1999: 25). It is excessively time and energy consuming for the teacher. 20-30 minutes were spent on pre- and post- action interviews, and 10-15 minutes were spent on mini-counseling interviews. This was in addition to the time spent planning tailored activities, and preparing and checking individualized homework assignments. With many students, this kind of project is not feasible.
2. Interaction among students: This process has worked to improve rapport between my students and myself; however, it does not directly encourage cooperation among students. More student-student interaction could build a stronger sense of community in class (Brown, 2001: 178), as well as provide students with a more memorable or credible experience (Slimani, 2001: 298).
3. Role models: Related to the previous point is the need for acceptable role models.

Instead of placing the native-speaker on a pedestal as an unattainable ideal, it is better to have a more realistic and motivating role model (Cook, 2002: 336). By fostering positive interactions among students, learners are also given the chance to seek advice and inspiration from those students whose strengths differ from their own.

4. Evidence: It may be worthwhile for students to produce an organized and tangible manifestation of their progress in the form of a journal or portfolio (Brown, 2001: 418). This could serve as a reminder of their growth and the portfolios could be shared to motivate others and stimulate awareness about the learning process.

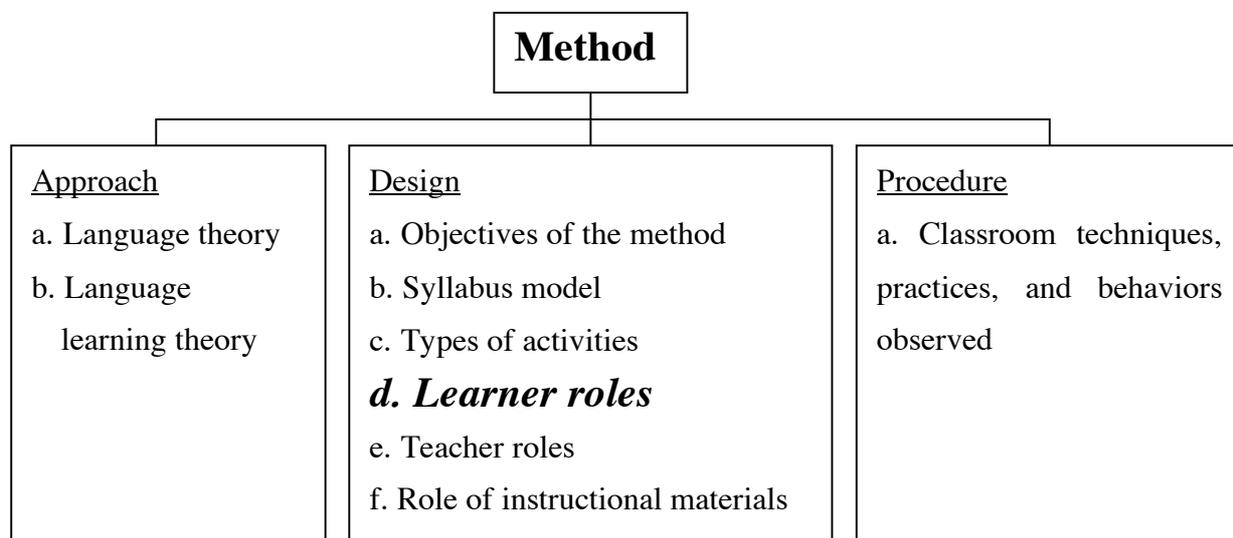
As a result of this assignment, it has been recognized that the extent to which teachers can students in becoming GLLs needs to be more closely examined. Regarding the teacher-student action cycle, further consideration must be given to the 4 points mentioned above. Although it is not possible to attend to this matter in greater detail in this essay, it is hoped that future attempts to modify and refine this cycle will lead to a more effective and collaborative process of promoting successful learning.

## **8. Conclusion**

In conclusion, as the literature and three of my former students have suggested, it is possible to become better at learning languages. Once goals have been identified or clarified, and context and individual factors have been accounted for, students and teachers can then optimally work together to discover ways to effectively use strategies

to increase learning potential. In order to improve the effectiveness of strategy usage, students need to align their perceptions of how to best learn with the desired result (Watkins, 2000: 96). One positive and concrete way to accomplish this is by using a cycle of reflection and action. For example, through 'trial and error', Student X found that clarifying through questions was a more appropriate strategy than inferring from context. This allowed him to have more coherent and meaningful conversations. Furthermore, when students can use suitably chosen strategies, they can increase their levels of responsibility and independence. This empowering dimension can allow students to actively become more efficient and efficacious learners, 'even on occasions when the learning context may not be promoting such a process' (Watkins, 2000: 99). In short, this ability to autonomously strive for success under any circumstance is the essence of the good language learner.

## Appendix 1: Richards and Rodgers' 'Summary of elements and subelements that constitute a method'



(Summarized version of Figure 2.1 in Richards, J.C. and Rodgers, T.S. (2001) *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), page 33, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)

## Appendix 2: Rubin's 14 Characteristics of Good Language Learners

1. Find their own way, taking charge of their learning.
2. Organize information about language.
3. Are creative, developing a “feel” for the language by experimenting with its grammar and words.
4. Make their own opportunities for practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom.
5. Learn to live with uncertainty by not getting flustered and by continuing to talk or listen without understanding every word.
6. Use mnemonics and other memory strategies to recall what has been learned.
7. Make errors work for them and not against them.
8. Use linguistic knowledge, including knowledge of their first language, in learning a second language.
9. Use contextual cues to help them in comprehension.
10. Learn to make intelligent guesses.
11. Learn chunks of language as wholes and formalized routines to help them perform “beyond their competence”.
12. Learn certain tricks that help to keep conversations going.
13. Learn certain production strategies to fill in gaps in their own competence.
14. Learn different styles of speech and writing and learn to vary their language according to the formality of the situation.

(Reproduced from Brown, H.D. (2000) *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), page 123, New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.)

### Appendix 3: Further Details of Boud's Schema

#### A Cycle of Learning to Learn:

Described by Boud et al as:

*Association:* Connecting the ideas and feelings that emerge to existing knowledge and attitudes, often through brainstorming, free association and joint construction of texts (without analysis at this stage) and group discussion

*Integration:* This describes the consequent analysis of these associations – looking for patterns, classifying and grouping ideas and/or themes that emerge

*Validation:* Validation is to do with how we, as learners 'road test' theories that are being integrated with existing attitudes and beliefs. Checks and balances promote a critical and cautious awareness for learners taking on new ideas- this could be through role play, observation and/or discussion

*Appropriation:* Those ideas, skills and behaviors that are deemed valid can then be appropriated as existing knowledge and/or practice.

(Reproduced from ARIS (2000) 'Learning to Learn: ARIS Information Sheet-September 2000', page 4, Available from Language Australia, Melbourne (Victoria): Adult Education Resource and Information Service. Publication type: Guides – Non-Classroom; Information Analysis.)

## Appendix 4: Further Details of Breen’s Set of Steps

Stage	Description
Goals	Learners and teacher need to discuss and agree upon what the language course should try to achieve.
Roles	Learners and teacher clarify what each expects of the other.
Plan	In some respects this is close to the syllabus aspect of traditional language courses, since it concerns the general shape of the lessons, and the sequence of events that will unfold.
Activities	The aspect of a process syllabus which is closest to methodology is determination of the activities that learners and teacher will use. The activities which are used should reflect the wishes of the learners. Decisions will need to reflect what learners, perhaps after taking the teacher’s advice, think will contribute most to their progress.
Evaluation	If learners are intended to have power, this power should manifest itself most crucially in decisions about what framework for evaluation and assessment will be adopted (Rea-Dickins and Germaine 1992) – it is their opinions which count here.
<p><i>Table 11.1: A set of steps that teacher and learner need to negotiate at the outset of a language learning course (Breen 1987: 161)</i></p>	

(Reproduced from Skehan, P. (1998) *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning*, page 263, Oxford: Oxford University Press.)

## **Appendix 5: Counseling Form (Student Section)**

## Appendix 6: Sample Interview Questions

### General Questions/Small Talk:

How is class? Easy? Difficult?

Are the listenings fast or slow?

Do you like the textbook?

Am I speaking at a good speed?

Are you studying or reviewing at home? Do you have time to study at home?

### Guiding Questions:

What are your long and short-term goals?

What is most difficult for you now?

What would you like to improve most?

Do you feel your \_\_\_\_\_ is getting easier/better?

What can we do in and outside of class to improve more or to make \_\_\_\_\_ easier?

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