

**Elements of Learner training and learning strategies in a
Japanese *eikaiwa* (private language school)**

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1. Introduction

After considering the broad concept of *learner training*, what it is, why it is important and how it might be implemented, this paper will seek to define learner training in my context; an instructor teaching in a branch of the largest private language chain school in Japan. The current role of learner training in my context will be examined and discussed, with a view to suggesting further improvement and research in my classes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 What is *learner training*?

An examination of the literature reveals a wide range of terminology associated with learner training, which is also referred to as *strategy training* (Richards *et al*, 1992) or *strategies-based instruction* (SBI) (Brown, 2000, 2001). Since the 1970s, there has been growing interest in the concept of the ‘good’ language learner and the importance of learning styles and learner preferences (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; Naiman *et al*, 1978; and Oxford, 1990).¹ This has marked a continued investigation into learning processes and support for the communicative philosophy of teaching learners how to learn, and thus become independent and autonomous learners through the use of learning strategies (Benson & Voller, 1987; Willing, 1989; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wenden, 1991; and Stern, 1992); together with increasing learners’ language awareness through inductive learning approaches and activities, such as *consciousness-raising* (Sharwood Smith, 1981; Rutherford, 1987; and Thornbury, 1999). Learner training and learning strategies can be seen to

Table 1 **Definitions of learning strategies**

Author(s)	Definition	Comments
Bialystok (1978) (In O'Malley & Chamot, 1990: 10)	“...optimal means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language...” (1978:71)	This early definition refers to improving competence, although O'Malley & Chamot did not discuss the actual definition of ‘competence’.
Rubin (1987) (In Stern, 1992:261)	“what learners do to learn and do to regulate their learning” (1987: 19)	This is a broadly encompassing definition of learning strategies implies both cognitive and metacognitive processes are included.
O'Malley & Chamot (1990)	“... the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information.” (1990: 1)	A slightly more specific definition is now offered which accounts for the need to understand new information in order to learn. However, like Bialystok, there is no explicit reference to managing or monitoring the learning process.
Oxford (1990) (In Richards and Lockhart, 1996: 63)	“Specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, and more transferable to new situations.” (1990: 8)	The significance of enjoyment and increased transferability, in addition to learner autonomy is appreciated in Oxford's concise definition.
Wenden (1991)	“ learning strategy specific mental steps or operations learners implement to learn” (1991: 163). They also “... regulate [learners'] efforts to [learn] ...” [and] “They are one type of learner training content that should be included in plans to promote learner autonomy.” (1991: 18)	The initial glossary definition is briefer but tantamount to the same interpretation as O'Malley & Chamot. However, Wenden specifies a metacognitive function and notably points out the notion of promoting learner autonomy.
Stern (1992)	“The concept of learning strategy is based on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals, that they exercise a choice of procedure, and that they undertake	This narrower definition is based on the ‘intentionality of language learning’ (1992: 261) and includes the concept of managing the learning process.

	some form of long-term planning.” (1992: 261)	
Richards et al (1992)	“intentional behaviour and thoughts that learners make use of during learning in order to better help them understand, learn or remember new information. These may include focusing on certain aspects of new information, analyzing and organizing information during learning to increase comprehension, evaluating learning when it is completed to see if further action is needed. Learning strategies may be applied to simple tasks such as learning a list of new words, or more complex tasks involving language comprehension and production. The effectiveness of second language learning is thought to be improved by teaching learners more effective learning strategies (see STRATEGY TRAINING.) <i>Further reading</i> O’Malley & Chamot 1989; Wenden & Rubin 1987.” (1992:209)	Richards <i>et al</i> acknowledge prior work and illustrate their definition of a learning strategy in second language learning. N.B. The note and references for further reading indicate that the references cited in this table represent key authors in this field.
Nunan (1999)	“ Language Learning Strategies The mental and communicative processes that learners deploy to learn a second language.” (1999: 55)	Nunan offers a broad, yet concise definition, which includes communicative strategies.
Carter & Nunan (2001)	“ Learning strategies: techniques used by learners to help make their learning be more effective and to increase their independence and autonomy as learners. Strategies can be employed by learners to assist with the storage of information, to help with the construction of language rules and to help with an appropriate attitude towards the learning situation” (2001: 223)	This definition also highlights learner independence and autonomy, and provides further details with respect to cognitive and affective strategies, including a reference to ‘attitude’, not previously encountered.

It can be seen that Stern (1992) and Richards *et al* (1992) limit their definition to ‘intentional’ behaviour and thoughts. Whilst other writers refer to ‘special’ (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990) or ‘specific’ (Oxford, 1990) actions, steps, thoughts and behaviours, they do not explicitly state whether or not strategies must be conscious. Hence, it might be inferred that strategies may also operate at a subconscious level. I would posit that this assertion seems plausible on the basis that strategies which have been fully acquired become ‘automatic’. This position is supported by Wenden:

[Strategies] can also become automatized [*sic*]. The decision to use them remains below consciousness.

(1991: 18)

Furthermore, it is not feasible to measure whether a learner is acting or behaving consciously or not; nor is it possible to establish if a learner is developing their own strategies whilst learning is in progress.

In summary, learning strategies have been defined as:

- 1) Mental and/or communicative processes;
- 2) Subconscious or conscious actions and techniques for learning: they assist with storing information, forming language rules, and understanding; making learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, and more transferable to new situations;
- 3) Applicable to both simple and complex tasks;
- 4) Teachable; and
- 5) Helpful in developing ‘appropriate attitudes’ towards the learning situation,

and increasing learner independence and autonomy.

The last criterion is subjective, especially when considering what an ‘appropriate attitude’ is, and the relative cultural merits of learner independence and autonomy. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss these complex, and often controversial, issues, Kubota highlights some of the difficulties encountered when examining the concept of ‘cultural difference’ and concludes that:

Cultural difference thus is not fixed but relational, always shifting its meaning. This follows that second language learners cannot be viewed as members of a homogeneous cultural group without agency, but rather they are active agents who assume their subject positions in the competing discourses and negotiate them.

(2004: 35)

For my context, I shall therefore define fostering appropriate student attitudes in two respects: (1) cooperating with other learners to achieve immediate classroom goals; (2) developing and/or maintaining a positive attitude to learning English.

Brown optimistically concludes:

Studies conducted in China, Japan, Israel, Egypt, and Russia, among others, promise more than a glimmer of hope that SBI and autonomous learning are viable avenues to success (McDonough, 1999; Oxford, 1996; Pemberton 1996), cultural differences notwithstanding.

(2000:127)

With respect to the potential for furthering independence and autonomy,

learners are free to decide what this means to them personally, and to what degree they wish to achieve this as an individual. For the purposes of this paper, learning strategies may be thus considered *tools to aid learning*, and I can place myself at the very broad end of the continuum in **Figure 1** above.

2.1.2 **Types of learning strategies**

According to Wenden (1991), there are two main kinds of learning strategies:

- 1) *Cognitive strategies*; and
- 2) *Self management strategies*.

Linguistic and sociolinguistic content are processed using mental steps or operations, i.e. cognitive strategies, which fulfil four key functions:

- (1) selecting information from incoming data; (2) comprehending it; (3) storing it; and (4) retrieving it for use.

(1991: 19)

Learners employ self-management strategies to monitor and manage the learning process. Wenden (1991: 25) points out that they may also be referred to as *metacognitive strategies*, *regulatory skills* or *skills of self-directed learning*. These strategies can be divided into three categories: (1) planning; (2) monitoring; and (3) evaluating (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wenden, 1991; and Stern, 1992).

O'Malley & Chamot (1990: 8) identify a third type of learning strategy in their literature review, *social/affective strategies*, of which cooperative learning, asking for clarification, and redirecting negative thoughts are some

examples. They also note that learning strategies and communication strategies can be differentiated:

...learning strategies have learning as a goal, and communication strategies are directed towards maintaining communication (Tarone 1981).

(1990: 10)

Similarly, Brown (2000: 123) initially distinguishes learning strategies (relating to input) and communication strategies (relating to output). With further consideration, however, I would suggest that the distinction appears blurred. For example, asking for repetition or clarification might both be considered a communication strategy to maintain conversation and a cognitive strategy to foster understanding and aid retention. In fact, Brown considers *socioaffective strategies* to be a type of learning strategy (or social/affective strategies according to O'Malley & Chamot), as well as communication strategy:

Socioaffective strategies have to do with social-mediating activity and interacting with others. Note that the latter strategy, along with some of the other strategies listed in Table 5.2, are actually **communication** strategies.

(2000: 124)

He later explains his position:

In the arena of linguistic interaction it is sometimes difficult, of course, to distinguish between the two [i.e. learning strategies and communication strategies], as Tarone (1983) aptly noted, since comprehension and production can occur almost simultaneously. Nevertheless, as long as one can appreciate the slipperiness of such a dichotomy, it remains a useful distinction in understanding the nature of strategies, especially for pedagogical purposes.

(2000: 127)

Stern (1992: 262) points out that research on 'good' language learners has also

identified strategies (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; and Oxford, 1990). Despite the superficial difference in classifying strategies, he supports the view that there is broad consensus. Following Brown *et al* (1983), however, O'Malley & Chamot (1990) rightly highlight the difficulty in assigning individual strategies to broad categories, and suggests a need for further theory, research and consensus within the domains of information processing theory, cognitive psychology, Second Language Acquisition and learning strategies literature. **Appendix A** illustrates a selection of different strategies and approaches to classification; **Table 2** below attempts to summarise a complex picture.

O'Malley & Chamot praise the identification of "...a number of highly useful deliberate approaches to learning a second language..." but are not entirely without criticism:

The Rubin and Naiman *et al* schemes are substantially different, however, and do not have any grounding in the theories of second language acquisition or cognition. Consequently, it is difficult to winnow out from the extensive listing of strategies and techniques which ones are fundamental for learning, which ones might be most useful to other learners, and which should be combined with others to maximize learning effectiveness.

(1990: 7)

Following Brown (2000: 131), I consider the approach offered by Oxford (1990) to be well-founded on research on successful learners, and the Strategies Inventory for Language Learning to be the most comprehensive taxonomy, providing a practical reference.

Table 2 **Classification of learning strategies**

Author	Classification system							
Rubin (1981, 1987)	A) Direct (cognitive) learning strategies						B) Indirect learning processes	
	Clarification / Verification	Guessing/ inductive inferencing	Deductive reasoning	Practice	Memorisation	Monitoring	Production tricks	Creating opportunities for practice
Oxford (1990)	A) Direct strategies						B) Indirect strategies	
	Memory	Cognitive			Compensation		Social	Affective
Wenden (1991)	A) Cognitive strategies						B) Self-management strategies	
	Selecting	Comprehending		Storing	Retrieving		Planning	Monitoring
Stern (1992)	A) Cognitive strategies		B) Communicative-experiential		C) Interpersonal	D) Affective		E) Management and planning
Naiman et al (1978)	A) Realisation of a language as a system		B) Active task approach		C) Realisation of language as a means of communication and interaction	D) Management of affective demands		E) Monitoring L2 performance
Brown (2000)	A) Cognitive strategies				B) Socioaffective strategies		C) Metacognitive strategies	

Author's note: It is not possible to satisfactorily align broad groups of strategies due to the different classifications by different authors. However, it is hoped that a schematic impression might be provided by this representation.

2.1.3 Definitions of learner training

Wenden offers a detailed definition of learner training:

the learning activities organized to help language learners improve their skills as learners; includes learning to use strategies; knowledge about the language learning process; and attitude and development to support autonomous use of the strategies and knowledge; learner education

(1991: 163)

Comparably, Richards *et al* present a specific definition of strategy training (synonymous with learner training) and outline three different approaches:

[It is] training in the use of learning strategies in order to improve a learner's effectiveness. A number of approaches to strategy training are used, including:

Explicit or direct training: learners are given information about the value and purpose of particular strategies, taught how to use them and how to monitor their own use of the strategies.

Embedded strategy training: the strategies to be taught are not taught explicitly but are embedded in the regular content of an academic subject area, such as reading, maths or science.

Combination strategy training: explicit strategy training is followed by embedded training.

Further reading O'Malley & Chamot, 1989

(1992:355)

A layman's definition of learner training is given by Scrivener:

*Raise student awareness about how they are learning and, as a result, help them to find more effective ways of working, so that they can continue working efficiently and usefully even when away from their teacher and the classroom. More simply, it means work on teaching **learning** as well as teaching English.*

Learner training, therefore, includes:

- Work on study skills, eg use of dictionaries, reference material, workbooks, notebooks, filed material;

- Student examination of the process of learning and reflection on what is happening.

In both cases, it seems important to include these as strands throughout a course.

(1994:189)

Brown (2000:130) acknowledges work on the effectiveness of learning strategies for various learners in a variety of contexts. He then devotes a chapter to strategies-based instruction in which he seeks to build on the ‘Principle of Strategic Investment’:

...we probe its implications for your teaching methodology in the classroom, specifically, how your language classroom techniques can encourage, build, and sustain effective language-learning strategies in your students.

(2001: 208)

Learner training can therefore be summarised as *teaching learners how to learn, with a view to becoming independent and autonomous learners.*

2.2 Why is learner training important?

Most of my students have already had up to six years of formal English instruction at school and thus developed their own learning techniques, strategies, and styles. Learner training might thus be considered unnecessary and even patronising, especially for adult learners. That being said and despite a plethora of English learning resources available in Japan, classroom research shows that many students seem to remain unaware of the available opportunities to study English (Ryan, 1997). Furthermore, learner training may offer some value to beginning students who are less likely to have developed their own language learning strategies. **Table 3** below highlights

a number of justifications for learner training.

Table 3 Justification for learner training

Author	Justifications
Stern (1992)	Observing learners, Stern notes, “The literature on learner training suggests that many learners fail to consider all the alternatives and tend to rely on too narrow a range of techniques.” (1992: 267) He thus summarises the goal of learner training as raising learners’ consciousness of strategies and techniques to enable more effective learning, together with reflection.
Rutherford (1987)	In the last section of his book, Rutherford (1987) emphasises the importance of consciousness-raising, a form of learner training, not so much for making the learner a better reader or listener, but for better enabling them to learn from reading and listening.
Wenden (1991)	Wenden cites a selection of second language learning and cognitive psychology writings, then concludes: In effect, ‘successful’ or ‘expert’ or ‘intelligent’ <i>learners have learned how to learn</i> . [My italics]. They have acquired the learning strategies and the knowledge about learning, and the attitudes that enable them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher. Therefore, they are autonomous. The literature also argued implicitly or explicitly for the need to provide learner training ... (1991: 15)
Holland & Shortall (1997)	Holland & Shortall conclude that the concept of learner training is founded on the belief that “teachers may best serve their learners by helping them develop their approach to learning.” (1997: 109)
Brown (2001)	Brown goes further; he reminds teachers of “... their mission of enabling learners to eventually become <i>independent</i> of classrooms – that is, to become autonomous learners.” (2001: 208)

Candlin, in the preface to Rutherford (1987), observed the, “pedagogic concern for learner-centredness and the centrality of learner-training in the

curriculum.” Since then, there has been increasing research into learner strategies, though predominantly focusing on receptive skills (i.e. listening and reading) or vocabulary learning. This is summarised in **Table 4**, below.

Table 4 Summary of research on learner strategies

Researcher, writer, source	Area of research
Cohen & Apek (1980, 1981); Atkinson & Raugh (1975); Levin (1981); and Pressley et al (1980, 1981) (In O’Malley & Chamot, 1990: 7)	Research on the application of strategies to vocabulary tasks
Wong Fillmore (1985); and Wong Fillmore & Swain (1984) (In O’Malley & Chamot (1990: 10)	“Learning strategies were said to be the principal influence on the rate and level of second language acquisition for children, whereas inherent developmental and experiential factors were considered to be primarily responsible for first language acquisition.” (1990: 10)
O’Malley, Chamot & Kupper (1989) (In Brown, 2000: 124)	Research on the development of effective listening skills.
Medani (1989) (In McCarthy, 1990: 124)	Research on vocabulary learning strategies employed by both ‘good’ and ‘poor’ learners.
McCarthy (1990: 124)	Research has shown that learning strategies for coping with vocabulary are adopted by learners but the success of learning or maximising of strategic resources varies.
Vann & Abraham (1990) (In Brown, 2000: 124)	A study of ‘unsuccessful’ learners.
Anderson (1991) (In Brown, 2000: 124)	Research identifying 47 reading strategies.
Bacon (1992) (In Brown, 2000: 124)	Research discovered differences between listening comprehension studies used by men and women.

However, O’Malley & Chamot (1990: 151), citing Derry and Murphy (1986), observed that there was no research on learning strategy training in first

language contexts with regards to oral language production, and very little with respect to writing strategies. O'Malley & Chamot further expressed their scepticism with regards to the gap between research and pedagogy:

We have sensed that instructional approaches in second language acquisition are rarely based on sound theory and research on how individuals learn.

(1990, p x)

This critical observation was shared by Wenden:

Few teachers will disagree with the importance of helping language learners become more autonomous as learners. However, while they may often give their students hints about how to learn, learner autonomy is not usually included as a main objective in their lessons plans [*sic*] and course outlines.

(1991: 11)

Even though it is apparent that there is no 'best way' to either teach or learn a language, and some researchers and practitioners believe learner training to be unnecessary (Krashen, 1981; and Kubota, 2004), there seems to be stronger evidence to support its usefulness. In short, learner training may help learners to realise what learning materials and resources are available, how best to take advantage of them to suit their own individual needs and interests, and thus become better language learners.

2.3 How can learner training be incorporated into the syllabus?

O'Malley & Chamot draw our attention two key issues, which we shall examine further below:

[1] ...whether strategy training should be presented separately from or incorporated with course content ... [and]

[2] ... the extent to which the strategies should be explicitly identified or

should be embedded in the materials for a course.

(1990:14)

2.3.1 **How should learner training be presented?**

A number of writers emphasise the importance of including learner training into the teaching materials (Mendelsohn, 1998) and/or the curriculum (Nunan, 1997, 1999; Reid, 2001; and Breen, 2001). Brown (2001: 220) points to the increasing inclusion of strategies work in textbook exercises, designed to promote learning beyond the classroom.

The arguments in favour of including learner training within the course content, as opposed to presenting them separately (i.e. as specific learning strategies and training lessons), rests with the notion that they are more effective if contextualised (Wenden, 1991).

2.3.2 **How should learner training be implemented?**

O'Malley & Chamot, after pointing out the importance of teacher training and the need for developing and adapting instructional materials, focus on how to implement learner training:

... the specific scope, sequence, and methods of training activities to meet the needs of particular students need to be considered. Finally, the level of language proficiency at which strategy training can and should be introduced has to be determined.

(1990: 154).

On the one hand, according to O'Malley & Chamot, *embedded instruction* requires minimal teacher training:

Students are presented with activities and materials structured to elicit the use of the strategies being taught but are not informed of the reason why this approach to learning is being practiced.

(1990: 153)

However, there is poignant criticism of this approach:

...students who are not aware of the strategies they are using do not develop independent learning strategies and have little opportunity of becoming autonomous learners.

Wenden (1987b). In O'Malley & Chamot (1990: 4)

On the other hand, *direct instruction* involves informing students of the value and purpose of strategy training. Making goals explicit is also believed to increase motivation by making learning meaningful (Brown, 2000: 85). O'Malley & Chamot cite further research to support the benefits of explicit training:

[The inclusion of] ... a metacognitive component ... [helps] ... to maintain strategy use over time and in transferring to new tasks (Brown *et al*, 1986; Palincsar and Brown 1986).

(1990: 153)

O'Malley & Chamot (1990: 8) pointed to research by Brown *et al* (1983) which identifies the benefit of pairing metacognitive strategies with appropriate cognitive strategies to optimise the transfer of strategy training to new tasks, although they conceded that, "...the issue of transfer is far from being resolved."

A number of authors present different approaches to learner training, summarised below in **Table 5**. These approaches will be considered when discussing learner training in my context (**Section 4.1**).

Table 5 Summary of approaches to learner training

Author	Approach to learner training
<p>O'Malley & Chamot (1990)</p>	<p>O'Malley & Chamot summarised four suggested learner training sequences for different learning situations and ascertained a fundamental approach underlying the sequences (1990: 157):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identify or show students how to identify their current learning strategies; 2) Explain the rationale and application for using additional learning strategies; 3) Provide opportunities and materials for practice; and 4) Evaluate or assist students to evaluate their degree of success with the new learning strategies (1990: 157-159). <p>Whilst none of them are specifically aimed at teaching English as a foreign language to Japanese students, they later refer to strategies taught for speaking which include “a metacognitive strategy (self-evaluation), a cognitive strategy (substitution), and a social/affective strategy (cooperation)” (1990: 183).</p>
<p>Wenden (1991)</p>	<p>Albeit based on research in non-ESL contexts, Wenden presents five valuable principles to guide strategy training:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Strategy training should be informed; 2) Students should be trained how to regulate or oversee the use of the strategy; 3) Strategies should be contextualized; 4) Strategy training should be interactive; and 5) The content of the training should be based on the actual proficiency of the learners (1991: 105).
<p>Stern (1992)</p>	<p>Stern, however, considers the use of both explicit and implicit teaching strategies. Following Faerch and Sharwood Smith, he rejects the notion that they are mutually exclusive (Krashen and Terrell, 1983), supporting and highlighting the belief that they form a continuum (1992: 345). He further points out the benefits of teaching both types of strategies to better suit learner preferences (1992: 334). Appendix C summarises his ideas.</p>
<p>Ryan (1997)</p>	<p>Ryan (1997) presents an explicit three-stage process for learner training of engineering students in their final year of formal English education:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Raise consciousness of available resources, e.g. through discussion; 2) Presenting and practising techniques to exploit resources; and

	<p>3) Introduce the theoretical constructs of language acquisition underlying the selection of resources and techniques.</p> <p>Ryan reported that students responded positively to the course and showed signs of developing autonomy (1997: 223-224).</p>
Nunan (1997)	<p>Nunan, in addition to addressing the ‘language domain’ (i.e. what will be taught), considers the ‘learning process domain’ (i.e. how students will learn) (1997: 194). Five stages to foster learner autonomy in the classroom, by either designing or adapting available materials, were identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Awareness; 2) Involvement; 3) Intervention; 4) Creation; and 5) Transcendence. <p>These are detailed in Appendix D. The five levels, however, are not clearly defined and Nunan (1997:195) is keen to point out that, “... these levels involve considerable overlap, and ... in practice, learners will move back and forth between levels”.</p>
Brown (2001)	<p>Brown outlines four different approaches to teaching strategies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Teach strategies through interactive techniques; 2) Use compensatory techniques to overcome cognitive style problems or weaknesses; 3) Administer a strategy inventory; and 4) Make use of impromptu teacher-initiated advice (2001: 216-220). <p>These are exemplified in Appendix E</p>

2.4 Summary

Learner training has been defined, basically, as *teaching learners how to learn*.

I have applied a broad interpretation and approach which includes both explicit and implicit teaching of learning and communication strategies.

Implementation of learner training in my classes shall be considered in more detail in **Section 3**, and discussed with reference to the literature in **Section 4**.

3. Learner training in a private language school

3.1 Teaching in a private language school

I work for the largest private language school in Japan, and teach at a ‘small’ branch with 285 students (NOVA Corporation, 2005).² The students represent a wide cross-section of society and, therefore, learn English for a number of different reasons:

One of the most appealing aspects of Nova's work is the sheer variety of students.

Students and seniors, homemakers and high schoolers [sic], business people and busy mums, part-time workers and public officials; Nova has them all. Naturally, no two classes are the same as students create a rich mix of personalities.

Japan has many formal socialized relationships based on age, jobs or family but in Nova the students [sic] level is based purely on ability. Students' attendance isn't compulsory. All our students have chosen to study English with us and do so for diverse reasons. Some want to travel, others to take exams or have chosen English as a way of finding out more about movies or Western culture.

(NOVA Group, 2005)

Motivation also varies significantly from individual to individual, although most adult students are paying customers and learn English because they choose to. The majority of students are high (‘false’) beginners (24%), intermediates (20%), and high intermediate learners (21%) (NOVA Corporation, 2005).³

Regular Lessons

Regular courses are conversation lessons that can be booked at any time which suits the student's schedule. The classes are always small, with a maximum of four students for branch lessons and three in Multimedia lessons.

...

There are nine levels of study that start with complete beginners through to the very advanced. The emphasis in all languages is on communication with native speaking teachers.

(NOVA Group, 2005)

Classes are conducted using English only and the company has a strict “No Japanese” policy. All lessons have a company produced *Lesson Management Plan* (LMP) which newer teachers are expected to follow, and more experienced teachers are encouraged to adapt to better meet students needs, abilities, and interests.

Textbooks for regular lessons are in-house produced. The eight different textbooks (labelled Zone A-G): the top two levels use the same text book (Zone G). There are twelve lessons in Zone A (absolute beginners) and fifty each in Zones B-G.

Due to the flexibility of the booking system, which only has fixed, group classes for KIDS and those learning English for Specific Purposes (e.g. Business, TOEIC, TOEFL, or Travel), students regularly take classes with different teachers and classmates. The schedule is not usually finalised until the night before but it is possible, though infrequent, for it to be changed as late as five minutes before class. Consequently, there is a need for minimal preparation time and it is not feasible to set homework for regular lessons.

The company also offers ‘Voice’ which is like a ‘conversation lounge’ supervised by an instructor whose primary aim is to facilitate communication.

Voice

Voice, as the name suggests, is all about giving the students the opportunity to make themselves heard. It's the place where they get to put into practice, in a relaxed setting, all that they have learned in the more formal classroom lessons.

A teacher is present and guides the topics of discussion. Nova provides a full pack of materials to support teachers and ensure that the discussions keep rolling along. There are also themed Voices that are always a great opportunity for teachers to share bits of their culture with students—successful events include St Patrick's Day, Canada Day and Australia Day.

Cross-cultural comparison topics are always popular and many teachers will attest to the fact that the wealth of knowledge they have gained about Japan came from the Voice Room!

(NOVA Group, 2005)

Voice classes maybe attended by any number of students, but typically there are between two and eight in our school. Students' levels are mixed, but usually intermediate and above.⁴ On average, I teach four Voice classes a week, including two or three Special Voices a month.

3.2 Learner training in my context

In this paper, I will focus on learner training in regular classes, but will also consider its application in one-to-one ESP classes and Voice. Based on the literature reviewed, self-reflection and personal journal-writing, seven main types of learner training applicable to my context can be identified:

- 1) Specific learner training lesson aims;
- 2) Specific aims for activities and tasks;
- 3) Specific lesson activities and tasks;

- 4) Specific teaching/learning techniques or strategies;
- 5) Specific feedback during the lesson;
- 6) Specific feedback at the end of the lesson;
- 7) General feedback and ‘counselling’ from Japanese staff in Japanese.

Additional commentary is included in **Sections 3.2.1-3.2.11** below.

3.2.1 Specific learner training lesson aims

Table 6 Specific learner training lesson aims

Description	Illustrative examples
A number of specific lesson aims target the development of learning strategies and communication strategies.	<p>For high beginners:</p> <p>“Today we’re talking about how to learn a language. We’re going to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Talk about language problems 2. Give advice 3. Discuss the strategies.” <p><i>(Diplomat: Zone D, D08 “Swapping Study Tips”)</i></p> <p>For high intermediates:</p> <p>“Today we’re developing our communication skills, especially on the telephone. We’re going to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interrupt to ask for clarification 2. Check the listener’s understanding 3. Recap information to confirm your understanding.” <p><i>(Diplomat: Zone F, F12 “Asking For Clarification”)</i></p>

On reflection, I am aware of my lesson selection leaning towards those lessons which have greater elements of learner training in them because I feel they will benefit the students.

Following the warm up, I always introduce the lesson topic and/or function to

provide a clear focus, followed by the lesson aims which I usually write down to create a clear sense of purpose, raise awareness, and increase motivation.

3.2.2 Specific aims for activities and tasks

Table 7 Specific aims for activities and tasks

Description	Illustrative examples
Aims for individual tasks and activities can be made explicit.	For beginners , simple instructions suffice: “Let’s practise (asking) questions.” “Let’s practise listening.” With high beginners and above , functions and basic meta-language can be introduced with more specific aims: “Let’s practise inviting using <i>Would you like to ... ?</i> ” “Let’s practise pronunciation of <i>r</i> and <i>l</i> .”

As previously noted in **Section 2.3.2**, making aims explicit helps create a sense of purpose, raise awareness, and motivate learners. Admittedly, however, I am not consistent in setting clear task and activity aims, and this marks an area for personal improvement.

3.2.3 Specific lesson activities and tasks

Table 8 Specific lesson activities and tasks

Description	Illustrative examples
Embedded within the text books and incorporated in the LMPs are a wide range of student-centred activities and tasks.	Information gaps, matching, consensus-reaching, sequencing, categorising, gap fillers, dialogues, role-plays, discussions, debates, puzzles, problem-solving, and questionnaires.

Learner-centred tasks and activities are designed to engage students actively

in class, promote production, and develop students' communication skills. I always to seek to select the most appropriate activities and tasks, appropriate to students' needs, and help them achieve lesson aims.

3.2.4 Specific teaching/learning techniques or strategies

Table 9 Specific teaching/learning techniques or strategies

Description	Illustrative examples
There are a plethora of techniques, which can be utilised in the classroom, to create student-centred opportunities for learning, address individual needs, different learning styles and learner preferences, and lower the affective filter.	Encouraging students to ask and help each other, setting student-to-student tasks (such as brainstorming, ranking and rating, as well as those above), eliciting corrections, rules, explanations, and examples from students. Using aural, visual, and kinaesthetic cues (colour, illustrations, flashcards, tokens, realia, gestures, mnemonics, etc), and encouraging students to do the same outside class. Scaffolding, giving praise, using fun and/or interesting activities.

I concede that, whilst I endeavour to use a variety of techniques, techniques are employed on an intuitive rather than systematic basis. In this sense, teaching might be said to be more of an art than an exact science. However, greater self-reflection and analysis might better able me to pinpoint more successful techniques and strategies for individual learners. Occasionally, I record information, such as which techniques seemed to help rather than hinder individual learners, and make suggestions for subsequent lessons. For example:

[She was] reluctant to answer in open class, even though [she had] the correct answer ... written down. [She] responded better to talking about answers paired with another student. Work on simple opinion sharing language, e.g. *I*

think ... / I think so too / I don't think so / What do you think? etc to build confidence.

Author (2005)

3.2.5 Specific feedback during the lesson

Table 10 Specific feedback during the lesson

Description	Illustrative examples
Specific feedback is given on lesson aims, activities, tasks, and communication strategies (Sections 3.2.1-3.2.4 above)	Praising and pointing out exactly what students did well and achieved, as well as what to work on and how (“Good use of ...”, “Excellent questions on ...” “You could ...” “Work on ...” “Try to ... in order to ...” etc).

When I first started teaching, I typically praised students with simple comments such as “Good!” or “Well done!” but it became apparent that this was often mechanical. Following feedback from a trainer, I began to make feedback specific, as illustrated in **Table 10** above.

In the last year, I have also begun to add brief explanations: for instance, “Responding *Uh huh* helps to maintain the conversation and sound more natural.” Brown (2005) further examines the importance teaching turn-taking skills and in conversation to foster better oral communication.

3.2.6 Specific feedback at the end of the lesson

Table 11 Specific feedback at the end of the lesson

Description	Illustrative examples
<i>Review Tips</i> or suggestions for self-study outside class are given in order to	For low beginners : “Complete a weather diary for the next week. Complete it daily.”

<p>review the lesson and help students learn English.</p> <p>N.B. <i>Review Tips</i>, printed on company produced LMPs, are expected to be given to students at the end of each lesson.</p>	<p><i>(Diploma: Zone A & B, B08 “Describing Weather”)</i></p> <p>For high beginners:</p> <p>“Organize your notebook and use three of the tips [on how to improve your English] all next week.”</p> <p><i>(Diplomat: Zone D, D08 “Swapping Study Tips”)</i></p> <p>For high intermediates:</p> <p>“Next time you don’t understand, please clarify using some of the language you practiced today.”</p> <p><i>(Diplomat: Zone F, F12 “Asking For Clarification”)</i></p>
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There are certain prerequisites for the success of any task: hence, Review Tips should be clear and understandable; achievable; relevant, interesting and/or fun; appropriate to the students’ needs, motivation and time available.

Review Tips, such as the one below for absolute beginners, which are too difficult for learners to understand, are pointless, unless they can be simplified or explained in Japanese:

“Draw three pictures of things you want to know how to say in English then use a dictionary to find out.”

(Diplomat: Zone A & B, A05 “What’s This?”)

I believe, however, this particular Review Tip is highly useful and I can successfully convey meaning using gestures and examples.

In terms of relevance and achievability, the review and use of lexis and/or grammar from the lesson, contrasted with the demand on students to use new language, should be considered. For example, the Review Tip below has only a very weak topical link to the lesson:

On your last vacation, where did you go? How was it? Write a short story about it in your notebook.

(Diplomat: Zone A&B, B45 “Catching a Taxi”)

Review Tips are sometimes repetitive in nature: in Zone A, for example, six out of twelve Review Tips are “Draw and label” activities and five are basic writing tasks. For these reasons, I sometimes modify or change Review Tips. For example, as an alternative for drawing and labelling pictures, especially for students who do not or cannot draw, I suggest labelling items in their home or cutting out pictures from a magazine. Zones B-G, however, offer a greater variety of activities and tasks, as illustrated in **Table 12** below, so there is arguably less need to make changes.

Table 12 **Examples of *Diplomat: Zone B* Review Tips**

Lesson	Review Tip
B02 Introductions/ Nationality	Ask other instructors then write where they’re from
B05 Greeting people	Before your next class, greet your classmates in English
B12 Phone numbers/Email	Design your own name card. Write a conversation
B13 Families	Draw your own family tree and make 3 sentences about it
B29 Bus departure information	Listen to your CD then record yourself buying a ticket
B40 Directions around town	Make a map of your local area in English
B41 Starting conversations	Practice these phrases in Voice then use them in class
B47 Recent trips	Write a short story about your last trip away

Nevertheless, Review Tips are a teacher-directed top-down approach. Hence, I have also begun to ask students what they are going to do to review the lesson, particularly where Review Tips do not appear relevant, useful, interesting or achievable. This question has invariably been met with surprise but is usually followed by some positive, student-generated ideas. Although the ideas are often very general, such as, “Read the text” or “Listen

to the CD”, I hope to encourage students to learn more from each other and share new ideas like, “Write the word down many times” (Author, 2005).

Following up on Review Tips, by asking students how they did, has also been an eye-opener both for learners surprised to be asked, and myself surprised at their surprise (Author, 2005).

3.2.7 General feedback and ‘counselling’ from Japanese staff in Japanese

Table 13 General feedback and ‘counselling’ from Japanese staff

Description	Illustrative examples
<p>In addition to specific feedback, I give general study tips on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis.</p> <p>Students may also book free ‘counselling’ sessions with Japanese staff who will give feedback in Japanese.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the lesson at home: reading the textbook, listening to the CD, and using the workbooks. 2. Take Voice lessons in order to: practise what you know; develop fluency, listening skills, and vocabulary; increase confidence; and have fun. 3. Write a diary in English (which can be reviewed in one-to-one lessons). 4. Read English newspapers, books and/or magazines. 5. Listen to English music, radio, etc. 6. Watch English TV programmes, videos, DVDs etc. 7. Find “Coffee shop lessons” whereby Japanese students gather with a native speaker to chat in a coffee shop for a relatively small fee or arrange a ‘language exchange’ for free. 8. Try singing English songs in karaoke to develop speaking, listening and reading skills.

Table 13 above illustrates the more frequent learn training advice I give directly to students and also encourage the Japanese staff to relay to them in counselling.

In addition, I have recently begun to set specific listening tasks for students reviewing the lesson at home with their CD, as well as suggest general approaches for listening, as shown in **Table 14**, below:

Table 14 Listening review task for students to try at home

Listening strategy	Purpose
Look at the picture and guess the conversation. Guess the answers to pre-set questions	Develop prediction skills and focus on the listening task.
Listen for gist	Develop 'global' listening skills for general information
Pre-set questions (e.g. True/False or Yes/No questions, Open or 'WH' questions, gap fillers)	Develop 'intensive' listening skills for specific information
Listen with a partner then help each other to understand the conversation	Develop listening and communication skills

Secondly, I am encouraging more students to use the internet:

- 1) To surf English learning sites;
- 2) To surf English bilingual sites;
- 3) To surf English websites which may be of interest to them;
- 4) To chat, play online games, etc, in English; and
- 5) To use an English search engine to search for new words that they want to learn how to use.

One intermediate student now looks at fashion articles on the internet, and another high beginner browses real estate sites. Two other students have downloaded free copies of the General Service List and a few have visited English learning sites for native Japanese.

3.2.8 **Graded readers**

For students who have shown an interest in reading, and for those taking one-to-one ESP courses, I am introducing graded readers, bilingual books, and bilingual newspapers as alternatives to materials written for native speakers, which are too difficult for beginners and intermediate students. All seven students, thus far, had never heard of these resources.

Two students have not yet tried any, saying they are too busy and only have time to read their textbook. However, three students have bought graded readers, and two have been enthusiastically reading about one book a fortnight for the past six months. Another two students have bought bilingual newspapers and two advanced students were already buying an English newspaper each week. Students have reported graded readers to be interesting and enjoyable, affordable, readable, and beneficial to their English (Author 2005). It is evident that taking the time to explain to students what materials are available, where to find them, and how to use them is proving fruitful, even if only amongst relatively few students.

3.2.9 **Specific learner training lessons**

In Voice classes, where students have shown interest, I have conducted activities and discussions to raise awareness of learner types as well as learner strategies. I have also administered a strategies inventory (Oxford, 1990, reproduced in Brown, 2001: 221-224) and a questionnaire on “Popular views on how languages are learned” (Lightbrown and Spada, 1999: xv). Students

participated enthusiastically and found the discussion interesting and informative (Author 2005).

3.2.10 **Learner training in ESP classes**

In ESP classes, in addition to learner training outlined above in **Sections 3.2.1-3.2.8**, I explicitly teach a wide range of strategies, such as skimming and scanning, listening for gist or specific information, guessing from context, seeking clarification, and so on. In class, we actively practise strategies and techniques, and learners often study hard in their own time.

3.2.11 **Increasing student involvement setting lesson goals**

Occasionally, I am able to offer students a choice as to what topic they will address in the lesson, even though the functional aims remain set by the textbook and LMP. For instance, for a high beginner lesson (*Diplomat: Zone D, D30* “Things You Need/Don’t Need (BBQ)”), I tell the students, “Decide together what you would like to plan: for example, a party, a barbecue, a camping trip, etc.”

I often prepare a topic and some activities for Voice because, firstly, it is always wise to prepare and, secondly, when I go into class, I am often faced with a situation where if I ask students what they want to talk about, they say they do not know. Sometimes students ask if I have a topic, which I do, but my response is, “Do you have a topic?” If students do not have one, I often put them into pairs and get them to find three things in common that they want

to talk about. These topics are then used to focus the lesson (Author, 2005).

4. Discussion

4.1 The role and potential role of learner training in my context

In this section, I will consider, analyse and evaluate learner training in my context in terms of the definitions and guidelines outlined by Oxford (1990), O'Malley & Chamot (1990), Wenden (1991), Stern (1992), Nunan (1992), Scrivener (1994), and Brown (2001) in **Section 2** above. I shall also offer some suggestions for continued improvement and research. My findings are presented below in **Table 15**.

It is apparent that learner training in my context fulfils only a limited number of the criteria established in **Table 15**. These predominantly relate to feedback and advice on how to study outside class, and teacher-directed use of tasks and activities. It is evident that the criteria relating to the development of learner autonomy are neglected and explicit learner training is lacking.

In spite of all good intentions, however, specific and general feedback, direct and indirect, appears to have limited impact or benefit for learners. This is indicated by anecdotal evidence from colleagues in different schools, my own observations, and personal feedback from students:

Table 15 Analysis and evaluation of learner training in my context

Criteria	Application of learner training	Evaluation and Suggestions for improvement
<p>Administer an inventory of strategies (Oxford, 1990; Brown, 2001).</p> <p>Identify students' current strategy usage (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wenden, 1991)</p> <p>Help students to identify their learning styles and strategy use (Nunan, 1997)</p>	<p>There has been only two conscious occasions (both in Voice) where I have conducted specific learner training lessons, administering a strategies inventory and talking about learning styles (Section 3.2.9). In one-to-one ESP classes I ask students what strategies they use for listening and reading, then aim to introduce new strategies. Otherwise, there is no conscious identification of strategies in my main teaching context.</p>	<p>Administering a strategies inventory, such as the SILL (Oxford, 1990), would appear to be the first logical step to ensure learner training is informed. Secondly, it might serve as reference for analysing the learner strategies employed by my students, and I could further encourage students to try new strategies outside of class and, perhaps, discover their own learning styles and preferences.</p>
<p>Raise students' awareness about pedagogical goals, content of materials and learning implications of tasks (Nunan, 1997)</p>	<p>To a certain extent, this is achieved through lessons with specific learner training (Section 3.2.1), giving aims for tasks and activities (Section 3.2.2), and following up with specific feedback during and after the lesson (Sections 3.2.5-3.2.6). Learning implications, however, are rarely made explicit.</p>	<p>More consistently stating explicit goals, learning implications, reasons and applications for strategies may benefit students in terms of acquiring strategies and transferring them to other tasks (Sections 2.2-2.3). To reduce the risk of patronising learners, especially those who are already efficient, eliciting these points might be more appropriate so long as they do not feel they are being tested on their knowledge, and I have begun to do this with some success (as noted in Sections 3.2.6 and 3.2.9).</p>
<p>Explain the rationale and application of strategies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wenden, 1991; and Ryan, 1997)</p>	<p>Explicit explanation and discussion of learner training has only occurred in Voice (Section 3.2.9), some ESP classes (Section 3.2.10), and on occasion in regular classes, predominantly those with specific learner training aims (Section 3.2.1).</p>	<p>More consistently stating explicit goals, learning implications, reasons and applications for strategies may benefit students in terms of acquiring strategies and transferring them to other tasks (Sections 2.2-2.3). To reduce the risk of patronising learners, especially those who are already efficient, eliciting these points might be more appropriate so long as they do not feel they are being tested on their knowledge, and I have begun to do this with some success (as noted in Sections 3.2.6 and 3.2.9).</p>

Raise consciousness about the availability of learning resources and opportunities (Ryan, 1997)	These criteria are notably met through specific feedback at the end of the lesson on how to review the lesson (Section 3.2.6), and general feedback directly or via Japanese staff on learning English (Section 3.2.7). Specific learner training lessons and aims (Section 3.2.1 and 3.2.9), and the introduction of graded readers (Section 3.2.8) have also contributed to a small degree.	Implementing a system to record and monitor the feedback I give might be worth consideration. I might, for example, be able to use a strategies inventory to systematically increase and monitor the range of activities I use in class.
Give impromptu advice and hints on how to learn (Brown, 2001), i.e. metacognitive counselling (Stern, 1992)		
Provide materials and opportunities for practice (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990)		
Use guided cognitive learning techniques; implicit audiolingual techniques; and experiential teaching techniques (Stern, 1992)		
Teach strategies through interactive techniques (Wenden, 1991; and Brown, 2001)		
Present and practise techniques to exploit learning resources (Ryan, 1997)	Students are always given a wide range of specific activities and tasks (Section 3.2.3) and I consistently employ a range of specific teaching/learning techniques or strategies (Section 3.2.4). Even so, teaching decisions are made intuitively or directed by the materials, and there is no evidence of being methodical.	I will continue to present alternative learning opportunities in the manner described. There is little hope of instigating any policy change in a company with a strong top-down management style, but I can submit a proposal in any case.
Contextualise strategies training	Due to company policy, which prescribes the use of 'approved' methods and materials, I have been confined to presenting techniques on how to select graded readers (Section 3.2.8) and exploit other learning opportunities (Section 3.2.6-3.2.7).	
	Strategies are generally contextualised in that they are	

(Wenden, 1991).	incorporated in the lesson and materials.	
Use compensatory strategies to overcome cognitive styles (Brown, 2001), and create states of receptiveness (Stern, 1992)	Lowering the affective filter is a common challenge in my context which I have sought to address through activities, tasks, techniques, and strategies outlined in Sections 3.2.3-3.2.5 .	Further consideration of social/affective strategies (Section 2.1.2) will help to improve the teaching strategies and techniques I employ, and feedback I give directly and indirectly via the Japanese staff.
Evaluate or help students to self-evaluate strategy use (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990); and promote student examination of the learning process and reflection on what is happening (Scrivener, 1994).	Specific teacher feedback during the lesson (Section 3.2.5) is the only means of evaluation currently used, although I occasionally ask students to say what they learned in class or how they will review the class (Section 3.2.6), hopefully encouraging students to consider how they learn.	Students may benefit from being encouraged to further examine, reflect, and evaluate the learning process. In order to make this manageable, a 'checklist' or strategies inventory would provide a practical tool. The SILL (Oxford, 1990) appears to be the most comprehensive, especially for my own purposes, but it would probably be too overwhelming for all but a few dedicated learners. Brown's "Ten Commandments" (2001: 216-218) appears to offer the most learner-friendly option.
Encourage self-regulation and application of strategies by learners (Wenden, 1991).	Teaching ESP, I promote the use and self-regulation of strategies, asking students to monitor their own strategy use and apply appropriate strategies to learning tasks and test questions (Section 3.2.10).	
Involve learners in selecting goals from options (Nunan, 1997).	This is done infrequently and on a random basis (Section 3.2.11).	Further consideration in the lesson planning stage of how to create greater learner choice and increase their involvement in setting lesson goals, especially in Voice, may help to foster greater student autonomy.
Have learners modify and adapt goals and tasks, create their own lesson goals, then transcend the classroom (Nunan, 1997).	A few advanced level Voice students regularly direct the conversation and, at times, talk about the learning process. However, I have not as yet sought to ask them to set their own lesson goals and this is something, given the right classroom dynamics, I would like to try.	

Some students (particularly new students, beginners, and those with more specific reasons for learning English) do try to follow recommendations and tips but seldom sustain their efforts. Furthermore, a significant number of staff members, students and instructors are not aware of the existence of Review Tips.

(Author, 2005)

From passive observation and feedback from instructors, students, and staff, it is evident that Review Tips are not always given, and are in fact often forgotten or may go unnoticed by some students who claim they have never been told despite taking over 20 lessons! (Author, 2005)

Learner training in my context may also be undermined due to the lack of explanation as to why or how it may help students improve their English, as discussed in **Section 2.3.2** above. Students may therefore underestimate the value of learning strategies or be unaware of its potential. For instance, thus simply view Review Tips as optional homework that will never be marked and is, therefore, unimportant.

Another limitation may be that learners, particularly low levels have difficulty understanding learner training unless given in their native language. The availability of optional 'counselling' with Japanese staff might, however, help to address the dilemma of not being able to use Japanese in class. General feedback can be seen to have some positive effect, as shown by the student responses above in **Section 3.2.6**.

‘Counselling’ from Japanese staff in Japanese has the potential to be particularly useful with beginning students, especially because I cannot use Japanese myself. However, there are a number of considerations to be made.

Firstly, Japanese staff is trained in sales: they are not teachers and they do not observe lessons. Consequently, there are limits to how much useful advice they can give. Moreover, advice from sales staff to take more lessons or attend Voice may be sceptically viewed as sales pitches, as opposed to recommendations to help them improve their English. Secondly, there is the possibility of advice being lost in translation or not being conveyed. Thirdly, it is difficult to find time to follow up on counselling and find out what students themselves really think about learner training.

4.2 Summary

Within my teaching context, learner training has a very modest role, and has generally been *ad hoc* and subjective. Therefore, a more systematic approach, particularly to reach out to less efficient learners would appear necessary.

It seems, however, that success depends on the learners. Ironically, it is generally the ‘good’ language learners who ask for ways to improve their English, and employ learning strategies and communication strategies more and more successfully; yet it is the ‘bad’ learners who need to do this the most. On the other hand, feedback from staff suggests many students are satisfied

taking lessons as a ‘hobby’ (Author 2005), so why should they engage in the rigours of learning? In their research, O’Malley & Chamot demonstrated the clear importance of motivation. In further support, they refer to Paris (1988a) and observe:

The will to learn appears to be essential for developing the skill to learn.
(1990: 184)

Hence, consideration of individual learners, their beliefs, attitudes, and motivation, is indeed important if not critical. It is also worth considering our own cultural bias and our learners’ perspectives. Whilst we seek to champion the value of learner autonomy, it may be in stark contrast with the views of our learners. Nunan (1997) believes that the extent of learner autonomy is constrained by psychological and cognitive make-up, as well as cultural, social and educational context. Anecdotal evidence appears to support this:

Sun 23rd October

I continue to encourage [students] to talk outside class but this only happens if they are specifically instructed to do so just beforehand. Even though they appreciate that it will save a few minutes of class time, get them acquainted and make them feel more comfortable with each other, and get them thinking and talking in English for ‘free’, they overwhelmingly say they are too shy, and revert back to Japanese or avoid communication by looking at mobile phones and textbooks. After four years of working in different schools for the same company and observing the same phenomena, I would suggest it maybe institutionally cultural, perhaps due to the fact that students rarely take lessons with the same classmates, share an L1, and the idea of talking to strangers in their L2 is a foreign concept.

Author (2005)

And yet:

Friday 24th November 2005

[A colleague] reported that [some intermediate students] were talking to each other, in English, before class. After months of encouragement, [they've] finally done so! Fantastic!

Author (2005)

In addition, views of 'good' language learners and learning strategies may differ. O'Malley & Chamot observe the need for further research regarding the effect of prior educational experience on learner training, referring to O'Malley *et al* (1985b), which yielded some anomalous results:

O'Malley et al. (1985b) found resistance from Asian students to using strategies for imagery and grouping to learn vocabulary definition. Asian students in the control group applied rote learning to the vocabulary task so successfully that they outperformed the experimental groups who had been trained in what we perceived as more sophisticated strategies.

(1990: 165)

Nevertheless, educational policy makers, teachers, Japanese staff and students may benefit from awareness-raising as to the potential role of learning strategies and learner training, notwithstanding individual learning styles, preferences, and needs.

5. Conclusion

This paper has sought to investigate the role, or potential role of learner training in my teaching context; as an instructor in a private language school. It has examined the definitions of learning strategies and learner training, their importance and how they may be implemented.

Adopting a broad interpretation, learner training can be seen to play a modest, but not insignificant, role in my teaching context. Research would appear to support the notion that less effective learners can learn to use strategies to help them learn. Whilst teaching does not necessarily equate with learning, I believe we can help learners by providing opportunities to learn. Learner training aims to raise students' awareness about how to learn and how to become better learners, whilst leaving it up to individuals to decide whether to accept these innovations.

Writing this paper has been a process of learning about learner training and learning strategies: my initial vague notions have been taken on a voyage of discovery. I hope that by implementing what I have learnt, I might better enable my students to become as good at learning English as they would like to be.

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7. Appendices

Appendix A: Classification of learning strategies

Author	Primary strategy classification	Representative secondary strategies	Representative examples
Rubin (1981) (In O'Malley & Chamot, 1990: 4-5); and Rubin (1987) (In Stern, 1992: 263)	Cognitive strategies (directly affecting learning)	1. Clarification/ verification	Asking for an example, repeating words, rephrasing
		2. Guessing/inductive inferencing	Guessing meaning from key words, structures, context, etc
		3. Deductive reasoning	Comparing L1 and L2, using (grammar) rules
		4. Practice	Repeating and experimenting with new sounds, words, and sentences
		5. Memorisation	Taking notes, using mnemonic devices, rote learning
		6. Monitoring	Correcting own/others' errors in spelling, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, style, etc
	Processes that contribute indirectly to learning	1. Creating opportunities for practice	Finding situations with native speakers, initiating L2 conversations with other learners, accessing L2 materials out of class
		2. Production tricks	Using circumlocution, synonyms, formulaic interaction, and gestures to maintain conversation, contextualising to clarify meaning
Naiman et al (1978) (In O'Malley & Chamot, 1990: 4-5)	Active task approach	1. Responding positively to learning opportunities or seeking and exploiting learning environments	Acknowledging need for structured learning environment and taking a course prior to immersion in L2
		2. Adding related language learning activities to regular classroom program	Reading additional items, listening to tapes, etc.
		3. Practising	Writing down words to aid memorisation, looking at speakers' mouth and mimicking

		4. Analysing individual problems	Reading alone to hear sounds.
	Realisation of language as a system	1. Making L1/L2 comparisons	Using cognates, using what is already known
		2. Analysing target language to make inferences	Using rules to generate possibilities
		3. Making use of fact that language is a system	Relating new words to others in the same category
	Realisation of language as a means of communication and interaction	1. Emphasising fluency over accuracy	Not hesitating to speak, using circumlocutions
		2. Seeking communicative situations with L2 speakers	Communicating whenever possible, establishing close personal contact with L2 native speakers, writing to pen pals
		3. Finding sociocultural meanings	Memorising courtesies and phrases
	Management of affective demands	Coping with affective demands in learning	Overcoming inhibitions to speak, being able to laugh at own mistakes, being prepared for difficulties
	Monitoring L2 performance	Constantly revising L2 system by testing inferences and asking L2 native speakers for feedback.	Generating sentences and looking for reactions, looking for ways to improve so as not to repeat mistakes
Oxford (1990)	Memory strategies	1. Creating mental linkages	Grouping, associating/elaborating, placing new words into a context
		2. Applying images and sounds	Using imagery and keywords, semantic mapping, representing sounds in memory
		3. Reviewing well	Structured viewing
		4. Employing action	Using physical response or sensation, using mechanical techniques

	Cognitive strategies	1. Practicing	Repeating, formally practicing with sounds and writing systems, recognizing and using formulas and patterns, recombining, practising naturalistically
		2. Receiving and sending messages	Getting the idea quickly, using resources for receiving and sending messages
		3. Analyzing and reasoning	Reasoning deductively, analyzing expressions, analyzing contrastively (across languages), translating, transferring
		4. Creating structure for input and output	Taking notes, summarizing, highlighting
	Compensation strategies	1. Guessing intelligently	Using linguistic and other clues
		2. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing	Switching to the mother tongue, getting help, using mime or gesture, avoiding communication partially or totally, selecting the topic, adjusting or approximating the message, coining words, using a circumlocution or synonym
	Metacognitive strategies	1. Centering your learning	Overviewing and linking with already known material, paying attention, delaying speech production to focus on listening
		2. Arranging and planning your learning	Finding out about language learning, organizing, setting goals and objectives, identifying the purpose of a language task (purposeful listening/reading/speaking writing), planning for a language task, seeking practice opportunities
		3. Evaluating your learning	Self-monitoring, self-evaluating
	Affective strategies	1. Lowering your anxiety	Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation, music, laughter
		2. Encouraging yourself	Making positive statements, taking risks wisely, rewarding yourself

		3. Taking your emotional temperature	Listening to your body, using a checklist, writing a language learning diary, discussing your feelings with someone else
	Social strategies	1. Asking questions	Asking for clarification or verification, asking for correction
		2. Cooperating with others	Cooperating with others, cooperating with proficient L2 users
		3. Empathizing with others	Developing cultural understanding, becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings
Wenden (1991)	Cognitive strategies	1. Selecting	Attending to native speakers in selective contexts, attending to the sound of the language
		2. Comprehending	Using a dictionary, asking friends for an explanation, inferring meaning from context, reading a grammar, finding examples, understanding corrections, comparing L1/L2
		3. Storing	Overtly practising, silently rehearsing, classifying language, using mnemonic devices, memorising words, phrases and meanings
		4. Retrieving	Recalling words several times during the day, using new words in conversation, socialising with native speakers, watching TV, listening to other conversations
	Self-management strategies	1. Planning	Setting goals and objectives and how to achieve them
		2. Monitoring	Monitoring attempts to learn as a participant observer, noticing affective and cognitive factors
		3. Evaluating	Considering the success of attempts to learn, assessing the evaluation criteria, applying the criteria
Stern (1992)	Management and planning	1. Planning	Deciding commitment to learning, setting reasonable goals, deciding on appropriate methodology, and resources

		2. Monitoring	Monitoring progress
		1. Evaluation	Evaluating achievements <i>vis-à-vis</i> goals and expectations
Cognitive strategies	1. Clarification/ verification	Note: Stern refers initially to Rubin (1987) and questions whether the list is exhaustive, thus adding a seventh strategy, 'observation'. He does, however, acknowledge that it is, "... a useful but tentative list of suggestions which should be verified by empirical studies." (p. 265)	
	2. Guessing/inductive inferencing		
	3. Deductive reasoning		
	4. Practice		
	5. Memorization		
	6. Monitoring		
	7. Observing		Carefully watching, listening, and reading.
Communicative-experiential strategies	1. Seeking opportunities for unrehearsed, authentic language use	Reading materials of interest, listening to the radio, watching films, engaging other people in conversation	
	2. Using communication strategies to maintain the flow of conversation	Using circumlocution, gesturing, paraphrasing, or asking for repetition and explanation	
Interpersonal strategies	1. Dealing with 'infantilization' and 'satellization' (i.e. loss of status)	Finding a family to be 'adopted' by	
	2. Dealing with second language issues independently ('desatellization')	Learning from correction, monitoring one's progress, evaluating one's performance.	
	3. Seeking contact and cooperating with native speakers	<i>This is closely tied to the communicative-experiential strategies, above</i>	
	4. Becoming acquainted with the target culture	Reading books, watching and listening to cultural programs, talking about culture.	

	Affective strategies	1. Dealing with frustration and the feeling of being overwhelmed by the magnitude of the language learning task	Creating favourable learning conditions to deal with negative affect, learning to accept inevitable difficulties, and tolerate ambiguity.
		2. Overcoming 'feelings of strangeness'	Learning to accept the development of an L2 'ego' or 'personality'.
		3. Addressing any negativity towards to the target language, culture, or people	Being conscious of one's feelings and attitudes about the L2, its people and culture

Based on and adapted from O'Malley & Chamot (1990: 4-5), Table 1.1 Classification of learning strategies in second language acquisition.

Appendix B: Wenden (1991), Five principles for strategies training

Principle	Description
Informed	Strategy training should be informed. The purpose of the training should be made explicit and its value brought to the students' attention.
Self-regulation	Students should be trained how to regulate or oversee the use of the strategy, i.e. when it is appropriate to use it; the difficulties they have implementing it; and its effectiveness.
Contextualized	Strategies should be contextualized. Training should be in the context of the subject matter content and/or skill for which it is appropriate. It should be directed to specific language learning problems related to the learners' experience.
Interactive	Strategy training should be interactive. According to this mode of training, learners are not told what to do and then left on their own to practise. Rather, until they evidence some ability to regulate their use of the strategy, teachers are expected to continue to work with them.
Diagnosis	The content of the training should be based on the actual proficiency of the learners. Therefore, at the outset of any strategy training, information on which strategies students use and how well they use them should be collected.

Reproduced from Wenden (1991: 105)

Appendix C: Stern (1992), Explicit and implicit learning/teaching strategies

Type of strategies	Description and examples
A) The explicit teaching strategy	
1. Metacognitive counselling techniques	Advice to learners during class. Admonitions, encouragement, hints and specific suggestions on how learn more efficiently, respond to correction, and apply what has been studied.
2. Guided cognitive learning techniques	“Observation, conceptualization, explanation, mnemonic devices, rule discovery, relational thinking, trial and error, explicit practice, and monitoring.” (1992: 336)
B) The implicit teaching strategy	
1. Implicit audiolingual techniques	Analytic techniques which focus on the language but aim to lessen the cognitive load. Examples include repetition, rote learning, memorising dialogues or narratives, and pattern practice.
2. Experiential	Techniques to “direct attention to topics, tasks, activities, and substantive

teaching techniques	content.” (1992: 341) These may be applied to all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Examples include use of radio and television programmes, films, and other authentic exposure to ‘comprehensible input’ (Krashen and Terrell, 1983).
3. Creating states of receptiveness	Techniques to “overcome the deeper psychological resistance to second language learning.” (1992: 343) In addition to helping students to relax by giving support, praise and encouragement, selecting appropriately challenging yet achievable tasks, examples of specific approaches include hypnopedia and Suggestopedia. These are all aimed at overcoming the ‘affective filter’ (Krashen, 1981).

Based on Stern (1992: 334-347)

Appendix D: Nunan (1997), Five stages to foster learner autonomy

Level	Learner action	Content	Process
1	Awareness	Learners are made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the materials they are using.	Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles/ strategies.
2	Involvement	Learners are involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives on offer.	Learners make choices among a range of options.
3	Intervention	Learners are involved in modifying and adapting the goals and content of the learning programme.	Learners modify/ adapt tasks.
4	Creation	Learners create their own goals and objectives.	Learners create their own tasks.
5	Transcendence	Learners go beyond the classroom and make links between the content of classroom learning and the world beyond.	Learners become teachers and researchers.

Figure 13.1 Autonomy: levels of implementation.

Reproduced from Nunan (1997: 195)

Appendix E: Brown (2001), Approaches to teaching strategies in the classroom

Approach	Example goals/techniques	References
<p>1. Teach strategies through interactive techniques</p>	<p>“Ten Commandments” for good language learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lower inhibitions 2. Encourage risk-taking. 3. Build self-confidence. 4. Develop intrinsic motivation. 5. Engage in cooperative learning. 6. Use right-brain processes. 7. Promote ambiguity tolerance. 8. Practice intuition. 9. Process error feedback. 10. Set personal goals” 	<p>Brown (2001: 216-216); Brown (2000); and Oxford (1990)</p>
<p>2. Use compensatory techniques to overcome cognitive style problems or weaknesses</p>	<p>“1. <i>Low tolerance of ambiguity</i>: brainstorming, retelling, role-play, paraphrasing, finding synonyms, skimming, jigsaw techniques to overcome.</p> <p>2. <i>Excessive impulsiveness</i>: making inferences, syntactic or semantic clue searches, scanning, inductive rule generalization.</p> <p>3. <i>Excessive reflectiveness/caution</i>: small-group techniques, role-play, brainstorming, fluency techniques.</p> <p>4. <i>Too much right-brain dominance</i>: syntactic or semantic clue searches, scanning, proofreading, categorizing, information-gap activities.</p> <p>5. <i>Too much left-brain dominance</i>: integrative language techniques, fluency technique, retelling, skimming.”</p> <p>(2000: 219)</p>	<p>Omaggio (1981)</p>
<p>3. Administer a strategy inventory</p>	<p>Introduce a self-checklist for learner styles and/or strategies inventory in the classroom, such as the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Use the inventory to raise awareness of strategies, base assignments on, and as a reference for strategies to teach.</p>	<p>Oxford (1990)</p>
<p>4. Make use of impromptu teacher-initiated advice</p>	<p>Pass on the ‘tricks of the trade’ which helped you with your own language learning (e.g. using flashcards, reading, drawing pictures, etc).</p>	<p>Brown (2000: 135)</p>

Appendix F: Footnotes

¹ A significant number of writers highlight the importance of individual learners, their beliefs, styles and preferences (Brown, 2000, 2001; Oxford, 1990). It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss these issues, but O'Malley & Chamot point out their potential significance:

Characteristics such as motivation, aptitude, or effectiveness as a learner, age, sex, prior education and cultural background, and learning style may play an important role in the receptiveness of students to learner strategy training and in their ability to acquire new learning strategies.

(1990: 160)

Wenden (1991) developed “An action plan for beliefs and attitudes” and Paris (1988a), cited in O'Malley & Chamot (1990: 161), identifies four teaching techniques to increase motivation in cognitive strategy instruction: (1) modelling; (2) direct explanation; (3) scaffolding instruction; and (4) cooperative learning.

Richards and Rodgers outline the learner-centred philosophy of Multiple Intelligences and point out its close association with learner training, learning strategies, and learner autonomy (2001: 115). They advocate encouraging learners to “take an MI inventory and to develop their own MI profiles ...” (2001:120).

² Nova employs several thousand foreign instructors and boasts about 440,000 students at over 640 schools nationwide (Nova Corporation, 2001). In my school, there are 285 ‘active’ students. Active students have attended at least once in the past three months. Many students, however, attend regularly, either once or twice a week. There are also 108 ‘inactive’ students who have contracts but have not attended in the past three months

³ Students can take ‘regular’ lessons in their own level or the one immediately above, except absolute beginners who can only take lessons in their own level. I usually teach about twenty regular classes a week with an average of two students per class. I also teach a few regularly attending Business and TOEIC students on a one-to-one basis, as well as children.

⁴ In addition to themed Voices, we offer ‘Special Voices’ for beginners, intermediates and high level students. These are often regularly attended by the same core members.