A STUDENT-FOCUSED, CLASSROOM-BASED RESEARCH PROJECT WITH THE AIM OF DISCOVERING TO WHAT EXTENT MY STUDENTS CAN BECOME *BETTER* LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Assignment # 2   PG/03/09
Do you think that there is such a thing as a '*good* language learner'? To what extent do you think it is possible to become 'better' language learners? Discuss with reference to your own students, past or present.

1.0   <u>Introduction</u>

In this student-focused, classroom-based project I will discuss the *good* language learner (Naiman et al, 1975, noted in Skehan, 1998: 263) and to what extent I think it is possible for learners to become *better* learners. This will be done with reference to a particular target group.

Through data collection I will ascertain my students' strategy use. I will consider to what extent it is possible to guide my students to become *better learners* by adopting or improving on learning techniques and appropriate strategies (Ehrman, 1996: 177) and developing learner autonomy and independence. This will be illustrated through specific language learning activities, in this sense, taking a description of *learning* as, 'an act of gaining knowledge' to make learning more effective (Collins, 1993: 644).

Understandably, the teacher plays an important role. Brown (2001) asserts that a fundamental part of a teacher's job is to provide learners with the tools for self-development. Skehan (1998: 261) agrees, writing of the moves which distinguish the role of the individual, in terms of learner autonomy and responsibility. Brown (2001: 208) cautions us:

> '…teachers might overlook their mission of enabling learners to eventually become
>
> *independent* of classrooms – that is, to become autonomous learners.'

Holland and Shortall (1997: 110) suggest that teachers can present classes with a 'menu' of learning strategies, the aim being for the learners to reach the point where teacher support can be withdrawn (Ehrman, 1996: 177). But Oxford (1990) acknowledges that systems of strategies are proposals and little tested through practical classroom use and through research, a point with which Skehan (1998) concurs when he writes of the lack of empirical justification for the proliferation of learner training materials as disturbing, implying that, as teachers, we should regard such materials as methodologically unproven

until their effectiveness is verified. Brown, however, (2001: 207/8) endorses strategy employment, stating,

> '…often…learners have achieved their goals only through conscious, systematic application of a battery of strategies. Strategies are, in essence, learners' techniques for capitalizing on the principles of …learning.'

Scheid (1993: 3/4) concurs,

> 'What students are capable of learning is influenced by developmental factors, and by what they know and understand about how to approach learning strategically.'

With those considerations in mind, I will attempt to determine to what extent my students, through teacher assistance, can become *better* language learners.

2.0   Definition of a *good* language learner

The notion of a *good* language learner is rather ambiguous and needs some clarification. In the area of second language acquisition (SLA), usually a *good* learner would be classed as one who is successful in the use of the target language and who can display high communicative competence when tackling language tasks. This is clearly an area of great interest. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to deal in detail with issues of intelligence, academic skills and aptitude, and the effect they have on SLA, especially as such qualities cannot be directly observed or measured (Lightbrown and Spada, 1999: 51).

Needless to say, if you are a *good* learner then you increase your chances of being successful at SLA. However, the *good* learner might not necessarily be a successful one, just as a successful learner might not necessarily be a *good* one. Therefore, I consider a *good* learner to be an *efficient* learner who can draw from, and employ, a wide repertoire of learner strategies to improve their effectiveness (Richards et al). Richards et al define

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strategies as,

> 'Intentional behaviour and thoughts that learners make use of during learning in order
>
> to better help them understand, learn or remember new information.' (1992: 209)

Negative aspects such as 'avoidance' strategies - not extending one's linguistic repertoire (Skehan, 1998: 21) – resulting in low levels of verbal production (Oxford, 1999: 66) are of course excluded.

A *good* language learner is one who is also aware of, and can make efficient use of, their preferred sensory modalities, but also be able to operate outside their 'comfort zone' (Oxford). They are also able to develop independence and autonomy. Both terms need defining. Independence means that one is not reliant or dependent on the support of others - the students look to themselves to undertake tasks, moving away from teacher-dependence and teacher-provided 'scaffolding' (Van Lier). Autonomy means having the freedom to determine one's own actions and behaviour (Collins) - which the students need to seek opportunities to develop and take control of their own effective learning - and as a result eschewing learner inactivity (Richards, in Candlin and Mercer, 2001: 176).

3.0   Teaching context - Assessment of current situation

3.1   Class description.

A Japanese private high school third-year class of fifteen students (eight males, seven females) aged eighteen, in their fifth academic year of EFL. I, a native English speaker with 6 years of TEFL, have been teaching this five times weekly, fifty-minute English Oral Communication (O.C.) lesson since July 2002. The course book, *Passport: English for International Communication*, is regularly supplemented with materials aiming to promote conversation and develop listening skills.

3.2   Group proficiency levels and learner types.

General proficiency levels are monitored in lesson time, and along with learner types, I intuitively grade the group as below, feeling well placed to do this over an extended period of time (McDonough and McDonough. 1997: 212). The speaking proficiency levels below are noted merely as an indication of the target group's range of levels.

Table 1   Target group English speaking proficiency*

Level	Number of students
Novice-High	4
Intermediate-Low	5
Intermediate-Mid	4
Intermediate-High	1
Advanced	1

*based upon ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 1986 (in Brown, H. 2001: 100).

The broad and relatively even range of learner types (see Table 2 below) indicate how the students learn and what range of learning options and activities I ought to provide

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in class (Nunan, 1991: 170) to increase and improve strategy-use.

Table 2   Learner types of target group

Learner types*	Number of students
Concrete	**4**
Analytical	**5**
Communicative	**4**
Authority-oriented	**2**

*See Table 7, Appendix One for taxonomy of learner types.

3.3   Hypothesis.

Will teaching my students about learning strategies actually help them become *better* learners by overcoming their weaknesses and developing independence and autonomy?

3.4   Strategies checklist.

The students were asked to complete the following strategies checklist (Brown, 2000: 136) to discover their strategy use preferences. To reduce confusion and misunderstandings a Japanese translation was provided (see Appendix Two).

Strategies checklist completion instructions

Check one box in each item that best describes you. Boxes A and E would indicate that the sentence is very much like you. Boxes B and D would indicate that the sentence is somewhat descriptive of you. Box C would indicate that you have no inclination one way or the other.   (Brown, 2000: 136)

Strategies checklist | **A** | **B** | **C** | **D** | **E**

1. I don't mind if people laugh at me when I speak. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I get embarrassed if people laugh at me when I speak.

2. I like to try using new words and patterns that I don't know about 100%. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I like to use only language that I really know is correct.

3. I feel very confident that I will be successful in learning English. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I feel quite unsure that I will be successful in learning English.

4. I want to learn English for personal gain. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I am learning English only because someone requires me to.

5. I really enjoy working with other people in groups. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I really prefer working alone than with other people.

6. I like to 'absorb' English and understand the 'general meaning' of what is said or written. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I like to analyse the many details of English and understand exactly what is said or written.

7. If there is a lot of English to master, I just try to take things step by step. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I am very annoyed by a lot of English material presented all at once.

8. I am not very conscious of myself when I speak. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I 'monitor' myself very closely and consciously when I speak.

9. When I make mistakes, I try to use them to learn something about English. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ When I make a mistake, it annoys me because that's a symbol of how poor my English is.

10. I find ways to continue learning English outside the classroom. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I look to the teacher and the classroom activities for everything I need to be successful.

3.5   Strategies checklist results.

The strategy use points were allocated as below:

Table 3   Strategy use points

Category	A	B	C	D	E
Points value	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**

Figure 1 displays the target group's male and female combined strategy use scores out of a maximum of 75. Table 4 shows the percentage equivalent.

Figure 1   Target group's combined strategy use total scores
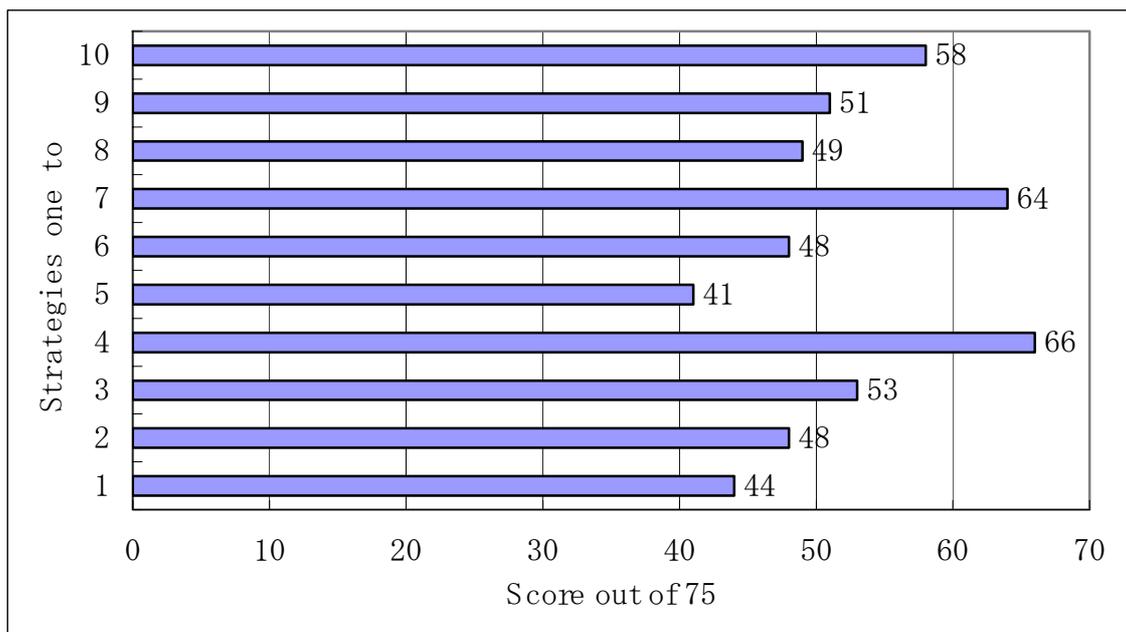
Table 4   Strategy use scores – percentages*

Strategy number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%age equivalent+	**59**	**64**	**71**	**88**	**55**	**64**	**85**	**65**	**68**	**77**

*See Figure 6, Appendix Three for comparative male and female percentage results.

+to nearest whole figure.

There is a disparity of 25 points (33%) between the highest and lowest strategy use scores. The average points score is 52.2, equating to almost 70%. However, strategies numbers one and five (see Table 5 below for description of strategies), at scores of 44 and 41 respectively, score almost eight and eleven percent below average.

Figure 2   Display of strategies checklist results – student responses
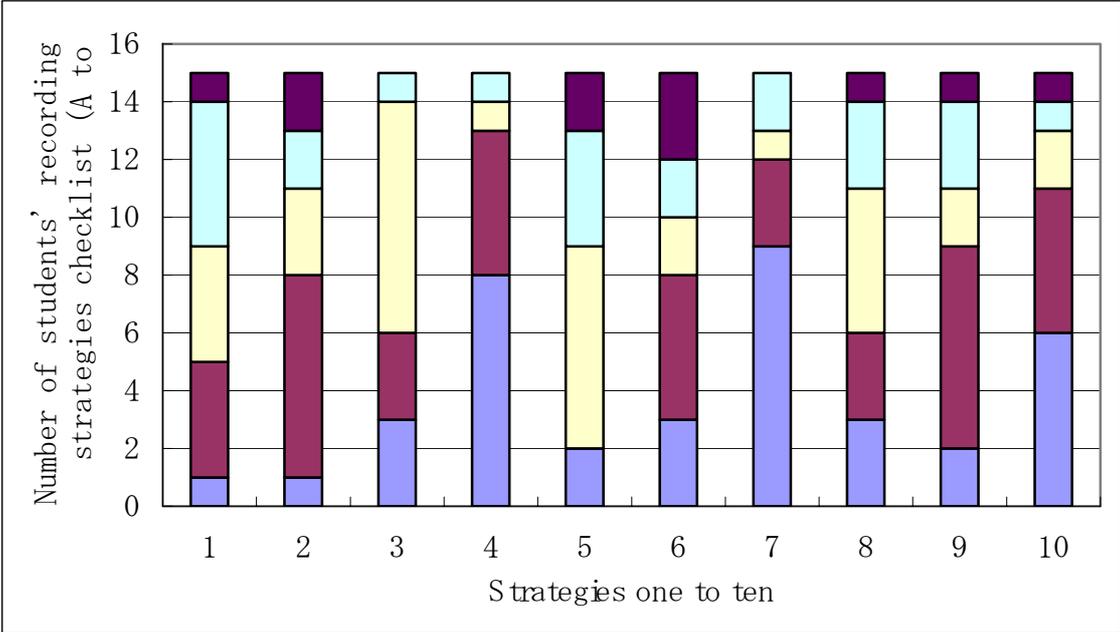
The above results show either four or five blocks in the vertical columns. The larger the first two blocks (from the bottom up, but excluding strategy 5), the higher the number of students having answered in **A** or **B**. They reveal that the target group does in fact draw on a wide range of strategies.

Table 5   Key to strategies and average strategy-use points - males and females

Strategy number	%age score	Description of strategy	Points – max. 5	
			Males*	Females
1	59	Lowering of inhibitions	3.1	3.3
2	64	Level of risk-taking	3.6	2.9
3	71	Self-confidence	3.5	3.6
4	88	Intrinsic motivation	4.1	4.6
5	55	Use of cooperative learning	3.0	2.7
6	64	Use of right-brain processes	3.4	2.9
7	85	Level of ambiguity tolerance	3.6	4.7
8	65	Using intuition	3.3	3.3
9	68	Error feedback processing	3.9	2.9
10	77	Setting personal goals	4.8	2.9
			Average	3.6	3.4

Number four, the highest scoring, displays a very high level of internal (positive) motivation, influencing the extent of 'active, personal engagement in learning' (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992: 52). All strategy use points scored above the 2.5 mid-point, demonstrating a broad adoption of strategies. From these results we can assume that the target group are *good* learners, and that there is an overall similarity in both genders' strategy use scores. There is, however, room for improvement.

3.7   Strategies requiring remedial attention and countermeasures.

To later assess to what extent the students can become *better* learners, strategies **One**, **Five** and **Ten** will be focused on in the following ways:

One - Six students show high inhibition levels. Such low self-esteem – creating barriers - stifles improvement and manifests itself through a 'poor self-image, fear of failure and a feeling of inadequacy.' (de Andrés, in Candlin and Mercer, 1999: 87.)

A reversal in the overuse of avoidance strategies (Edwards et al, 1998: 154) (silences, ending conversations abruptly and unnaturally, shying away from participation) through learning 'direct compensation strategies' will aid learners with knowledge gaps to continue to communicate authentically (Oxford, 1990: 9). To limit inhibitions, Brown (2000: 137) suggests

> '…play guessing games and communication games; do role-plays and skits; use plenty
>
> of group work; laugh **with** your students; have them share their fears in small groups.'

Figure 3   Compensation strategy system*

Compensation strategies ► Overcoming limitations in speaking ⟨ Getting help / Using mime or gestures / Selecting the topic / Adjusting the message / Using a circumlocution or synonym
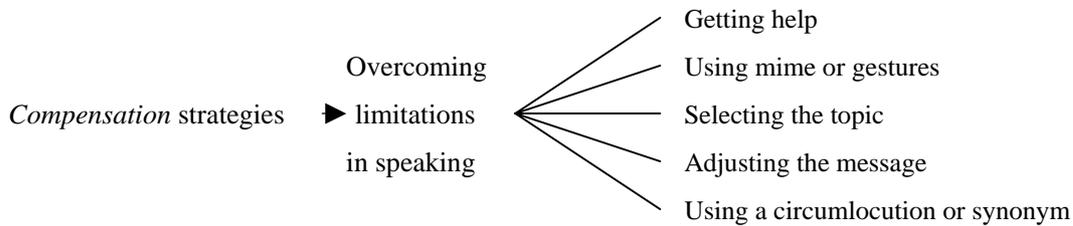
(*Taken from Oxford, 1990: 19)

<u>Five</u> - The females typically prefer working alone, making O.C. techniques and activities practice problematic. To promote cooperative learning, Brown (2000: 138) writes:

> '…direct students to share their knowledge; play down competition…; get your class
>
> to think of themselves as a team; do a considerable amount of small group work.'

To introduce such group learning indirect strategies I should design learning situations by which working together helps foster a positive collective group attitude (Scheid, 1993: 40).

Figure 4   Social strategy system*

Asking ——————— 1. Asking for clarification or verification
questions ——————— 2. Asking for correction

Social strategies ⊢ Cooperating ——————— 1. Cooperating with peers
with others ——————— 2. Cooperating with proficient language users

Empathising ——————— 1. Developing cultural understanding
with others ——————— 2. Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings
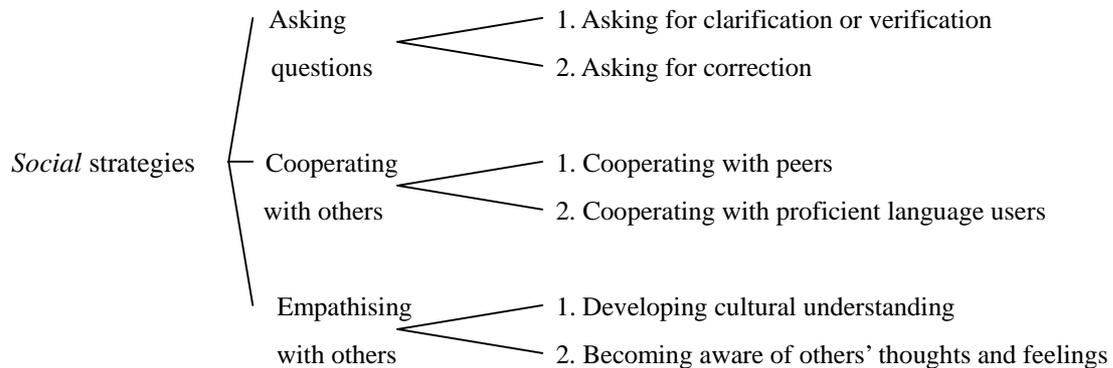
(*Also known as Socio-affective strategies. Taken from Oxford, 1990: 21)

<u>**Ten**</u> - Learner independence and autonomy should be achieved by setting personal goals. The males' score at 95% was far higher than the females' at 60% because:

- Male responses in **A** category – 6, but female – 0.
- Male responses in **B** category – 2, but female – 3.

Independence and autonomy should be achieved by focusing less explicitly on O.C. and starting with what is 'difficult in small increments and with tasks on which nothing depends' (Ehrman, in Arnold, 1999: 72). Self-managed learning by taking more control over, and shaping their own methods of, learning will build strategic techniques directed towards good language learning behaviours (Brown, 2000: 137). Palinscar (in Scheid, 1993: 39), states

'If students are to develop into purposeful and independent learners instruction should be designed in a way that will lead them to take responsibility for their own learning.'

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4.0   Learner Training Activities

This section briefly describes the six learning activities conducted. Detailed descriptions are in Appendix Four.

4.1   Activity one, day one. Matching activity.

Following completion of the strategies checklist, in small groups the students put the "Ten Commandments" (Brown, 2000: 137) in the correct order to match the strategies. This aimed to raise consciousnesses of the implications of the strategies checklist (Brown). Next, they placed the poster-sized sentences in the correct order on the blackboard.

4.2   Activity two, day two. Sensory channel modalities awareness.

To increase the students' awareness of their preferred sensory modalities they were taken through a *guided visualization* exercise (in the ETJ Journal, Summer 2003, 4:2). They were read a script and asked to record on a triangle where they felt the strongest modality. Next, they were encouraged to talk openly about, and compare, their own styles (Brown, 2001: 211).

4.3   Activity three, day three. The Gestures Game.

The students were grouped into five teams of three, selected in order to mix up proficiency levels and genders (see Appendix Five, Table 10 for taxonomy on student proficiency levels). Every student was expected to participate in this direct compensation strategies activity, which saw the use of mime or gesture to communicate messages. The embedded activity intention was to lower inhibitions.

4.4   **Activity four, days four to six. Why do you need or want English?**

The students were asked to conduct a self-analysis of anticipated future needs for English on chart 4.4.a (see Appendix Four), with the aim of getting the students to establish learning priorities. The embedded activity intention was to develop a sense of learner independence - not teacher reliance. Next, the students filled in a self-assessment scale – 4.4.b (see Appendix Four), followed by recording their priorities on a scale from **a** to **f** – record 4.4.c (see Appendix Four).

Days five and six of student-centred, learner-driven study encouraged students' development of learner autonomy and learner responsibility (Skehan, 1998: 261). They were given the opportunity to prescribe their own learning for two days. The lessons were teacher-monitored to ensure that the time was used wisely.

4.5   **Activity five, day seven. What would you say? / What *wouldn't* you say?**

The students use direct compensation strategies through using circumlocution, selecting what words to use and using gestures. It aimed to promote indirect social strategies through social interaction and asking questions or for clarification or verification. The embedded activity intention was to lower inhibitions.

4.6   **Activity six, day eight. Snakes and Ladders.**

The students develop indirect social strategies (through asking for clarification or verification and cooperating with peers) and direct compensation strategies through conversation strategies (selecting what words to use and getting help). The embedded activity intentions were to review units 1 to 18 of the regular textbook – *Passport* - and (re)introduce students to expressions and tactics to take control of communication.

5.0   Analyses of results

Following are the most salient observations made from the learner activities and assessment of the degree of learner progression.

5.1   Strategies and modalities awareness training.

For the target group, it was important to introduce awareness training as the students are at an age where they can make sense of, and benefit from, awareness of the concept of strategies and sensory (input channel) modalities. The students are often not aware that they are using certain strategies, just as they are not consciously aware that they favour certain sensory modalities. With a conscious knowledge of the ways they learn, the process of understanding their individual learner differences can, in turn, begin to foster an understanding of why they process information differently.

5.1.1   Strategies awareness.

Upon completion of the individual-focused awareness through the strategies checklist (in which the students were told to answer honestly and personally about their own learning), and the group-focused awareness through the "Ten Commandments" for good language learning (involving manipulating the order of the meanings of the strategies), to what extent can we deduce the students have become *better* learners?

The students were able to see the "Big Picture" (Oxford) and discover that the "Ten Commandments" represent high strategy use. It was the first time that many of them had been able to 'compartmentalise' their weaknesses and receive an opportunity to look closely at their learning without simply 'brushing their difficulties under the carpet' and ignoring them. This is leading to a more mature 'face the music' learning approach.

From the group feedback that ensued they could see that collectively, despite having

high motivation levels, their embarrassment at making mistakes and subsequent inhibition are a factors that the whole group can attempt to overcome together given time.

Knowing that they are not alone in their fears, and that as a collective group their apprehensions have been 'exposed' and addressed in class, they are less anxious to admit when they don't understand something. Now that as individuals in the classroom the burden of failure and embarrassment has been somewhat lifted, the students are beginning to accept that mistakes and errors are an inevitable and natural part of language learning. From this, one very evident change since awareness training is how many more students now look to other members of the group - rather than to the floor - when asked a teacher-fronted question. Instead of shying away from participation, the students more readily turn to, and consult, one another.

The students, knowing that there is no simple a remedy as a 'bravery pill', may not yet be fully aware of how to overcome their inhibitions, but simply by becoming more aware of the ways they learn they have already taken a first step on the road to improvement. We can, therefore, deduce that now they have participated in strategies assessment and awareness and are more informed about their own learning, their interest in strategies has increased and they are more motivated to participate in strategy training (Oxford).

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5.1.2   Sensory modalities awareness.

The students recorded the following results from the *Guided Visualization* exercise.

Figure 5   Preferred learning modality recording results triangle*
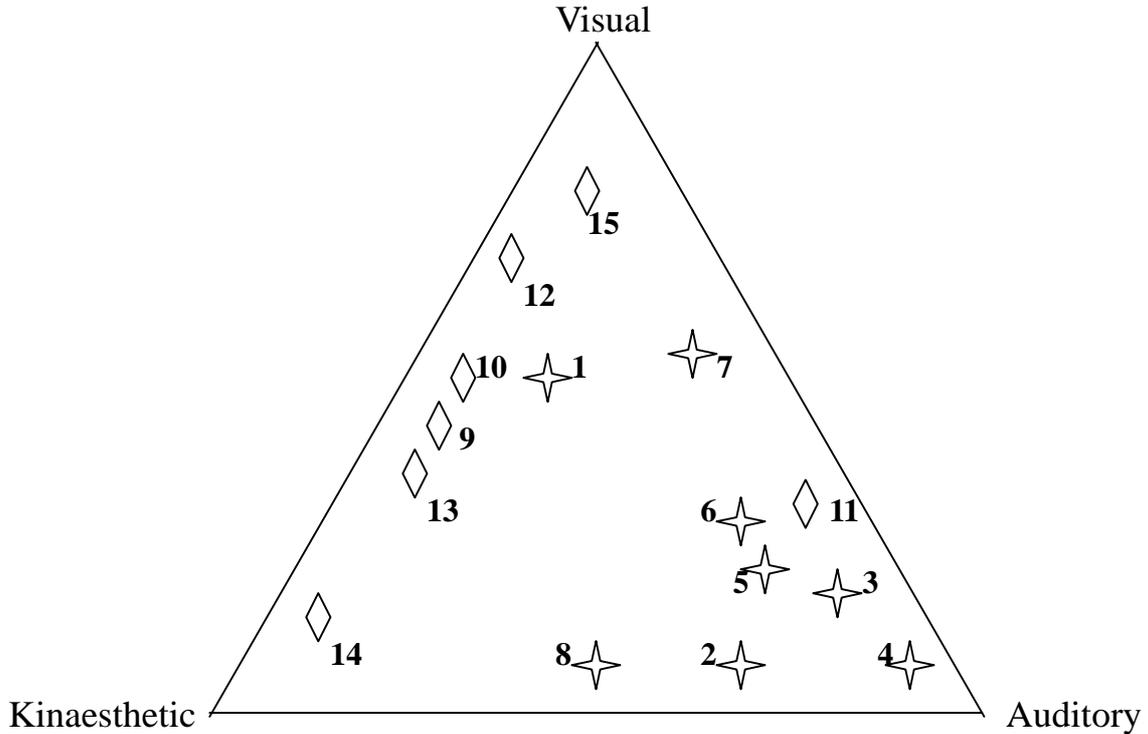
Results indicator: ✦   = males (student numbers 1 – 8).   ◇ = females (student numbers 9 – 15).

The target group were interested in this learning style dimension (Ehrman), to enrich their learning because it again displayed to them how, as individuals, they possess a 'preferred way of absorbing, processing, and retaining information and skills' (Reid 1995, in Lightbrown and Spada, 1999: 58). They were surprised to see how differently they process information and how it influences the way they study. Six students having recorded strong auditory preferences counters Reid's findings that few Japanese students prefer auditory modality (1987, noted in Brown, 2000: 122).

Until now the students have followed class instructions from the teacher that were

not always suited to their varied preferred modalities. For example, a visual student (student 15) who is told to close books when conducting a listening exercise now is able to request that they read the text at the same time. The auditory learner, however, might benefit from closing their eyes. This means a manipulation of materials to their preferred learning styles. Furthermore, the students realise that despite sensory modalities often being 'situation-dependent' (Ehrman, 1996: 63), they can now understand more about why they have weak areas, and are able to develop strategies to associate with their stylistic preferences (Ehrman, in Arnold, 1999: 72). For example, student 14, a kinaesthetic learner, likes to play with the language (cutting out words, writing in the air, etc).

My lessons, similar to most communicative language classrooms, have a considerable amount of auditory and visual content. The kinaesthetic students now know that they have a legitimate reason for wanting to get up and walk around the room occasionally (to go and find a dictionary, write on the blackboard, manually handle materials and so on). It will be interesting to see how freedom for such behaviour in the O.C. classroom will make a difference to the way they learn.

An expansion in my teaching repertoire to offer a variety and change in activities and provide for a differing array of stimuli within a consistent, learner-centred, communicative approach (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992: 63) will, hopefully, further encourage the students to make full use of the materials available.

5.2   Compensation strategies.

Activities three, five and six helped the students build up *compensation strategies* (enveloping communication strategies); generally concerning overcoming limitations in speaking, they are also essential to all four language skills, and not as Tarone (1977, 1980, 1983) claims relevant only to the speaking situation (Oxford 1990: 168).

Those students who prefer to keep a 'low profile' and experience high anxiety levels were encouraged to break down barriers and increase class participation. Despite usually shying away from opportunities to carry out tasks necessary for dealing with others in the target language (Richards, Nov. 2003: 3), all fulfilled their expected role in the challenges.

The inhibited speakers who usually avoid having to engage in clause-internal processing through the use of memorised chunks of language (Skehan, 1998: 35) managed to begin to move beyond the expressions they usually restrict themselves to, such as, 'May I help you?'; 'Can I sit here?'; 'Would you repeat that, please?'; 'Please speak more slowly'; 'I'm sorry, I don't understand'. This meant having to use circumlocution or synonyms and adjust the message to advance communication, strongly benefiting the seven students who noted speaking as top priority (see Chart 4.4.c, Appendix Six). Thus, the opportunities they took to advance conversation - which previously would often have been rejected - not only saw them review language but also start to expand the use of spoken English.

Stepping up before the group should have, by definition, created fear of 'negative comparisons with others who might perform better' (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992: 55), resulting in debilitating anxiety. Conversely, it can be assumed that facilitating anxiety helped get them through the tasks, yet such anxiety is only really helpful for simple tasks and not for actual language learning (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992: 54). The activities on which, at face value, little depended (Ehrman, in Arnold, 1999: 83), did however fail to

allow the students to truly select their own topics for speaking, therefore restricting creativity, but providing a 'cushion' at this stage of strategies instruction.

Despite usually preferring a lot of thinking time and planning time during conversation - which, if too drawn out, stifle spontaneity - the limited five-second thinking time of the gestures game (not allowing for rehearsal and feedback) did not impede their ability to get the intended message across. The students don't tend to gesture very much but, seemingly determined to get their message across, were quite creative in their ability to communicate.

The pair-work activities (despite leaning towards social strategies) alleviated the pain of severe language anxiety for those learners generally dependent on what others say. Profiting from chances to develop a more personal manner of speaking (Skehan, in Candlin and Mercer, 2001: 81) they developed opportunities to express their own individual meanings using the target language, in a range of contexts (Richards, Nov. 2003), and thus could begin to learn that getting the message across is more important than worrying about language accuracy. However, they still don't seem ready to expand those skills outside the "comfort zone" of the classroom and obviously have some way to go before they can truly feel comfortable to break the pattern of language avoidance until now overly relied upon.

The inhibited students were encouraged by the others to participate in the speaking activities and subsequently had to rely on resourcefulness and improvising ability (Skehan, in Bygate et al. 1994: 178) whilst building up achievement strategies - which include retaining the original intention of meaning and using resources creatively to solve a communication problem (Skehan) - hence leading to an improvement in compensation strategies (Oxford, 1990: 9).

5.3   **Learner autonomy.**

Upon graduation the target group will soon end O.C. classroom instruction. Six of the students intend to study English at institutes of higher education, so clearly have a future need for English. Therefore, chart 4.4.a, scale 4.4.b and record 4.4.c (see Appendix Six for results) aimed to get the students to begin to be more autonomous by determining their own actions and behaviour, arguably vital for the average eighteen-year-old high school leaver because, for the most part, the students' typical high school learning environment does not encourage them to decide their own course of actions. Seldom being expected to determine the process of their own learning, developing autonomy is an area in which teacher support is required in the early stages.

Presupposing that learning strategies are the epitome of learner choice and self-direction (Oxford, 1990: 206), the students being given the freedom to select their own course of action for days five and six agreed with Ehrman, who states:

'Part of the art of teaching is to help students find which activities belong in which

category for them to make use of them appropriately.' (in Arnold, 1999: 84.)

Considering carefully in the needs analysis why they need English helped the students focus on how they should channel their energies into choosing and undertaking activities. In the results of 4.4.a (see Appendix Six) listening scored the highest at 41 points, followed by extending vocabulary (38). With seven points fewer was speaking (the core O.C. skill). The average was 30.2.

Following the results of 4.4.b and 4.4.c (see Appendix Six) the group was given opportunities to consider what approach they should take towards learning. That needed careful monitoring to ensure that the students planned carefully (Richards, in Candlin and Mercer, 2001: 168) because, even with preparation, the students needed a chance to become used to their new responsibility and role (Crandall, in Arnold, 1999: 240).

Assessing the suitability of the students' choice of learning materials for self-direction is done according to the correlation between what they each recorded in 4.4.b and 4.4.c (see Appendix Six for group results) and what activities they subsequently selected to undertake (see Appendix Seven).

Table 6　Days five and six- Suitability of activities matched to priorities

Day		Self-directed activity suitability*			
		Zero	Low	Medium	High
Five	Number of	1	2	1	11
Six	students	0	1	1	13

*For example, student number 7 spent his self-direction daydreaming. His activity suitability score is subsequently zero. See Appendix Eight for his interview transcript.

As can be seen in Table 6 above, a high proportion of students made profitable use of the lesson time. The self-reflection process embedded in the needs analysis and priorities record eliminated chaos, leading to a quiet, self-managed group, mostly managing beneficial activities, something that I would not have thought so possible just one year ago. Nevertheless, being a homogenous group, a little too much Japanese was used over the two days, more than is tolerated in a teacher-led (yet student-centred) class, but probably due to them having far more opportunities to interact.

Further opportunities should be made for them to,

'develop higher self-esteem by training them to set reasonable goals and to assess their own progress toward these goals realistically and positively' (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992: 146).

So doing should hopefully lead to a greater use of English.

Nearing the end of the *Passport* course book and with no other syllabus

obligations for the remainder of the term, I am in a position to offer further such self-directed opportunities on Tuesdays and Friday, as has been requested and elected for by the students. However, to do so, (and still having to be somewhat teacher-controlled) a list of rules (such as far less Japanese be spoken) was drawn up to ensure advantageous time-use. It is recognised that careful teacher monitoring need take place to avoid some students treating it as a free-for-all 'playtime'. I do not, however, anticipate too many problems whilst displaying that, as teacher, I am fulfilling my expected 'low-key monitoring' role in the classroom, which should appease the 'authority-oriented' learners.

It should be remembered, however, that a handful of students clearly need more guidance and suggestions regarding how to plan for self-direction. One example is student number 14 (see Appendix Eight for transcript), who is a dedicated learner of English but who feels she lacks ideas about ways to learn, and is subsequently not yet as autonomous as she would like to be. Student seven especially will hopefully, through sufficient motivation, eschew social isolation and renew his efforts at functioning within the group (Crandall, in Arnold, 1999: 241).

I anticipate that once a recognised pattern has evolved in the self-directed lessons, the students will be able to bounce ideas of one another, and thus be further able to distance themselves from teacher-reliance.

6.0   Limitations of short-term training

Ideally, strategies should be phased in gently and gradually, something impossible over the short-term and narrow focus (Oxford, 1990: 206) of this project. Longer-term training would allow subtle training techniques to be introduced, which would not expect overnight change in the students. Also, some strategies that appear synonymous with certain aspects of language learning (such as cooperative learning and Oral Communication) simply seem unsuitable to certain individuals. Here is one example:

- Student 15, a reserved person, has consistently stated that she prefers working alone and is not too highly motivated if thrown into a cooperative, conversational learning environment (Oxford). We cannot, however, class her as 'not a *good* learner' simply because she regularly feels uncomfortable speaking to others in the target language. She is a *good*, keen reader of English novels and has become a *better* learner simply by expanding her vocabulary and grammar base by introducing herself to graded readers for extensive reading.

7.0   Conclusion

I have established that my students, through short-term training can become *better* learners through more active, self-directed, and effective learning (Oxford, 1990), but that further discovery of the potential role of strategy training could occur as an additional, prolonged, long-term course of action. It would be likely to be more effective than one-time, short-term training (Oxford, 1990: 203) as Richards asserts:

'…effective teaching and learning strategies is a central and ongoing component of the

process of teaching' (in Candlin and Mercer, 2001: 177).

The *socio-affective* factors have increased the self-confidence and perseverance needed for my students to involve themselves actively in language learning, although not yet to the degree where they have lost enough of their inhibition. Second, *metacognitive* factors have helped the learners to focus, plan, and evaluate their progress as they set clearer language goals (Oxford) and take more responsibility for their own learning in the language classroom.

Student concerns and fears persist as some in the target group, although interacting well in small groups, still become silent when asked to speak out in front of the whole group, suggesting that outside the classroom opportunities to use English might still be shunned for fear of embarrassment at making mistakes. Unfortunately, that envelopes cultural considerations, but assuming that previous instruction did not afford the students enough opportunities to overcome their inhibitions in speaking, I should continue to encourage the lowering of inhibitions through further classroom activities allowing the students more opportunities to self-direct and confidence-build. Already though, it seems that everyone in the group now sympathises more with the other members, which has in turn led to more mutual support.

The classroom is still regarded as a "security blanket" (Oxford, 1990: 207), but a

more positive attitude ensues as awareness that having invested time and effort into the learning of English has made the students take responsibility for a good deal of their own learning (Brown, 2001: 227). How they subsequently build on that in the 'wider world' is up to them as individuals, but it is certainly hoped that the lessons learned through consciousness-raising and strategy adoption will be made good use of.

In order to truly enable *independence* of my classroom (Brown, 2001: 208), obtainable through what Crandall calls 'participatory or constructivist knowledge development' (in Arnold, 1999: 226), I must constantly monitor how I provide the support the learners need as I cannot yet presuppose that they can clarify their own pedagogic aims or possess the range of skills and strategies required for planning, directing attention, and setting goals. However, introducing a more 'process-style' syllabus, in which the students have to take responsibility (Skehan, 1998: 266), is now more achievable following their introduction to lesson-style negotiation and strategy development.

Now believing the most effective learner training is long-term, I will extend the lessons learned from this project into future groups I teach, employing training earlier to build up the students' repertoire of strategies.

Appendix One

Table 7   Learner types and personality factors of target group

Learner types; Personality factors	Description	Number of students (out of 15)
'concrete' learners	Learners tend to like games, pictures, films, video, using cassettes, talking in pairs and practicing English outside class.	4
'analytical' learners	Learners like studying grammar, English books, studying alone, finding their own mistakes and working on teacher-set problems.	5
'communicative' learners	Learners tend to like learning by watching TV in English, listening to NSs*, talking to friends in English, learning new words by hearing and conversations.	4
'authority-oriented' learners	Prefer the teacher to explain everything, like to have own textbook, to write everything in a notebook, to study grammar, learn by reading, learn words by seeing them.	2

*native speakers   (taken and adapted from Nunan, 1991: 170)

Appendix Two

**Strategies checklist – Japanese translation.**

	*HIGH	A	B	C	D	E	LOW	

1.私が英語を話すとき笑われても気にしない。　□　□　□　□　□　私が英語を話すとき笑われたら恥ずかしい。

2.私は100%わからなくても新しい言葉と構成を使うことが好きだ。　□　□　□　□　□　私は正しく理解した英語しか使えない。

3. 私は英語を話せるようなるだろう。　□　□　□　□　□　私はおそらく英語をつかえないだろう。

4. 私は自分自身の向上の為英語を学びたい。　□　□　□　□　□　私は必要に迫られ英語を学んでいる。

5. 私は集団学習が好きだ。　□　□　□　□　□　私は集団より一人で学習することが好きだ。

6. 私は英語を聞いたり読んだりする時大意をつかむのが好きだ。　□　□　□　□　□　私は英語を精読することが好きだ。

7. 多くの英語を習得するには一歩一歩進むべきだ。　□　□　□　□　□　一度に多くの英語の題材を出されればいらいらする。

8. 私は英語を話す時あまり意識しない。　□　□　□　□　□　私は英語を話す時自分自身を非常に意識する。

9. 私は英語を間違えるとそこから何かを学ぼうとする。　□　□　□　□　□　私は英語を間違えると自分の英語ができないことにいらいらする。

10. 私は学校以外で英語を続ける方法を見つける。　□　□　□　□　□　私は英語を習得するために授業や教師をあてにする。

* HIGH and LOW not written on students' copies.

(Credit goes to Setsuko Warren-Price for translation assistance. Adapted from Brown, 2000: 136)

Appendix Three

Figure 6   Strategies adoption comparative results – males and females*
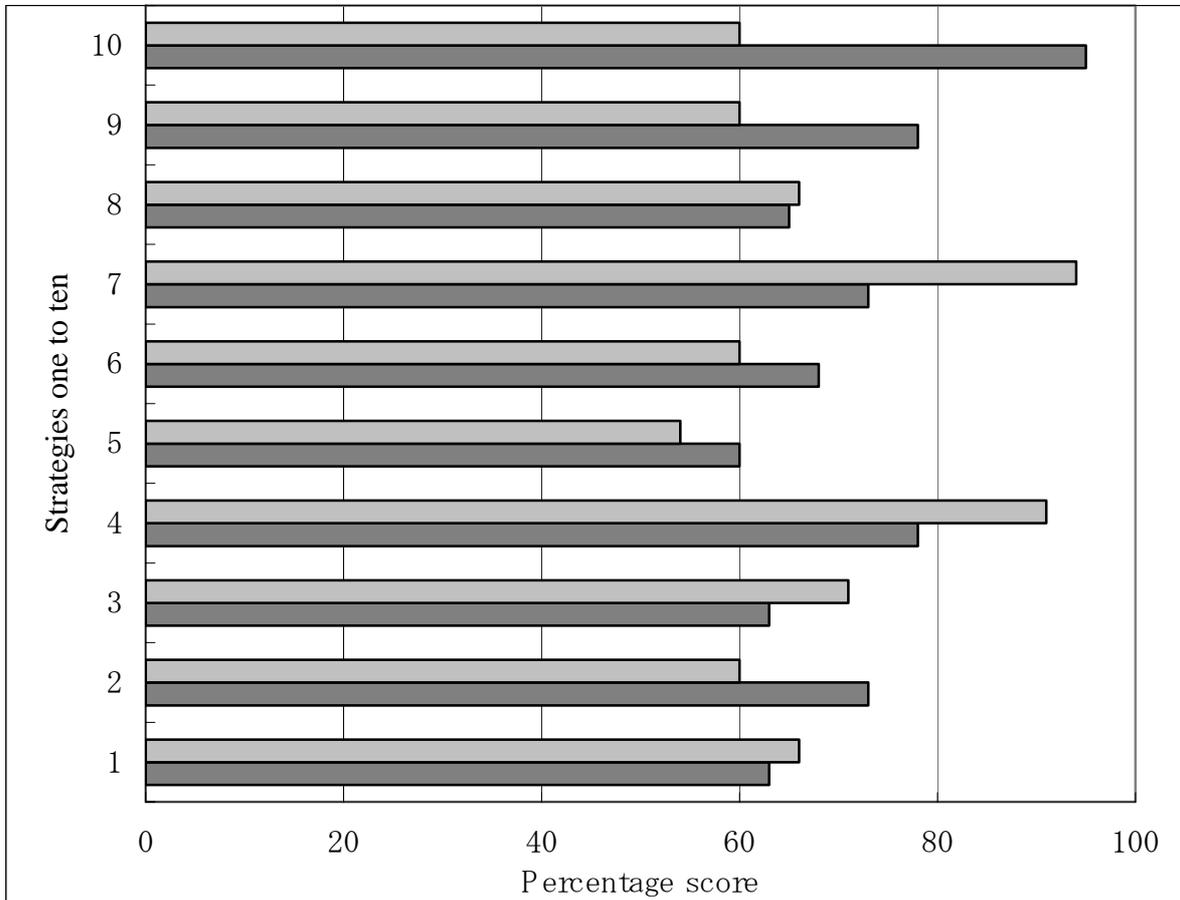
 * Example: Strategy Ten (Setting Personal Goals). The males (in dark grey) scored 95%, but the females (light grey) scored 60%.

Appendix Four - Learner activities

Following are detailed descriptions of the learner activities.

Activity one, day one. Matching activity.

Activity instructions: Activity duration – 25 minutes.

Now you have just completed the strategies checklist, in small groups, put the following "Ten Commandments" in order to match the strategies. When you have finished, try to place the poster-sized sentences in order on the blackboard.

Next, talk with a partner about what you could gain from the activity.

Table 8   "Ten Commandments"* for good language learning

Learner's version	Teacher's version
1.Fear Not!	Lower inhibitions.
2. Dive in.	Encourage risk-taking.
3. Believe in yourself.	Build self-confidence.
4. Seize the day.	Develop intrinsic motivation.
5. Love thy neighbor.	Engage in cooperative learning.
6. Get the BIG picture.	Use right-brain processes.
7. Cope with the chaos.	Promote ambiguity tolerance.
8. Go with your hunches.	Practice intuition.
9. Make mistakes work for you.	Process error feedback.
10. Set your own goals.	Set personal goals.

* Taken from Brown, 2000: 137. Also referred to as "Ten Suggestions".

Activity two, day two. Sensory channel modalities awareness.

Activities instructions:

Look at the triangle and the three words – Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic. Study the meaning of each word. You will receive a demonstration by the teacher, who will then read through the guided visualization script*. At the end of the exercise, mark a cross in the triangle where you felt the strongest feeling.   * See below.

Figure 7   Preferred learning modality recording results triangle+
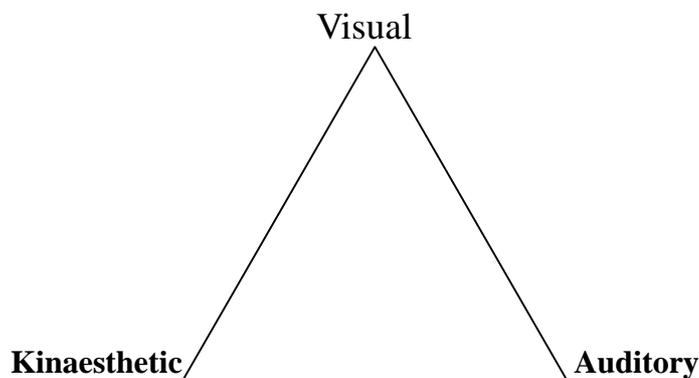
+Students' own recording triangle double the dimensions of above.

Appendix Four continued

Guided Visualization.

   The following script is structured to guide the students in remembering a situation by leading them through the three main senses: sight (**Visual**), hearing (**Auditory**) and feeling (**Kinaesthetic**), and discovering their preferred modality. The order of the story is:

First - Sensory neutral language (*remember, experience*).

Second – Visual images (*Look around, What do you see?*).

Third – Auditory sense (*Listen, What do you hear?*).

Fourth – Kinaesthetic sense /"haptic" (*Do you feel hot/ cold? How you feel in your heart?*)

Finally – Before the 30-second imagination time, the listener is reminded to experience the story through the senses, ensuring some focus in their main sense.

<p align="center">***Guided visualization* exercise script**</p>

> *Think about a time you felt very happy - or very sad. It can be any time that is OK for you to talk about. Any time you were happy – or sad.*
>
> *And, in your mind, you can experience that time now. You remember the time… the place…and the people who were there. You can experience those now.*
>
> *And you can see yourself? Look around. Where are you? Are you inside or outside? Look at the place you where are. What do you see? What do things look like? What do people look like? Notice their clothing. Notice what they are doing. Notice their faces.*
>
> *Who are these people? Do you know them? Who are they? Are they talking? Listen. What are they saying? What else do you hear? Birds? Cars? Music? Other sounds. What do you hear?*
>
> *And what do you feel like? What's the weather like? Is it hot? Cold? Do you feel the wind? Are you standing or sitting? Can you feel the ground under your feet? Or can you notice a chair or something else against your body? Are you moving? Feel the movement of your body and notice your emotions. How do you feel in your heart? This is an important time for you. How do you feel?*
>
> *And now, you will have about half a minute to experience the time now. And as you do, notice everything you can see, you can hear and you can feel.*
>
> *And when you are ready, take a deep breath, come back to the room and open your eyes.*

(Slighted adapted from Helgesen, M. 'Plan Ahead', *ETJ Journal.*2003, Vol. 4 (2))

The explanation at the top of this page is paraphrased from the source material.

Appendix Four continued

Activity three, day three. The Gestures Game.

The students were grouped into five teams of three as below:

Table 9   The Gestures Game team groupings

Team names*	Student numbers
1. Pican	1, 9, 15
2. Cell	5, 7, 11
3. Pooh Bear	2, 10,13
4. 356	6, 8, 12
5. Nissin	3, 4, 14

* Chosen by students.

Game rules: Activity duration – 35 minutes.

The first team comes up to the front of the class. Two of the team members sit down, backs to the other teams. The remaining team member stays standing and faces the whole group. Take a Gestures Challenge card from the face down pile. You have five seconds to plan your go. The one-minute egg timer starts*. Gesture or mime the exact words shown on the card. Your team can shout out the answer at any time. If the time ends before the team has called out the words, the other teams have a chance to respond. One point is given to the team that responds correctly. The next team comes up and the game is repeated. Each team appears three times to allow each member to participate.

Gesture card examples – *Three pink elephants; An old guitar; A short skipping rope.*

*Teacher concurrently records times on a stopwatch. Egg timer is visible to students.

Activity four, days four to six. Why do you need or want English?

Activity duration – three full 50-minute periods.

Day four - Activity instructions and independent study plan.

The students fill in their anticipated future needs for English – chart 4.4.a .

Activity instructions:

Think about what your main purpose for using English will be after you leave this high school. You will be shown an example of a Swedish youth hostel manager's language needs. Tick (check) in the columns what skills you will need for each situation. Don't worry if you are not too sure – just try to think of situations in which you might need to use English in the future.   (adapted from Ellis and Sinclair, 1989: 109)

Appendix four continued

Student needs analysis chart 4.4.a

Situations+	Skills					
	Extending vocabulary	Dealing with grammar	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Meeting foreign people - welcoming new neighbours	*					

+ The students determine what future anticipated needs they have for English.

* Students tick (check) what skills they need for each situation.

The students then mark on a self-assessment scale – 4.4.b.

> Look at the student self-assessment scale. There are letters **a** to **e**.
>
> **a** = This is the standard I would like to reach. My goal.
>
> **e** = I can do very little. I am a long way from my goal.
>
> Put a circle around the number that is closest to how you feel now about each skill.

Student self-assessment scale 4.4.b

Extending vocabulary	Dealing with grammar	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
a*	a	a	a	a	a
b	b	b	b	b	b
c	c	c	c	c	c
d	d	d	d	d	d
e	e	e	e	e	e

* Scale. a = this is the standard I would like to reach – my goal.

e = I can do very little. I am a long way from my goal.

Next the students record their priorities on a scale from **a** to **f** – record 4.4.c.

> Write a letter from **a** to **f** next to each skill depending on how much you need that skill. For example, if speaking is the most important, write **a**. If writing is the *next* most important, write **b**, etc.
>
> To follow, discuss your answers, and reflect on activity 4.4.a, adding to it if necessary.

Appendix Four continued

Student record of priorities 4.4.c.

Skill	Priority rating*
Extending vocabulary	
Dealing with grammar	
Listening	
Speaking	
Reading	
Writing	

*Students rate their priorities from a – f.

a = top priority.

All above tables/ charts taken and adapted from Ellis and Sinclair, 1989: pp109/110.

Then the students plan for the next two study periods.

In preparation for days five and six, relax and think about what you need to concentrate on in English. Also think of ways to use the next two O.C. lessons' time to maximum benefit. You may work alone or in small groups. You will have to bring your own materials or ask the teacher in advance for anything you need from the classroom.

Days five and six – student-centred, learner-driven study.

The students choose their own activities and direct their own study according to their needs analysis and self assessment form results.

Activity five, day seven. What would you say? / What *wouldn't* you say?

Activity duration – Total 50 minutes.

Part one – What would you say?*

Part one instructions:

Look at the five cartoons. What would you seriously say to the people in each situation? How many sentences can you think of for each of the speaking situations? You have 15 minutes thinking time. Then circulate around the class for 10 minutes exchanging ideas.

Appendix Four continued

Short description of the situations detailed in the cartoons:

1. A standing woman gesturing to a seated woman on a train, pointing towards an empty seat. The seated woman is holding a piece of paper.
2. A man sitting down on the ground, wrapped in a blanket, holding his hand up to a woman passer by.
3. A young child sitting in a supermarket trolley, pointing and looking at a broken bottle on the floor, his father embarrassed as a store clerk, hands on hips, looks disapprovingly at him.
4. Two men in a van gesturing at another man who is pushing his broken-down car.
5. A middle-aged couple, arm in arm, carrying many shopping bags, looking towards an empty coffee shop terrace, the waiter in the doorway, looking expectant.

Part two – What *wouldn't* you say?

Part two instructions:

Look at the five cartoons again. What would you definitely not say in each situation? Try to come up with as many crazy things to say as you can! Really use your imagination and make full use of the expressions on the cartoon characters' faces. Again you have 15 minutes to think about it. When you then walk around the room comparing with your classmates, use the expressions you have thought of. Try to see how many sentences match with those of your partners. Also, see how strange some of the new mini conversations are. Have fun!

Closure.

Categories*:   Activity duration – 4 minutes

Working with a partner, and using a dictionary if necessary, put your sentences for part one into these categories:

- apologising.
- making a suggestion.
- offering help
- asking for permission.
- refusing.

*Part one and Categories taken from Viney and Viney, 1996. *Handshake: A Course in Communication* (Unit Four).

Part two conceived specially for the target group.

Appendix Four continued

Activity six, day eight. Snakes and Ladders.

The teacher gives out the 'Snakes and Ladders' boards.

Game rules: Activity duration – 45 minutes.

Get into pairs. One team will have three people.

Three pairs will play together in one group, and three pairs plus a team of three will play in the other group. The teacher will hand out two Snakes and Ladders game boards. Put them in the middle of the desks. Put the two different-coloured cards face up on the desk. The blue ones are *What To Do?* The yellow ones are *Help!* Put your eraser, key, coin, or pen cap on the "Start" square.

Do *janken* (paper, scissors, stone) to see which pair will go first, second, third, etc.

Roll the die and move your marker the number of spaces you see on the die.

If you land on the head of a snake, go down the snake. If you land on the bottom of a ladder, go up to the top of it.

If you land on a *What to do?* or *Help!** square, take a card and read it aloud to the other members. **In pairs, or threes, try the challenge**. **Speak for about 30 seconds on the topic. Each person must play the part of a character in the situation.**

Some of the topics will be reviews of *Passport – English for International* Communication, units 1 to 18.

If your conversation is too short you must go back to the last square you were on.

---

*See below for examples of *What To Do?* and *Help!* cards.

Snakes and Ladders Board Game*

30 **FINISH**	29 **OH NO!** Go back to start	28 *HELP!*	27 *SSSsss!*	26 *WHAT TO DO?*
21 *WHAT TO DO?*	22 *SSsss!*	23 **OH NO!** Back 2 spaces	24 *HELP!*	25 *SSSsss!*
20 *HELP!*	19 **YEAH!**	18 *HELP!*	17 **OH NO!** Go back 4 spaces	16 **BONUS!** Spin again
11 *WHAT TO DO?*	12 *HELP!*	13 **YEAH!**	14 *Ssss!*	15 *HELP!*
10 **OH NO!** Miss a turn!	9 **BONUS** Spin again	8 *HELP!*	7 **YEAH!**	6 *WHAT TO DO?*
1 **START**	2 **YEAH!**	3 **BONUS!** Spin again	4 *HELP!*	5 **BONUS!** Forward 6 spaces
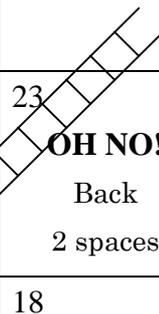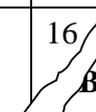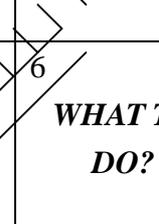
*Information on original source unavailable.

Appendix Four continued

Examples of *WHAT TO DO?* and *HELP!* cards+

WHAT TO DO? A You are taking a train while on holiday in London. Oh no! You have lost your ticket. B. You work at the ticket -checking gate. **Speak for 30 seconds**	WHAT TO DO? In an airport in a foreign country you wait a very long time for your bag, but it doesn't come. You are worried. You go to the missing baggage desk. **Speak for 30 seconds**	WHAT TO DO? In an English lesson the teacher asks you a question. You don't know the answer. What can you do? **Speak for 30 seconds**
WHAT TO DO? Your new neighbours are Canadian but can't speak or read Japanese. Give advice about the strict trash collection rules in your neighbourhood. **Speak for 30 seconds**	WHAT TO DO? The person in front of you at the supermarket is not Japanese and is having trouble using Japanese money. You offer to help them. **Speak for 30 seconds**	HELP! You are taking a school interview in English. The interviewer asks you some difficult questions You cannot answer. Use expressions to 'buy time'. **Speak for 30 seconds**
HELP! You were invited to a party in London. You forgot the address and phone number but can remember only the street name. Call a taxi. **Speak for 30 seconds**	HELP! An American stops you in the street to ask for directions. He speaks really fast and you can't understand him well. What should you say? **Speak for 30 seconds**	HELP! You are sitting at a bus stop in Windsor next to an elderly person. You want to practice English. Start some small talk. **Speak for 30 seconds**

+A lot of the language for *WHAT TO DO? and HELP!* is a review of work covered in the students' regular textbook *Passport- English for International Communication* and *Handshake: A Course in Communication*.

Table 10   A taxonomy of individual's strategies checklist results - males

Student numbers	Strategies adoption score+	Speaking proficiency level	Learner type~	Breakdown of strategies checklist results*					Negative factors – low strategy use – D and E. Checklist number and commentary.
				A	B	C	D	E	
1	40	Intermediate-Mid	Communicative	4	3	2	1	0	1. Embarrassed if laughed at when speaking.
2	41	Intermediate-Mid	Communicative	6	1	1	2	0	1. Embarrassed if laughed at when speaking. 7. Annoyed by a lot of English material presented at once.
3	27	Intermediate-Low	Analytical	0	3	4	2	1	1. Embarrassed if laughed at when speaking. 5. Prefers working alone. 8. Self-monitoring when speaking.
4	37	Novice-High	Concrete	4	3	2	1	0	4. Learning English as other's requirement.
5	38	Intermediate-Mid	Authority-oriented	2	5	2	1	0	7. Annoyed by a lot of English material presented at once.
6	36	Advanced	Analytical	5	0	3	0	2	2. Likes to only use language that is really known. 5. Prefers working along

+ Assuming checklist result **A** is worth five points, **B** – four, **C** – three, **D** – two, **E** – one. Maximum points – 50.

~ See Appendix Two for taxonomy of learner types – taken from Nunan, 1991: 170.

*A and B suggest high strategy use. C is neutral. D and E imply low strategy use.

Appendix Five continued

Table 10   A taxonomy of individual's strategies checklist results – males continued

Student numbers	Strategies adoption score+	Speaking proficiency level	Learner type	Results of strategies checklist					Negative factors – low strategy use – **D** and **E**. Checklist number and commentary.
				A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	
7	27	Intermediate-Mid	Authority-oriented	3	0	1	4	2	2. Likes to only use language that is really known. 3. Quite unsure of future success in English. 5. Prefers working alone. 6. Likes to analyse English and understand all. 8. Self-monitoring when speaking. 9. Annoyed by mistakes –symbolises poor English.
8	38	Intermediate-Low	Concrete	3	5	2	0	0	No negative strategies recorded.

Table 10   A taxonomy of target group and strategies checklist results - females

Student numbers	Strategies adoption score+	Speaking proficiency level	Learner type	Results of strategies checklist					Negative factors – low strategy use – **D** and **E**. Checklist number and commentary.
				A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	
9	35	Intermediate-Low	Communicative	1	5	2	2	0	6. Likes to analyse English and understand all. 1. Embarrassed if laughed at when speaking.
10	30	Novice-High	Analytical	1	4	0	4	1	1. Embarrassed if laughed at when speaking. 2. Likes to only use language that is really known. 5. Prefers working alone. 8. Self-monitoring when speaking. 9. Annoyed by mistakes.
11	36	Novice-High	Communicative	3	1	5	1	0	9. Annoyed by mistakes –symbolises poor English.
12	34	Intermediate-Low	Analytical	2	2	4	2	0	2. Likes to only use language that is really known. 10. Looks to teacher/ activities for success.
13	32	Intermediate-Low	Concrete	2	2	3	2	1	5. Prefers working alone. 8. Self-monitoring when speaking. 9. Annoyed by mistakes.
14	31	Intermediate-High	Analytical	4	2	1	0	3	5. Prefers working alone. 6. Likes to analyse English and understand all. 10. Looks to teacher/ activities for success.
15	34	Novice-High	Concrete	0	6	2	2	0	1. Embarrassed if laughed at when speaking. 6. Likes to analyse English and understand all.
Ave.	34.4	Total - males / females		39	42	34	24	11	= 150

Appendix Six

Day four results - Chart 4.4.a   Student needs analysis results

Situations+	Situation selection frequency	Skills*					
		Extending vocabulary	Dealing with grammar	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
1. Teach a child English	1	1	1		1	1	1
2. Write a letter	3	2	2			2	3
3. Travel abroad	8	7	3	7	8	2	2
4. Talk to foreign friends	1	1		1	1		
5. Listen to Western music	6	4	2	6		1	
6. Speak in English	1	1		1	1		
7. Study new words	1	1	1			1	1
8. Watch TV/ movies	6	5	3	6	2	3	
9. Read books	1		1			1	
10. Study English lit.	1	1	1	1		1	1
11. Work abroad	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
12. Study psychology	1	1	1			1	1
13. Study social welfare	1	1				1	1
14. Work as an announcer	1	1	1	1	1	1	
15. Study in America	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
16. Be an English teacher	1	1	1		1	1	1
17. Study Liberal Arts	1	1	1	1		1	1
18. Join an English club	1			1	1		
19. Shop abroad	2	1		1	2	1	
20. Meet foreign people	3	2	1	3	3	1	
21. Order in a restaurant	2			1	2	1	
22. Be a tour conductor	1	1	1	1	1		
23. Ask for directions	1			1	1	1	1
24. Reserve a hotel room	2			2	2		
25. Be a flight attendant	2	1	1	2	2		
26. Become a translator	2	2	2	1		1	1
27. Take an English test	2	1	2	2		2	2
Total		**38**	**27**	**41**	**31**	**26**	**18**

+ Students' own anticipated needs for English outside the O.C. classroom.

* Figures indicate number of times students recorded that skill.

(Adapted from Ellis and Sinclair, 1989: 109/ 110)

Appendix Six continued

Self-assessment scale.

Student self-assessment scale 4.4.b results

Extending vocabulary	Dealing with grammar	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
a*	a	a – 1+	a - 1	a	a
b	b - 1	b - 6	b - 1	b - 1	b
c - 9	c - 4	c - 7	c - 4	c - 6	c - 9
d - 6	d - 4	d - 1	d - 9	d - 7	d - 4
e	e – 6	e	e	e - 1	e - 2

* Scale   a = this is the standard I would like to reach – my goal.

e = I can do very little. I am a long way from my goal.

+Numbers represent students' responses to each category.

Chart 4.4.c   Record of priorities for listening and speaking results

Student numbers	Skills*	
	Listening	Speaking
1+	b	c
2	b	b
3	c	b
4	a	b
5	a	d
6	e	d
7	f	e
8	b	a
9	c	a
10	c	a
11	b	a
12	b	a
13	b	a
14	c	a
15	d	b

*Only Speaking and Listening noted as they are the key O.C. skills. +For example, student number one noted listening as his second priority and speaking as third priority.

Appendix Seven

Days five and six – Self-directed learning.

Table 11   Day five – A taxonomy of private study time activities

Student numbers	Activity selected	Description of activity	Relevance*
1	Talking book	Practicing listening / extending vocabulary.	High
2	Dictionary	Improving dictionary-use skills.	High
3	School text	Reviewing previous lessons.	High
4	Music lyrics	Writing out his favourite songs' lyrics.	High
5	Music lyrics	Listening to Western songs and reading lyrics.	High
6	Reading	Extensive reading of a novel.	High
7	Daydreaming	Half asleep (following sports training)	Zero
8	Interview	University interview practice	High
9, 10, 11, 12, 14	Scrabble	All playing this word construction game for the first time.	3 High 2 Low
13	Uni. entrance	Writing a university application letter.	Medium+
15	Translation	Translating short stories into English.	High

*In relation to priorities.

Table 12   Day six – taxonomy of private study time activities

Student numbers	Activity selected	Description of activity	Relevance
1, 2, 3	Scrabble	All playing this game for the first time.	All High
4	College test	Practicing for college English entrance test	Medium+
5	Music lyrics	Listening to Western songs and reading lyrics.	High
6	Reading	Reading a popular English fashion magazine.	High
7	Chatting	General chat with other members of the group.	Low
8	Chatting	Amusing the others with funny catchphrases	High
9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	Clue~	Playing it for the first time. Deciphering the English rules, doing a trial mini-run.	All High
15	Reading	Reading graded readers.	High

+Please note that although these activities are graded at medium needs relevance, they are in fact immediate needs that score highly.

~A detective game created by Hasbro, Parker Brothers, U.S.A.

Appendix Eight

Student interviews.

Students 7 and 14 were twice privately interviewed, first following the strategy checklist (but prior to commencing learner activities), then following training. They were chosen because their strategy scores were atypical of their proficiency levels and both seem somewhat anxious. (Interviews conducted in a mix of English and Japanese.)

Student backgrounds and situations.

Student 7 – male. Strategy score – **27** (7.4 below average). Intermediate-Mid when prompted. A bright athlete planning to study psychology, but appears sleepy and unresponsive in English lessons. 2. Likes to only use language that is really known. 3. Quite unsure of future success in English. 5. Prefers working alone. 6. Likes to analyse English and understand all. 8. Self-monitoring when speaking. 9. Annoyed by mistakes –symbolises poor English.	Student 14 – female. Strategy score – **31** (3.4 below average). Intermediate-High. Plans to study English at university. Has volunteered for, and attended twice weekly, one-to-one after-school tuition, vastly improving conversation skills, pronunciation, interview skills (was Intermediate-Low to Mid 1 year ago). 5. Prefers working alone. 6. Likes to analyse English and understand all. 10. Looks to teacher/ activities for success.

Interview one transcript. (Following some small talk.)

Teacher: *Seven**, I noticed that you seem a bit disappointed with your English study. I saw that you wrote on the side of the strategies checklist 'frustration' and 'impatience' in Japanese (showing him his checklist). Do you feel that in the English lesson?

Seven: A little bit. Well, not so much, that meant I hate making mistakes.

Teacher: I see. So do you prefer to stay quiet and not now not speak so much in class? (Student nods his head.) You also wrote that you are unsure of your future success in English. Why do think that is?

Seven: I don't think I will use it much. It's not so easy to learn it usually.

Teacher: I see. Do you think that is because it's hard to learn grammar and reading from your Japanese teachers, or is O.C. difficult, too?

Seven: I just don't really need it. Especially not talking. I don't really have time.

Teacher: Thanks *Seven*. I know you've got training from now.

*Students are referred to by number in the interviews. Japanese parts have been translated. They were then checked by Setsuko Warren-Price.

Appendix Eight continued

Interview two transcript.

Teacher: Hi, *Fourteen*. I just want to ask you a few things about your strategies checklist, if that's okay.

Fourteen: No problem.

Teacher: Your English has really become better in the past year. Why do you think that is?

Fourteen: Oh really!? Thank you. (Long pause) Oh, why? Well, I really like O.C. Last year I missed some school for my sports competitions, so I was really worried about falling behind. I think my extra classes helped me…. And I want to study English at university so I must try hard for my interview.

Teacher: You wrote on your checklist that you like working alone. I think you are very sociable, so I was surprised.

Fourteen: Well, we usually have the same groups for pair and group work but *Nine* (the student who sits next to her) is better at spelling than me and she sometimes laughs at my mistakes. I get a bit upset so like to do everything carefully alone.

Teacher: I see. Would you like to sit next to a different person sometimes?

Fourteen: Oh, it's not that. *Nine* is my friend, but….. (says nothing more).

Teacher: But you like the teacher and activities to give you what you need to be successful? (Student looks confused, so teacher shows her checklist to her.)

Fourteen: Yes. I don't have many ideas myself of how to study. I want to study well, but it's hard for me.

Teacher: Well, *Fourteen*, from now we're going to try a new style lesson that I think will help you.

(After-note: Fourteen recorded in **A** for numbers 3, 4, 7 and 8 of the checklist, suggesting low inhibitions. Her checklist score was reduced by her recording in **E** for numbers 5, 6 and 10.)

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Appendix Eight continued

Interview three transcript. (A short chat during a lesson)

Teacher: *Seven*, you look a bit happier than two weeks ago. It's good to see. Did you enjoy some of the activities we did recently in groups?

Seven: Yeah, so-so.

Teacher: How is your university application coming along?

Seven: Not finished yet. (Student number Eight, sitting next to him interjects, "He got told off again this morning by the homeroom teacher.")

Teacher: Why?

Seven: He said my (application) letter was not good enough.

Teacher: Well, *Seven*, if you need any help, just ask me, O.K.?

Seven: Thanks.

(The conversation ended as I realised that student seven is under a lot of pressure with sports training and his form teacher pushing him, perhaps leading to some stress.)

Interview four transcript. (It started with the student asking a question.)

Fourteen: Tom, last week we did the snake game (Snakes and Ladders). (Students) Nine, Ten, Eleven and I want to do it again. Can we?

Teacher: Erm, sure. I'll make some more challenge cards.

Fourteen: No, we want to do that for our private study (self-directed days).

Teacher: Wow, that sounds great. Have you finished the "Ten Commandments" poster yet? It's not on the wall.

Fourteen: Oh, no. But we'll finish it soon. We need your big pens.

Teacher: Well they're under the stereo in S112 (classroom). Did you and everybody enjoy the activities recently?

Fourteen: Yes, I think so.

Teacher: Many people were chatting more in English…..

Fourteen: Yeah, it was a good atmosphere.

Teacher: Is there anything else you want to try?

Fourteen: (pause…) Can I bring in my 'Get by in English' (VHS) tape next week?

Teacher: Yes, of course. Bring it in and we'll take a look.

(The interview didn't quite take the intended path, but student fourteen was as enthusiastic as ever, and taking initiative for her own learning – quite a change from interview one.)

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