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# *Learning strategies in action*

## *Aprendizaje de estrategias en acción*

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### ABSTRACT

This paper reports the results of a study which aimed to investigate how an intervention for the development of learning strategies helps students to build self-regulation in learning and to learn English as a foreign language. The intervention was part of a first-year English course in a foreign language program that followed a task-based methodological orientation. The intervention was implemented in four phases: planning, presentation, instruction, and evaluation and engaged students in the development of two tasks, involving context-aware learning with the use of strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, memory, affective, and social. The evaluation of results demonstrated that students develop a positive attitude facing learning and raised awareness about the importance of using strategies. However, the

strategies used by students were of direct type, related to linguistic aspects learning. This means that the intervention did not achieve to develop indirect strategies, particularly metacognitive, which demand reflection for making critical learning decisions. This shows that a short-term intervention is not enough to promote self-regulation in learning and that a long-term intervention would be required.

**KEYWORDS** Learning strategies, self-regulation, and task-based language approach

Este artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio que tuvo como objetivo investigar cómo una intervención para el desarrollo de estrategias de aprendizaje contribuye en la promoción de aprendizaje autorregulado y a aprender inglés como lengua extranjera. La intervención hizo parte de un curso de inglés de primer año en un programa de lenguas extranjeras que siguió una orientación metodológica basada en tareas de aprendizaje, y se implementó en cuatro fases: planificación, presentación, instrucción y evaluación. La intervención involucró a los estudiantes en el desarrollo de dos tareas, que promovían aprendizaje consciente a partir del

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uso de estrategias: cognitivas, metacognitivas, de memoria, afectivas y sociales. La evaluación de los resultados demostró que, los estudiantes desarrollaron una actitud positiva frente al aprendizaje y se hicieron conscientes de la importancia de usar estrategias. Sin embargo, las estrategias utilizadas por ellos fueron, sobretudo, de tipo directo, que se relacionan con aspectos lingüísticos. Esto significa que la intervención no logró desarrollar estrategias indirectas, particularmente metacognitivas, que exigen reflexión y toma de decisiones críticas frente al aprendizaje. Esto demuestra que una intervención a corto plazo no es suficiente para promover autorregulación en el aprendizaje y que este objetivo requiere intervenciones a mediano o largo plazo.

**PALABRAS CLAVE.** Estrategias de aprendizaje, autorregulación y enfoque basado en tareas de aprendizaje.

## INTRODUCTION

Interest in instructing on the use of learning strategies stems from the wish to develop effective and efficient approaches which help students become more proficient English learners, in the recognition of language learning strategies as an important factor which influences language learning (Oxford, 2013; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Segler, Pain, & Sorace, 2002, Cohen, 2014). Also, the study aims at closing the well-recognized gap between teaching and learning, evidenced in various studies, such as O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Green & Oxford, 1995; Anderson, 2005; Stern, 1990; Hernández, 2008; Oxford, 2013; Rubin & Thompson, 1994. These studies evidence that successful learners of a foreign language make a good choice at using learning strategies, based on conscious planning.

Attempts at providing students with effective strategies have been made by many researchers and the present study builds this history with

some of them: O'Malley et al. (1985) showed that a group of students receiving instruction in the use of strategies showed higher results in evaluations than other groups with no intervention; Wenden (1987) assures that an instruction should make part of a course syllabus; Nunan (1996) established that a strategy instruction and the opportunity to reflect on learning provokes greater sensitivity towards a learning process; García Salinas & Ferreira Cabrera (2010) determined that an instruction in metacognitive, cognitive, affective and social learning strategies contributes to improve the learning of English, as it raises awareness and controls anxiety; Guapacha & Benavidez (2017) evidenced that an explicit strategy instruction which combines a cognitive academic language learning approach with a task-based language teaching improves learners' language learning strategies and performance in the process of learning English.

Learning strategies are defined by O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 1) as "the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information". Oxford (1990, p.1) defines them as the "steps taken by learners to enhance their own learning", and redefine them (2013, p.518) as "specific actions, behaviours, steps or techniques that students use to improve their own progress in developing skills in a second or foreign language". In essence, we might say that strategies are sequences of actions directed to reach goals and objectives in learning. In the beginning, they should be consciously planned and applied, but with constant use they can develop into unconscious actions. Oxford, 1990 classifies learning strategies into direct and indirect categories: Direct category includes memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies and indirect category includes metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

The use of strategies in relation to foreign languages teaching and learning has its bases on research and has shown that, besides attitude and motivation it is necessary to participate actively in a learning process. We can find research promoting a model in which learning is approached through self-regulation in learning. Zimmerman (2002), among others, understands learning as a reflective process, where the learner participates actively in the establishment of the relations between the object of study, the learning activities, the objectives of learning, and the individual possibilities and needs. In the establishment of these relations the learner develops engagement and the capacity for monitoring the learning process. This relationship is identified in Butler and Winne (1995) definition of monitoring in the learning process: "Monitoring is the hub of self-regulated task engagement, and the internal feedback it generates is critical in shaping the evolving pattern of a learner's engagement with the task" (p. 275). However, it is also important to consider that cognitive monitoring and motivational behaviors are not always developed by all learners, as Pintrich (1999; 2000) sustains.

Self-regulated learning is described by Zimmerman & Schunk (2011) as "the processes whereby learners personally activate and sustain cognitions, affects, and behaviors that are systematically oriented toward the attainment of personal goals" (p. 1). Self-regulated learning is a process of great complexity, as no time is enough to learn a language exhaustively, but it fosters engagement of learners in conscious learning as it involves monitoring performance, and develops strategies to improve and turn into efficient learners (Stern, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Griffiths, 2013). All considered, one of the central characteristics of self-regulated learning is the conscious use of learning strategies. In addition, the incursion in the use of strategies for accessing knowledge generates motivation, a key element for

regulating learning (Borkowsky et al, 1987 in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). In summary, this study understands that in the process of learning a foreign language self-regulation and learning strategies are of paramount importance and that these two aspects belong together. The study also understands that individual characteristic differences in the use of learning strategies may promote or inhibit self-regulation in learning.

Following these principles, an Action Research was designed and carried out with the purpose of developing learning strategies to aid self-regulation achievements in the process of learning English as a foreign language (Project registered in the institution, with the code CI-4328, 2015 and 2017, and titled *Aprendiendo Inglés Estratégicamente*, Learning English Strategically). The study followed four stages: Planning for the intervention; presentation and explanation of the intervention; intervention for the development of five learning strategies through Task Based Learning; and evaluation and revision of the intervention. The whole intervention process took three months with six hours per week and the strategies adopted were:

*Cognitive - Creating structure for input and output* to help students identify main ideas in a text, when reading and writing, and to self-evaluate their performance in the process.

*Metacognitive - Planning and evaluating learning* to promote the setting of personal objectives. Students plan what they need to do to tackle a task step by step, set personal goals and assess their learning, self-assessment promotes reflection and generates independence.

*Memory - Creating mental linkages* (grouping) to help students recall vocabulary, without translation to their native language, and to facilitate information is be remembered.

*Affective - Encouraging learning* (self-motivation / non-dependence). Self-encouragement

motivates students to overcome difficulties when developing learning tasks.

*Social - Asking questions for clarification or verification* is helpful any time when students encounter doubts. The answers might be found in peers or teachers.

This study strives to develop an effective approach for teaching and learning English, through the promotion of learning strategies, which should help building self-regulation and English learning. With this objective in mind, the study attempts to address a main question: *What is the impact of an intervention, which aimed at improving the use of learning strategies and building self-regulation in learning, through the development of learning tasks?*

## METHOD

### RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted an action research approach for trying to solve a current problem concerning effectiveness in learning English as a foreign language. On this purpose, Cohen and Manion (1994, p.186) in Cohen and Manion, 2005, p.226 definition oriented the understanding of the research process: “a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention”.

The learning strategy intervention was approached taking into account some learning principles: it adopted an informed perspective (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995), introducing the intervention, promoting learner awareness, and giving rational for showing its importance in the learning context (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Wenden, 1991; Wenden and Rubin, 1987); also, it recognized the relationship between learning awareness and active participation in class, aspects which contribute to learning independence, as they foster autonomy (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Nunan

et al. 2000); the proposal gave relevance to the promotion of opportunities for practicing the language and for self-evaluating performance in the development of learning tasks (Oxford, 1990, 2013). It assumed that a task-based language learning (TBLL) orientation promotes best foreign languages acquisition, as it centers attention on students, fosters the use of the target language, uses authentic and meaningful materials, presents clear learning goals, and increases learning motivation (Kiernan and Aizawa, 2004; Willis, 1996; Nunan, 1992; Ushioda, 1996; Ellis, 2009, Little, 2007)

The intervention followed Oxford (1990) proposal, which considers four steps: planning; presenting and explaining the intervention on strategies; and evaluating or revising the process. In the planning step, literature revision considered particularly an exploratory research on strategies carried out by Hernández (2008), as it was developed in a similar context. The study suggests instructing students in the use of specific strategies, which are required when aiming at developing self-regulation in learning. In the presentation and explanation step the pedagogical intervention was socialized with students, promoting active participation in the process. A strategies development plan was integrated to the course planning composed by three learning tasks: Task1: *English Speaking Countries Contest*; Task 2: *Performing our abilities and interests*; and Task 3: *This is my Family poster*.

For the purpose of the research, the basis of this paper, the intervention on strategies development was implemented on tasks 1 and 2. Task1: *English Speaking Countries Contest* was worked collectively, introducing the strategies in integration with the task development. The collective work, guided by the teacher-researcher through the use of planning and evaluation questionnaires (Appendix 1), was expected to serve as a sample to follow in the development

of Task 2: *Performing our abilities and interests*. Planning and evaluation questionnaires for task two followed individual process of learning and this information complemented students' reflection and perception on the learning process, for determining the effects of the intervention on strategies.

## DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The methods used for collecting information consisted of five questionnaires: three short questionnaires, applied in the beginning of the course, for recognizing the learning context, and two more questionnaires implemented during the intervention, for planning and evaluating learning. In addition, each students wrote a reflection notebook with the purpose of helping monitoring of the process. The three initial *questionnaires* explored students' English learning expectations; their perceptions about academic responsibility; and their understanding of 'learning strategy'. The *reflection notebook* aimed at raising awareness on the use of strategies and its relation with self-regulation. The *planning and evaluation questionnaires* served the purpose of planning learning for task development, integrating learning strategies, and promote self-evaluation in learning and in the implementation of the instructed strategies.

## CONTEXT AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The participants included fourteen students, eight women and six men, registered in an English first level course of a *Foreign Language Education Program* at a public University in Colombia. Their ages ranged from 18 to 21 years old; they came from public schools; and belonged to low socio-economical strata in the city.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The analysis followed a qualitative orientation, aiming at describing the students' process in the use of the strategies through the development of

one task (Task 2) (Chamot, 2005). Information was complemented with quantitative data, in terms of frequencies. In general, the analysis process was guided by Allwright and Bailey (1991). The collected information was analyzed independently and, after, results were triangulated to come to conclusions. Results are illustrated with students' voices, using codes for identities protection<sup>3</sup>.

### *Questionnaire 1.* Exploration of English language learning expectations

In the beginning of the course students were asked to complete the sentence: *Learning English is like...* The purpose of the questionnaire was to explore what English meant for students.

#### *Learning English is like:*

- Understanding a culture
- Drawing a tree
- Making a puzzle
- Making a bridge between countries
- Starting to live a new style of life
- Learning how the world works
- Crossing border – limits
- Getting a wider view of the world

We could learn that students, on one hand, felt that learning English is not an easy task. When they said *learning English is like drawing a tree* or *making a puzzle*, they evidence the need to make an effort, in order to identify the parts of a chain and put them together coherently to make it work on their benefit. On the other hand, students feel that learning a foreign language might change their perspective about themselves and the world; they feel that with this knowledge they will be able to *Make a bridge between countries; cross borders; overcome limits; learn*

<sup>3</sup> Three of the fourteen students consented their participation in this study, but decided not to include their voices later on.

*how the world works, getting a wider view of it; and in this way, understand other cultures.* From this student perspective about learning English, we learnt that at the beginning of the process students have such a great inner motivation that, as they say, they *start living a new life*.

**Questionnaire 2.** Exploration of perceptions about academic responsibility

This questionnaire was built on the bases of a list of academic actions, usually carried out by efficient learners. Information allowed to establish, in terms of percentages, how students see themselves facing academic responsibility.

Table 2. Students' self-perception of academic responsibility

Students' self-perception of academic responsibility				
Very High	High	Medium	low	Very low
0%	22%	44%	30%	4%

Students recognize they are not prepared for walking the path of knowledge acquisition on their own; most of the students (74%) accept they let 50% of the responsibility, or even more, in professors' hands. Only 22% of the students recognize they have a high level of academic responsibility and, in opposition, 2% feel they are not responsible at all. This panorama does not match the great expectations they expressed to have, facing the language acquisition process.

**Questionnaire 3.** Students' understanding of the concept 'strategy'

This questionnaire consisted of a single open question: *What is all that comes to my mind while attending a presentation about learning strategies?* It was given to students at the beginning of a presentation, held by the teacher, about strategies. The questionnaire results were analyzed and categorized in three categories (Table 2: students' conceptions of strategies): what students knew about strategies, what they did not know, and other issues related to strategies.

Table 2: students' conceptions of strategies

What students knew	What students did not know	Other issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategies are good tools for learning. (S13: 'Strategies are good tools for learning.')</li> <li>- Importance of being organized and reading a lot. (S3: 'Reading improves writing and vocabulary')</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concept and types of Strategies (S9: 'I was wrong about the concept of strategy and that I was doing wrong.')</li> <li>- Role as learner (S12: 'there are many strategies and I need to work so much on my own')</li> <li>- Importance of objectives in learning (S2: 'There are little goals and big goals. The little help to accomplish the big ones.')</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Needs: To change the way of learning, to change the use of time, to change the learning strategy (S10: 'I need to improve my way of learning. S8: I need to make a better use of time, divide it by subjects.')</li> <li>- Decisions: to improve Skills, to be more Curious about academic issues. (S11: 'Now I am more conscious. S9: I'll try to improve my English and French skills.')</li> </ul>

Students' concept of learning strategies matches their perceptions of their responsibility. They think strategies are more on part of professors, they do not see themselves in relation to strategies; they knew that strategies are good tools for teaching and learning, but they did not recognize the active role they need to play as learners. They did not know either that there are a great variety of strategies to fit individual needs and reach learning goals.

It was positive, on the other hand, to identify students' reactions facing the new knowledge about strategies: They recognize the need to change the way they learn, to make a better use of time, and to be more curious; this means, to read more about professional issues, in order to be improve in all areas.

### *Reflection notebook*

The reflection Notebook aimed at keeping track of students' learning process, in relation to the strategies instructed and modeled in class for learning English and self-regulating learning. Also, it offered students the possibility to express themselves freely about other general teaching and learning issues. The corpus of analysis was built with 70 reflection notebook entries, which gave account of 14 students' actions, reactions, reflections and worries concerning the process of learning English as a foreign language in the University context.

In the analysis, twelve categories were identified and organized according to frequency of appearance. Table 3 presents the categories with grade of frequency.

Table 3. Analysis of the Reflection Notebook – Categories and Frequencies

Category	Frequency
Self-evaluation concerning general performance	12
Self-evaluation concerning course evaluation	10
Reflecting on the use of Strategies	9
Praising oneself in terms of strengths	9
Likes of the course	7
Initial thoughts about a F.L. learning process	5
Learning from presentation about foreign Languages Learning	5
General Feelings about learning self-image	4
Reactions to Professor's feedback	4
Preparing for the following semester	2
Messages for the professor	2
Dislikes from the course	1

The analysis of the categories permitted to identify the emphasis students make when reflecting and writing about their learning process (students' voices are represented with an S plus a number):

- Students make a great emphasis on *evaluating their learning* in general terms, and evaluation center attention on abilities: "I'm feeling very

happy with the results because I have seen the improvements in my speak and I'm seeing these improvement in my quizzes" (S4). Evaluating learning is an important doing in the process of learning. However, students' reflections lack of clear referents for evaluation; they did not refer to objectives of the course, as expected, though the modeling phase with task 1 showed the importance in the process and how to do it. Eval-

uation, in general terms, is assigned to external evaluation or evaluators (initial placement test, quizzes, feedback from professor, etc.) “The intermedia quizzes were really difficult. I have to improve in everything.” (S1).

- Students are conscious of the *importance of learning strategies*. As a result, they start using them through the development of the task 2. To work in group, to make use of the resources for receiving input, to create mental connections for learning new vocabulary are some of the strategies students expressed they started using: “This week I saw Dallas Buyers Club again without subtitles, ... I learn two new expressions watching this movie.” (S 8). In a first moment of the analysis this fact could be understood as a plus for the instruction, but a follow-up of these categories showed no continuity in their use and this gives account of unconscious use and no clear objective in its implementation.

- *Praising oneself in terms of strengths* is a category studied independently due to its high frequency in the analysis. Many students praised themselves by recognizing what they learnt through a period of time. Students even took the time to list new linguistic aspects they came across, studied, and learnt. Students also showed they could identify progress in learning, but support of the progress was presented in general terms “...these months I have learned a lot and I am really surprised.” (S14). Recognition in learning is a required strategy for learning as it develops intrinsic motivation that contributes to success in the learning purposes. Besides, this strategy has a close relationship with the following three categories: *likes of the course*, *initial thoughts about a foreign language learning process*, and *learning from presentation about foreign Languages Learning*. Learning can be recognized when learners develop a positive attitude facing learning; the four previous categories present not only different positive aspects concerning the learning process, but

also students' identification of their possibilities, needs, and future plans for learning. All these aspects, undoubtedly, contribute to making progress in learning a foreign language.

- *General Feelings about learning self-image* The way students see themselves, as learners, gives account of their view about their professional identity development. Hong (2010) considers six factors which shape professional identity: value, efficacy, commitment, emotions, knowledge and beliefs, and micropolitics. Students' voices show that emotion is the factor prevailing at this moment of their professionalization and that self-image is not so positive in many cases, “I am trying very hard to get better in my autobiography, even when I don't have many things to tell about my life because it is not interesting, in fact, is kind of boring” (S4). This self-image deserves attention, as it could turn into a factor that hinders learning and twist professional identity. In fact, boosting learners' identity positively fosters language learning (Norton, 2010).

The three last categories, *reactions to professor's feedback*, *preparing for the following term*, and *messages for the professor* are understood as the evaluation of the intervention in strategies. Students approach the topic but stay at a general level, assuming it as enough to go further in learning. Professor's feedback is well received and their response to professor's intervention is received with gratitude. However, the voice of a student who expresses *dislikes from the course* might be presenting a clear picture of what could have happened with part of the group that presented thoughts in general terms: “I felt laziness when I was writing about the objectives of the unit and about what I promise to do to improve my knowledge, however the teacher know what she's doing and I'm a simple student. (S3)”. It seems that students followed the professors' instructions in the intervention, but they did not raise the expected awareness and, as a result they did not assume the active role to



set commitment with the learning process. The understanding is that at the end of the intervention students continued letting great of the academic responsibility in professors' hands as in the beginning of the process. This comprehension suggests that a short intervention in a particular course is not enough for raising the needed awareness in the process and that a longer intervention might be required.

#### Questionnaire 4: Planning my Learning

This questionnaire was applied at the beginning of each task to guide work using strategies. The questionnaire for task 1 was completed collectively, since it was thought to be a sample to follow in task 2 development. To do so, it was during task 1 development when the five strategies were presented and put into practice. Task 2 development should be showing individual doing in relation to the use of strategies and achievements in self-regulation of learning. Planning my Learning included actions such as: Revise and understand the objectives of the English course; understand objectives of the task; establish relationships between one course objective and task objectives; set personal objectives in relation to the course and the task objectives; define actions to undertake, resources to use and strategies to implement; devote time for task development; and other remarks.

Task 2. *Our interests and abilities performance* had two objectives and required from students to interrelate them with one of the course objectives. The task objectives were: to learn about students' abilities within the group and to create and perform a story which involves coherently students' abilities and capacities. The course objective on the topic was to know each other to build a relationship which fosters collaborative work.

The analysis of Planning my Learning Questionnaire for task 2 showed the following:

- Revision and understanding of the course objective on the topic was not completed by any student. Students did not consult the syllabus to check the course objective.
- Understanding the task objective: Most students rewrote the task objectives (88%), as it was written on the task presentation that they had at hand with the questionnaire.
- Relationship between objectives: Some students (40%) dared to present relations between the objectives, but these relations were not so pertinent, due to their ignorance of the course objective on the topic: "To prepare students to talk inside and outside the class" (S8).
- Personal objectives: Students' personal objectives focused on learning vocabulary and expressions related to the task topic; identifying personal or classmates' strengths and abilities; and developing performing no linguistic capacities such as dancing. These individual objectives respond to part of the task objective, but important aspects were left behind. The analysis understanding is that it is difficult for students to establish relations and to visualize more than one thing at a time. Also, that the role and usefulness of a syllabus should be shown permanently by professors of all areas in an academic program.
- Actions, resources, and strategies: Students identified some actions to carry out: to download songs related to abilities and capacities and mix them; to organize hints for designing the performance; to memorize expressions related to the topic; to write dialogues; to ask classmates about their likes and abilities; to reflect about own interest and abilities; and to practice their abilities (origami, dancing). Strategies were not explicitly mentioned by any student in relation to their actions. It is assumed by the researcher that establishment of relations is very difficult for students. Besides, it can be though that

the intervention lack clearness or emphasis on the interrelations between learning actions, resources, strategies, and the requirement of clear and specific input to get an output.

- Time to devote for task development: Students had the intention to assign between six and twelve hours per week to information exploration and learning.

- Evaluation of achievements

Students thought they could evaluate their learning through peer evaluation; writing the script for the performance; taking internet quizzes; integrating new learning in the writing; evaluating their acting in the performance. What could be identified in this item has also to do with the capacity of establishing relations, while individual objectives are mostly related to the first part of the task objective: learning about classmates' abilities and capacities, the evaluation is mostly focused on the second part of the task objective: creating a story to be performed which integrates participants' abilities.

- Other reflections: Students' further reflections can be summarized in terms of what they liked from the task developed. They found it was good to feel free for developing an academic task and for deciding on the way of socializing it. Also, they found valuable to have the opportunity to explore their own talents. Moreover, they liked the TBLL methodological orientation, it was enjoyable to work with their classmates and see what they could create.

#### *Questionnaire 5. Evaluating performance*

This questionnaire was applied at the end of each task to evaluate individual work on the use of strategies and English knowledge achievements, fostering reflection about the learning process. As well as in the Planning my Learning Questionnaire, the Evaluating Performance Questionnaire was completed collectively for task 1 to serve as a model for

the development of task 2, which constituted the corpus for analysis of individual performance. The questionnaire was structured with questions that matched the strategies promoted in the intervention: Metacognitive - What were my personal objectives? Cognitive - What did I read and what can I produce now? Affective – What did I say to myself to get motivated? Memory – what new vocabulary or expressions did you learn? Social – Who did you consult and what about? What other strategies did I use? and What did I learn in the process?

#### *Metacognitive Strategy - What were my personal objectives?*

Most common objectives presented by students were to learn new vocabulary related to the abilities involved in the task, to improve grammar and writing, and not to disappoint the group with their participation in the collective final product. Students lay stress on structure and grammatical patters. This stress shows an emphasis on elements which can be acquired without much individual reflection or critical demand on their part. This learning might be useful at some point, but may be insufficient for accomplishing communicative goals, as proposed by the task. Students showed concerns talking about their own feelings and about their need to be accepted in the group. These concerns should be treated openly when wishing to promote communicative performance.

#### *Cognitive Strategy - What did I read and what can I produce now?*

Students consulted some sources for getting input. They read web pages with interests and abilities expressions; they watch YouTube videos about the topic; reviewed class materials and English books dialogues about abilities; they looked for interaction with native speakers; and consulted dictionaries for unknown vocabulary. Students said they were able to tell a story, to have long conversations about interests and

abilities, to use correct verbal tenses, and to write about themselves.

*Affective Strategy - What did I say to myself to get motivated?*

Textual students' words: "I can learn in a short time.", "I have to do more if I want to be better.", "Study. You have to do it.", "If I do not study, I won't pass exams.", "If you rehearse presentation, it will be fine.", "Keep in mind objectives.", "I have to be better at something.", "I am good, but I can be better.", "I am good, but I need to work hard.". As examples show, this strategy was useful for students to recognize themselves as learners, with their possibilities and their aspects to strengthen. It is clear their recognition of the need to commit more with the learning process and to keep in mind objectives.

*Memory Strategy - What new vocabulary did I learn?*

Most students could order and list new vocabulary they came across through the task development. Words such as, apply; elusive; approach; freedom; contest; and many others. Students also identified many expressions concerning abilities and interests: eager to learn; pride my work; she is good at...; she is a first-rate teacher; to make flowers arrangements; among others. Students showed good use of this strategy and it was clearly the preferred one.

*Social Strategy - Who did I consult and what about?*

Students consulted each other in the classroom. They said they also consulted friends in higher levels of English and professors from other courses, mostly about pronunciation; they asked for information to native English speakers. Human resource was recognized and accepted as a good source of information though their challenge to be accepted as part of a social - academic group.

*Others - What other strategies did I use? and What did I learn in the process?*

Students recognized that working in group is an effective and fun strategy. Also, that collective writing improves the writing ability and that talking about own feelings was not as difficult as they thought. Also, they feel they still need to make a better use of the time.

An aspect well commented by many students relates task-based learning as a methodological orientation. Students felt that working with tasks was a good new experience, as tasks can awake passion, learning turns easier and it also fosters learning grammar.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion are structured in three parts: before the intervention on strategies; the intervention on strategies; and recommendations, as the results of evaluating the intervention on strategies.

### BEFORE THE INTERVENTION ON STRATEGIES

In an initial moment of the learning process, students recognize, on one side, the importance of learning English, they feel this knowledge will change their perspective of the world and of themselves. They also show awareness of the difficulties they will have to face in the learning process and of the challenges they will have to overcome. On the other side, students recognize that in their previous academic experience they did not develop the sense of academic responsibility and that academic issues were more on teachers' hands.

In the assumption that learning strategies development is closely related to academic responsibility for self-regulating learning, students' understanding of strategies fits their own sense of responsibility. Students relate strategies with teaching but not with learning, they can evaluate if a teacher or professor is not

implementing good strategies for teaching, but they do not associate these strategies with their learning process. Students know that strategies are good tools for learning, but they do not recognize the active role students need to play as learners. They do not know either about the existence of a great variety of strategies, which can be chosen according to individual needs.

### THE INTERVENTION ON STRATEGIES

In an intervention to promote the use of strategies, through learning tasks, students develop a positive attitude facing learning and they also gain the capacity to identify this learning in general terms, and in relation to abilities. It is true that the expectation in this type of intervention is that students relate learning with task and individual objectives, but the enthusiasm that generates the feeling of general learning also counts. This feeling develops intrinsic motivation, a key element for regulating learning (Borkowsky et al, 1987 in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990), which contributes to keep on going in the learning process.

Concerning feelings awakened through the intervention, it is also valuable to mention that emotions are present throughout a learning process, it is striking that students prioritize, in some way, the approval of their peers, or their acceptance in a group, over the learning itself. This aspect is mentioned by Hong (2010) and is worth putting it into consideration when doing academic planning. Emotions is an aspect that affects learning and teaching planning, and teachers can profit of this recognition.

An intervention also raises awareness about the importance of strategies in the learning process. In this recognition, students start using some, such as praising oneself, this strategy is well accepted and implemented by students, in terms of strengths. Students also started implementing other strategies like working in group, using resources for receiving input, and creating

mental connections for learning new vocabulary. These strategies are basic in the learning process and respond to part of the intervention, they belong to the group of the Direct Strategies, which are in close relation with the linguistic learning. However, Direct Strategies need to be complemented with Indirect Strategies, in order to go further in the learning process, formulate and accomplish communicative goals, and turn into self-regulated learners. This means that the intervention, carried out in this study, achieved to promote the use of one type of strategies but fail in the achievement of objectives related to the other ones. As a consequence, it is necessary to think of future interventions, different to one implemented in the present research. Findings confirm Pintrich (1999; 2000) assumption that cognitive monitoring and motivational behaviors are not easy to be developed by all learners.

It is well known that metacognitive strategies like setting individual learning goals, planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning need different conditions to be acquired. The implementation of metacognitive strategies demand reflection, and the establishment of interrelations between learning actions, resources, and strategies, in order to be able to make critical and pertinent academic decisions for setting individual objectives, planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning. Results suggest that metacognitive demands are too high for students in the beginning of their professionalization: students' objectives lay stress on structure and grammatical patterns, and this emphasis shows linguistic learning but also shows difficulties for establishing relations; their learning planning follows the formulated weak objectives; and the evaluation does not respond to the expectations for self-regulation in learning. Setting weak individual objectives makes it difficult to plan, monitor, and evaluate learning and this affects the whole learning process, and hinders the possibility of developing self-regulation in learning, as Griffiths (2013) suggest.

Under this perspective, it is possible to state that self-regulation cannot be promoted with this type of intervention, it can only be introduced, as metacognitive strategies are indispensable when wishing to promote self-regulation in learning. A short-term intervention is not enough to change students' low self-evaluation of their academic responsibility, attached to self-regulation in learning, or their assumption that reflective and critical strategies belong to teachers. An evidence of this lack of evolution is shown with their recognition of the need to make a better use of the time. This need is a permanent, going from the introduction of the intervention to the end of it.

In opposition, the participation in an intervention for developing learning strategies allows students to value other aspects from the experience. They raise awareness of the characteristics of methodological orientations for teaching foreign languages, identifying the Task-based learning as a methodological orientation that awakes passion, makes learning easier, and fosters learning grammar. Students' perceptions of this methodological orientation get in correspondence with many authors' precepts about tasks (Kiernan and Aizawa, 2004; Willis, 1996; Nunan, 1992; Ushioda, 1996; Ellis, 2009, Little, 2007). Also, with an intervention on strategies students gain appreciation for the role the teacher plays, they value the teacher support in the accomplishment of their learning goals.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS AS THE RESULTS OF EVALUATING THE INTERVENTION ON STRATEGIES**

In the recognition that metacognitive demands are too high for students in the beginning of their professionalization and that a short-term intervention on the frame of a course is not enough to instruct and gain domain in the implementation of learning strategies with high cognitive demands, it is suggested to design and implement long-term interventions on learning

strategies development. To make it possible, it is also suggested to formulate area objectives concerning strategies development, and integrate these objectives to the area curriculum. This suggestion was also made many years ago, by Wenden 1987, when strategies development started to be explored. An instruction on strategies in an isolated course might be in danger of serving short-term objectives, while in integration to the area curriculum it could give the possibility of focusing attention on specific strategies and dose emphasis through the different courses that make part of the curriculum. One-time modeling, in an intervention to develop learning strategies, is not enough for students to gain independence in learning and to understand the need to evolve from a passive role to a more active role as learner.

It is considered essential to devote greater emphasis to indirect strategies, particularly to metacognitive strategies, highlighting the formulation of good individual objectives, as they guide the planning, monitoring, and evaluating of learning. A good use of these strategies would generate dynamism in the apprenticeship and increase motivation in learning the foreign language, as Zimmerman (2002) states. Additionally, it is suggested to include the affective and social strategies in the area planning, as students print great emphasis on social recognition.

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## Appendix 1. Planning Questionnaire for Task 1 *English Speaking Countries* contest

### ESCUELA DE CIENCIAS DEL LENGUAJE - HABILIDADES INTEGRADAS EN INGLES I

DEPARTAMENTO DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS      Professor: \_\_\_\_\_

Planning my work for the Task N°1: ***English Speaking Countries Contest***

#### Objective of the program related to English language

To recognize the state of English language in the world. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Objectives of the task 1: *English Speaking Countries Contest*

To design a contest focused on the characteristics of some English speaking countries. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Relationship between the course objective and the task objective

To design a contest about the characteristics of some English-speaking countries, it is necessary, firstly, to define the countries to be explored; then, to learn as much as possible about them, and to get prepared for the contest.

#### Personal Objective in relation to the course objective the task objectives

To explore and learn about India looking for sources in English. Where is it located? Why do people speak English? How big is it? What do Indians look like? Why tourists love to visit the country? How is its economy supported?

#### What actions should I undertake? What resources do I need? and What strategies can I adopt?

Action	Resource	Strategy	Product
Explore documents with information about India.	On the web	- Cognitive Input and Output  - Memory  Vocabulary and expressions	Write main ideas and short summaries of documents related to the topic.
Look for a person and talk with her/him about the questions I have about India.	An Indian person	- Cognitive Input and Output  - Social – asking for verifying or complementing information.	Select the new information to complement the initial document about India.
Encourage my work	Reflection on my doing	Affective  Self-motivation	Listing hits and misses



**How much time can I assign to devote to this learning?**

Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday	
From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To
		15:00	16:00			19:00	21:00			9:00	11:00

**How can I evaluate my learning?**

I will know if I learnt about the topic when I write the script for my presentation of India. If I am able to do it without copying and pasting, it will mean that I really learnt through the task exploration.

**Other aspects:**

I will pay attention to grammar, new expressions and new vocabulary. I could also share this information with my classmates.

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