

INVESTIGATING INDEPENDENT LANGUAGE LEARNING IN CLASSROOM-BASED EFL LEARNERS

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RESUM

La recerca efectuada sobre les estratègies d'aprenentatge de llengües ha demostrat que els aprenents que utilitzen estratègies metacognitives (planificació, revisió i avaluació) desenvolupen estratègies cognitives més eficaces (Anderson, 2002). Aquest article descriu les activitats que 43 estudiants de llengua estrangera de la Universitat de Vic van emprendre de forma independent i dedueix les estratègies metacognitives que van utilitzar sense cap formació prèvia en estratègies. Els estudiants van completar un dossier on expressaven les necessitats d'aprenentatge, la planificació i supervisió de les activitats i finalment l'avaluació de l'aprenentatge que havien portat a terme de manera independent fora de les hores lectives. La primera fase de l'anàlisi de les dades revela que, tot i que els estudiants foren capaços d'expressar les necessitats d'aprenentatge en general, la formulació d'objectius i la supervisió de les activitats fou escassa. La discussió gira entorn de la formació dels estudiants de llengües estrangeres en estratègies metacognitives i la integració de l'aprenentatge autònom dins el currículum docent.

ABSTRACT

Research into language learning strategies has shown that learners who use metacognitive strategies (planning, monitoring and evaluating) develop stronger cognitive skills (Anderson, 2002). This article describes the independent language learning activities of 43 EFL learners at the University of Vic and infers how learners might employ metacognitive strategies without previous strategy training. Learners completed a Language Learning Portfolio (LLP) documenting their needs, action planning, monitoring and evaluating activities carried out independently of the classroom. The first phase of data analysis has revealed that although all learners were able to analyse their general needs using the LLP, few made specific goals or monitored activities. Implications for training metacognitive strategies to second/foreign language learners and for integrating independent language learning into the curriculum are discussed.

RESUMEN

La investigación sobre las estrategias de aprendizaje de lenguas demuestra que los estudiantes que utilizan estrategias metacognitivas (planificación, supervisión y evaluación) desarrollan estrategias cognitivas más eficaces (Anderson, 2002). El presente artículo describe las actividades de aprendizaje que 43 estudiantes de lenguas extranjeras de la Universidad de Vic realizaron autónomamente e infiere las estrategias metacognitivas utilizadas por los estudiantes sin previa formación sobre estrategias. Los estudiantes completaron un dossier donde informaban sobre sus necesidades de aprendizaje, la planificación y supervisión de las actividades, así como la evaluación de su propio aprendizaje autónomo llevado a cabo fuera de las horas lectivas. La primera fase del análisis de la información revela que, a pesar de que los estudiantes demuestran su capacidad para expresar sus necesidades de aprendizaje, la formulación de objetivos y la supervisión de las actividades fue escasa. La discusión debate las implicaciones sobre la formación de los estudiantes de lenguas extranjeras en estrategias metacognitivas y sobre la integración del aprendizaje autónomo en el currículum docente.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concepts of *learner autonomy* and *independence* have gained importance and evolved over the last thirty years. Autonomy has become a key word within the context of language learning (Little, 1991). In communicative language learning there has been a shift of responsibility from the teacher to the learner most probably as the result of a series of changes to the curriculum towards a more learner-centred approach (Wenden, 1998). Therefore, power and authority in the traditional classroom have been redistributed. Learners are expected to assume greater responsibility for their own learning. They have to have the 'capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action' (Little, 1991).

Autonomy

Edith Esch (1996), in exploring what is meant by 'promoting learner autonomy,' touches on some of the misconceptions that have emerged in the field, principally that autonomy equates with learners learning on their own. Arguments are clearly made throughout the literature for autonomy as a precept for effective learning whatever the modality, that is face-to-face or distance, in a classroom with peers or individually in self-access. The notion of autonomy implies both freedom to learn and ability to take responsibility for learning. Dickinson (1995) further specifies that 'autonomy [is] both an attitude towards learning and a capacity for independent learning'. Nevertheless, the development towards autonomy is not one-sided. It is still a process of interaction between learner, tutor, peers, learning context and learning materials. Any one of these factors will be potentially responsible for the success or failure of independent learning opportunities. However, ultimately, the end result of successful interactions will be a learner's sense of control over their learning.

According to Benson and Voller (1997) the term autonomy has come to be used in at least five ways:

- a) for situations in which learners study entirely on their own;
- b) for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning;
- c) for an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education;
- d) for the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning;
- e) for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

In all these ways, the autonomous learner takes an active role in the learning process, generating ideas and providing himself with learning opportunities, rather than simply reacting to various stimuli of the teacher (Kohonen, 1992). For Rathbone (1971, cited in Candy, 1991), the autonomous learner is a "self-activated maker of meaning, an active agent in his own learning process". He is not a passive subject to whom things merely happen; he is the one who, by his own volition, causes things to happen. Learning is seen as the result of his own self-initiated interaction with the world.

The seven main attributes characterising autonomous learners (see Omaggio, 1978, cited in Wenden, 1998) are the following:

- 1) Autonomous learners have insights into their learning styles and strategies;
- 2) take an active approach to the learning task at hand;
- 3) are willing to take risks, i.e., to communicate in the target language at all costs;
- 4) are good guessers;
- 5) attend to form as well as to content, that is, place importance on accuracy as well as appropriacy;
- 6) develop the target language into a separate reference system and are willing to revise and

reject hypotheses and rules that do not apply; and
7) have a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language.

As it can be seen these attributes make reference to different areas such as learner needs, motivation, learner strategies and language awareness.

Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are defined by Chamot & Kupper (1989) as “techniques which students use to comprehend, store, and remember information and skills”. These strategies are used to enhance and facilitate learning. Oxford, Lavine, & Crookall (1989) give the following six broad strategy categories, which contain specific strategies and behaviour. The first three are also classified as *direct* and the last three as *indirect* strategies.

1. *Memory strategies* consist of creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing and employing action.
2. *Cognitive strategies* are practising, receiving and sending messages, analysing and reasoning and creating structure for input and output.
3. *Compensation strategies* are guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing.
4. *Metacognitive strategies* are centring one’s learning, arranging, planning and evaluating one’s learning.
5. *Affective strategies* are lowering one’s anxiety, encouraging oneself and taking the emotional temperature.
6. *Social strategies* are asking questions, cooperating with others and empathising with others.

The right learning strategy can make the difference between effective and ineffective language learning since it has been claimed that successful language learners have their own "special ways of doing it". Rubin (1975), suggested that good L2 learners are willing and accurate guessers; have a strong drive to communicate; are often uninhibited; are willing to make mistakes; focus on form by looking for patterns and analyzing; take advantage of all practice opportunities; monitor their speech as well as that of others; and pay attention to meaning.

Graham (1997) believes that metacognitive strategies, that allow students to plan, control, and evaluate their learning, have the most central role to play in improvement of learning. Anderson (2002^b) believes that "developing metacognitive awareness may also lead to the development of stronger cognitive skills". Since metacognitive strategies are the focus of this study, a more detailed discussion on this topic follows.

Metacognition

In this study, *metacognitive strategies* is defined as actions one takes to plan for learning, to monitor one’s own comprehension/production, or to evaluate the extent to which a learning goal has been reached (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Chamot & O’Malley, 1994). Therefore, there are three categories of metacognitive strategies, namely, *Planning*, *Monitoring* and *Evaluating*. According to Chamot and O’Malley (1994), metacognitive strategies can be used by learners before, during and after a task. Learners use metacognitive strategies to plan for a task, to check how the plan is being carried out during task, and evaluate the learning outcomes after task.

Anderson (2002^a) defines metacognition as "thinking about thinking." Anderson also states that “the use of metacognitive strategies ignites one’s thinking and can lead to higher learning and better performance”. Anderson (2002^a), based on previous research, has proposed five main components for metacognition. They include: 1) preparing and planning for learning, 2) selecting and using learning strategies, 3) monitoring strategy use, 4) orchestrating various

strategies, and 5) evaluating strategy use and learning.

By *preparation and planning* in relation to their learning goal, students think about what their goals are and how they will go about accomplishing them. Students, with the help of the teacher, can set a realistic goal within a set time for accomplishing that goal. Setting clear, challenging, and realistic goals can help students see their own progress and hopefully, by becoming consciously aware of their progress, the students' motivation for learning would be increased.

The metacognitive ability to *select and use particular strategies* in a given context for a specific purpose means that the learner can think and make conscious decisions about the learning process. Learners should be taught not only about learning strategies but also about when to use them and how to use them. Students should be instructed on how to choose the best and most appropriate strategy in a given situation. For example, when reading, they can use context to guess the meaning of some unknown vocabulary items. To monitor their use of this strategy, they should pause and check to see if the meaning they guessed makes sense in the text and if not, go back and modify or change their strategy.

The next main component of metacognition is *monitoring strategy use*. By examining and monitoring their use of learning strategies, students have more chances of success in meeting their learning goals. Students should be explicitly taught that once they have selected and begun to use the specific strategies, they need to check periodically whether or not those strategies are effective and being used as intended.

Knowing *how to use a combination of strategies in an orchestrated fashion* is an important metacognitive skill. Research has shown that successful language learners tend to select strategies that work well together in a highly orchestrated way, tailored to the requirements of the language task (Chamot and Kupper, 1989; Wenden, 1998). These learners can easily explain the strategies they use and why they employ them (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

According to Chamot and Kupper (1989), certain strategies or clusters of strategies are linked to particular language skills or tasks. For example, L2 writing, like L1 writing, benefits from the learning strategies of planning, self-monitoring, deduction, and substitution. L2 speaking demands strategies such as risk-taking, paraphrasing, circumlocution, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. L2 listening comprehension gains from strategies of elaboration, inferencing, selective attention, and self-monitoring. Reading comprehension uses strategies like reading aloud, guessing, deduction, and summarizing. Research shows that use of appropriate language learning strategies often results in improved proficiency or achievement overall or in specific skill areas (Oxford, Park-Oh, Ito, & Sumrall, 1993).

One of the most important metacognitive strategies is to *evaluate effectiveness of strategy use*. Self-questioning, debriefing discussions after strategies practice, learning logs in which students record the results of their learning strategies applications, and checklists of strategies used can be used to allow the student to reflect through the cycle of learning. At this stage of metacognition the whole cycle of planning, selecting, using, monitoring and orchestration of strategies is evaluated.

It should be noted that different metacognitive skills interact with each other. The components are not used in a linear fashion. More than one metacognitive process along with cognitive ones may be working during a learning task (Anderson, 2002^b). Therefore the orchestration of various strategies is a vital component of second language learning in general and vocabulary learning in particular. Allowing learners opportunities to think about and talk about how they combine various strategies facilitates strategy use.

According to Anderson (2002^b), developing metacognitive awareness in learners may also lead to the development of stronger cognitive skills and much deeper processing. It results in critical but healthy reflection and evaluation of thinking.

Language learning at the University of Vic is mostly through traditional classroom-based courses, although a self-access centre exists on the campus and a Virtual Campus has recently been introduced. Nevertheless, as Sheerin (1989) claims the existence of self-access facilities doesn't guarantee the use of those facilities or that learners will successfully become autonomous. With this in mind this pilot study was designed as a starting point for investigating learners metacognitive strategies in order to gain a broader understanding of how strategy training could be used to facilitate and motivate learners and which would be the best way to integrate it into the language curriculum. The following research questions were proposed:

1. What independent language learning activities do classroom based learners undertake?
2. How do classroom based learners employ metacognitive strategies?

METHOD

Subjects and Context

The present study was a pilot study which was carried out during the second semester of 2004 at the University of Vic, Catalonia (Spain). The subjects of the study were first and second year undergraduates studying English language as a compulsory component of their degree courses, but who were not majoring in English language, and adult students from the public courses at the School of Languages.

Learners were asked to complete a set of questionnaires over a 12 week period. The questionnaires had been downloaded from the University of Manchester Language Centre website and adapted for the local context. Manchester University's Language Centre webpages, as well as the University of Lincoln website, provide learning resources to support student-led learning. The questionnaires were given to the students in the form of a booklet, which we named the 'Language Learning Portfolio' (LLP) (see Appendix 1) and which contained the following sections:

1. Needs Analysis (open & closed questions)
2. Action Plan (grid)
3. Language Log (grid to fill in dates, materials and activities done)
4. Reflective Questionnaire (grid to complete for skills & open questions)

For the learners the rationale given for the LLP was to provide the preparation and support to plan, monitor and evaluate their language learning. For the researchers it would provide an insight into how learners articulated their language needs, pinpointed strengths and weaknesses, set objectives and took action to reach these objectives, and finally assessed their progress. In other words the LLP was focusing on the metacognitive strategies learners employed without having had any kind of strategy training. The pilot study would test the clarity of the questions and foresee problems of design and procedure for a final LLP which could subsequently be integrated into the classroom curriculum.

To ensure reliability the following procedure was carried out for consistency in the data collection, analysis and interpretation of results: portfolios were distributed to teachers with a set of instructions about how to introduce the portfolios to the students, when to collect them in and the rationale behind the study. The results were then categorised by two independent researchers for inter-rater reliability.

Data Collection

The portfolios were not translated into the learner's L1 (first language) but left in English due to time constraints. As all the subjects had studied English for at least five years and the portfolios were to be introduced and explained in class, initial misunderstandings could be clarified. Furthermore, learners were told that they could fill in the questions in their L1.

It was stressed that the information was purely for research purposes and was not going to be used for or against them in assessing their course grades. Therefore they could fill in the questionnaires as honestly as possible. Students were told that the questionnaires were a tool which they could use to set objectives, plan their language learning activities and reflect on their progress over the following 12 weeks. The first questionnaire (Needs Analysis) was filled in during class time and learners were guided through the questions in the rest of the portfolio and told to complete the Action Plan and Language Log in their own time over the next 12 weeks, and the Reflective Questionnaire in the final week of the study.

Procedure for selecting data

1. First reading of LLP's: The portfolios were read with no attempt to categorise the data. Portfolios in which the Reflective Questionnaire was not completed were discarded as they didn't hold enough information and the inferences made would not be reliable. A reduced sample of questionnaires remained. With this data results could not be generalised but the information was still considered valuable for understanding metacognitive strategies and could lead to quantification of the data or a more experimental method in future research.
2. Second reading of portfolios: General categories of reported events were categorised with the reduced sample of 19.

At all points of the analysis the information was treated as a whole and in the context in which the entries were made.

RESULTS

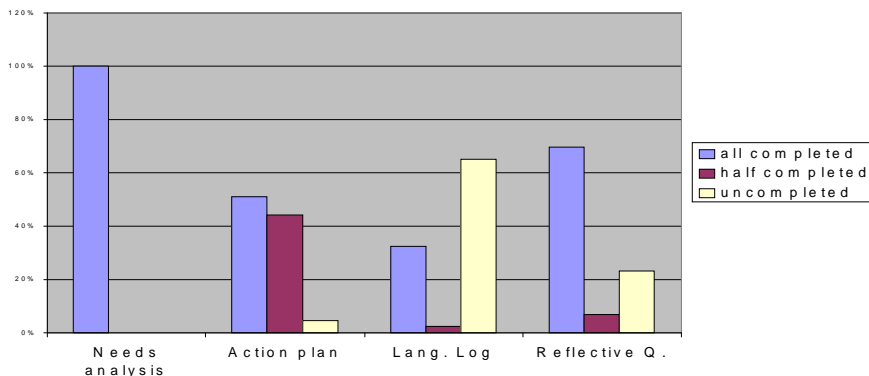
First reading of questionnaires

The portfolios were not a compulsory part of the course so it was expected that some of the LLPs would not be fully completed or handed back. Nevertheless, of the 83 questionnaires handed out, 43 were returned (52% of the total).

Graph 1 shows the percentage of learners that filled in each of the sections. All students (100%) completed the Needs analysis as it was carried out during the in-class introductory session of the LLP's. The graph shows that just over half the sample (51%) went on to complete the action plan in full, 44% partly completed it and 5% didn't complete it at all. The language log was completed by 33% of students in full, 2% completed part of it and 65% didn't complete it at all. The reflective questionnaire was completed by 70% of students in full. 7% completed part of it and 23% didn't complete it at all.

Learners who had completed all sections of the LLP's were selected for the final data analysis. A further 12 questionnaires from those with 3 completed parts were selected as they contained enough information on planning, monitoring and evaluating which met the requirements of the analysis (to make comparisons of planning, monitoring and evaluation strategies across students). The remaining questionnaires were discarded as it would be impossible to make such comparisons with them. Therefore a total of 19 questionnaires were used for the final comparative analysis of metacognitive strategies.

GRAPH 1
Percentage of completed sections in returned questionnaires

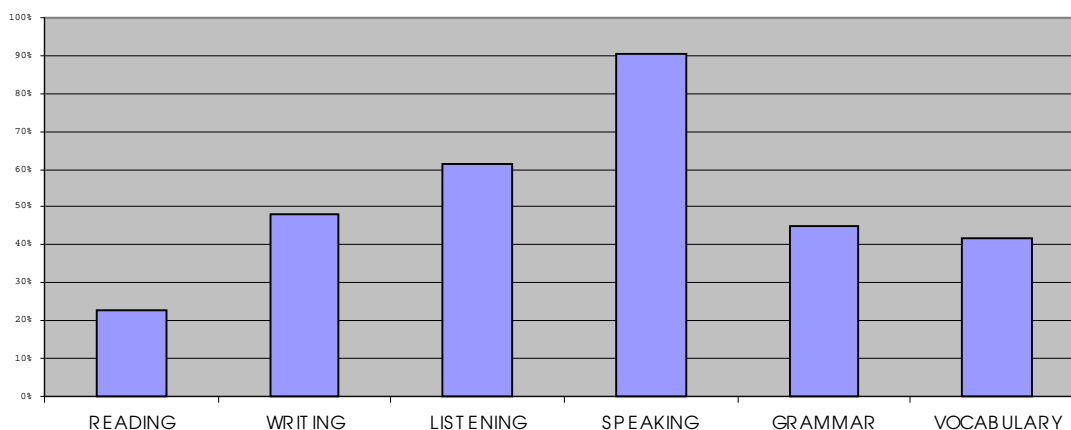


Second Reading of Questionnaires

PLANNING

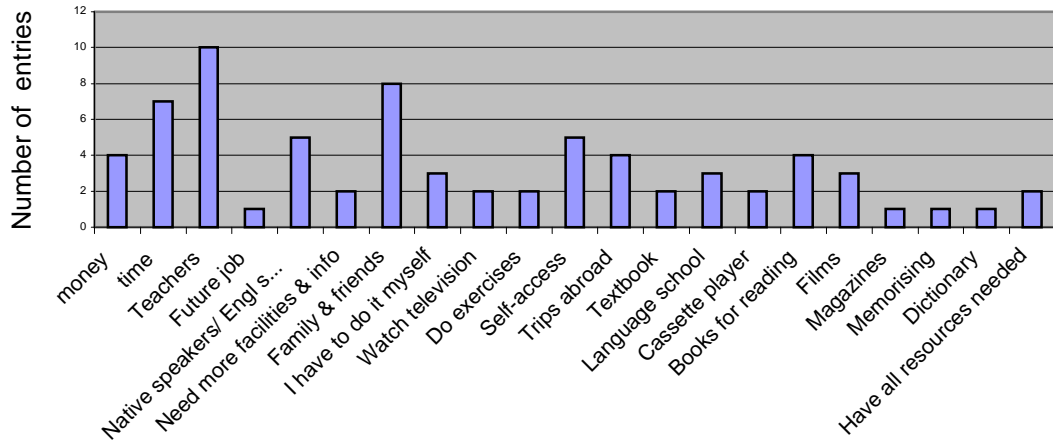
Graph 2 shows the areas which students believed needed developing. Most students wanted to improve speaking (90%), 61% listening, 48% writing, 45% grammar, 42% vocabulary and lastly only 23 % considered reading for improvement.

GRAPH 2
Areas needing development



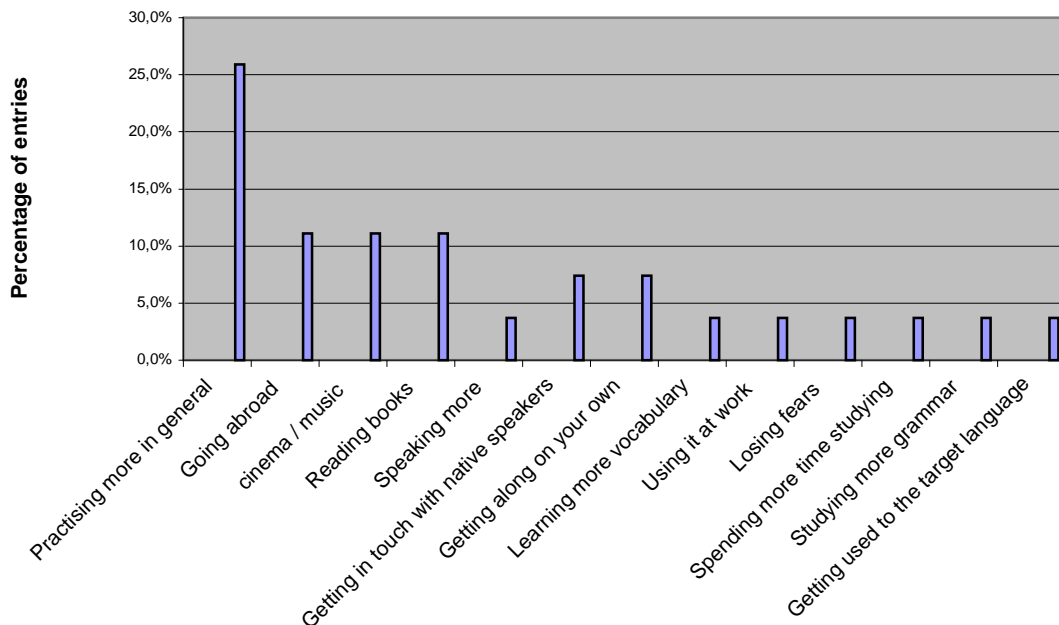
Graph 3 shows the facilities students believed were available to them and could support them. *The teacher* was the most common citation (10) and then *family and friends* (8), *time* (7), the *Self Access Centre* (5) and *native speakers* (5). 2 learners stated that they weren't aware of the resources they needed and one learner stated that all the resources were available.

GRAPH 3
Knowledge of Resources



Graph 4 shows actions taken by students in order to solve their problems. Although all of them mention some actions taken, only 37% of them take the appropriate action to solve the problems stated in their plan. Student 58 (S58) stated reading to improve her vocabulary as part of her plan and subsequently stated reading books as a way of carrying out this plan.

GRAPH 4
Actions planned to resolve problems identified in the Needs Analysis



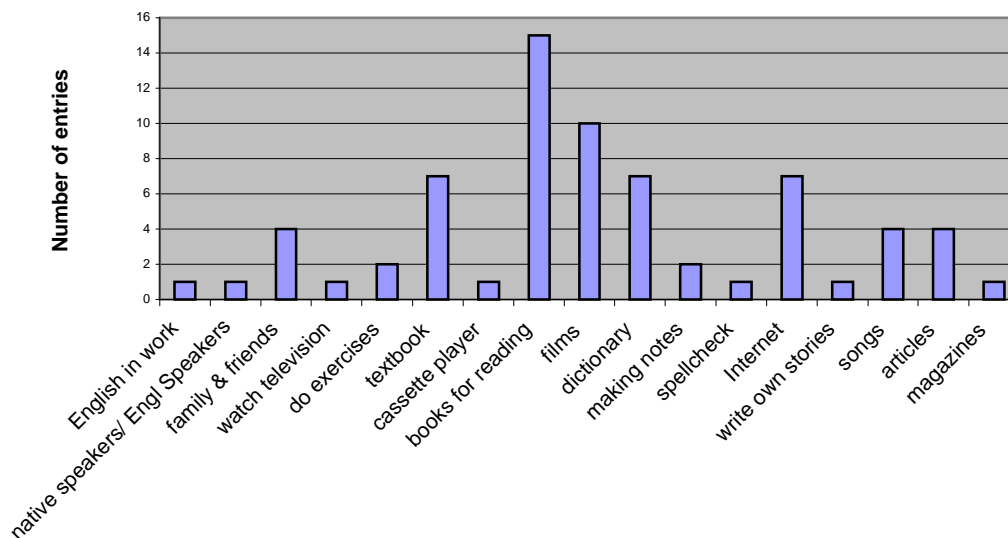
At the end of the 12 week period 12 students had completed their final action plan for future

learning activities. Their entries were categorised into general (42%) or specific (58%) goals. An example of a general goal was *'continuing to study'* or *'practising reading'* whereas a specific goal was *'revising my notes'* or *'listening every two weeks'*.

MONITORING

Graph 5 shows students use of resources during the 12 week monitoring period. Reading books were the most frequently mentioned resource followed by films, the Internet and the textbook. The language logs revealed that 6/19 students carried out regular chronological monitoring, making between 8 and 17 entries. However 9/19 students who had analysed needs, planned and later evaluated their independent learning activities did not complete the language log at all. If we look at learners who monitored to see if they followed up their plan and carried out what they had stated in solving their problem, we observe that only 3 students (16%) completed the chain.

GRAPH 5
Use of Resources



EVALUATING LEARNING

REPORTED ACTIVITIES

General categories of independent language learning activities, which students remembered doing are listed below. These activities reflect how students make use of opportunities to learn English outside of the classroom. Nunan (ref) identified the failure to use language outside class as one of the reasons for learner failure. Work which students stated doing as a class requirement has not been included. Only 58% of students who completed the reflective questionnaire described activities which weren't required for class.

Reading: books, articles, the Internet

Writing: short stories, emails to friends, letters, reports for work

Listening: to subtitled films, videoclips, songs, dialogues on cassette, the news, television

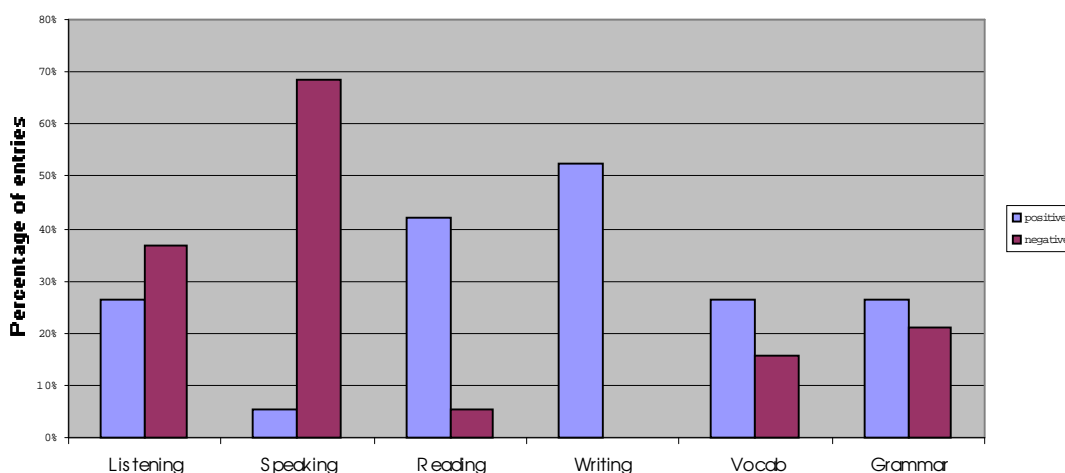
Speaking: making phone calls in work, practising with proficient users, talking to native speakers

Grammar: making notes, revising classwork, doing exercises

Vocabulary: using the dictionary/web dictionary, doing exercises, learning a few words everyday

Graph 6 categorises students' self-evaluation of their skills in terms of negative and positive comments. Nearly 70% of comments were negative for speaking whereas only 5% were positive. At the other extreme 53% of comments were positive for writing with no negative comments for this skill. Reading is also worth mentioning as 42% of comments were positive with only 5% negative comments.

GRAPH 6
Positive and negative self evaluation



DISCUSSION

52 % of learners submitted their portfolio, which is a considerable number bearing in mind that it was not a compulsory activity. The fact that these learners were willing to participate was regarded as positive in terms of using the portfolios in future research and integrating portfolios into the curriculum.

Looking at the data, in the first place, the needs analysis section was the part containing the most information and completed by all learners, which might well be attributed to the fact that it was completed during class time under the supervision of the teacher. The reason why the action plan, reflective questionnaire and particularly the language log were not completed in all the returned portfolios may have been because learners did not have enough time or forgot to fill them in. A possible solution for this in a future study could be in-class monitoring in order to gather reliable data.

The needs analysis revealed that far more learners wanted to develop their speaking skills above any other kind of skill. This could be an area in which they have the least opportunities to practise.

With reference to the available resources, the teacher is the 'resource' mentioned the most, which could be because the teacher is a resource which is regularly available or because learners in this cultural context see the teacher as a central part of the learning process. Apart from this, even though the list of resources available is considerable in length, this does not mean that *all* the students are aware of *all* of these resources. Nor does it mean that only the resources mentioned are the ones learners are aware of. **This knowledge may be enhanced by providing explicit information on the type, availability and appropriacy of resources so that students can benefit more fully from their use.**

So far only the information in the planning section has been described, but this alone reveals general and vague entries like '*I want to learn more*' or entries like '*going abroad*' which may have been unrealistic and hard to achieve within the 12 week limit of the study. These results clearly suggest that although students can plan their language learning, there are scarce numbers of entries related to specific actions taken to solve specific problems. Hence, it goes without saying that more effort should be directed at helping students gain problem solving strategies or, at least, making them aware of setting achievable goals. As Rivers (2001) or Tse (2000) mention, some students may not find the necessity to use metacognitive strategies because they are expert learners and simply use these strategies unconsciously.

The use of resources and activities learners carried out show that although learners wanted to develop speaking skills few managed to do this.

Monitoring strategies can hardly be seen in the language log since there were few examples of chronological tracking. In fact from those students who planned, only three of them followed up their plans. Reasons for the lack of information provided might be found, first of all, in the questionnaire design. In Griffiths (2003) the drawbacks of using a questionnaire where learners self-report is discussed. Inability to remember accurately, lack of self-awareness, varying interpretation of terms and effect of cultural background on response patterns are the major drawbacks mentioned. In this study the varying interpretation of terms was a major cause of misinterpretation. For example, the question on comments in section E (see the LLP in Appendix 1) where answers were related to students' own learning, instead of making reference to the language portfolio.

Another reason for misinterpretation has to be found in the fact that questionnaires were not in the L1. Even though students had an intermediate level of proficiency in the target language, their answers were sometimes inappropriate. Apart from this, space given on the questionnaire, might have had, again, a misleading effect on the answers by giving a determined idea of length. Finally, the period of time the research was carried out, the second semester, did not prove appropriate since final exams took up most of students' time. Therefore, students rushed to hand in the portfolio at the end of the semester without having concentrated on the process of filling in the language log.

As far as the implicit metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring and evaluating revealed in the current study, it is worth mentioning that listening and speaking are the skills which receive most attention, especially in the evaluation. Thus, when students are asked about "what went well" or "what did not go so well", 70% of the negative comments refer to speaking. The fact that there were so many negative comments for speaking ties up with the explanation given in the needs analysis. This might imply that they do take the appropriate direction to solve their problems because either they are not aware of the resources they are provided with, or they do not feel they are improving their competence in this particular skill.

These are the skills, then, which may require more strategy training in general and metacognitive strategy training in particular since students consider it difficult to find

opportunities to develop them outside class. Therefore, more guidance on the part of the teacher is required to give students advice about opportunities available outside class in order to foster independent learning.

Last but not least, in any qualitative research on a small sample, the question of the validity of the study arises. It is obvious that with such a small sample, generalising the results of the study to a broader scope is impossible. Even though this is a limitation, the results produced by this kind of qualitative analysis provided the researchers with a better understanding of learners in this particular context and have opened up further lines of enquiry for subsequent research on autonomy and strategy use.

CONCLUSION

Thirty years of language learning strategy research has provided empirical evidence that the use of metacognitive strategies is a major factor to go beyond the current level of competence in language learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994). Therefore it is crucial to implement metacognitive strategies as part of independent language learning training in the classroom.

The results from this study will continue to be analysed in greater depth to compare learners use and knowledge of resources and individual portfolios will be analysed to see how learners connect their planning, monitoring and evaluating. A systematic coding should be developed of isolated events and chronological tracking of planning, monitoring and self-assessment will be carried out for each portfolio. Furthermore, interviews with learners would clarify information in the portfolio and make the results more reliable.

This study gives us insights into the difficulty of using metacognitive strategies without training. More importantly, it provides us with the preliminary results from which we can analyse and build on for further research. As Graham (1997: 170) declares, "For learners, a vital component of self-directed learning lies in the on-going evaluation of the methods they have employed on tasks and of their achievements within the...programme". Whatever the context or method, it is important for L2/FL learners to have the chance to reflect on their language learning and strategy use.

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ANNEX 1

Language Learning Portfolio

LANGUAGE LEARNING PORTFOLIO (LLP)

Research shows that independent learners are more successful. The aim of this portfolio, therefore, is to provide you with help and advice to develop independence as a language learner and so become a more effective learner. The following questionnaires will help you plan your learning, monitor your progress and evaluate the results.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name:

Native Language:.....

University Course:.....

Profession (if applicable):.....

Sex:.....

Age:.....

Phone Number:.....

Address:.....

.....

NEEDS ANALYSIS & ACTION PLAN

1. Why do you want to learn/continue to learn this language?

2. What languages have you studied and to what level (Please give dates)?
This may include language acquired during time spent abroad, even if only at an elementary level.

3. Please describe in your own words your current knowledge of the target language.

4. Which aspects of the language (if any) do you feel entirely confident about? (eg reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar knowledge/accuracy, vocabulary knowledge etc)

5. Which aspects of the language do you feel nervous about?

6. Why do you feel nervous about them?

7. What do you think can be done to make you feel more confident about them?

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8. For each of the following statements, circle the word which best describes the current state of your knowledge of the target language.

Reading

I can understand street signs and public notices	never	sometimes	always
I can read a menu well enough to make a choice	never	sometimes	always
I can understand the gist of a simple letter or email	never	sometimes	always
I can understand the gist of a newspaper article	never	sometimes	always
I can appreciate more complex arguments in a text	never	sometimes	always

Listening

I can understand public announcements e.g. in a station	never	sometimes	always
I can understand directions given clearly	never	sometimes	always
I can understand when one person speaks slowly to me	never	sometimes	always
I can follow a conversation between native speakers	never	sometimes	always
I can watch and understand TV programmes	never	sometimes	always

Writing

I can write a short note or postcard to a friend	never	sometimes	always
I can write a personal letter	never	sometimes	always
I can write an official letter	never	sometimes	always
I can write an essay and develop arguments	never	sometimes	always

Speaking

I can give basic personal details	never	sometimes	always
I can buy goods in shops and order in restaurants	never	sometimes	always
I can make a simple telephone call	never	sometimes	always
I can have a conversation with a sympathetic native speaker	never	sometimes	always
I can express my ideas on any subject and be understood	never	sometimes	always

Grammar

I understand basic structures	never	sometimes	always
I can recognise past and future forms	never	sometimes	always
I can correctly produce past and future forms	never	sometimes	always
I can recognise more complex structures	never	sometimes	always
I can correctly produce complex structures	never	sometimes	always

Other aspects

My pronunciation is	incomprehensible	very Catalan/ Spanish	acceptable	good
My vocabulary is	non-existent	limited	adequate for basic needs	wide

9. Please mention any other strengths or weaknesses you feel you have.

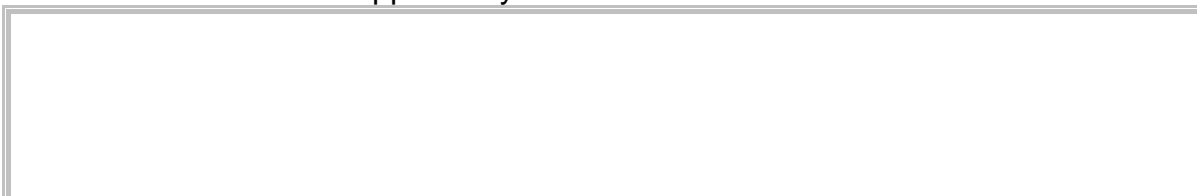
10. Are there any specific areas you would like to develop ?

Listening	
Speaking	
Reading	
Writing	
Topics, vocabulary areas	
Grammar	

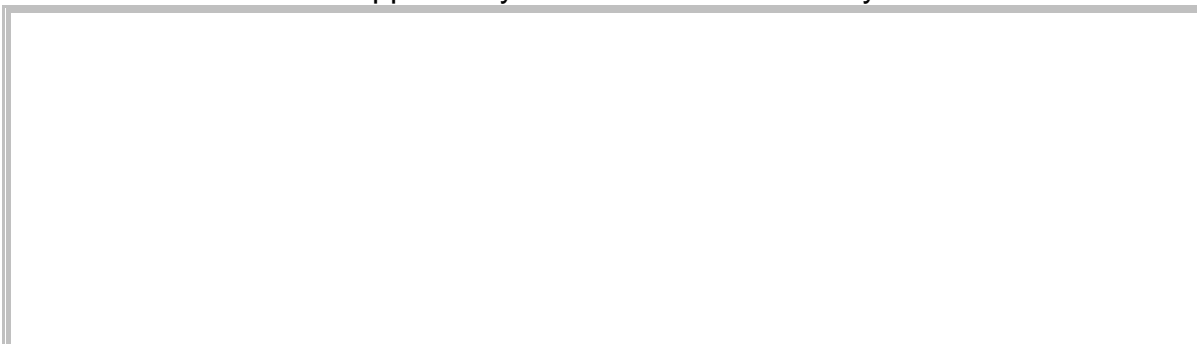
11. What do you plan to do for yourself?




12. What facilities and support do you need to do this?



13. What facilities and support do you think are available to you?



14. Who can help you ensure that your language learning needs are being met?



15. What practical steps are you going to take over the coming **week**?

Practical steps/tasks/activities	Date completed

16. What practical steps are you going to take over the coming **month**?

Practical steps/tasks/activities	Date completed

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

A WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

Briefly describe the independent language learning activities you have undertaken over the past semester.

1. Reading
2. Writing
3. Listening
4. Speaking
5. Grammar work
6. Vocabulary work

B WHAT WENT WELL?

Think about one of these activities which worked particularly well for you and/or which you enjoyed.

1. Briefly describe the activity.
2. What did you enjoy most about it?
3. Which aspect of it do you think you gained most from, for your language learning?

C WHAT DIDN'T GO SO WELL?

Think about one of the activities (listed in A above) which didn't seem to work for you and/or which you didn't enjoy.

1. Briefly describe the activity.
2. What was it you didn't enjoy about it?
3. Why do you think you got little/nothing out of it for your language learning?
4. What have you learnt from this?

D ACTION PLAN

What practical steps are you going to take in order to build on what went well (B above) and to turn around what went less well (C above)?

Practical steps/tasks

E OTHER COMMENTS

Think what you have got out of this experience. Will it help your other studies, provide you with skills for employment, has it given you more confidence etc?