Explicit Teaching of Socio-Affective Language Learning Strategies to Beginner EFL Students*1

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Objetivo: enseñar explícitamente estrategias socioafectivas de aprendizaje de lengua, para impactar positivamente las creencias, actitudes, ansiedades y motivaciones de un grupo de estudiantes principiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en el Centro Colombo Americano en Bogotá. **Método:** se realizó una investigación-acción con diecisiete estudiantes que asistían a un curso básico; estos estudiantes respondieron dos cuestionarios abiertos, uno al inicio y uno al final del estudio; diligenciaron una escala de valoración sobre factores afectivos, y participaron en una serie de actividades socioafectivas diseñadas e implementadas por el investigador. **Resultados:** los resultados de este estudio sugieren que la instrucción explícita de estrategias socioafectivas es útil para aumentar la conciencia del estudiante sobre la importancia de prestar atención a sus propios sentimientos y a sus relaciones sociales como parte de su proceso de aprendizaje. **Conclusiones:** este estudio le permitió al investigador asumir los factores afectivos como consideraciones importantes sobre las que tanto profesores como estudiantes necesitan reflexionar para ganar un entendimiento más profundo de la naturaleza del aprendizaje de lengua y para, en últimas, conocerse mejor a sí mismos.

Palabras clave: estrategias socioafectivas de aprendizaje de lengua, factores afectivos, estudiantes principiantes de lengua extranjera, investigación-acción, instrucción de estrategias

Objective: To explicitly teach socio-affective language learning strategies (SLLS) to positively impact the beliefs, attitudes, anxieties, and motivations of a group of beginner EFL students at the Centro Colombo Americano in Bogota, Colombia. **Method:** An action research study was carried out with 17 students who were taking a Basic English course. They answered two open-ended questionnaires, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the study; they also answered questions using a rating scale about affective factors and participated in a set of socio-affective activities designed and implemented by the researcher. **Results:** The results of the study suggest that explicit strategy instruction in SLLS is helpful in heightening learner awareness of the importance of paying attention to their own feelings and social relationships as part of their learning process. **Conclusions:** Affective factors are important considerations that both teachers and students need to reflect on to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of language learning and, ultimately, to gain insight about themselves.

Key words: socio-affective language learning strategies, affective factors, beginner EFL students, action research, strategy instruction

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Objectif: Enseigner explicitement des stratégies socio-affectives d'apprentissage de la langue, pour affecter de manière positive les croyances, les attitudes, les craintes et les motivations d'un groupe d'étudiants débutants d'anglais langue étrangère au Centre Colombo Americano de Bogotá, en Colombie. **Méthode:** une recherche action a été réalisée avec 17 étudiants qui suivaient un cours élémentaire d'anglais; ces étudiants ont répondu à deux questionnaires ouverts, l'un au début et l'autre à la fin de l'étude; ils ont rempli une échelle d'évaluation sur des facteurs affectifs et ont participé à une série d'activités socio affectives créées et mises en application par l'enquêteur. **Résultats:** les résultats de cette étude suggèrent que l'instruction explicite de stratégies socio affectives est utile pour augmenter la conscience de l'étudiant sur l'importance de prêter attention à ses propres sentiments et à ses relations sociales comme étant une chose faisant partie de son processus d'apprentissage. **Conclusions:** cette étude a permis à l'enquêteur d'assumer les facteurs affectifs comme des considérations importantes sur lesquelles professeurs et étudiants ont besoin de réfléchir pour obtenir une compréhension plus profonde de la nature de l'apprentissage de la langue et pour, au final, se connaître mieux eux-même.

Mots-clés: stratégies socio affectives d'apprentissage de la langue, facteurs affectifs, étudiants débutants de langue étrangère, recherche action, instruction de stratégies

1. Introduction

English as a foreign language (EFL) learners decide to learn and speak English because of personal interests, social needs, professional goals, or academic requirements. However, many beginner EFL learners do poorly and end up dropping out of their classes no matter how hard EFL teachers try to help them succeed. This does not happen because they are not intelligent or capable. In fact, Iverson (2005) pointed out, "most of the [beginner] students in [our] classes have already demonstrated incredible ingenuity, stamina, and determination in previous [life] experiences" (p. 9). So, why do some beginner EFL students give up on English feeling they are not good at learning a foreign language or not able to excel at it?

Research has shown that there are many factors involved when trying to understand what makes a person learn a foreign language successfully (Wenden and Rubin, 1987; Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). However, humanistic language teaching has indicated that affective factors, such as attitudes, motivation, anxiety, and self-esteem, have great influence on the success of language learning since "the way we feel about our capacities and ourselves can either facilitate or impede our learning" (Arnold and Brown, 1999, p. 8). In the same vein, Andres (2002) argues that "if we want our students to develop their inherent potential to learn, the affective variables such as anxiety, motivation, self-esteem and inhibition… [and] the inner needs of the learners can no longer

be neglected" (p. 97). Previously, Oxford and Ehrman (1993) had pointed out, "many excellent teachers have learned to do some of this intuitively, but explicit understanding of individual-difference dimensions can enhance the work of all teachers" (p. 188).

This study takes place within the context of a longstanding but growing line of inquiry into affective consideration in EFL. Specifically, this study aims to encourage foreign language learners, teachers, and researchers to attend to socio-affective language learning strategies (SLLS) explicitly and address students' personal, emotional, and social attributes systematically. SLLS and students' socioemotional attributes need to be considered methodically and approached directly by the Colombian EFL community, not only because they can help learners to acquire a language better, but also because they can lead them to know themselves better and, ultimately, to learn to take control of their own learning process (Thanasoulas, 2000).

2. Literature Review

The importance of affective factors has brought about a number of approaches and studies directed at educating the person as a whole: humanism, the silent way, community language learning, etc. Rogers (1969) and Moskowitz (1978), for instance, contended that it was necessary to shift attention from content to learners' subjective needs and their search for personal meaning. Along the same line of thought, Finch (2000) spoke of the need for teachers to pay attention to students' affective natures and needs, not simply to help them to live more satisfying lives and to be responsible members of society, but also in order to improve language teaching and education in the process. Chou (2004) argued specifically for the use of SLLS because these strategies can both help EFL learners regulate their emotions and attitudes towards learning and learn to interact with others successfully.

In this regard, Rainey de Díaz (2005) determined that secondary school EFL teachers in Bogotá tend to favor a socio-affective culture over that preferred by mainstream TESOL. In fact, she stated that they have undertaken or are currently undertaking the corresponding research in their determination to address the issues they have with respect to the socio-affective and cultural aspects of the EFL

secondary school classroom. In a similar vein, Habte-Gabr (2006) showed that socio-affective strategies should be considered central to studying EFL at the university level in Colombia. According to this author, the use of socio-affective strategies allows students to eventually learn how to learn by regarding the instructor as a resource for language and content and as a provider of emotional support. Likewise, Rosas Lobo (2007) suggests that Colombian EFL teachers apply SLLS because they can both contribute to strengthening the interaction of EFL learners and help learners to avoid negative situations such as nervousness, a fear of public speaking, and anxiety.

Unfortunately, the EFL reality in Colombia is still far from appropriately articulating the learners' affective needs and reactions as integral elements of EFL teaching. The Ministry of Education, for instance, has been implementing a national bilingualism program[2] in order to standardize levels, content, and teaching practices in Colombian schools and universities based on guidelines taken from the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.*[3] However, little has been done to move the emphasis from curricular contents (what and when students learn) to the process of learning (who learns and how and why s/he learns). The present paper seeks to start bridging the gap between EFL research and policies on learner-centeredness in Colombia, especially in the area of socio-affective factors and strategy instruction.

2.1 Affective Factors

According to Feder (1987), affective considerations have been incidental rather than integral to teaching methodology and are not grounded in a conscious pedagogical philosophy. Affect, however, should not continue being considered the Cinderella of education, since affective factors "link what is important for us to the world of people, things, and happenings" (Oatley and Jenkins, 1996, p. 122 cited in Arnold, 1999, p. 2). According to Arnold (1999), attention and

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2 See National Bilingualism Program and the implementation of competence standards at http://www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/html/productos/1685/article-158720.html

3 Cárdenas (2006) and others argued against imposing international standards on EFL teaching and research in Colombia instead of promoting open debate and critical reflection about them.

language learning can benefit mutually. For the purposes of this study, only four affective factors were addressed: beliefs, attitudes, anxiety, and motivation.

2.2 Beliefs

According to Horwitz (1987, p. 121), this variable refers to learners' ideas or opinions regarding various aspects of language learning, including "foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, the use of learning and communication strategies and the effect of motivation." Similarly, Young (1991) cited learner beliefs about language learning as a major contributor to language success, not only because they influence learners' behaviors and strategy use but also because they may be the basis of students' expectations for and commitment to successful language learning.

2.3 Attitudes

Ghadessy and Nicol (2002) support Baker's (1992) main characteristics of attitudes: they are both cognitive (i.e. are capable of being thought about) and affective (i.e. have feelings and emotions attached to them); they are dimensional rather than bipolar; they vary in degree of favorability/unfavorability; they predispose a person to act in a certain way; they are learned, not inherited or genetically endowed, and they tend to persist but they can be modified by experience. These researchers also concur with Ellis (1994), who states that attitudes are manifested towards a number of things including the target language, the target language speakers, target language culture, the social value of learning the L2, particular uses of the target language, and students themselves as members of their own culture.

2.4 Anxiety

Scovel (1978) views anxiety as a state of apprehension influenced by factors that are intrinsic and extrinsic to the foreign language learner. This researcher differentiates between *facilitating* anxiety (a state that keeps us alert and gives us a competitive edge) and *debilitating* anxiety (angst that causes us to flee the new task or structure and hence leads to avoidance behavior). In 1986, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope identified three performance anxieties in foreign language learning: *communication apprehension* (an uneasiness arising from the learner's

inability to adequately express mature thoughts and ideas), *test anxiety* (a fear of academic evaluation), and *fear of negative evaluation* (an apprehension arising from the learner's need to make a positive social impression on others). Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) understand anxiety as a fear or apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in an L2 and he or she perceives an uncomfortable experience.

2.5 Motivation

Gardner (1985) describes motivation in terms of attitude, effort, and desire. Peacock (1997) defines motivation as interest in and enthusiasm for the materials used in the class, persistence with the learning task, and levels of concentration and enjoyment. Dörnyei (1994, 1998) created a model of FL learning motivation composed of three different levels: *the language level* (integrative and instrumental motivational subsystems focusing on reactions and attitudes toward the target language), *the learner level* (the individual's reactions to the language and the learning situation), and *the learning situation level* (the extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors related to the teacher, the course, and the group of language learners with which an individual interacts).

2.6 Affective Factors and Language Learning Strategies

Dörnyei (2001, p. 116) suggests that "teacher skills in [helping] learners should be seen as central to teaching effectiveness." This implies that teachers should not only be knowledgeable about general affective and motivational concepts in language learning, but also be able to apply them to promote affect and emotion where they may be lacking. Similarly, Oxford (1996, p. 1) calls for research regarding FL setting:

> For the sake of students worldwide, we cannot afford to restrict ourselves to a small set of motivational variables, especially when we know from research in other fields that [the affective domain] is an extraordinarily complex, multifaceted, and important construct.

One specific area in which affective factors can be seen at work is in the use of different language learning strategies, particularly SLLS. Studies by Oxford and Nyikos (1989) show that the degree of motivation and other

affective factors are the most powerful influence on how and when students use language learning strategies. Scimonelli (2002) contends that affective and social language learning strategies as well as communication strategies are the areas in which the teacher's intervention should come first, in order to develop positive frames of mind in the students and help them overcome the stress and sense of discomfort that a poor or low oral command of English sometimes causes.

2.7 Language Learning Strategies

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) define language learning strategies (LLS) as the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information. Oxford (1990, p. 8) provides this comprehensive definition of LLS:

> [...] specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability.

Different authors have provided a number of classifications and inventories. O'Malley and Chamot (1990), for instance, divide language learning strategies into three main categories. Oxford (1990) divides them into two main categories, direct and indirect, which are further subdivided into 6 subcategories (see table 1).

Table 1. Inventories of Language Learning Strategies

O'Malley and Chamot (1990)	Oxford (1990)
Metacognitive strategies: Express executive function and involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning activities.	*Direct strategies***:** Directly involve the mental processing of the target language. *Cognitive strategies* are the mental strategies learners use to make sense of their learning, *memory strategies* are those used for storage of information, and *compensation strategies* help learners to overcome knowledge gaps and continue communicating.

Table 1. (continuación)

Cognitive strategies: Limited to specific learning tasks and involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself.	Indirect strategies: Support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language. *Metacognitive strategies* help learners to regulate their learning. *Affective strategies* are concerned with the learner's emotional requirements such as confidence, while *social strategies* lead to increased interaction with the target language.
Socioaffective strategies: Related to social-mediating activity and transacting with others.	

The concept of SLLS as discussed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) refers to interaction and affective control through the use of peer cooperation, social-mediating activities, interaction with others, asking clarification questions, self-talk, and self-reinforcement. To Oxford (1990), affective strategies consist of lowering one's anxiety, encouraging oneself, and taking one's emotional temperature whereas social strategies deal with asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others. SLLS can, as Mantle-Bromley (1995) notes, help EFL teachers attend to students' affective component as well as to develop defendable pedagogical techniques to increase both the length of time students commit to language study and their chances of success.

2.8 Strategy Instruction

Strategy instruction supplies students with appropriate tools and techniques to understand and learn new material or skills. With continued guidance and ample opportunities for practice, students learn to integrate information in a way that helps them to recall it at a later time, even in a different situation or setting (Luke, 2006). Given the current state of knowledge about explicit and integrated strategy instruction, this study opted for explicitly instructing beginner EFL students about affective factors and SLLS as part of their everyday language instruction. To do this, the study utilized Cohen's (1998) approach to strategy training: 1) Determine learners' needs and the resources available for training; 2) Select the strategies to be taught; 3) Consider the benefits of integrated strategy training; 4) Consider motivational issues; 5) Prepare materials and activities; 6) Conduct explicit strategy training; and 7) Evaluate and revise strategy training.

3. METHOD

3.1 Research Questions

This study attempted to answer one main question: How does the explicit teaching of socio-affective language learning strategies impact the beliefs, attitudes, anxieties, and motivations of a group of beginner students in a three-month EFL course?

Responses to this question were used to identify the students' beliefs, attitudes, anxieties, and motivations in a course that used socio-affective activities and materials. Students' responses and experiences were collected throughout the course to examine how changes took place and to guide the researchers' actions. This study also included a set of specific questions that further explored the students' experiences. These specific questions were:

1. What are the beginner EFL students' beliefs, attitudes, anxieties, and motivations with regard to learning English at the end of a three-month course that implements affective strategy instruction?
2. What obstacles and difficulties do EFL students experience when engaging in learning activities?
3. What language learning strategies do EFL students make use of when engaging in such activities?
4. What are EFL students' reactions to affective activities and materials and socio-affective language learning strategies?
5. How does students' learning develop over the course, and what impact do the students feel the explicit socio-affective strategy instruction has on them as EFL learners?
6. Judging from beginner EFL students' feedback, how does a socio-affective language learning strategy approach enrich their language learning process?

3.2 Methodology and Design

In order to integrate and enhance teaching, research, reflection and self-examination, we opted to use action research (AR). According to McNiff (2002), AR is a term that refers to a practical way of looking at your own work to ensure that it is as you would like it to be. In AR, researchers do research on themselves because it involves them thinking about and reflecting on their work.

Burns' (1999) model of AR and Whitehead's (1993) set of reflective questions were adopted in order to allow for practical but critical classroom inquiry. Burns' AR model[4] was chosen because it provides a sound source for pedagogical planning and action. Whitehead's set of questions[5] was selected because it depicts a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by teachers to systematically and consistently answer research questions with the aim of improving teaching.

With this AR study, I aimed to contribute theoretical findings and pedagogical recommendations to socio-affective research in the field of EFL. I did so by first identifying and describing the beliefs, attitudes, anxieties, and motivations of a group of beginner students in a three-month course in which the learning-to-learn and communicative language teaching approaches were among its primary objectives. Afterwards, I analyzed what affective factors seemed to play the greatest role in the language learning process of this group of students. Subsequently, I implemented strategy-based instruction on socio-affective language learning strategies through affect-based activities. Then, I assessed the usefulness of affect-based instruction. This study sought to promote a critical consciousness which could exhibit itself in new educational as well as practical actions for EFL teachers, beginner students, and monolingual classrooms.

3.3 Context

This study was carried out in the Adult English Program (AEP) at the Centro Colombo Americano (CCA) in Bogotá, Colombia. The CCA has 3 programs: the AEP, a Saturday program for children, and a special program for university students and businesspeople. The AEP offers courses to students ages 16 and up from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Friday. Classes meet for two hours

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4   This model consists of 10 steps: exploration, identification, planning, data collection, analysis/reflection, hypothesizing/speculation, intervention, observation, reporting, and writing/presentation (Burns, 1999, p. 35).

5   Whitehead (1993) proposes 8 questions to guide practitioners' reflection: What issue am I interested in researching?, Why do I want to research this issue?, What kind of evidence can I gather to show why I am interested in this issue?, What can I do?, What will I do?, What kind of evidence can I gather to show that I am having an influence?, How can I explain that influence?, How can I ensure that any judgments I might make are reasonably fair and accurate?, and How will I change my practice in light of my evaluation?

a day for a total of 38 classroom hours. The program consists of four distinct blocks of courses: Basic, Skills, Challenge, and Advance. According to the AEP syllabus and teaching guidelines[6], students who have completed the first three courses of the Basic block are expected to be able to state short-term goals for learning English, use basic sentences, expressions, formulae, and chunks of language, and start and maintain basic conversations related to personal information, routines, and small talk.

3.4 Participants

The participants in this study were 17 beginner EFL students enrolled in the first three courses of the Basic block of the AEP at the CCA in Bogotá, Colombia described previously. They took classes from 6:10 to 7:50 A.M. from September to December, 2006. Fourteen students had full-time jobs from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Three were studying at university and needed to take an English course to satisfy university requirements. This course was not their first contact with English since most schools and universities teach English. Five students had studied English previously at other English language institutes.

3.5 Data Collection

In this study, I used a number of qualitative research methods suggested by Burns (1999) and Wallace (1998). These methods included two open-ended questionnaires, a rating scale, participant observation, and field notes. These methods of data collection were used interactively to obtain an optimum amount of information within the context of the study.

a. Questionnaires

Questionnaires are non-observational techniques for data collection used to gain factual or attitudinal responses to specific issues in non-face-to-face situations (Burns, p. 117). I used two questionnaires. The initial questionnaire allowed me to make a comparison between what my students reported and what my colleagues regarded as important or basic matters regarding the issues at hand.

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6   See Curricular Framework for Evaluation, 2006 at http://eduspaces.net/libiar/files/-1/13929/tasks%2C+objectives+and+competencies2006.doc

The final questionnaire was to record my students' final thoughts regarding their experiences with SLLS and affect-based instruction.

b. Rating Scales

A rating scale is a set of statistical or numerical values along a defined continuum used to measure the degree, direction, or intensity to which an individual possesses certain attitudes, values, or characteristics of interest (Key, 1997). I followed certain steps suggested by Popham (2002)[7] for building a rating scale based on existing validated instruments such as the language learning attitude questionnaire, the foreign language classroom anxiety scale, the attitude and motivation test battery, and the strategies inventory for language learning. The final rating scale included 50 statements that addressed the following topics: English language learning anxieties (from statement 1 to statement 10); English language learning attitudes (from statement 11 to 20); English language learning beliefs (from statement 21 to statement 30); English language learning motivations (from statement 31 to statement 38); and English language learning strategies (from statement 39 to statement 50).

c. Observation

Burns (p. 80) defines observation as taking regular and conscious notice of classroom actions and occurrences through procedures that ensure that the information collected provides a sound basis for answering research questions and supporting the interpretations that are reached. I took field notes not only because they can be useful for later reflection, but also because, as Wallace (1998, p. 58) notes, "they can prevent our hard-won experience ebbing away and being lost in the tide of the pressures of everyday work."

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7   Popham (2002, pp. 225-226) recommends eights steps for building a rating scale: choosing the affective variable you want to assess; generating a series of favorable and unfavorable statements regarding the affective variable; getting several people to classify each statement as positive or negative; deciding on the number and phrasing of the response options for each statement; preparing the self-report inventory; giving students directions regarding how to respond and stipulating that the inventory must be completed anonymously; administering the inventory either to your own students or, if possible (as a trial run), to other students; scoring the inventories and identifying and eliminating statements that fail to function in accord with the other statements.

I took my field notes in a structured way following a particular format called a *teaching log* to distinguish it from more fluid and ad hoc field notes (Wallace, 1998, pp. 105-106). In it, I wrote down occurrences relevant to the issue or topic being investigated: affective factors and SLLS. I decided that *the focus of the observation* was on my beginner students: the way they worked, the way they interacted, the way they responded to my teaching, and their on-task and off-task behaviors. I used *real time observation* to gather observed data, that is, the observation is made and analyzed as the teaching/learning actually happens without using any electronic means of recalling data.

3.6 Data Analysis

When making my plan for data processing and analysis, I considered the following issues: sorting data, performing quality-control checks, data processing, and data analysis. I numbered the instruments and their different sections separately right after they were sorted. I checked the data in the field to ensure that all the information had been properly collected and recorded. I did the data processing and analysis with careful consideration of the objectives of my study as well as of the tools I developed to meet its objectives. I used *frequency counts*[8] for each section of my questionnaires and rating scale.

Further analysis of the data required the combination of information on the first questionnaire and the rating scale in order to describe my research topic or to arrive at possible explanations for it. For this purpose and based on the objectives and the type of my study, I used *descriptive cross-tabulations* that aimed at describing the problem under study. In addition, I used *content analysis*[9] for each section of my fieldnotes. Using these data analysis techniques, I set up *relevant categories* by choosing as many unambiguous concepts as I could and by avoiding overlaps among the categories I chose (my thesis advisor and a colleague helped a

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8   A frequency count is defined as an enumeration of how often a certain measurement or a certain answer to a specific question occurs (Varkevisser, Pathmanathan, and Brownlee, 1999).

9   Content analysis is concerned with analyzing the meaning of the structures and expressions contained in a message or communication to uncover incidences of certain words, phrases, or key themes (Burns, 1999, pp. 166-167).

great deal with this task). Once working categories were set up, I observed, noted, and counted their instances to know how often they occurred.

I used *triangulation*[10] in order to verify data through multiple methods of data collection. I also used peer examination from a close colleague, my validation group, and my thesis advisor to help get more and better insights through a combination of viewpoints. Additionally, I used thick description to ensure to the extent possible *verisimilitude*, which implies that the reader comes to know what is being told as if he or she had experienced the situation firsthand (Denzin, 1997 p. 10).

Based on Burns' suggestions, I decided to create an interpretation matrix with the basic findings and interpretations to be able to scan all the data in a general way and then to extract the maximum amount of information. I searched for broad patterns which I compared and contrasted to see what fit together. When making comparisons, I made an effort to see whether themes or patterns were repeated or developed across different data gathering techniques.

4. Findings

After going over my interpretation matrix, the following issues were identified:

•   Students seemed to have a combination of intrinsic-instrumental motivation — a desire to attain a goal utilizing L2; intrinsic motivation to know — doing an activity or task for the pleasure related to developing knowledge or new ideas; and intrinsic motivation towards accomplishment — positive feeling associated with attempting to realize a goal or master a task.

   Aug. 22nd: "…El buscar nuevos horizontes a partir del idioma. Querer comprender y desenvolverse con el inglés… En primer lugar, estudio una carrera que me exige saber el idioma y estoy cansado de pagar traducciones

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10 Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross-verification from more than two sources. In particular, it refers to the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Bogdan and Biklen, 2006, p. 80).

y en segundo lugar creo que aprender inglés dejó de ser un gusto personal para convertirse en una necesidad general. (…)

El deseo de superación, el querer avanzar, el desenvolverme mejor para poder interactuar con otros." [Excerpt from student questionnaire, Fandiño, 2007][11]

• Students appeared to have two sets of perceptions about language learning. A helpful set of beliefs made them believe in themselves as language learners and in their ability to utilize various actions and tactics to face the demands of language learning. An unhelpful set of beliefs made them fail to put many actions and tactics into practice since they would not or could not be as participative and committed as they said they were going to be in class.

> Sept. 27th: "They are using basic English and classroom expressions to do the activity (completing application forms). Some are sitting down on their chairs waiting for others to approach them. Um, are they being lazy or just trying to avoid speaking because they feel uncomfortable?... Students are just talking to their favorite classmates or friends, but they do not invite other to talk to them. I wonder why. Do they believe it is Ok? Does it help them feel relaxed?... Those who prepared the homework (a short paragraph about their favorite celebrities) are interacting and speaking more. What happened to the others? Why didn't they prepare the paragraph? Did they think it was not really necessary? I guess now they know being prepared really helps. I need to say that to them…" [Excerpt from teacher's observations, Fandiño, 2007]

• Students agreed that participating, being well-disposed in class, showing interest, practicing, and being responsible were positive attitudes. Students regarded shyness, avoidance to ask questions, and resistance to following teachers' instructions as negative or unfavorable attitudes. However, their tolerance to ambiguity and their risk-taking were rather low, which seemed to decrease their desire to practice and participate in class.

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11 Quotes from questionnaire responses are taken verbatim.

Aug. 22nd: "Participación ya que de esta depende o mejor se MIDE el progreso que tiene cada persona y se identifican las fallas para así mejorarlas. Preparación porque de ésta depende el mayor entendimiento durante la clase…Disposición sacándose de la cabeza que soy negado para el inglés. Este es un buen comienzo. En mi caso particularmente. (…)

Es necesario tener una actitud emprendedora que muestre interés para aprender el idioma. En general, es necesario tener una actitud de incertidumbre para llenar los vacíos que se tengan. Debemos participar en clase y realizar las actividades o ejercicios en la misma. Es importante interesarse en la clase y practicar con los compañeros." [Excerpt from student questionnaires, Fandiño, 2007].

- Students said they felt more anxious when the tasks or exercise required a more spontaneous and authentic use of a foreign language. This anxiety was characterized by avoidance, passiveness, and discomfort; situations reflected on students' reluctance to volunteering, little involvement, and high insecurity. Specifically, students identified speaking, pronunciation, and whole class activities as situations that made them feel insecure and nervous.

  Aug. 22nd: "Participar en clase puede generar bastante ansiedad por el temor a equivocarse y la reacción que pueda tener los compañeros de clase. (…)

  … el hecho de no tener resultados rápidos en el aprendizaje del idioma y desear hablarlo como lengua propia. (…)

  Poder tener una conversación amena con mis compañeros… El hecho de realizar actividades de escucha y habla." [Excerpt from student questionnaire, Fandiño, 2007]

- Language learning strategies were mainly used to solve linguistic or communicative problems, to accomplish course tasks, or to meet academic objectives. In general, students focused much more on remembering and memorizing vocabulary, on understanding and producing the language, and on compensating for their knowledge gaps than on paying attention to the affective, social, and decision-making aspects of language learning.

Nov. 17th: "Students compare the similarities and differences between yes-no questions and short answers between present simple and past simple. They are analyzing the grammar chart and having a look at the one we studied in unit 4. It is great to see them contrasting and preparing formulas... Wow! Some have taken notes from our nicenet class and are sharing them with their classmates. Others are using the dictionary to check the grammar charts it has... They said they now feel more comfortable with grammar and know what tools to resort to… I wish they did the same for speaking and interacting..." [Excerpt from teacher's observations, Fandiño, 2007]

Based on the triangulation and on the analytical steps I used, I determined that anxiety, beliefs, attitudes, and the effective use of socio-affective strategies to solve learning and communication difficulties were priority areas to work on. I created an inventory of suggestions, strategies, and possible activities I had collected from the literature review to devise ways in which I could take action based on previous research. Then, I consulted with others about how I could move forward (a close colleague, my validation group, and my thesis advisor). Subsequently, I elaborated a scheme adapted from Leng (2002)[12] and based on Krathwohl's taxonomy of affective objectives (Krathwohl et al., 1964) to work with affective factors and SLLS in my class effectively[13].

As a result of the previous steps, I crafted some worksheets with SLLS and affective factors. The first worksheet addressed anxiety and beliefs, the second worksheet addressed speaking and classroom oral activities, and the last worksheet had three sections: general recommendations to control or reduce your anxiety, good or positive opinions for your English class, and SLLS for your English class. Simultaneously, I implemented nine basic activities to attend to SLLS and affective factors as part of my daily teaching practices:

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12 This scheme consists of three steps: assessing learners' affective characteristics, drawing affective characteristics informally, and choosing some formal activities.

13 This taxonomy has 5 categories: receiving (being willing to receive or to attend to new values), responding (gaining satisfaction from working with new values), valuing (seeing worth in respecting new values), organization (beginning the building of a consistent value system) and characterization by value set (acting consistently in accordance with a set of internalized values).

Table 2. Affect-Based Activities

Improvisation (dialogs done without any preparation, using models and conversations from a textbook)	*Skills-based tips* (practical techniques and ideas to work with the different areas of the target language)	*Role-plays in front of the class* (training activities in which students pretend to be in particular communicative situations)
Presentations (planned activities in which students describe or present ideas, places, or situations)	*Chats with classmates* (informal talks between two or three students)	*Interviews* (activities in which a student asks classmates questions to get information about a particular topic)
Videos (a television program, or a real-life situation, recorded for students to fill out a worksheet or do learning activities)	*Songs* (activities to enjoy music, work with lyrics, and develop listening skills)	*Discussions* (talking with others in order to exchange ideas, decide something, or reach a consensus)

Finally, I used a structured questionnaire with open-ended items to gather my students' assessments of the usefulness of addressing SLLS and affective factors. Students seemed to find improvisations, recommendations to work different language areas, role-plays, presentations, and chats with their classmates very useful. This preference seemed to suggest that when receiving affect-based instruction, students are willing to face classroom activities with appropriate strategies understanding that they are free to make mistakes and capable of coping with language demands.

Results from the last questionnaire along with final class observations suggested that students appeared to have gained increased confidence, awareness, and risk-taking out of this experience:

• An increase in student confidence seems to have taken place because, as Iwaki (2005) explains, when students believe in their own capability to learn languages and feel comfortable while doing class activities, they approach EFL learning with a greater measure of self-assurance and tend to be more open to allowing the new language experience to penetrate their heads and hearts.

• Student awareness may have been heightened because students tend to ex-periment with and take control of their own language learning when they are

mentally active and properly informed about language learning techniques and processes and about themselves as language learners (Stawowy, 2004).

- Students appear to have understood that taking risks may imply a temporary loss of security and a disorienting feeling, but eventually helps us develop the knowledge, the skills, and the understanding we need to be successful learners because, as Brown states (2000, p. 149), "learners have to be able to gamble a bit, to be willing to try out hunches about the language and take the risk of being wrong."

> Nov. 23rd: "Sí, mucho, este curso me generó la confianza que nunca tuve para el estudio de inglés, que siempre fue mi mayor debilidad académica y personal. No soy una persona introvertida ni insegura pero en inglés desde el colegio solía siempre generarme mucha ansiedad y temor… (…)

> Si tal vez el hecho de que se dedique tiempo a hablar de cómo trabajar las diferentes áreas del aprendizaje y de las creencias que se tienen hacen ver que el único problema que se tiene para aprender inglés es tener dedicación y lanzarse a ello. (…)

> Creo que tengo herramientas que me pueden ser muy útiles al momento de enfrentarme a un instante de ansiedad, el que lo puede controlar va a depender de poner en práctica estas herramientas y comprender que en la medida en que más enfrente estos estados de ansiedad será más fácil manejarlos." [Excerpt from student questionnaires, Fandiño, 2007]

5. DISCUSSION

Instruction in affective factors and socio-affective strategies can promote and facilitate the process of English learning by stimulating students to have deeper thoughts about their learning state as well as the affective factors they had brought into the learning process, which can ultimately encourage them to plan more effective learning methods and directions for future efforts. Other pedagogical implications that derive from this study are:

1. SLLS and affective factors should not be regarded as simple instructional strategies or techniques, but as a smarter way of teaching foreign languages that does not require a total revamping of teaching practices. Rather, EFL

teachers can complement their daily work with the use of socio-affective materials and activities aimed at helping learners better understand and experience the social and affective side of their learning process. Working with SLLS and affective factors can ultimately help EFL teachers create a comfortable classroom atmosphere in which students can develop a deeper understanding of the nature of FL learning.

2. The beliefs, attitudes, and anxieties of EFL beginner students are constructed based on previous experiences with activities and materials related to EFL language learning. Therefore, teachers should be aware of these affective factors especially when using learner-centered approaches or strategy-based instruction, since students may come to the class with erroneous preconceptions, negative experiences, or with limited exposure to these methods.

3. The contents, the materials, the methods, and the class itself bombard students with such a large number of new structures, functions, rules, and skills that they tend to focus much more on memorizing vocabulary, understanding the language, and compensating for knowledge gaps than paying attention to the affective, social, and decision-making aspects of language learning. Accordingly, EFL teachers should create a relaxed and comfortable classroom and incorporate classroom activities into their lessons that directly get students to think about their own learning anxieties, concerns, and dilemmas, the causes of these problems, and possible ways of solving them.

4. Since English language learners' abilities, experiences, and expectations can affect learning, EFL teachers need to get to know their students and their needs. Consequently, it is important to include time for activities that allow learners to get to know one another and get to feel comfortable or at ease in class. These activities should also foster a safe classroom environment in which beginner EFL students can build up speaking skills, demystify false beliefs, promote appropriate attitudes, and minimize debilitating anxieties.

5. AR certainly helps to reveal the fact that teachers and students' actions are based on implicitly held assumptions, theories, and hypotheses. It allows teachers and students to make explicit the justifications for their actions and to question the bases of those justifications. The ensuing practical applications that follow can, then, be subjected to further analysis in a transformative cycle aimed at promoting a critical consciousness, which exhibits itself in practical action.

6. Conclusions

It seems that beginner EFL students can become more interested in and ready for their language learning if they realize that the focus of attention and interest is upon themselves as intelligent individuals and effective learners. With socio-affective learning, students can realize that they do not necessarily need to work more, but simply need to be more aware of affective factors, use language strategies better, and organize their efforts more effectively. Learners, thus, can be led into a process of self-discovery as successful learners who can and want to exploit their inner attributes and their social skills.

With socio-affective training, EFL teachers have an additional tool that helps them to get to know learners individually and give them "learning-to-learn" tools that are useful both for their present life in class and for their future life outside the classroom. Instead of focusing on finding the best method or approach, the EFL field should devote time and energy to instructing EFL learners to be better informed about and prepared for their learning process. In the long run, this kind of instruction can empower students by making them feel that they can experiment with their language learning and, ultimately, take control of their own language learning process.

Finally, when striving to help EFL students become better learners, foreign language teachers can engage in AR to analyze potential problems, modify their teaching practices, and evaluate the results. Not only can they successfully adapt pedagogical theories into their professional performance, but they can also face and transform their daily practices in ways which let them respond adequately to their students' needs and sociocultural agendas. In the end, they can create what Restrepo (2007) calls "pedagogical know-how": practical but professional knowledge built up through reflection on one's daily practice and a permanent transformation of this knowledge in relation to the disciplinary components that determine it.

*   Due to space constraints, instruments and appendices were not included in this article. Readers can go to http://www.scribd.com/doc/17117213/Masters-thesis-The-explicit-teaching-of-socioaffective-language-learning-strategies-to-beginner-EFL-students-at-the-Centro-Colombo-Americano-An-ac to view the master's thesis on which this article is based.

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