On Becoming a Good English Language Learner: An Exploratory Case Study

Cómo convertirse en un buen aprendiz de lenguas: un estudio de caso exploratorio[*]

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This paper reports a case study that explores the cognitive process and the language learning strategies and styles that one Spanish trainee used to become a good English language learner. The participant held an in-depth, semi-structured interview and completed a learning style survey. Results show that the conscious use of multiple direct/indirect language learning strategies and a significant change in her learning styles may account for the participant's success in becoming a good English language learner.

Key words: Autonomy, English (second language), language learning strategies, learning styles, metacognition.

Este artículo describe un estudio de caso que explora las estrategias de aprendizaje y los estilos de aprendizaje que una estudiante de inglés utilizó para convertirse en una buena aprendiz. Los instrumentos utilizados fueron una entrevista semi-estructurada y una encuesta. Los resultados indican que el uso variado de estrategias directas/indirectas, sumadas a cambios en el estilo de aprendizaje son factores conducentes a concretar los objetivos propuestos por la participante y convertirse en una buena aprendiz.

Palabras clave: autonomía, estilos de aprendizaje, estrategias de aprendizaje, inglés (segunda lengua), metacognición.

Introduction

It is often the case that in most English teacher training programs (ETTP) around the world, English language development courses generally become the major obstacles that learners have to overcome on their way to getting their degrees. To pass such courses, they need to be able to use the L2 (second language) appropriately in different communicative situations. Trainees need to be able to talk about different content areas, manipulate linguistic components accurately such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, and make use of an array of language learning strategies and styles that facilitate acquisition (Griffiths & Oxford, 2014; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 2002; Oxford et al., 2014).

Although many of these learners experience disappointment in the accomplishment of this end, some others manage to accomplish it effectively. These successful L2 learners are known as *good language learners* (henceforth, GLLs) (Rubin, 1975). Without external assistance from mates, tutors, or instructors, these learners manage to develop self-regulated efficacy and thus improve their linguistic performance (Oxford et al., 2014; Skehan, 1995). Autonomy is a predictor of L2 acquisition, and along with the appropriate use of learning strategies and styles, these factors have a positive effect on students' command of L2 (Griffiths & Oxford, 2014; Ma & Oxford, 2014). This case study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000) sets out to explore the cognitive process and the language learning strategies and styles that one trainee enrolled in the ETTP used to become a GLL. The participant held an in-depth, semi- structured interview and completed a learning style survey (see Appendix 1). Information coming from these two instruments of data collection was cross-checked to validate findings. We expect that the results of this study will provide some useful information to other L2 learners in similar situations as well as to language instructors in charge of L2 development courses.

Two Relevant Concepts: *Good Language Learner* and *Learning Strategies*

Several studies show that not all individuals acquire an L2 in the same way or with the same degree of success. Rubin (1975) was one the first researchers to be concerned with the characteristics which enable some individuals to perform better than others at learning an L2. She describes three variables: aptitude, motivation, and the opportunity which GLLs possess or may create. Whether the first variable can be modified is unknown. There is debate both for and against. On the optimistic side, researchers believe that an individual's aptitude to learn an L2 may be improved by implementing diverse learning strategies. As to the second

variable, motivation is usually classified as intrinsic when the driving force to learn the language arises from a genuine interest either in the language itself or in a desire to achieve personal growth. Motivation is classified as extrinsic when the interest to learn an L2 comes not from within the individual, but from an external source. The third variable comprises the opportunities that learners have or find to practice the L2. GLLs look for chances to use the language both inside and outside the classroom. Research in the area indicates that GLLs make use of an array of language learning strategies and styles, and that these strategies and styles should be re-defined, classified and explored further.

On their part, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) studied ways of processing information that enhances its comprehension, learning, and retention. Their studies came from a concern for identifying the characteristics of effective learners. They arrived at three important conclusions regarding the use of learning strategies. First, mentally active learners are better learners. Those students who consciously make links between what they already know and new materials have better comprehension and recall than those who do not. Second, strategies can be taught. If strategies are taught and students are given classroom time and opportunities to practice the L2 using them, they will learn more effectively than those students who do not go through such experiences. Third, academic language learning, in particular, is more effective when the use and development of language learning strategies are promoted.

Ehrman and Oxford (1990) set out to research the learning strategies employed by language learners as well as the different learning styles. These authors define them as: "the often conscious steps or behaviors used by language learners to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and use of new information" (p. 40). According to these authors, strategy use is related to becoming more self-directed and can help improve students' performance. While the relationship between strategy use and proficiency is quite complex, they agree that more proficient learners "appear to use a wider range in a greater number of situations than do less proficient learners" (p. 42).

In their studies, Naiman, Frolich, Stern, and Todesco (1996) identified three attributes of GLLs. First, they are actively involved in their language learning process, either right from the beginning or later on. Second, they find ways to overcome the obstacles they face, whether these obstacles are linguistic, affective, or environmental. Finally, they monitor their own performance by studying, practicing, and becoming involved in communication. Regarding the use of learning strategies, Naiman et al. state that "certain attributes [were] common among GLLs, especially with regard to strategies and techniques they had employed" (p. 99).

Several authors classify learning strategies in different ways. Ehrman and Oxford's (1990) classification seems to be the broadest. They divide strategies into two groups: direct and indirect. Direct learning strategies involve using the language, retrieving and storing information, and manipulating the language. Indirect strategies complement the previous group

and support language learning. These include metacognitive strategies, which are used for organizing and evaluating the learning process; affective strategies used for managing emotional states and attitudes; and social strategies used for learning cooperatively with others.

Research Questions

In this study we aim to explore, analyze, and describe the different paths taken by an L2 learner to become a successful autonomous language user. It is well-known that language learning strategies and learning styles play a crucial role in second language acquisition. Guided by this claim, this paper sets out to find plausible answers to these research questions:

1. Can language learners *learn* to modify their own learning styles?
2. Which language learning strategies do GLLs often use?
3. Can learners manipulate some of their cognitive processes to promote L2 learning? If they can, then, how does that happen?

Method

Case studies provide fine-grained, detailed information which aims at understanding a bounded phenomenon by examining in depth, and in a holistic manner, one particular instance of the phenomenon (Schmidt, 1983). Case studies can be used to complement other, more coarsely grained—often large scale—kinds of research. The present study attempts to distinguish unique features which would otherwise be lost in large scale studies. It will focus on an individual actor and explore the cognitive processes and learning strategies involved in becoming a GELL. By providing insights into similar cases, it may assist in interpreting and informing other similar cases and situations (Cohen et al., 2000).

Instruments for Data Collection

The participant completed a learning style survey adapted from Cohen, Oxford, and Chi (2009) (see Appendix 1). The survey comprises eleven different aspects of the subject's learning style and the answers range on a scale from 0 (never) to 4 (always). Some of the most relevant areas covered by this instrument include receiving and processing new information; committing material to memory; and dealing with language rules, multiple inputs, and response time. This survey was followed by a personal, semi-structured interview (see Appendix 2). The interview revolved around the changes Silvina[1] (the subject chosen for this

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[1] For ethical reasons, the participant's real name has been changed to protect her identity.

study) implemented to become a good language learner. She was asked to describe in detail her unsuccessful attempts to pass a final exam in college. During a three-year period, Silvina failed a phonetics exam twice. Silvina was encouraged to explain how she had prepared for those two examination instances. Then, she was requested to discuss the steps she took to come closer to her goal of becoming a good language learner. Finally, data coming from these two instruments of data collection were cross-checked to validate findings.

Participant's Background and Context

When data were collected, Silvina was twenty-eight years old. She is a sharp student who is aware and confident of her learning preferences. In fact, she takes advantage of several learning styles and employs a wide range of learning strategies even though she relies heavily on rote learning. She is quite extroverted and is not embarrassed or inhibited to take risks inside and outside the classroom. She is a highly deductive learner. She claims that learning is easier when given specific rules and information from the outset of a task or new teaching point. However, she does not spend time analyzing these rules once she is involved in production. She also relies heavily on her intuition.

Silvina is a native Spanish speaker who became an English language teacher in 2013, before having her first baby. She graduated from a four-year teacher training program taught at *Instituto de Formación Superior*, in Mar del Plata, Argentina. Although she often encountered some linguistic obstacles along her course of studies to pass her English classes, she always managed to move forward successfully. Her biggest challenge, though, came in her last year in college when she had to take and pass a course on English pronunciation.

Her pronunciation teachers suggested she would have to improve her command of L2 considerably if she meant to pass her final test. She had always studied by rote learning, so she decided to use the same technique to tackle that test. However, that time her technique did not run entirely true to type, as she failed her final test twice in a row. That frustrating experience must have led her to reflect upon her approach to studying. Thus, she decided to make drastic changes in her learning style. She stopped committing to memory and began to develop the ability to read and understand texts as a basic requirement for learning.

Data Analysis and Findings

The Learning Style Survey

Silvina took approximately half an hour to complete this survey whose results are classified in eleven categories. It covers whether the learner is more introverted or extroverted, random-intuitive or concrete-sequential, closure-oriented or open, global or

particular, synthesizing or analyzing, sharpener or leveler, deductive or inductive, field-dependent or field-independent, impulsive or reflective, metaphoric or literal, and visual, auditory, or tactile/kinesthetic. As the survey was completed in English, Silvina required some assistance to answer a few questions, especially those formulated in the negative form. She was absolutely certain of her answers. Sometimes, she even selected her response before having read the entire sentence. Figure 1 illustrates, by means of a bar chart with values ranging from 1 to 9, how she deals with response time and impulsiveness. The tallest bar to the left indicates the highest value for impulsiveness.
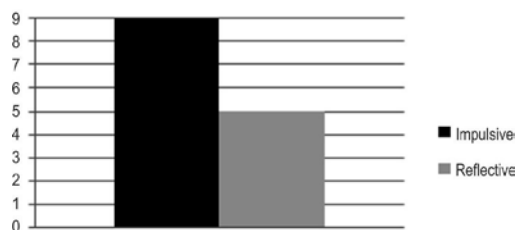

Figure 1. Participant's Dealing With Response Time and Impulsiveness

The results from this survey indicate that Silvina is conscious of her learning style. When completing the questionnaire, she answered each question both quickly and confidently. This shows how important it is for each student to "understand the potential advantages and disadvantages of the varied components of his or her learning style profile, as well as the combined effects of these components" (Ma & Oxford, 2014, p. 111) while remaining open and flexible to adjust to given tasks.

The participant uses her senses and receives information in multiple, varied ways. She is mainly a visual learner who benefits from graphs, videos, colorful charts, and books. When preparing for her final exam (third time), her first step included writing down her own notes from the bibliography and writing summaries. Ma and Oxford (2014) explain that "note-taking is a cognitive strategy preferred by visual learners, who learn better when they see the words written down" (p. 111). Yet, Silvina is also a tactile-kinesthetic learner, who enjoys doing projects and working on a task without having first thoroughly read the instructions. She also relies on the auditory style for remembering jokes and group discussions. Figure 2 shows the use of her physical senses, classified into visual, auditory, and tactile and enables getting a rapid overview of the measured values.

As regards receiving information, she is able to learn by both getting the gist of a piece of discourse and remembering specific details about it. Overall, Silvina is a flexible learner. She
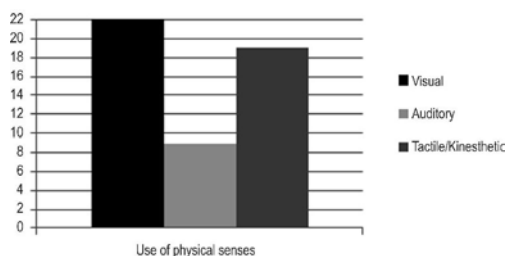
Figure 2. Participant's Use of Physical Senses

does not have a single way of going about tasks. When answering certain questions in the survey, she hesitated. She expressed her concerns stating she did not face all activities in the exact same way. Flexibility is another characteristic present in GLLs. They can "adapt their learning style to fit a learning task or purpose, while poor language learners rigidly refuse to change their learning styles, no matter what the task or purpose is" (Ma & Oxford, 2014, p. 111).

In other areas covered by this survey, Silvina has marked tendencies and preferences in her learning style. These areas include exposure to learning situations, processing information, committing material to memory, dealing with language rules, and dealing with multiple inputs. Silvina is undoubtedly an extroverted learner. She enjoys participating in the classroom and constantly looks for learning situations. The results of this survey describe this learner as a synthesizing one; that is, one who can both summarize material very well and paraphrase without difficulties. These findings are displayed in Figure 3. The bargraph to the left shows the learner's exposed preferences for learning, while the one to the right indicates how she processes information.
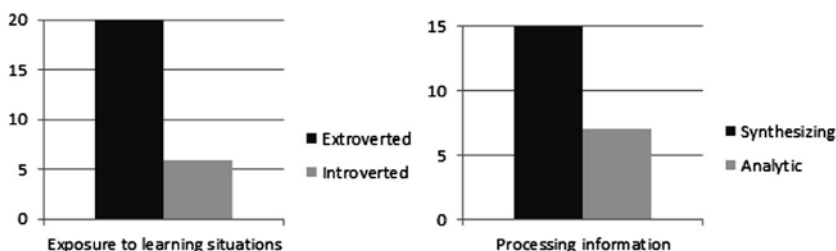

Figure 3. Participant's Exposure to Learning Situations and Processing Information

Silvina enjoys pulling ideas together and finding similarities. These results correlate with data coming from the interview when she describes her learning process. This process of cross-checking information, coming from different sources, contributes to the reinforcement and validation of these findings.

This learner commits data to memory mostly by grouping concepts and materials together and focusing on their similarities, but without getting distinctions clear. Figure 4 shows she is a leveler learner, because oftentimes she is willing to merge similar memories or experiences and disregard their minor differences.
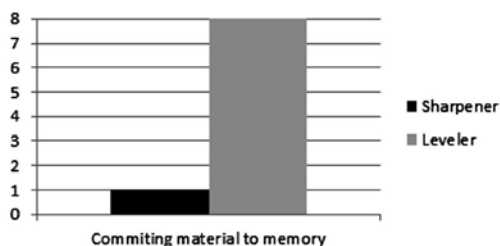
Figure 4. Participant as a Leveler Learner

She is also able to merge new experiences with previous ones and to store new material relating it to her previous knowledge. The way in which Silvina deals with language rules is very specific. Figure 5 illustrates how much of a deductive learner she is.
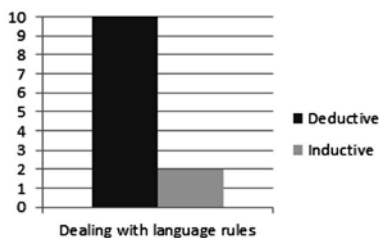
Figure 5. Participant's Dealing With Language Rules

She claims that starting from the rules is the easiest way for her. She begins with the general rule and then moves on to particular cases or examples. Figure 6 shows how she moves on from the global to the particular when processing information.
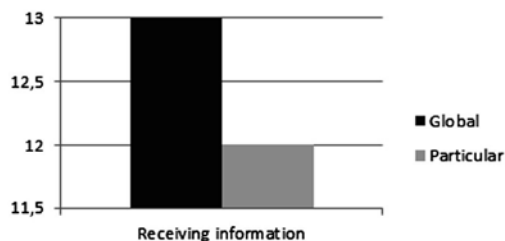
Figure 6. Participant's Way of Processing Information

As can be observed in Figure 7, the results of the survey suggest that Silvina is a field-independent learner. She is able to abstract material from a given context despite distractions or hindrances. In other words, she has the ability to separate details from the surrounding context.

Figure 7. Participant as a Field-Independent Learner
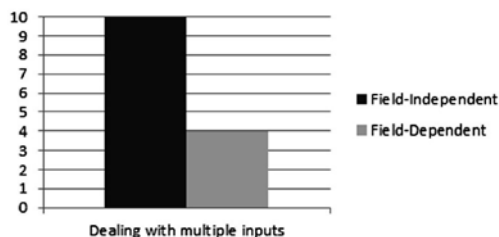
Each aspect of an individual's learning style can have positive and negative effects in the learning process. Ma and Oxford (2014) suggest that learners metacognitively manage these effects, confirming "the importance of metacognitive thinking and planning on the part of the learner" (p. 111).

The first research question was to determine whether Silvina would be able to *learn* to modify her learning styles. The results of this survey indicate that Silvina *did* learn to change her learning styles. Originally, she relied exclusively on summarizing texts and memorizing those summaries in order to learn. As a synthesizing learner, she was able to both summarize material very well and paraphrase it without difficulties. However, when she realized she was having difficulties in her learning process, she set out to modify her learning styles.

Data triangulation allowed us to see that she was able to change and adapt her learning style to meet her final goal. Retrieval of information is an example of this change. She decided she needed to stop memorizing isolated vocabulary items. Instead, she felt she needed to learn to establish meaningful connections and associations among them. In reference to this, at the interview, she said: "I think that the biggest mistake was that I was just trying to memorize vocabulary. And I didn't know how I could relate that vocabulary to English itself." Cross-checking this information with that coming from the survey, we can tell she was initially a sharpener, because she liked to distinguish small differences and to separate memories of prior experiences from memories of current ones. She could easily retrieve the different items because she stored them separately. On seeing that being a sharpener did not help her achieve her goal, she decided to implement a change in her learning style and thus became a leveler. If one is concerned about expediency, then being a leveler may be the key to communication.

As was said earlier, the results from the survey were complemented and cross-checked with those coming from an in-depth, semi-structured interview. This technique of data triangulation, emerging from different sources and instruments, strengthens the validity of findings and allows for further interpretations. Robust information will allow researchers to shed some light on the participant's learning process, as well as to discover the type of strategies employed to attain her goal of becoming a GLL.

The Interview

The semi-structured interview was held in L2 and lasted about thirty minutes. Silvina was eager to answer our questions and talk about her learning process. The interview revolved around the changes Silvina implemented to become a GLL. Initially, she was asked to describe how she had prepared for language tests before succeeding. Silvina described the manner in which she had studied and tried to improve her L2 to pass those exams. Then, she was asked to discuss how she was pushed to modify her course of action and the steps she needed to take which brought her closer to her goal of becoming a good language learner. With the benefit of hindsight, she was able to analyze and describe how she had studied in the past, how and why she thought she had failed her pronunciation test twice, and how she managed to change her learning styles to overcome that frustrating experience and succeed in her studies.

In our second research question we set out to investigate the language learning strategies that GLLs often use. We know that they often go through three vital phases. The first step they take is to become aware of their difficulties. Naiman et al. (1996) claim that GLLs manage to find different ways to overcome linguistic obstacles. For Silvina, after failing her final exam twice, that meant reflecting on her study methods because they had not worked out the way

she had expected. She claims that when she studied for her pronunciation tests, she had relied mostly on the reading and memorization of her summaries. This information is consistent with data coming from the survey, in which she reported that she often relies on rote learning as her favorite study technique. In hindsight, Silvina makes an interesting remark with regard to committing material to memory: "I think I never understood what I was reading."

She refers specifically to her approach to vocabulary learning as her biggest obstacle. She memorized specific lexical items without linking them to her previous knowledge, or to the English language system as a whole. Worded differently, she seldom made distinctions clear. There is here another overlap of information with data emerging from the survey, in which she rated herself a leveler student. In her own words: "I didn't know how I could relate that vocabulary to the English [language] itself."

It is interesting to see that after failing her final exam for the first time, she did not modify her study techniques. She continued reading and memorizing the same summaries she had prepared while taking the course. When asked why she had failed her final exam twice, she answered:

> Because I didn't sit down and try to go beyond. I just memorized. Well, you asked me, I don't know, something that was a little bit outside the theory and I couldn't answer. Because I wasn't thinking.

As the results of the survey indicate, Silvina is a synthesizing learner. This means that summarizing was an easy task for her, and that she was rather effective at it, although it might not have given her the best results in the end.

The third research question inquired whether students can manipulate cognitive processes when learning an L2. Literature in the area indicates that by resorting to a wide array of language learning strategies, learners may influence their learning processes (Ma & Oxford, 2014). Once Silvina became aware of the obstacles on her way to becoming a GLL, she selected and combined relevant metacognitive strategies that she used for managing her whole learning process.

Silvina's next step to become a GLL consisted of becoming actively involved in her own learning process. She decided to record herself reading her summaries aloud. Then, she listened to her recordings instead of merely reading them again. In this way, Silvina began to take charge of her learning process. Only after these two initial phases was she ready for the third step: monitoring her own performance. She was able to identify mistakes in her production. She became aware of some mistakes in the use of pitch contours. She realized she was using rising tones when adding new information in cases in which she should have used falling tones, to signal finality. These changes in pitch direction brought about some communication problems with her interlocutors. Another prosodic feature that she felt affected her speech was related to pause location and its correlate: fluency. She acknowledged

that pause misplacement broke the temporal structure of her speech, and that also caused some misunderstandings in her messages. She also mentioned the importance of stress placement at both word and sentence levels for the attainment of mutual intelligibility. At the segmental level, she noticed some problems in the realization of some sounds, such as the production and distinction of the alveolar fricative [s] and its counterpart [z], [b]/[v] distinctions, and the production of some consonant clusters, especially those in word-initial position. She describes this process as follows:

> I think in some way it is some kind of punishment. I mean I heard it, I heard it, over and over again. So I didn't stop until I was happy with my recording . . . because the first times that you hear it isn't nice. I mean it doesn't sound nice. I can't believe, I couldn't believe I was talking like that. So I recorded again and again and again and again. I'm not talking about recording two or three minutes, I mean they took like twenty minutes each.

At this point, it should be remembered that all the phonological aspects mentioned above had been formally introduced to Silvina and her classmates as part of the explicit instruction they received along the course they took. However, only after she reflected on her learning styles, and that was long after she had taken that course and failed her two final exams, was she able to improve them, working autonomously. She had no extra assistance from any teachers, tutors, or peers. From the interpretation of the data gathered, it can be seen that she adopted and followed a very systematic procedure to eradicate these problems and internalize the correct forms: (a) she noticed her mistakes, (b) she wrote them down, (c) she tried to fix them, (d) she practiced them by reading them aloud in a very controlled manner, and (e) she read and taped her summaries again, always focusing on those phonological areas that needed modification.

Direct learning strategies. Direct learning strategies are divided into three types: *memory*, *cognitive*, and *comprehension strategies*. During the semi-structured interview, Silvina discussed the wide array of cognitive strategies she relies on. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) define this type of strategies as those in which the learner interacts with the material to be learned by manipulating it mentally (as in making mental images) or physically (such as taking notes). Silvina physically manipulated the material, first by writing summaries and then by listening to them. She listened to her recordings whenever she had a chance, for instance on her way to work. She first recognized mistakes in sounds and then she modified them. She worked first with individual sounds, and then she contextualized them in fragments, and later in full sentences. Her practice combined insights of both naturalistic and more formal approaches to language learning. Regarding this last comment, she states: "The last times I recorded them, I already knew them by heart so I was talking."

Another cognitive strategy Silvina employed is that of analyzing and reasoning. She signals: "I tried to make a comparison between all the authors and what each author talks about, the years when they wrote their works. That also helped." She mentally manipulated the material by comparing different authors' points of view. This coincides

with data coming from the survey in which she defines herself as a leveler, that is, someone who is "likely to clump material together in order to remember it by eliminating or reducing differences, and by focusing almost exclusively on similarities" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 160). Silvina's varied use of direct learning strategies was complemented by her use of indirect ones.

Indirect learning strategies. Indirect learning strategies are divided into three types: *metacognitive*, *affective*, and *social strategies*. Silvina effectively employs a wide array of metacognitive strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) define these types of strategies as those which involve executive processes, such as planning for learning, monitoring one's comprehension and production, and evaluating how well one has achieved a learning objective. Ehrman and Oxford (1990) further subdivide metacognitive strategies into centering, arranging and planning, and evaluating learning. Silvina realized she had to modify her rote learning style to succeed if she meant to become a better language learner. She focused on relating new material to her prior knowledge. In the interview, she referred to it as "going beyond." In Ehrman and Oxford's taxonomy, her strategy falls into centering learning, over-viewing and linking with already known material. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) strongly recommend that teachers should have their students use metacognitive strategies. They further claim that learners who organize new information and consciously relate it to existing knowledge learn better than those who simply memorize by rote learning.

As an advanced learner, Silvina employed a wide variety of metacognitive strategies. These are used to plan, manage, and control the learning process. Silvina determined her own objectives and the way in which she would accomplish them. She took charge of her learning process and organized her learning approach. She decided how much time she would devote to complete different kinds of tasks. Ma and Oxford (2014) offer two plausible explanations as to why metacognitive strategies are so important to advanced learners. On the one hand, advanced learners are more self-regulated, so they may use more metacognitive strategies in their learning process. On the other hand, it might be possible that as advanced learners become more flexible in implementing different metacognitive strategies, they learn to become more self-regulated. Although a correlation between these two variables has not been observed yet, it can be stated that to reach their linguistic goals, advanced learners organize their learning process by employing metacognitive strategies.

Another very important strategy Silvina employed was evaluating and monitoring her own production. While listening to her recordings, she was able to spot mistakes in her production. In reference to this, she said: "You should find out where you sound the way you don't want to sound."

Silvina constantly evaluated her performance. In fact, she used her mistakes in L2 to identify her weak areas and to understand why she was making those mistakes. This varied use of multiple indirect learning strategies accounts to a great extent for Silvina's success in becoming a GLL.

Conclusion

The objective of this case study was to explore the learning processes which have led an unsuccessful student to become a GLL. To do so, we initially presented three research questions which have been promptly addressed in the Data Analysis and Findings section above. We have also discussed the language learning strategies that most GELLs often use and compared them to the ones deployed by Silvana throughout her learning process on her way to becoming a GLL. Two different instruments for data collection were used: (1) a learning style survey, and (2) an in-depth, semi-structured interview. One of the key aspects of this study has been the manner in which the subject monitored and self-directed her learning process autonomously. Griffiths and Oxford (2014) predict that "there will be an increasing groundswell of interest in definitions that emphasize learners' strategic self-regulation" (p. 8).

The insights provided in this study may be taken into account for teachers to better understand how they might help their students. Oxford et al. (2014) claim that language teachers, coaches, or counselors must be competent in successful strategy instruction to provide assistance for learners to become aware of the strategies available and their effectiveness for performing given tasks. This might be achieved by designing tasks which push learners to use metacognitive strategies; for example, tasks which encourage learners to notice gaps in their interlanguage by comparing and contrasting input/output and the distance to be covered to reach the desired level of L2 proficiency (Luchini, 2005, 2012, 2013). Teachers may also discuss with their students how to organize their learning and how to set realistic goals. As regards learning styles, a practical suggestion for teachers might be to "pair one student with another student who has a different learning style, so that learners can emulate the desirable strategies of the other person and incorporate them into their own styles" (Ma & Oxford, 2014, p. 112).

This study may also be useful for other students facing similar challenges to the one depicted by Silvina, who wanted to achieve individual self-development. We hope that this work may contribute to the coming together of English language teachers, strategy researchers, and theorists around the central cognitive and metacognitive aspects of language learning strategies. This joint work should have a positive impact on L2 learners' language development, a fact that will allow them to achieve their desired linguistic goals and eventually become better language learners (Griffith & Oxford, 2014).

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Appendix 1: Learning Style Survey: Assessing Your Own Learning Styles (Adapted From Cohen et al., 2009)

The Learning Style Survey is designed to assess your general approach to learning. It does not predict your behavior in every instance, but it is a clear indication of your overall style preferences. For each item, circle the response that represents your approach. Complete all items. There are 11 major activities representing 12 different aspects of your learning style. When you read the statements, try to think about what you usually do when learning. It typically takes about 30 minutes to complete the survey. Do not spend too much time on any item—indicate your immediate feeling and move on to the next item.

For each item, circle your response:

0 = Never, 1 = Rarely, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Always

Part 1: How I Use My Physical Senses

Part 2: How I Expose Myself to Learning Situations

Part 3: How I Handle Possibilities

Part 4: How I Deal With Ambiguity and With Deadlines

Part 5: How I Receive Information

Part 6: How I Further Process Information

Part 7: How I Commit Material to Memory

Part 8: How I Deal With Language Rules

Part 9: How I Deal With Multiple Inputs

Part 10: How I Deal With Response Time

Part 11: How Literally I Take Reality

Understanding your totals

Once you have totaled your points, write the results in the blanks below. Circle the higher number in each part (if they are close, circle both). Read about your learning styles on the next page.

Part 1: Part 5: Part 9:

A _____ Visual _____ Global _____ Field-Independent

B _____ Auditory _____ Particular _____ Field-Dependent

C _____ Tactile/Kinesthetic

Part 2: Part 6: Part 10:

A _____ Extroverted _____ Synthesizing _____ Impulsive

B _____ Introverted _____ Analytic _____ Reflective

Part 3: Part 7: Part 11:

A _____ Random-Intuitive _____ Sharpener _____ Metaphoric

B _____ Concrete-Sequential _____ Leveler _____ Literal

Part 4: Part 8:

A _____ Closure-Oriented _____ Deductive

B _____ Open _____ Inductive

Appendix 2: Interview (Some Sample Questions Asked Along the Interview)

— Can you tell us what happened to you before you took this test?

— How do you know that you "never understood how to study"?

— What happened the second time you failed?

— And, what did you do to pass this test?

— Why did you record yourself? How did you do it?

— Did you record your summaries while you were reading them aloud?

— What about your reaction when you first listened to your recordings?

— Can you remember some of the mistakes you spotted in your recordings?

— How did you manage to modify them?

— Can you explain what you mean by "it was like a self-punishment to me"?

— Did you transcribe your recordings? Why?

— How did you acquire the technical vocabulary that you needed to express your ideas?

— How many times did you listen to your recordings? And for how long?

— What piece of advice would you give to classmates in similar situations?

— What do you think about your English now?