

Analysis of Language Learning Strategies Used by efl Learners in Oral Production Tasks

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Abstract

This article reports on a qualitative case study of language learning strategies used by learners in an English class at a Colombian university. The study aimed to analyze how a group of 36 learners employed language learning strategies when presenting English oral reports through an intensive reading-controlled exercise. Data were collected through focus groups, a survey, and classroom observations. The results showed that the students' strategies deployed differently—not because some strategies are more important than others, but because they are adopted at different stages in oral tasks. Moreover, the findings reveal that strategy use varies between high- and low-achieving students, even when the same guidelines apply to oral reports. In conclusion, differences in learning styles, learning processes, and the English proficiency suggest that students with lower proficiency tend to use more strategies to help close the gap in oral tasks compared to students with higher proficiency.

Keywords: english as a foreign language; intensive reading; language learning strategies; oral reports

Análise das estratégias de aprendizagem de línguas utilizadas por alunos de inglês como língua estrangeira em tarefas de produção oral

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta um estudo de caso qualitativo sobre as estratégias de aprendizagem de línguas utilizadas por alunos em uma aula de inglês em uma universidade colombiana. O objetivo do estudo foi analisar como um grupo de 36 estudantes utilizou estratégias de aprendizagem ao apresentar relatórios orais em inglês por meio de um exercício controlado de leitura intensiva. Os dados foram coletados por meio de grupos focais, um questionário e observações em sala de aula. Os resultados mostraram que as estratégias foram utilizadas de forma diferente — não porque algumas sejam mais importantes que outras, mas porque são adotadas em diferentes etapas das tarefas orais. Além disso, os achados revelam que o uso das estratégias varia entre alunos com alto e baixo desempenho, mesmo quando as mesmas orientações são aplicadas aos relatórios orais. Em conclusão, as diferenças nos estilos de aprendizagem, nos processos de aquisição e no nível de proficiência em inglês sugerem que alunos com menor proficiência tendem a usar mais estratégias para tentar diminuir a lacuna nas tarefas orais, em comparação com aqueles com maior proficiência.

Palavras-chave: inglês como língua estrangeira; leitura intensiva; estratégias de aprendizagem de línguas; relatórios orais

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Análisis de las estrategias de aprendizaje de lenguas utilizadas por estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en tareas de producción oral

Resumen

Este artículo presenta un estudio de caso cualitativo sobre las estrategias de aprendizaje de lenguas utilizadas por estudiantes en una clase de inglés en una universidad colombiana. El estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar cómo un grupo de 36 estudiantes empleó estrategias de aprendizaje al presentar informes orales en inglés mediante un ejercicio controlado de lectura intensiva. Los datos se recopilaban a través de grupos focales, una encuesta y observaciones en el aula. Los resultados mostraron que las estrategias fueron utilizadas de manera diferente, no porque unas sean más importantes que otras, sino porque se adoptan en distintas etapas de las tareas orales. Además, los hallazgos revelan que el uso de estrategias varía entre estudiantes con alto y bajo rendimiento, incluso cuando se siguen las mismas directrices para los informes orales. En conclusión, las diferencias en los estilos de aprendizaje, los procesos de adquisición y el nivel de competencia en inglés sugieren que los estudiantes con menor dominio tienden a utilizar más estrategias para cerrar la brecha en las tareas orales, en comparación con aquellos con mayor dominio.

Palabras clave: inglés como lengua extranjera; lectura intensiva; estrategias de aprendizaje de lenguas; informes orales

Introduction

Given the prevalence of English as an international language, improving the four basic English skills—listening, writing, reading, and speaking—is one of the main concerns in EFL teaching. Speaking, in particular is considered a highly demanding skill for effective communication. It is a basic need in today's world and facilitates the acquisition of other language skills (Akhter, 2021; El-Sakka, 2016; Islam & Stapa, 2021). English is currently the fastest-growing language worldwide in diverse domains such as business, technology, medicine, research, science, engineering, trade, education, economic globalization, tourism, migration, transportation, and banking (Rao, 2019; Saud, 2020). This expansion enables broader interaction and communicative purposes. Although it is not possible to determine the exact number of English users, it is estimated that nearly two billion people speak English, both native and non-native speakers (Crystal, 2008; Schneider, 2011, as cited in Ojha, 2022).

In Colombia, EFL has been prioritized by the Ministry of National Education (MEN) through the *National Plan on Bilingualism*, recognizing the benefits of mastering English and the role of globalization in discussions of human rights issues, environmental protection, social justice, culture, and information and communication technologies (ICTs), as well as local and global interactions. Therefore, the spread of the English language is linked to access to knowledge and online information, human development, learning about other cultures, promoting mobilities and expanding the opportunities for scholarships and jobs (MEN, 2006, 2016). Within this context, Colombian society has become increasingly aware of the importance of EFL, and local scholars have suggested the participation in ELT to achieve better outcomes (Bastidas, 2017). Today, English teachers seek assertive strategies and tools to engage learners in English classes in ways that contribute meaningfully to the development of the oral proficiency.

Based on the fact that many people are interested in language learning and, after many years as English teachers, who incorporate different strategies and diverse print and audio materials such as videos and readings to promote oral production in EFL classrooms, according to the language learning strategy (LLS) management, we noticed that, when learners are told to speak oral English based on a specific output task, even though they are provided the same input and guidelines when creating the output tasks, the path to achieving the same intended learning purpose is not the same.

This study is significant because it analyzes the speaking skills of a group of Colombian EFL learners in relation to the LLS they employed when presenting oral reports, helping to explain the process between input and output results. An intensive reading strategy was implemented, given its role as a comprehensive learning activity. It enables the reader to manage their own learning through linguistic analysis and fosters the development of thinking skills (Merchán & Rivadeneira, 2021). It also establishes a clear study framework, facilitating reliable reporting of results.

A gap in the literature on qualitative LLS studies has also been identified, as many related studies provide quantitative data to identify which LLS is most used by EFL learners. However, we strongly believe that this qualitative study contributes to the EFL field, as the results provided rich insights that English teachers can use when planning, making decisions or adapting strategies in their EFL courses, since they should assist learners to assess their level of English success on their LLS (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). In this case, the LLS was used for oral tasks. Therefore, the research question was: how does a group of Colombian EFL students employ language learning strategies for oral reports in English classes through an intensive reading-controlled strategy? The general objective is to analyze the LLS that EFL learners use in the production of spoken English skills.

Theoretical Framework

Language Learning Strategies (LLS)

Learning a language goes beyond repeating or memorizing linguistic structures. When learning a foreign language, learners use strategies that contribute to the development of learning habits. It has been said that repetition makes an action habitual; in the language area, all actions taken by learners are learning paths that can contribute to effective learning.

LLSs are purposeful, conscious (or at least partially conscious), mental actions that the learner uses to meet one or more self-chosen goals, such as (a) overcoming a learning barrier, (b) accomplishing and L2 task, (c) enhancing long-term L2 proficiency, and (d) developing self-regulation (ability to guide one's own learning). (Burns & Richards, 2018, p. 82).

LLS can be activities, actions, steps, plans, or routines, but also behaviors that learners acquire, maintain, or change when learning languages and processing information (Agustin *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, LLSs can be understood as a set of procedures, decisions, strategies, and behaviors of learners that are adopted and applied during learning.

Several scholars have proposed different classifications of LLS (Naiman *et al.*, 1978; Dansereau, 1985; O'Malley *et al.*, 1985; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986; Rubin & Wenden, 1987; Oxford, 1990; Star, 1992; Wild, 1997; Bimmel & Rampillon, 2000; Cohen & Weaver, 2006, as cited in Vlčková & Völkle, 2013). Two key frameworks are O'Malley and Chamot's classification (1990) and Oxford's *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL) (1990). Although SILL has been criticized by some authors for some reasons such the use of frequency adverbs and the questionable reliability of self-reports in internal cognitive processes, Oxford (2018) also acknowledged that some strategy statements are outdated due to technological changes (Dörnyei, 2005; LoCastro, 1994; Oxford, 2018; Tseng *et al.*, 2006; White *et al.*, 2007; Woodrow, 2005, as cited in Amerstorfer, 2018). However, other scholars have found that SILL provides suitable response ranges and valid results through behavioral items. Likert scales, in this context, offer broad insights into strategy use, and the instrument has been recognized for its continued popularity and reliable outcomes. Furthermore, some researchers have supported the use of parametric analysis under specific conditions, and statisticians have validated parametric statistics for Likert-based instruments like SILL (Ardasheva & Tretter, 2013; Griffiths & Oxford, 2014; Mizumoto & Takeuchi, 2018; Oxford, 2011; Oxford & Amerstorfer, 2018, as cited in Amerstorfer, 2018).

For this study, Oxford's (1990) classification was chosen (see Figure 1), as the authors developed the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL), which includes one version specifically designed for ESL and EFL students (Shi, 2017). Oxford's SILL (1990) classification provides a more detailed LLS model, considered the most comprehensive (Ellis, 1994). Furthermore, this classification was adopted by MEN (2016) in the national language teaching curriculum guidelines, and its taxonomy is adapted here for the purposed of this EFL study.

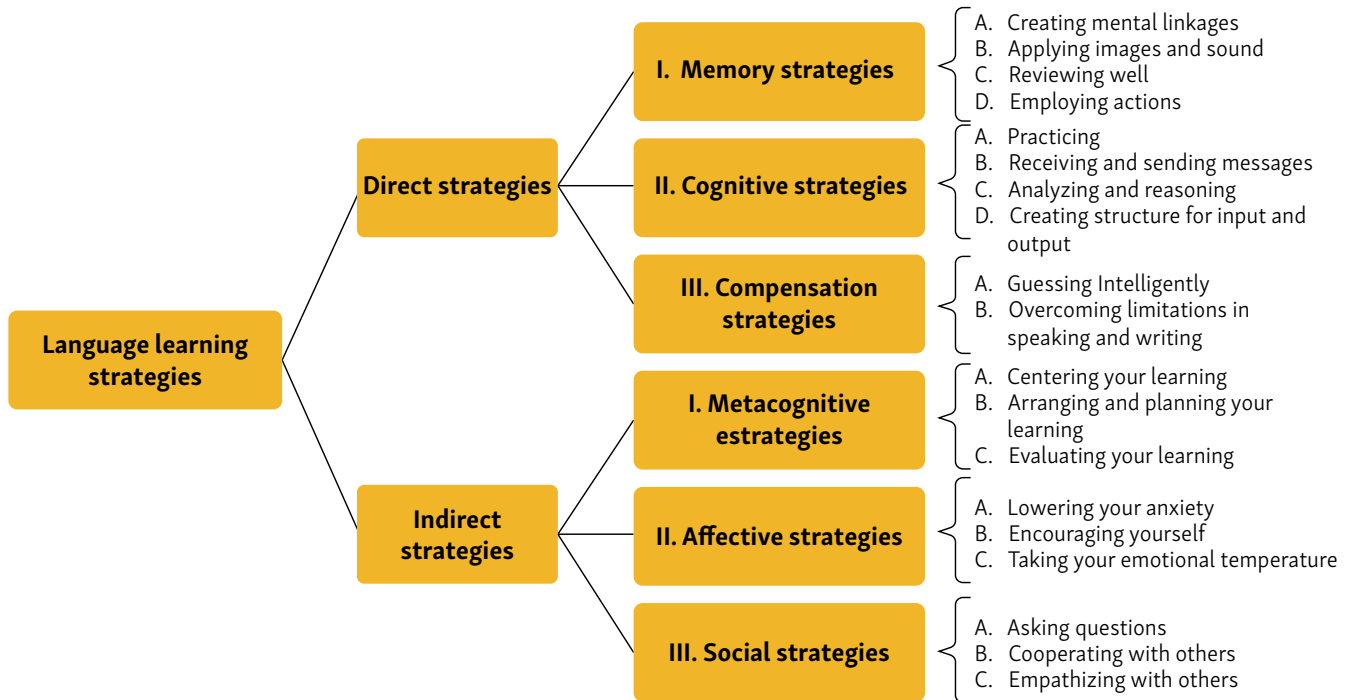


Figure 1. Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Note. Adapted from *Language learning strategies: what every teacher should know*, by Oxford, 1990, pp. 16-17.

Likewise, Wael et al. (2018) reported results on LLS and learners' speaking performance. The results showed that the strategies most used by students were memory strategies, followed by metacognitive strategies, and then social strategies. A study conducted by Nisa (2020) showed that students mainly used metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies to master their speaking skills, while grammar was perceived as a weakness. Finally, the aim of this study was not to list the set of strategies used by students in a particular order or frequency of use, but to determine how LLS functioned in these learners' speaking process and to analyze their actions and behavior.

Oral Production in EFL

Mastering the ability to speak has a significant impact on language learning. A student who is fluent in English can communicate without major problems and access new opportunities and perspectives in life. However, this skill should be mastered in real interaction environments (Günes & Sarigöz, 2021). Oral production in EFL therefore provides students with a wide range of opportunities to perform in different scenarios. Furthermore, "the importance of speaking is demonstrated through the integration of the other language skills. Speaking helps learners develop their vocabulary and grammar skills and subsequently improve their writing skills" (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017, p. 35). There are some perceived benefits due to oral EFL development.

Due to the well-known benefits of English, oral production takes on real meaning in communicative contexts. Currently, EFL learners face a reality in which EFL oral production brings advantages in business, careers, interviews,

debates, group discussions, jobs, opportunities for advancement, and social interaction. English is thus used as an efficient medium of communication, conveying ideas, feelings, and thoughts in all areas of life—whether in education, the workplace, or personal growth (Akhter, 2021; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Rao, 2019; Sudarmo, 2021). The ability to speak English, therefore, helps people interact not only with foreigners, but also with content, areas of knowledge, lifestyles, and viewpoints; and this empowers them to be part of a globalized world that uses the English language as a means of communication. Finally, this can also lead to other skills, such as reading, listening, and writing (Islam & Stapa, 2021). However, this does not mean that English is the dominant language but mastering it brings proven benefits.

However, oral production tasks present challenges such as communication breakdowns caused by nervousness, anxiety, fear of making mistakes, or discomfort at being the focus of attention. Other obstacles include limited vocabulary, grammar problems, pronunciation difficulties, unhelpful learning environments, and overreliance on translation. These challenges can be addressed by building vocabulary, practicing pronunciation patterns, focusing on common topics, applying relaxation techniques, and cultivating a positive mindset. Besides, there is another strategy which consists of enhancing fluency and accuracy relying on several activities such as listening to podcasts, songs, reading aloud, reviewing grammar rules, self-correction recording themselves and seeking conversational opportunities in different contexts.

One of the central goals of teaching oral skills in English is to facilitate interaction in the EFL classroom. This can be achieved by designing interactive tasks such as role plays and discussions, creating low-stress environments where students feel comfortable speaking in the foreign language, scaffold language and motivation and finally, promoting reflection and proper feedback. Strategies can be applied during the pre-, while-, and post- speaking stages. These include: cognitive strategies (repetition, translation, summarizing, and using formulaic expressions), metacognitive strategies (planning what to say, monitoring speech and evaluating performance post-task), social strategies (asking for clarification, cooperation with peers, seeking feedback and finally), and affective strategies (positive self-talk and relaxation techniques to reduce speaking anxiety) (Oxford, 1990).

Intensive Reading Strategy

Contemporary literate societies view reading as an essential skill to master, as it ensures access to knowledge and competence in a globalized world that demands the development of multiple skills. Modern definition of reading describe it as a process in which the learner brings prior knowledge to the text to create meaning, comprehend language, interpret syntactic structures, use textual information, and develop awareness of the topic. This process helps readers grasp details and interpret texts (McDonough, 1995, as cited in Al Raqqad et al., 2019); then, reading can be understood as a skill that incorporates the literal meaning and the interpretation of texts to make it a stronger skill for EFL learners.

In addition to the concept of reading, there are various typologies of reading as a skill and strategy. This study addresses *intensive reading* as a strategy that can be instructed and implemented according to learning outcomes in an EFL classroom. Intensive reading then focuses on students' understanding, relationships, factual and detailed information, and content, vocabulary, and grammar of a text. This can be achieved by reading along with a series of activities to improve the comprehension over texts (Insuasty, 2020; Suwarso & Praseno, 2022), which requires significant mental effort and concentration (Numan, 2019). Although reading is already a part of EFL teaching, the intensive reading strategy pursues a specific learning outcome that relates to students' understanding and interpretation of short passages and texts. Admittedly, the selection of the purpose of this reading strategy was not random: intensive reading was used in this study due to its scope and the reading learning outcomes suggested by the researchers at the beginning of semester. Additionally, intensive reading allowed constant classroom monitoring over students' reading-controlled exercises and LLS management.

Supporting evidence from previous studies further underscores the relevance of intensive reading. **Osman & Hassan (2015)**, working with Sudanese teachers of EFL, found that that students achieved greater accuracy and fluency in oral communication through intensive reading. Similarly, **Santamaría (2019)**, in an Ecuadorian context, reported that 25 learners improved in their oral production and interaction as a result of intensive reading processes. For this reason, intensive reading has been introduced into English classrooms to promote oral production. This represents language teachers' efforts to incorporate multiple strategies to help EFL learners develop their skills. In that sense, the latter cannot be developed in isolation.

Research Design

This was a qualitative case study exploring how people make sense of their lives and experiences. It addressed the nature of empirical inquiry and the importance of context to the case, primarily from a realist perspective (**Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2009**). This case study specifically identified the LLS used by a group of Colombian EFL learners when presenting oral reports in regular university-level English classes.

Participants and Setting

The participants were 36 undergraduate students between the ages of 17 and 25 who were enrolled in EFL courses as part of the curriculum. The sample consisted of A2-level English learners at a public Colombian university (**Table 1**). They belonged to different programs—Physics and Chemistry—but the same syllabus was implemented in both courses, and the researchers applied the same reading-controlled exercises at the same time intervals. Convenience sampling (**Obilor, 2023**) was used for this study because it allows teachers and researchers to intervene in their natural environment without affecting the behavior of regular participants, and the learning environment is like many A2 English classes for learners with similar characteristics. Finally, they were informed about the study and, later, signed an informed consent statement, granting the use of the collected data for academic and research purposes.

Table 1.
Participants characterization

Participants	Sample	Gender		Age	
		Female	Male		
Physics students	18	9	9	17 – 19	10 ss
				20 – 24	7 ss
				+ 25	1 ss
Chemistry students	18	7	11	17 – 19	7 ss
				20 – 24	9 ss
				+ 25	2 ss

Note: SS= students

Procedure and Data Collection Instruments

The process used for this study involved designing a strategy (**Figure 2**) based on an intensive reading-controlled exercise as input to encourage oral EFL reports as output. This was done to analyze how the LLS are adopted and what their potential effects are on English lessons, if any.



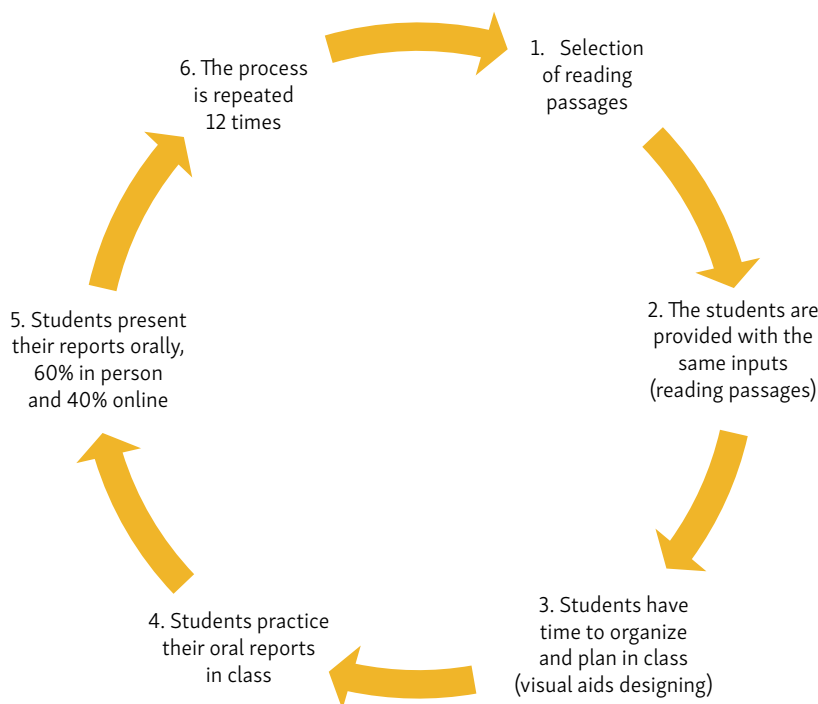


Figure 2.
Intensive Reading-controlled Strategy

Note. Own elaboration

Figure 2 illustrates the strategy process followed with the sample, conducted from August to November 2023. Meanwhile, the participants took the English II class (A2 level), a subject that is part of their undergraduate curriculum. The reading-controlled exercise was carried out 12 times over the course of the semester, approximately three times per month. 60 % of the oral reports were presented in person, while the other 40% were presented online. The presentation modality was deliberately chosen to gain insights into the learners' process, if any. In the same way, the intensive reading strategy and passages were selected at the very beginning of the course to carefully conduct this study. Likewise, the content selected for intensive reading covered various topics: nature, technology, social networks, short stories, fiction and non-fiction passages, and general culture.

Moreover, students participated in a focus group that was divided into two sessions, one for each group, each lasting two hours. Open questions were used, as focus groups are valuable tools for generating in-depth responses (Gundumogula, 2020). These focus groups were conducted in November of 2023.

A survey with 10 open-ended questions was conducted in October of 2023, leaving sufficient time to apply the other instruments and gather detailed information. This instrument provided more accurate insights into students' LLS, as the questions were designed and adapted qualitatively according to Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The adaptation grouped the strategies as follows: groups 1, 2, and 3 (direct strategies), and groups 4, 5, and 6 (indirect strategies). Students were required to identify any strategies used, specify the concrete strategies applied, indicate their frequency of use, and directly contextualize them within the oral reports process from beginning to end. The results collected from this survey were contextualized and qualitatively stated to be linear with the nature of this study.

Additionally, classroom observations were conducted to complement the information provided by students in the focus group and survey. There were three specific phases in which the observation was conducted: while students planned, practiced, and monitored, these took place from August to November of 2023. These classroom

observations were key to contrasting, delineating, and triangulating the data collected. The selected instruments were appropriate for the study, as they enabled data analysis through a qualitative coding process in which the frequency, types, and effectiveness of the reported strategies were identified. Finally, the instruments were applied in Spanish, but the researchers translated the responses into English language.

Data Analysis and Findings

The data analysis process was supported by grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Raw data were analyzed in an in-depth analysis of patterns, codes and themes to properly refine the data. Core categories then emerged from this exhaustive analysis process through MAXQDA software. The validity and reliability of the procedure were ensured through triangulation (Yin, 2009), which produced high quality and credible results derived from different sources of information, making the findings more convincing and accurate (Kaman & Othman, 2016). The coding process, themes, and resulting categories are presented in Table 2 to illustrate the process.

Table 2.
Categories emerging

Categories	Themes in Data	Data codes
Learning styles and learning process as axes to deploy direct strategies: memory and cognitive strategies usage	Students' information organization and planning Learning styles and learning process to follow a pathway. Memory and cognitive strategies use	Similarities and differences in organizing and planning oral reports. Reading passages management Selection of the information to report Learning styles use. Visual aids and mind maps designing Oral reports preparation Practicing, analyzing and reasoning. Creation of structures for input and output
English language proficiency as an agent to stimulate the use of indirect strategies: affective and social strategies management.	English level proficiency to use LLS. Identification of factors that facilitate the oral reports. Affective and social strategies use	English level to employ specific strategies. Students-students and students-teacher interaction when practicing. Resources online to facilitate learning. Factors identified for oral reports success. Lowering anxiety and encouraging themselves to report
Modality and Time as factors that might influence the Metacognitive Strategies in EFL oral Reports.	Implications of the modality to present oral reports. Implications of the time to report. Metacognitive strategies use	Factors identified when monitoring process. Modalities: in person and online oral reports Students' performance based on time and modality. Low-proficiency English learners' preference for online oral reports learners with good English skills tendency to in person oral reports Time to present, having extra time or not. Centering students' learning and arranging and planning learning

Learning Styles and Learning Process as Axes to Deploy Direct Strategies: Memory and Cognitive Strategies Usage

The results showed that most learners followed a similar approach when planning an oral report, from two perspectives: (a) organization, order and sequence of ideas, and (b) use of the English language (pronunciation, fluency and vocabulary). Most EFL learners skimmed and scanned the reading passage to get the gist, then identified secondary and supporting ideas, and finally reached a conclusion. It is important to note that students thought about the topic of the passage to connect it with prior knowledge, which helped them understand it more easily. In addition, the LLS adopted in the oral reports were based on students' learning styles rather than the input or output itself.

Students with high English proficiency read the passage two or three times and started speaking aloud to practice it through repetition. These learners did not use visual aids but underlined unfamiliar vocabulary, which

In the same way, learners with low English proficiency used reading and writing skills. They felt the need to read verbatim and write long paragraphs to memorize them. Additionally, visual style was one of the most notable, as it allowed them to use a visual aid and design mind maps with keywords and, in other cases, full of text. In Basalama *et al.* (2020) studies, it was observed that notetaking facilitates students' speaking skills by allowing them to understand the materials using their own words. In addition, students used online sites to check the correct pronunciation of some words, because they lacked vocabulary and pronunciation skills. Therefore, this group of learners required three groups of learning styles according to the model of EFL oral report proposed by Flemming (1995); that is, visual, auditory, reading and writing (VARK). Additionally, the use of students' hands was very appealing, as their movements conveyed a lack of confidence and difficulty while trying to express themselves in English.

First of all, I write a Spanish script and then I translate into English. I read both of them to know what I'm saying. Then, I check out the pronunciation using Google to some specific words and write down them how those are pronounced. Finally, I memorize my script and I repeated many times to improve the fluency. (PR, FG, November of 2023).

I write a script and memorize it literally. I just repeated again and again. I try not to use difficult words for me to remember. (Surv., Q1, October of 2023).

These findings so far are understood under Oxford's (1990) classification between planning and reporting processes. Students with low English proficiency mainly adopted group I of direct strategies (memory strategies), especially those that implied the creation of mental links (linking information to be reported through specific schemes, arrows, order), applying images and sounds (drawing words that they do not know and including the pronunciation of hard-to-remember words), as well as actions (using online sites to listen to the pronunciation of words and make lists of vocabulary words). In fact, these learners also agreed to use cognitive strategies that focus on practicing, analyzing, and reasoning, as well as creating structure for input and output. In fact, in the survey, for the first and second questions, most of them responded that they use direct strategies (memory and cognitive strategies) when planning oral EFL reports (Figure 4), which include the use of structures, vocabulary, intonation and styles.

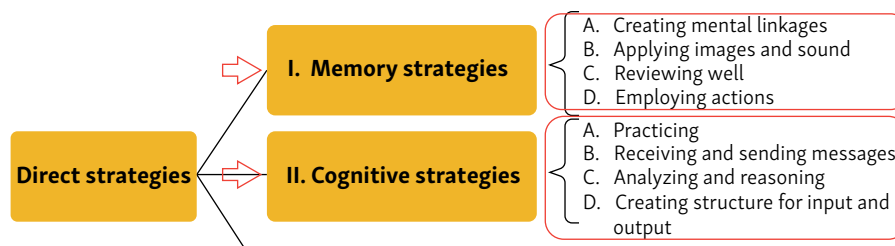


Figure 4. LLS used by the low English students between planning and reporting oral reports.

In this line, Amin *et al.* (2024) presented the practice repetition, which consists of a formal practice with sounds and writing systems, along with the use of structures and patterns, as well as translation. Likewise, the previous arguments were in synergy in light of the results of Safari & Fitriati (2016), highlighting that learner with low speaking performance used the most memory, cognitive and social strategies. For this category, it was proven that learners with low skills use two of them frequently (memory and cognitive ones).

Consequently, the data showed that learners adopted LLS based on their learning styles when planning and reporting EFL oral reports. These results are consistent with those of Teng & Huang (2019) in terms of learners' English level and learning style positively influencing their learning process, and this study showed that LLS

varied depending on learning style and learning process. Likewise, lower-achieving students required memory and cognitive strategies, while higher-achieving students primarily used the cognitive strategies. Previous findings are consistent with [Hong-Nam & Leavell \(2006\)](#), who argued that good English students have internalized the LLS application, so they do not need to report an automated process. Additionally, lower English students have been shown to adopt more strategies and use them more frequently, as noted by [Gharbavi & Mousavi \(2012\)](#).

English Language Proficiency as an Agent to Stimulate the Use of Indirect Strategies: Affective and Social Strategies Management

The results in this category showed that students' English proficiency is a touchstone that addresses the indirect strategies related to Group II (affective strategies) and Group III (social strategies). Although all learners adopted LLS in EFL oral reports, they did not manage the same strategies in a similar manner, even though the task and reporting guidelines were the same.

This study found that learners with lower language proficiency needed to master social strategies; therefore, in the oral report practice phase, these learners adopted social strategies, particularly asking questions when dealing with advanced learners or the teacher, in order to ask for help with their pronunciation and vocabulary comprehension problems, and they collaborated with others as they asked to be listened to and, if possible, corrected before the presentation.

When preparing their oral reports, learners with lower English level expressed a lack of confidence. They used online sites for advice and asked a lot of questions. First, they asked their classmates who knew English well a lot of questions about the pronunciation, intonation and meaning of words; in other cases, the teacher was asked, especially if students were having a lot of trouble understanding the passage. Regarding this, students knew every single word (Obs., September, and October of 2023).

"As I know that JD is good at English, I ask, read, and present to him first. When I'm at home, my uncle knows English, so I ask him and tried to make sure about myself" (PA, FG, November of 2023).

However, lower English students tried very hard to achieve the best possible performance. During the observation, it was noted that when an error was made, learners started over. They were aware that they had to complete the assignment. In fact, most learners in the survey (question 8) agreed that the lack of vocabulary, daily practice and pronunciation were the most difficult aspects in EFL oral reports. Similarly, students argued that lots of practice, using a wide range of vocabulary and mastering good pronunciation were key factors for success in EFL oral reports.

"The confidence comes from the steady practice. It also helps having good reading comprehension skills" (JC, Surv., Q10, October of 2023).

Similarly, learners claimed that confidence was incredibly important to achieve the success in EFL oral reports, even if they did not master English properly. Then, the participants in this study agreed that self-confidence comes from practicing a lot, because students must deal with fears, and reducing them leads to more fears. When reporting, students do not look at the teacher or other learners, because they do not feel comfortable when being observed. Their gaze is scattered, and their visual contact is limited. However, in the practice phase, they also adopted affective strategies that include encouraging themselves and managing their emotional temperature.

"Practicing makes me feel more confident in the spite of the emotions. Anxiety is normal and if I think about it, I get more anxious" (WC, Surv., Q9, October of 2023).

As shown above, the learners with more difficulty in English proficiency adopted indirect strategies when practicing and performing oral EFL reports in group II (affective strategies), as they were looking for a way to encourage themselves and trying to control their emotions as much as possible to skip situations that prevent them from speaking English. In addition, they adopted group III (social strategies) when collaborating with other learners or the teacher (Figure 5). In that sense, students do not feel ashamed to ask for help but rather assume that learning can be achieved through socialization, questioning, and collaboration with English users with greater language proficiency. Previous findings support those results of Gani et al. (2015) and Safari and Fitriati (2016), which emphasize that students with low speaking performance tend to use social and compensatory strategies. However, this study did not provide any insights into compensation strategies.



Figure 5. LLS used by the low English students when practicing and performing oral reports

On the other hand, high-level English learners did not have to use affective strategies as low-level English learners did. However, learners with good English skills worked with their partners and helped them check their language. These learners played a different role as language helpers and provided feedback when asked for help. Furthermore, it can be affirmed that good English learners used social strategies in other ways: not to learn, but to help. This finding is like that of Cabaysa and Baetiong (2010), who claimed that successful learners used combinations of strategies, and good speakers used them differently. Therefore, having a good knowledge of English implies to manage the indirect strategies (affective and social strategies). Nevertheless, based on English skills, these will be taken over for learning or helping, and it depends on the educational situation. This finding is consistent with that of Amin et al. (2024), who pointed out that the different strategies used by students in speaking performance did not follow the same pathway, meaning that the students used the strategies differently.

Modality and Time as Factors that might Influence the Metacognitive Strategies in EFL Oral Reports

This category provides insights into two factors that influence the path that learners might take in monitoring their process in EFL oral reports, particularly for learners with limited English proficiency. It should be emphasized that the monitoring process can be related to the metacognitive strategies, especially regarding the possibility of learning, organizing, and planning the learning. These metacognitive strategies were found to be applied differently, although the reading-controlled exercises were conducted in a similar way throughout the study.

The first factor identified was the oral reporting modality. Subsequently, 60 % of the oral reports were conducted in person, while 40 % were conducted online. Also, low-proficiency English learners tend to feel embarrassed when presenting oral reports in person: it was observed that they were uncomfortable with the teacher’s presence as he took notes on the learners’ performance to eventually provide feedback. This issue caused them concern, because students did not know what the teacher was writing, and sometimes they expressed they thought that this feedback was based on errors. Finally, it was observed that learners lacked comfort due to the teacher’s role in assessment and the opportunity to be heard by others; therefore, the way they are perceived by others affects their self-confidence (Obs., August to October of 2023).

Likewise, these learners were now more confident when presenting online oral reports. They expressed to feel better reporting orally from home or from a different place than the classroom. They then argued that home is a place where they can be themselves, and that their anxiety levels have decreased, which allows them to perform better in terms of language and communication skills.

I prefer the online oral reports. First, at home I feel confident, that is my space. In the classroom I get nervous when I have to talk to the teacher or my partners are surrounded and at home, nobody is looking at me. (JC, FG, November of 2023).

It was found that learners' performance improved when they were in a confidence zone, in this case, at home or somewhere other than the classroom. The online oral reports from low-level learners showed that these had a positive impact on their speaking performance, like when the Nokia company invented text messaging to help shy teenagers, who found it easier to text than to call their friends. Therefore, instead of focusing on how others might perceive it, learners focus on completing their task.

On the other hand, learners with good English skills argued that they were not affected by the modality of oral presentation of tasks. Furthermore, their metacognitive strategies were similar in both cases: face-to-face and online. However, they also showed a preference for face-to-face oral reports, as they perceived the classroom as a neutral place. In addition, they liked to use their body language to express themselves, such as hand movements and eye contact; and it was also noticed that they enjoyed regular conversations that made them feel like they could interact freely. This result is contrasted in the light of some authors who affirmed that good language learners are skilled at matching sequency strategies to the task of developing effectively to store and recall information depending on the situation learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Chamot, 2005), and it was evident that, for good learners, the modality had no impact on their metacognitive strategies.

This last result was consistent with that of Gani *et al.* (2015), who stated that students with high language achievement appear to be more aware of their language needs; therefore, they tend to use strategies that could help them master the target language through practice, thinking and analysis (p. 26).

"I prefer the face-to-face reports, you know? It's easier for me to communicate what I want, even using gestures and be able to move my hands, it's important to express." (LB, FG, November of 2023).

On the other hand, time was identified as a second factor. Due to the intensive reading-based strategy used in class during the semester, in some cases students intentionally had more time to plan, and their monitoring process was not the same. This meant that metacognitive strategies changed over time in terms of centering, organizing, and planning the learning process. It was found that, when low proficiency English learners were required to present their oral report on the same day that the reading passage was assigned, their monitoring process was less structured. In this case, they used more memory strategies and lacked deep reading comprehension. However, when they were told to present the report in the upcoming class, their monitoring process became more detailed, the use of vocabulary was expanded, and pronunciation was practiced more precisely. To simplify, with more time to plan, memory strategies are most adopted; and, with less time, cognitive strategies are adopted the most.

When I have to report the same day, I was assigned, I just memorize as much information as I can. Sometimes I don't understand too much but I repeat the information I selected. However, when I have time, I do the process consciously. (KR, FG, November of 2023).

Likewise, learners with good English skills showed a similar monitoring process whether they had extra time or not. In that sense, it has been observed that their monitoring process is less structured; however, they were accurate and made the point directly. They argued that their English performance could be adapted to the task whether

they had extra time or not. In fact, these learners argued whether they should undertake a similar process, or they had the time, because they tend to plan and practice almost when they were about to present the report.

Conclusions and Implications

To conclude, the key research findings showed that LLSs are used based on learning styles, learning processes and English proficiency; therefore, their use varies between low-level learners and high-level learners. It was found that low-level learners use more memory and cognitive strategies during the planning phase, while high-level learners use cognitive strategies. In the practice phase, low-level students were more likely to use indirect strategies (affective and social) in their learning process, but students with good English skills also use social strategies, although not for practice, but to help their classmates.

In the same vein, both high-level and low-level learners use metacognitive strategies, because these help with the planning and monitoring, they follow to fulfill the oral reports. In this sense, they all use metacognitive strategies; however, there were differences in terms of use. Two factors were identified: modality and time, and these factors benefited low-level students. Nevertheless, it was found that the opportunity to present oral reports online had a positive impact on students with low English proficiency, due to lower levels of anxiety, and they were able to complete the task successfully, which was complemented by the amount of time to complete the report. For students with good English skills, modality and time had no influence on their process, because their performance depends more on the level of proficiency than on the task; and the more proficient they are, the fewer strategies they need to use, as they develop deep mental processes that help them omit some strategies related to memory, depending on the assignment or academic goal; social strategies.

All the above has implications for the use of LLS, as students use strategies but apply them differently. There is a tendency for students at higher levels to use fewer strategies to complete their oral task, while students at lower levels tend to use many more strategies to help them close the gap in language proficiency. It is also noted that there are no strategies that are more important than others, but they are used in different stages during the process between the assignment and the presentation of the oral reports. Therefore, students tend to use all the strategies, but they do not necessarily use them with the same goal; lower-level students use them to improve their learning process, while higher-level students always tend to optimize their learning process. However, it should be noted that this study did not provide information on compensation strategies.

In addition, other factors that influence the use of the strategies in oral tasks, it is relevant to consider not only the proficiency level which demonstrated that learners with good English skills in this study use more metacognitive strategies but also involving students in role plays, interviews or storytelling among other activities which were outside the scope of this research since it focused on intensive reading mostly. Moreover, learning styles and personality traits are also considered when designing English oral tasks. On the other hand, the great variety of cultural and educational backgrounds might reveal other aspects regarding discourse analysis and finally, the motivation and confidence levels which arise from the different strategies used depending on the task and its requirements. The previous study presents the results related to the use of strategies according to Oxford's model on oral reports as one of the speaking activities which are common within the EFL classroom. Although for this research, three instruments were implemented such as: A focus group, a survey and observation, there are more instruments which can be applied: Think-aloud protocols, Audio/video recordings of oral tasks, Stimulated recall after performance to get extended results.

Finally, implications for future studies suggest that it is recommended to study the implementation of online oral reports in depth; this, to identify incidents, as well as the use of different inputs (extensive reading), and even more diverse ones, such as videos or audio materials, to inform the LLS generated from them in oral EFL reports. To

sum up, if English teachers are willing to replicate this study, they need to establish the LLS taxonomy to be used as a theoretical reference from the beginning, as well as state the input to be applied. Regarding the implications for teaching, the following are the most relevant about this study: Strategy instruction should be integrated into oral skills lessons to engage students to participate, besides teachers can explicitly model strategy use (e.g., think aloud, self-monitoring) to help students to recognize and apply these strategies. On the other hand, tasks should be designed to encourage collaborative and reflective use of strategies. Feedback should address not only linguistic accuracy but also strategic performance, promoting not only teachers' feedback but also peer-to-peer feedback within students.

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