"LEARNING STYLES, LEARNING STRATEGIES, AND VOCABULARY"

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ABSTRACT

This case study explored the language learning styles and strategies of three adult learners. A reading exercise explored a key vocabulary learning strategy, guessing at the meaning of words from context. The results of the exercise suggested that accuracy in contextual guessing was influenced by the strength of the contextual clues. A vocabulary learning exercise suggested that learners were relatively unaware of many strategies that they could have potentially be using. The paper concludes by recommending that vocabulary learning pedagogy be both broad in scope and deep in explanation.

INTRODUCTION

**Learning strategies**

According to Cohen (1990), learning strategies can be defined as “learning processes which are consciously selected by the learner.” He continues in his definition, emphasizing that “the element of **choice** is important here because this is what gives a strategy its special character. These are moves which the learner is at least partially aware of, even if full attention is not being given to them.” Learner strategies have been categorized in detail in Oxford’s taxonomy (Oxford, 1990), which includes six categories: Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective and Social.

Wenden and Rubin (1987) provide a list of theoretical assumptions of language strategy training (researchers comments in parenthesis):

1. **Some language learners are more successful than others.** (The relevant point made here is that strategies may be partially responsible for language learning success.)

2. **The learning process includes both explicit and implicit knowledge**

3. **Consciousness-raising is not incidental to learning.**

4. **Successful strategies can be use to good effect by less effective learners.**

5. **Teachers can promote strategy use.** (The relevant point here is that teachers can be instrumental in helping students consider which strategies work best for them.)
6. Once trained, students become the best judge of how to approach the learning task.

7. Self-direction promotes learning both inside and outside the classroom.

8. Language learning is like other kinds of learning. (The main point here seems to be that learning theorists suggest that it is essential for students to be able to assess their own knowledge, and that learning is most successful when students play an active role in the process.)

9. The success of learner training in other subjects is applicable to language learning.

10. The "critical" faculty used by all humans in communicating is important in language learning. (The point here is that the "critical" faculty, or our "awareness of language", serves as a "monitor," fulfilling an important role in language learning by identifying problems and correcting them.)

Learning Styles

Language styles are the "general approaches...that students use in acquiring a new language (Oxford, Ehrman, & Lavine, 1991 in Oxford & Lavine, 1992). In the following paragraphs, Oxford and Lavine (1992) offer a categorization of the different language styles of individual learners.

First, analytic learners are contrasted with global learners. Analytic learners would tend to focus on grammatical rules and details. They would rather look up a word in the dictionary to get it exactly right rather than guess at the word's meaning. Global learners focus on main ideas over details, avoid grammar analysis, and enjoy guessing.

Students may take one of three approaches in regards to sensory preference: visual, auditory, or hands-on. Visual students like reading and visual stimulation, whereas auditory students enjoy conversations, lectures and role plays. Hands-on students prefer to be mobile and active in the classroom, engaging in tangible activities such as working with flash cards or working with collages.

Students are also classified according to categories of intuitive-random versus sensory-sequential dimensions. A student who tends to be intuitive-random would think
in abstract, nonsequential ways. In contrast, a sensory-sequential learner would prefer to focus on more concrete, step-by-step approaches to learning and would tend to avoid taking risks.

In regards to their tolerance of openness, some students are open-oriented, and others are closed-oriented. Students who are more open have a more relaxed attitude toward language learning, seeing it more as a game than a task. Closed students are typically organized and hardworking, wanting directions and grammar rules spelled out clearly.

The last two sets of contrasting styles are reflective verses impulsive and introverted verses extroverted. Reflective students prefer to wait before responding because of their concern for accuracy. On the other hand, impulsive learners would not hesitate to respond, even though their answers may not be accurate. Finally, introverted learners would prefer to work alone or with one other person, whereas an extroverted learner would draw energy from working in groups (Oxford & Lavine, 1992).

Importance of vocabulary

There seems to be widespread agreement among students as to the importance of having an adequate vocabulary. In one poll of ESL students, 68 percent said that an inadequate vocabulary was the main single contributor to problems in academic reading, while in comparison only 19 percent indicated syntactic complexities as the main problem area (Gorman, 1979 in Crow & Quigley, 1985). Another poll examining the language learning beliefs of over 200 students showed that learners feel that learning vocabulary is important (Horowitz, 1988). Research has also recognized that vocabulary is a critical aspect of reading ability (Grabe, 1991; Koda, 1989; Stanovich, 1986).

Approaches to vocabulary instruction
Four main approaches to vocabulary instruction are outlined by Coady (1997). On one end of the continuum lies the Context Alone approach, which assumes that no direct vocabulary teaching is necessary. This approach argues that using the context while reading extensively is all that is needed for learning vocabulary, provided there is successful comprehension (Krashen, 1989). The second position on Coady’s continuum is occupied by Strategy Instruction. Proponents of this approach also believe that using the context is primary way to learn vocabulary; however, they would not argue that context needs to be used exclusively. They think that explicit strategy instruction (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994) is a necessary complement to effectively guessing from the context. The third position on the continuum is Development plus Explicit Instruction. This approach recommends using a large number of techniques and direct memorization of high frequency items. Explicit teaching of vocabulary is deemed especially necessary for elementary learners, who later on in their learning process are encouraged to use the context. For example, Nation (1993, in Coady, 1997) proposes that learners should first learn the 2,000 most frequently used words as quickly and efficiently as possible by means of direct teaching and learning and the use of graded readers. He recommends that when this is accomplished, the readers should then engage in extensive reading. The fourth position on the continuum emphasizes Classroom Activities. This approach is found in practical handbooks, and does not necessarily advocate a certain methodological approach. The handbooks may contain a combination of traditional grammar-translation techniques and contemporary communicative activities (Coady, 1997). Included in the traditional approach to teaching vocabulary is instruction which is “haphazard” in that teachers have not carefully considered which words need to be known by students (Oxford, 1994).

Categorization of vocabulary strategies

A helpful distinction has been made between two kinds of vocabulary activities (Cook and Mayer, 1983 cited in Schmitt 1997; Nation, 1990). The distinction is
between vocabulary activities that help to initially discover the meaning of a word and those that aid in remembering the word after it has been introduced. Schmitt labels the former activities Determination Strategies and the latter Consolidation Strategies (1997).

Determination strategies are further classified by Schmitt into discovering the meaning by guessing from the learners structural knowledge of the language, guessing from an L1 cognate, guessing from context, using reference materials, or asking someone else (p. 208).

Consolidation Strategies (strategies that help one remember the meaning of a word), are also classified into more specific categories. Memory strategies are one or these categories, and is often referred to as mnemonics, which means “aiding the memory” (Higbee, 1979).

There are several other Consolidation Strategies in Schmitt’s taxonomy. Social strategies, for example, would include group work in practicing vocabulary and interacting with native speakers. Using pictures and imagery refers to strategies such as studying new words with pictures instead of the definition in order to learn their meaning.

The category of related words would include semantic mapping, which refers to linking new words to other L2 words known by the learner (e.g. a category of fruits—apples, oranges and pears could be linked together and learned at the same time). It has been shown to be an effective way to learn vocabulary (Crow & Quigley, 1985).

Schmitt’s other categories include using the word’s orthographic structure, for example, visualizing the form of the word in order to remember it. Also, using the phonological structure is suggested, using rhymes to remember a word. Another phonological mnemonic is the Keyword Method, which involves finding an L1 word that sounds like the target word; for instance, the English word cat for the Japanese word katana (sword). Cognitive strategies differ from memory strategies in that they involve less manipulative mental processing. Examples of these would include written and verbal repetition, word lists, and flash cards. Metacognitive strategies are those used to control and evaluate one’s own learning. Examples would be choosing to interact with native speakers whenever possible, or choosing to test oneself. In another category
labeled "other memory strategies", Schmitt includes activities such as structural analysis of words (e.g., affixes, roots and word class), learning words in 'chunks,' and using physical actions while trying to learn a word (Schmitt, 1997).

**Research on vocabulary strategy instruction**

One study shows that most students do not appear to use structured vocabulary learning strategies (Lessard-Clouston, 1998). Other studies claim that learners are likely to use a variety of strategies in combination (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Sanaoui, 1995).

An extensive study by Gu and Johnson (1996) explores the relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and performance. The study involved 850 Chinese university learners who were asked to complete a vocabulary learning questionnaire, a vocabulary size test and the College English Test. Positive predictors of the general (College English) test included Self-Initiation and Selective Attention, two metacognitive strategies. Contextual guessing, skilful use of dictionaries, note taking, paying attention to word formation, contextual encoding, and activation of newly learned words positively correlated with both the vocabulary and general English tests. The strongest negative predictor of both tests was visual repetition, while vocabulary memory strategies related to vocabulary size, but not English proficiency. This study suggests that certain strategy combinations may have more of an effect on learning than individual strategies.

Though the literature seems focused on discovering what strategies are effective or not, Cohen (1998) suggests that:

"...it needs to be pointed out that with some exceptions, strategies themselves are not inherently good or bad, but have the potential to be used effectively—whether by the same learner from one instance within one task to another instance within that same task (e.g. at one point in a text v. some other point). From one task to another, or by different learners dealing with the same task...perhaps if enough learners in a given group successfully use a given strategy in a given task, then claims could be made for the effectiveness of that strategy in that instance for that group. Otherwise it is safest to refer to what often amounts to a panoply of potentially useful strategies for any given task."
It seems, then, that in vocabulary strategy instruction it may be best to avoid hasty conclusions regarding what strategy is “best” for any given learner or group of learners, since what is most effective may vary according to learning context and individual learner differences. It may be sufficiently helpful simply to make learners aware of a variety of learning strategies, allowing the learners themselves to discern when and how to effectively exploit the strategies.

*Contextual guessing as a vocabulary learning strategy*

Guessing the meaning of vocabulary by examining the word’s contextual clues is widely recognized as an important and useful vocabulary learning strategy (Nagy, 1997; Hosenfield, Arnold, Kirchofer, Laciura, & Wilson, 1981; Clark & Silberstein, 1977; Twaddel, 1973). Context is important in vocabulary learning for two reasons: a word’s meaning is mediated by its many contexts, and these contexts provide input from which learners gain vocabulary knowledge (Nagy, 1997). A study by Huckin and Bloch (1993) reported that students relying on context clues for guessing (especially local clues) were usually successful. The validity of contextual guessing has not merely been supported by the literature; teachers and textbooks often encourage students to guess at the meanings of words.

However, in spite of support in the field for contextual guessing as an effective strategy, there is also a growing body of literature that has recognized its limitations (Franzen, 1998; Laufer, 1997; Haynes, 1993; Dubin & Olshtain, 1993; Stein, 1993). Several reasons for unsuccessful guessing have been observed. Some of these reasons have to do with context. For example, in some cases there are no contextual clues (Franzen, 1998; Haynes, 1993). Other contexts may be vague or ambiguous, making guessing difficult (Franzen, 1998). Another difficulty is that the reading selection may be too difficult to guess at the meanings of words; in other words, there are too many unfamiliar words that surround the word that the learner is guessing at, thus decreasing the likelihood of a successful guess (Franzen, 1998; Laufer, 1997).

Sometimes the learners themselves may be “at fault” in their guessing.
For instance, they may be convinced they know the word’s meaning and thus guess incorrectly without using contextual clues to help “unlearn” the incorrect meaning (Frantzen, 1998). In addition, they may be too focused on phrasal context without considering the broader context (Frantzen, 1998). Learners may also be too easily satisfied with partial understanding of a word and not make thorough use of the context clues which could further refine their understanding of a word or reading (Frantzen, 1998). In some cases, the physical appearance of a word can be a stronger—and misleading— influence than context clues (Frantzen, 1998; Laufer, 1997; Haynes, 1993). In other cases, a learner’s background knowledge may override lexical and syntactic clues (Laufer, 1997; Stein, 1993).

*The Present Study*

There was a dual purpose to this case study. The first intention was to describe the general styles and strategies of three language learners and to suggest ways that this knowledge could benefit their own vocabulary learning. The second goal was to explore the answer to the following questions:

1. Does context provide enough clues to accurately guess the meaning of vocabulary words?
2. What are some of the reasons why learners make incorrect guesses at the meanings of words?
3. To what degree are learners:
   a) aware of vocabulary learning strategies?
   b) using vocabulary learning strategies effectively?

*METHOD*

*Subjects*

Three learners participated in this study.
Jack came to the United States from Vietnam more than one year prior to the research to study English in the Minnesota English Center (MEC) at the University of Minnesota. Previously in Vietnam he had studied English for six years in middle school and high school. He spent one additional year studying in Vietnam in a language program run by Americans. The approach taken by his language teachers in Vietnam appears to have been the grammar-translation method. During this period his teachers did not encourage guessing at the meaning of vocabulary, nor other vocabulary learning strategies. Since Jack was having difficulty in his grammar class, I tutored him twice a week, upon the suggestion of his grammar teacher. Jack described learning vocabulary as being somewhat difficult.

Marty was from Turkey, and had been in the United States for seven months. He had studied English for nine years, including a five-year period during which he was an English teacher. Like Jack, Marty was having difficulty with grammar, and I tutored him after his teacher asked me to do so. Marty was having more difficulty than his classmates in each of his three classes (reading and composition, grammar, and oral skills) during the quarter of study in which the data collection took place. At the point of the data collection, he was not likely to pass any of his three classes. In his opinion, learning vocabulary was somewhat difficult.

Tom came to the United States from Yemen three months before the data collection. He had studied English for six years in middle school and high school. Tom was a student of this researcher in the MEC. He approached me at the beginning of the quarter because he felt that the learning strategies he was using were not the most effective. Tom was passing all of his classes during the quarter this study took place, and was performing at an average level compared to his classmates. Tom also described learning vocabulary as being somewhat difficult.¹

*Instrumentation*

Five Instruments were used in this project:

¹ The TOEFL scores of the three learners were as follows: Jack, 407; Marty, 423; Tom, 403. These scores were examined to see if there was any relationship between proficiency and strategy choice, but no clear relationship was found.
1) A questionnaire was given to the three learners for the purpose of eliciting general background information about each of them (see Appendix A).

2) Two reading passages that were written by the researcher were given to the subjects. In the passages they had to guess the meaning of an underlined vocabulary word that they would not know. The passages were written with clear clues so that they could guess the meaning of the words from context. The language surrounding the underlined words was simple, but the underlined words themselves were difficult; in fact, some of the words are seldom used by native speakers. The words were not nonsense words, however; if the learners decided to look up these difficult words in the dictionary, they would be able to understand their meaning. The two reading passages were of equal length and difficulty, roughly speaking. During the reading of the first passage, they were allowed to use their dictionaries to look up words they did not know, but during the second reading passage they were not allowed to use a dictionary (see Appendix B).

3) A brief questionnaire (see Appendix D) was given after each reading passage to find out which words they already knew (after both readings) and which words they had guessed at instead of using the dictionary (after the first reading).

4) A ten-word vocabulary list was given to the learners for the purpose of finding out the vocabulary strategies they were or were not using (see Appendix E).

5) The learners were given Oxford’s Styles Analysis Survey (SAS) and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) to determine their learning style and strategy preference (see appendix F).

Data collection and analysis
During the course of this project, each student met individually with the investigator in a quiet office at the University of Minnesota on three separate occasions. At the first meeting the background questionnaire was given which served to elicit focused responses concerning the learners' experiences studying English and learning vocabulary. This questionnaire also was useful as a springboard for informal discussion surrounding these topics.

After completing the background questionnaire, the learners read the two reading passages which were followed by questionnaires. After reading the first passage (during which they were allowed to use dictionaries), they were asked about the words that they already knew and those words they had guessed at instead of using the dictionary. After the second reading (during which dictionaries were not allowed) they were questioned only about the words that they had already known. The number of guesses at the meanings of underlined words the learners made without looking at the dictionary (during the first reading) was counted, as was the number of accurate guesses on both readings. After this, preliminary suggestions were given to the learners regarding what might assist them in their reading (e.g. if one of the three learners seemingly looked up too many words in the dictionary, he was encouraged to consider guessing at the context as an alternative), and examples were given from the reading as to how the learners might practice such suggestions.

The learners were then given the vocabulary quiz. Previous to the start of the quiz, learners were encouraged to think about the strategies that they would be using as they memorized the words and their definitions. Each learner was given eight minutes to memorize the ten-word list before they were given the quiz. After the quiz, the learners were asked to recall how they had tried to memorize each word on the list. During this time, strategies that the students used were affirmed, and strategies they had not used were suggested and explained, using examples from the ten words on the exercise.

During the second meeting, the students were given the SAS and the SILL. The purpose of these questionnaires was explained to the learners beforehand, and any questions they had as they took the test were answered. After the tests were
completed, each student briefly discussed his impressions of the tests with the investigator.

During the third meeting the students and the investigator discussed the results of all the instruments. The learners were each given a personalized analysis (see Appendix G), which was a concise summary of all the instruments, including suggestions for how they might use the results to enhance their language learning. Using this summary while referring to the instruments themselves, their results were explained to them. They were also shown how they could use the instruments as a resource for future study (e.g. the questions on the SILL provide many specific strategies one could use).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and discussion of the SAS and SILL

Results from the SAS indicated that Jack was a visual, introverted, intuitive, closure-oriented, and global learner (for definitions of these categories and categories for the SILL, refer to Appendix E). The SILL profile described Jack as a preferring the strategies of remembering more effectively, using mental processes, and compensating for missing knowledge. General areas he did not prefer were learning with others, managing emotions, and organizing and evaluating his learning. [It should be noted that the categories used in the SILL correspond with the six categories mentioned in the introduction of this project (e.g. “learning with others” corresponds to social strategies). The categories in the SILL had merely been simplified for the L2 learners.]

According to the SAS, Marty was both visual and auditory, extroverted, intuitive, open, and analytic. The SILL listed the strategies he preferred as learning with others, compensating for missing knowledge, and using mental processes. Strategy areas he did not prefer were managing emotions, remembering more effectively, and organizing and evaluating his learning.

Tom, according to the SAS, was equally visual, auditory and hands on. He was also described as being equally extroverted and introverted, and also was equally
intuitive and concrete-sequential. Results indicate he was more closure-oriented than open, and was as global as he was analytic. The SILL reported that he preferred organizing and evaluating his learning, managing his emotions, and compensating for missing knowledge. Strategies he used less were learning with others, using mental processes, and remembering more effectively.

In comparing these three learners it is readily apparent that their approaches to learning and the strategies that they used varied significantly. If such a variance is reflective of language learners as a whole, it would stand to reason that a one-size-fits-all approach to language learning and teaching is inadequate.

A study by Oxford (1992), underscores the importance of being aware of such individual language learning styles. The study describes “style wars,” or style conflicts, that occur in the language classroom between teachers and students who have different approaches to language learning and teaching. For example, “Alice”, a participant in the study, described the style conflict she had with her language teacher:

My style wars began in a graduate course. The teacher and I are not compatible at all. My style of language learning is causing great friction with his teaching mode. I’m unhappy, I dread the class, and I’m under a great deal of stress in and out of the class.

I’m a visual learner. I must see things in order to get the picture in my mind and understand the concept. The teacher never writes anything on the board, in fact he never moves from his domain, the chair...I’m a global learner; he likes to have everything detailed at length with no explanation given. I’m having to use rote memorization in order to study, and that is no joy; nothing has meaning, everything is just a blur (Oxford, 1992).

From the examples or Alice and the three learners in this study we find that each learner has his or her own learning style. These approaches to learning languages may conflict with their instructors, negatively effecting motivation, and most likely hindering the learning process. One possible benefit of making learners aware of their learning style could be that the learner could interpret style differences with their teachers as simply that—merely differences. In this way, style instruction may allow for more tolerance between teachers and student, and reduce negative factors such as loss of motivation. Of course, once learners are aware of style differences, they could also plan for how they could make the best of the learning situation (e.g. in view of style
differences, discuss with the instructor certain possibilities of adapting in-class activities; outside of class, supplement their learning with activities that are more consistent with their style).

The benefits of strategy instruction may be significant as well. Through taking the SILL, the learners were made more aware of the strategies that they were using. This may be an important accomplishment, for as previously suggested by Wenden and Rubin (1987), consciousness-raising may lead to learning. They were also encouraged by the researcher to attempt to learn English in ways that were consistent with their strategy preference (for specific examples, see Appendix F). Numerous other benefits of strategies training can be inferred from the list of theoretical assumptions presented in the list by Wenden and Rubin (1987) that was given in the introduction of this study.

Results and discussion of the reading exercise

In general, the strength of the contextual clues affected the learners' ability to guess accurately. Some of the words that the students guessed at had contextual clues that were strong. Contextual clues for other words were less strong, and some words had no contextual clues at all. The three readers guessed at the meanings 48 words total. They guessed more accurately at the words that had strong contextual clues (4.5 out of 12 words, or 38%; note: half credit was given in some cases) than they did the words that had less strong contextual clues (9 out of 28 words, or 32%). Not surprisingly, having at least some contextual clues was essential in guessing at the meanings of words, because no words were guessed correctly if there were no contextual clues (0 out of 8 words).

The three learners had varying success in contextual guessing. Jack guessed at the meanings of seven out of ten words in the first reading, using his dictionary to look up only three of the words. However, even though Jack was willing to guess, he nonetheless was guessing inaccurately: he guessed correctly at only five of seventeen words total. All of these words had at least some contextual clues, and two of the correct guesses were of words that had strong contextual clues.
Marty guessed at the meanings of nine of the ten words in the first reading, looking up only one word in the dictionary. However, he only guessed correctly at six out of nineteen. All of the words he guessed correctly had at least some contextual clues, and one of the correct guesses were of words with strong contextual clues.

Tom guessed at the meanings of only two of the ten words in the first passage, looking up the other eight words in the dictionary. However, of the total number of words he guessed at, seven of twelve were correct. Again, all of the words guessed correctly had some contextual clues, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ of the correct guesses were of words with strong contextual clues.

All three learners revealed a fairly low rate of accuracy in their guessing at words from context. The following may be reasons why inaccurate guesses occurred:

1) Context alone may not be enough to guess at the meaning of words accurately. The target words in the reading passages had varying levels of contextual support (See Appendix C) which appears to have influenced how successful the readers guesses were.

2) Background knowledge may have overridden contextual clues. For example, Marty guessed that "mustang" meant "company of the car," even though the context would indicate that "mustang" in this case must be a sort of animal, not a vehicle: "He jumped on his mustang and rode as fast as he could to the city, which was four hours away. He stopped, gave his mustang something to eat...". Apparently Marty's knowledge of cars caused him to overlook fairly strong contextual clues.

3) Learners may have made good guesses from the local context and still missed the exact meaning of the word because they ignored the broader context. Tom seems to have done this when guessing what the word "specie" (an obscure word for money) means. "When he entered the building, someone with a wooden club hit him on his noggin. When Roger awoke, he found he had no specie in his wallet." It appears that Tom may have focused merely on the local clues (the sentence in which "specie" is
found), ignoring the sentence preceding it, which would have informed him that money had been forcefully taken.

4) Other guesses were not correct because only some of the contextual clues were used. Tom guessed that “shrink” meant “something not like what you want.” However, this guess is too general; the contextual clues were sufficient to make a much more precise guess. “The man went and found her a dress that was about her size, but he knew it would shrink. Sure enough, when the woman took the dress home and washed it, she found it was too short for her.”

5) Sometimes the morphology of the word overrode the contextual clues. For example, Tom guessed that “facade” meant “look face to face” instead of “disguise”, as the context would indicate: “Later that day the salesman’s wife, disguised as an old woman, went to the emporium. The salesman could not see through her facade, so he sold her a lot of bad merchandise.”

6) In some cases, the broader context overrode the local contextual clues. Jack, for example, guessed that “vessel” meant “another kind of chair”, apparently influenced by the discussion of chairs earlier in the reading. The local context, however, should have indicated to him that “another kind of chair” would be an improper guess: “She asked the salesman to show her some vessels for holding her plants. Unfortunately, when she brought them home, she discovered that the water she poured into the vessels all leaked out.”

There appears, then, to be several different causes for incorrect guesses at the meanings of words when relying on contextual support.

Since these reasons for incorrect guesses exist, it would seem that learners need first of all to be made aware of the contextual guessing strategy as well as being trained in how to do it well. Jack and Marty, relatively unsuccessful guessers, were made aware of the strategy of contextual guessing (they had not been taught to do this by their teachers when studying English in their native country). However, it may also be necessary to give the learners training in how to guess well; in other words, they need to be informed about the limitations of guessing at the meanings of words from
using its context. In other words, it may be important for the students to be trained how to be strategic when applying the strategy of contextual guessing.

**Integration of learning styles and contextual guessing**

Another approach to training students how to guess more accurately could be relate their specific strategy of contextual guessing to their overall learning style.

The three learners were given instruction by the researcher as to how they might use their knowledge of learning styles to possible improve their guessing (See Appendix F for complete style analysis). For example, Marty, who had an analytical approach to language, was encouraged to take full advantage of his style preference to help him guess more accurately. Jack, however, was not an analytical learner. Since an analytical approach might have helped him to guess more accurately, he was encouraged to “style flex”, or to try to develop another side of himself in order to enhance his learning.

Tom was relatively hesitant to guess, but he guessed with more accuracy. Because of this, the researcher encouraged him to guess more. It is not surprising, perhaps, that Tom described himself as a very closure-oriented person. It may be helpful for learners to see how their style preferences are sometimes consistent with their learning behaviors in language activities such as contextual guessing. It is possible that this kind of style recognition can help them guess at the meaning of vocabulary in more efficient and accurate ways.

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**Results from the vocabulary exercise**

Jack, Marty, and Tom used the following vocabulary learning strategies when learning the ten-word vocabulary list (see Appendix E):

**Jack’s vocabulary learning results**
Language transfer: “Physique” sounds like physical.
“Stipend” had the word “tip” in it, reminding him it is a “regular payment.”

Visualization: He pictured a dentist working on someone’s open mouth to help him remember “palate”

Other strategies: He remembered a song with the name “Carol” in it to help him remember that a “carol” is a type of song.

Marty’s vocabulary learning results

Language transfer: “Physique” sounds like physical.
Rhyme/similarity in sound: “Holler” sounded to him like “roller”

Tom’s vocabulary learning results

Repetition: He read all the words and definitions aloud three times. Sometimes he wrote the word down.

Visualization: He pictured the word “vulture”

Other strategies: He put the word in a sentence.

The results show that each of the learners was able to use strategies (with varying degrees of success) without having been given instruction. This would suggest that to a degree, vocabulary strategies may be instinctive. In other words, it appears that learners instinctively knew that there may be ways to learning vocabulary that were more efficient than others.

It also appeared that there were several strategies that could have been used to benefit the students' learning vocabulary, but were not. For example, whereas Tom used verbal repetition, Jack did not. On the other hand, Jack used language transfer, but Tom did not. A list of strategies that individual learners did not use—but could have—was given to them, with explanations (see Appendix G). Some learners did not
use the following strategies at all: repetition, rhyme, visualization, language transfer and keyword mnemonics. In addition, some categories of strategies were not utilized by any of the learners. For example, they could have tried grouping the words “physique,” “corpse,” “spine,” and “palate,” since they all had to do with the body. Similarly, “holler,” “utter,” and “carol” were all things we say or sing, so to group these together may have helped them remember.

In sum, the learners’ use of vocabulary learning strategies was generally incomplete. The likely reason for this is that the learners had not had strategy training in the past. Some learners did not use certain strategies and were completely unaware of the existence of other strategies that might have assisted them in vocabulary learning.

What impact, then, might strategy training have on vocabulary learning? An analogy may be helpful in this case. Building vocabulary may be likened to building a house. If the carpenter is unaware of certain house-building tools, his ability to build will also be hindered. Likewise, if he does not develop the skill of using these tools, the building of the house may be relatively laborious. In the same way, students trying to build their vocabulary may benefit from becoming aware of learning strategies and developing their skillful use.

Limitations and research suggestions

A limitation of this case study is that the number of subjects was small; larger studies may lead to more comprehensive results. Additionally, using verbal report that focusing on why the readers guessed the way they did might have yielded information that could have complemented the post hoc analysis of student responses in the reading exercise in this study. In other words, the reasons for the learners’ incorrect guesses from context may have been even more clear if verbal report had been used during or immediately after reading the two passages. Finally, the texts were researcher generated, which had certain advantages (it gave some control over the amount of context in passages and helped to make length and difficulty of text
consistent). However, since the texts were created by the researcher, they consequently were lacking in authenticity.

Future studies that explore the effectiveness of guessing at the meaning of words from context may want to involve more subjects and use carefully selected authentic texts that provide varying levels of contextual support (strong, some and no contextual clues). In such studies, researchers may want to use verbal report that focuses on why readers guessed the way they did. Such verbal report could be done during or immediately following the reading of the passages and could be used to gain more information about the reasons why learners may guess incorrectly (and correctly) at words when using contextual clues.

**Pedagogical implications**

Instructors and authors of textbooks need to be making learners aware of the existence of vocabulary learning strategies. This awareness raising needs to be broad in nature; in other words, it needs to go beyond a cursory instruction to guess at the meanings of words from vocabulary. Instruction should also be given regarding alternative strategies for dealing with unknown words (e.g. strategic use of dictionaries and glosses) and other vocabulary learning strategies (e.g. mnemonics, flashcards, etc.).

The awareness raising also needs to have depth; for instance, instructors need to go beyond telling their students that contextual guessing is a good language learning strategy; they also need to know when it is a useful strategy and when it may be a limited strategy. If students are simply told in general to “guess from the context”, they may almost certainly experience a measure of frustration, since some words have little or no contextual support, thus making contextual guessing nearly impossible. Of course, awareness raising is only an initial step; instructors and textbook publishers need to provide opportunities for learners to practice and use vocabulary learning strategies.
Similarly, instructors and textbook publishers need to help learners be aware of their learning styles. They also need to provide opportunities for learners to consider the relevance of learning styles to vocabulary learning.

CONCLUSION

There was a dual purpose to this study. First, the learning styles of strategies of three adult language learners were described. Their individual learning styles and strategies were explained to the learners, and suggestions were given as to how knowledge of their styles might help them learn languages more effectively. Each learner was also instructed by the researcher as to how the learners’ learning styles and strategies might help improve their approaches to vocabulary learning.

The second part of the study involved answering the following questions.

**Does context provide enough clues to accurately guess the meaning of vocabulary words?** It was found that there was a range of contextual support; some contexts did not provide enough clues to accurately guess the meaning of words and some do. Strong contextual support was not found to ensure accurate guessing, but it made it more likely.

This finding would suggest that it is not adequate for teachers to instruct learners to guess from the context without informing them of the limitations of this strategy. In addition, the limitations of contextual guessing as a strategy may encourage teachers to take a broad approach to language instruction. In other words, being knowledgeable about the wide variety of vocabulary learning strategies (i.e. not just contextual guessing) would help them give balanced and informed vocabulary learning instruction.

**What are some of the reasons why learners make incorrect guesses at the meanings of words?** There seems to be several reasons why the learners in this case study guessed incorrectly at the meanings of words: there may have been insufficient contextual support, contextual support may have been overridden by background knowledge, broader contextual clues may have been ignored, morphology may have overridden contextual clues, and broader contextual clues may have overridden local contextual clues.
To what degree are learners aware of vocabulary learning strategies? The results were mixed; learners were aware of some learning strategies, but were completely unaware of many strategies.

To what degree are learners using vocabulary learning strategies effectively? Though there was some use of strategies by learners, they were not using vocabulary learning strategies as effectively as they could have.

It appears in this study that the learners were aware of, and were using, some vocabulary learning strategies. However, the following two problems seemed to exist. First, in many cases the students were not aware of the strategies and in other cases the students were not using the strategies to their potential—they either did not use the strategy skillfully, or they didn’t use the strategy at all (see Appendix G). This lack or use, or lack of skillful use, was apparent in the reading exercise (Appendix B), where students guessed at the meanings of words from context with varying levels of success. It was also observed in the vocabulary exercise (Appendix E), where some strategies which might have been helpful were also not used. In sum, these findings suggest a need for vocabulary learning instruction that is both broad and deep.
References


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX B: READING PASSAGES

APPENDIX C: STRENGTH OF CONTEXT SUPPORT IN THE READING PASSAGES

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE ON READING PASSAGES

APPENDIX E: VOCABULARY EXERCISE

APPENDIX F: OXFORD'S (1989) SAS AND SILL

APPENDIX G: LEARNERS' PERSONALIZED ANALYSIS
APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is the amount of experience you have had learning English?

2. How long have you been in the US?

3. Learning new vocabulary is (circle one):
   a) easy
   b) somewhat easy
   c) somewhat difficult
   d) difficult

4. For me, learning vocabulary is __________ than for most people (circle one).
   a) easier
   b) somewhat easy
   c) somewhat more difficult
   d) more difficult

5. Do you know any other languages?
Part I: Read the passage.

Roger was a boy who lived on a small farm in the countryside. One day when Roger was reading the city periodical he saw an advertisement that read: “Get rich quick! Easy work!” He was so thrilled that he quickly ran to his genitors and showed them the periodical. “Foolishness!” said his genitors. “You can’t always believe what you read. Anybody who would write an advertisement like that must be a swindler.” Roger was very despondent. Yet he decided he would go to the city anyway. He jumped on his mustang and rode as fast as he could to the city, which was four hours away. He stopped, gave his mustang something to eat, and wandered towards the dark building whose address matched the one in the advertisement. When he entered the building, someone with a wooden club hit him on his noggin. When Roger awoke, he found that he had no specie in his wallet. Disheartened, he went back to his abode. There, he saw his genitors waiting for him. They were not angry with him; they were glad he had come back. “You were right; the advertisement was a hoax,” said Roger.

Part II: Write the meaning of the underlined word. You may use a dictionary if you like.

1. periodical:
2. thrilled:
3. genitors:
4. swindler:
5. despondent:
6. mustang:
7. noggin:
8. specie:
9. abode:
10. hoax:
Part I: Read the passage.

There once was an unfair salesman. He sold many things every day from his large emporium. One day, a young boy came, saying: “My mother asked me to acquire a new chair for him. Do you have any?” The salesman brought the boy a chair, and said “This is a very sturdy chair.” However, soon after the boy brought the chair home, it broke. A couple of hours later, a young woman came to the emporium. She asked the salesman to show her some vessels for holding her plants. Unfortunately, when she brought them home, she discovered that the water she poured into the vessels all leaked out. One day, one of his wife’s kith, whom the salesman had not seen in years, came to the emporium. The salesman thought, this will be the third person I will defraud this day. “Today, I would like to buy a dress, but I am quite lanky, and you may not have my size,” said the woman. The man went and found her a dress that was about her size, but he knew it would shrink. Sure enough, when the woman took the dress home and washed it, she found it was too short for her. When she brought the dress back to the salesman, he snickered: “its too late; you bought it!” The woman then went to see his wife. She said, “your husband sold me a dress that shrunk, and then he laughed at me when I tried to bring it back!” Later that day the salesman’s wife, disguised as an old woman, went to the emporium. The salesman could not see through her facade, so he sold her a lot of bad merchandise. Later that night after the salesman came home, he was surprised to find his living room filled with broken items from his store!

Part II: Write the meaning of the underlined word. You may not use the dictionary.

1. emporium:
2. acquire:
3. sturdy:
4. vessels:
5. kith:
6. defraud:
7. lanky:
8. shrink:
9. snickered:
10. facade:
APPENDIX C: STRENGTH OF CONTEXTUAL SUPPORT IN THE READING PASSAGES

I. **Strength of contextual support in first reading**

   A. Underlined words (in orange) with strong contextual support: *periodical, mustang*
   
   B. Underlined words (in blue) with some contextual support: *thrilled, swindler, noggin, specie, abode, hoax*
   
   C. Underlined words (in green) with no contextual support: *genitors, despondent*

II. **Strength of contextual support in second reading**

   A. Underlined words (in orange) with strong contextual support: *emporium, vessels, snickered*
   
   B. Underlined words (in blue) with some contextual support: *acquire, sturdy, defraud, lanky, shrink, facade* (this word is part of an idiomatic phrase, and thus may have been more difficult)
   
   C. Underlined word (in green) with no contextual support: *kith*
Questions after first reading passage:

1. Did you already know any of the underlined words before you read the passage? Which ones?

2. Which words did you look up in the dictionary before you wrote down your guess?

3. Which words did you check in the dictionary after you wrote them down (to see if your guess was correct). For which words was your guess correct?

4. For which words did you not use the dictionary at all?
Question after the second reading passage:

1. Did you know any of the underlined words before you read the passage? Which ones?
APPENDIX E: VOCABULARY EXERCISE

Directions: Look at the ten words and their definitions. I will give you six or seven minutes to try to learn them. Then I will test you, asking you for the word or the definition. When you are doing this exercise, try to remember how you learned the words (try to remember the strategies you used).

1. physique (n)          the form of a human body
2. stipend (n)           a regular payment
3. corpse (n)            the dead body of a human being
4. spine (n)             the set of bones down the middle of the back
5. holler (v)            to yell or shout
6. palate (n)            the top part of the inside of the mouth
7. carol (v)             to sing joyously
8. utter (v)             to speak
9. vulture (n)           a bird that eats dead things
10. recumbent (adj)      lying down
I enjoy collecting cards, stamps, coins, or other things.
20) When I am on the TV, I listen to the sound more than
19) I can recognize people by their voices.
18) Rarely remember faces I have seen.
17) Remember better when people say when they look like.
16) Can easily understand when people say even if I can’t see them.
15) Like to listen to music when I study or work.
14) Background sounds help me think.
13) Need clear directions for tasks.
12) Rather than seeing.
11) Forget to clean by leaving a light on or a tape.
10) Remember things better if I discuss them out loud.
9) Can move comfortably where I need to study or work.
8) Get distracted by background noises.
7) Need written directions for tasks.
6) Use colors to help me see the image or work.
5) Underline or highlight the important parts I read.
4) Read to keep with words or more than with other media.
3) Can visualize pictures, numbers, or words in my head.
2) Like to test my memory.
1) Remember something better if I write it down.

STUDY OR WORK

ACTIVITY 1: HOW I USE MY PHYSICAL SENSES TO

For each item, circle your immediate response:
0 = Never, 1 = Sometimes, 2 = Very Often, 3 = Always

[Table with rows and columns filled with responses]

Appendix A: Measuring Learning Styles Surveys 209

Assessing Your Own Learning Style
Style Analysis Survey (SAS):
ACTIVITY 5: HOW I DEAL WITH IDEAS

1. I feel like thinking about the most important thing.
2. I choose a mess of notes or a clear plan.
3. I take a minute to think about things.
4. I have a hypothesis to confirm.
5. I prefer simple answers rather than a lot of explanations.
6. It is easy for me to paraphrase what other people say.
7. It is easy for me to see the overall plan of this picture.
8. I know details that do not seem relevant.
9. I do not think of a lot of details.
10. I am a continuous person.

ACTIVITY 4: HOW I APPROACH TASKS

1. I prefer to work on many options.
2. I prefer carefully outlined processes, or detailed plans.
3. I like detailed answers to a lot of questions.
4. I am interested in solving problems.
5. I like to think of the big picture before starting.
6. I have a lot of ideas in order to get things done.
7. I prefer intellectual challenges and sports.
8. I dislike waiting in order to get things done.
9. I have a continuous position.
10. I prefer to set things in order.

ACTIVITY 2: HOW I DEAL WITH OTHER PEOPLE

1. I like to make use of my energy.
2. I prefer to work with people.
3. I prefer to work with people.
4. I prefer to work with people.
5. I prefer to work with people.
6. I prefer to work with people.
7. I prefer to work with people.
8. I prefer to work with people.
9. I prefer to work with people.
10. I prefer to work with people.

ACTIVITY 3: HOW I HANDLE POSSIBILITIES

1. I have a vivid imagination.
2. I avoid a vivid imagination.
3. I am very clear about what matters most.
4. I am very clear about what matters most.
5. I am very clear about what matters most.
6. I am very clear about what matters most.
7. I am very clear about what matters most.
8. I am very clear about what matters most.
9. I am very clear about what matters most.
10. I am very clear about what matters most.

Appendix A: Normed Learning Styles Surveys

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For each item, circle your immediate response.

0 = Never 1 = Sometime 2 = Very Often 3 = Always
OTHER PEOPLE

ACTIVITY 2: HOW I DEAL WITH

(Answers: Le couche, Le bateau, Le bal, Le chapeau)

ACTIVITY 3: HOW I HANDLE POSSIBILITIES

(Answers: Rien, Encore, Une fois, Dès lors)

ACTIVITY 4: HOW I APPROACH TASKS

(Answers: Ne jamais, Si jamais, Si jamais plus, Ne jamais)

ACTIVITY 5: HOW I APPEAR TO OTHERS

(Answers: Mon beau, Mon copain, Mon chapeau, Mon couche)

ACTIVITY 6: HOW I FOCUS ON IDEAS

(Answers: Ne jamais, Si jamais, Si jamais plus, Ne jamais)

ACTIVITY 7: HOW I USE MY PHYSICAL SENSES

(Answers: Tout, Rien, Encore, Une fois, Dès lors)

ACTIVITY 8: HOW I USE MY LEARNING STRATEGIES

(Answers: Ne jamais, Si jamais, Si jamais plus, Ne jamais)

ACTIVITY 9: HOW I USE MY STRATEGIES

(Answers: Rien, Encore, Une fois, Dès lors)

ACTIVITY 10: HOW I USE MY LEARNING SENSES

(Answers: Tout, Rien, Encore, Une fois, Dès lors)

ACTIVITY 11: HOW I USE MY LEARNING TOOLS

(Answers: Ne jamais, Si jamais, Si jamais plus, Ne jamais)

ACTIVITY 12: HOW I USE MY LEARNING RESOURCES

(Answers: Rien, Encore, Une fois, Dès lors)
**Activity 4: How I Approach Tasks**

**Tips**

- Think before you act.
- Plan your work.
- Set realistic goals.
- Break down complex tasks into smaller, manageable parts.
- Prioritize tasks based on importance and urgency.

**Activity 3: How I Handle Possibilities**

- Be open to new ideas and perspectives.
- Engage in critical thinking.
- Challenge yourself to think creatively.
- Seek feedback and constructive criticism.

**Activity 2: How I Deal With Ideas**

- Keep an open mind.
- Question assumptions.
- Explore multiple viewpoints.
- Be willing to change your mind.

**Activity 1: How I Think**

- Focus on the present.
- Practice mindfulness.
- Set goals and priorities.
- Reflect on your progress.

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**Learning Styles in the ESL Classroom**

Appendix A: Normal Learning Styles Surveys
Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Directions

The STRATEGY INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (SILL) is designed to gather information about how you, as a student of a foreign language, go about learning that language. On the following pages, you will find statements related to learning a new language. Please read each statement. On the separate answer sheet, mark the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells how true the statement is in terms of what you actually do when you are learning the new language.

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Generally not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Generally true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

Never or almost never true of me means that the statement is very rarely true of you; that is, you do the behavior which is described in the statement only in very rare instances.

Generally not true of me means that the statement is usually not true of you; that is, you do the behavior which is described in the statement less than half the time, but more than in very rare instances.

Somewhat true of me means that the statement is true of you about half the time; that is, sometimes you do the behavior which is described in the statement, and sometimes you don't, and these instances tend to occur with about equal frequency.

Generally true of me means that the statement is usually true of you; that is, you do the behavior which is described in the statement more than half the time.

Always or almost always true of me means that the statement is true of you in almost all circumstances; that is, you almost always do the behavior which is described in the statement.

Use the separate Worksheet for recording your answers and for scoring. Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you, not in terms of what you think you should do, or what other people do. Answer in reference to the language you are now learning (or the language you most recently learned.) There are no right or wrong responses to these statements. Work carefully but quickly. You will score the SILL yourself using the attached Worksheet. On the Worksheet, write your name, the date, and the language learned.

Example

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Generally not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Generally true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

Read the item, choose a response (1 through 5 as above), and write it in the space after the item.

I actively seek out opportunities to talk with native speakers of the new language. ________

You have just completed the example item. Answer the rest of the items on the Worksheet.
Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
© 1989. R. Oxford  Version 5.1

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Generally not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Generally true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me
(Write answers on Worksheet)

Part A

When learning a new word . . .
1. I create associations between new material and what I already know.
2. I put the new word in a sentence so I can remember it.
3. I place the new word in a group with other words that are similar in some way
(for example, words related to clothing, or feminine nouns)
4. I associate the sound of the new word with the sound of a familiar word.
5. I use rhyming to remember it.
6. I remember the word by making a clear mental image of it or by drawing a picture.
7. I visualize the spelling of the new word in my mind.
8. I use a combination of sounds and images to remember the new word.
9. I list all of the other words I know are related to the new word and draw lines to show
relationships.
10. I remember where the new word is located on the page, or where I first saw or heard it.
11. I use flashcards with the new word on one side and the definition or other information on the
other side.
12. I physically act out the new word.

When learning new material . . .
13. I review often.
14. I schedule my reviewing so that the review sessions are initially close together in time and
gradually become more widely spread apart.
15. I go back to refresh my memory of things I learned much earlier.

Part B

16. I say or write new expressions repeatedly to practice them.
17. I imitate the way native speakers talk.
18. I read a story or dialogue several times until I can understand it.
1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Generally not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Generally true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

(Write answers on Worksheet)

20. I practice the sounds or alphabet of the new language.
21. I use idioms or other routines in the new language.
22. I use familiar words in different combinations to make new sentences.
23. I initiate conversations in the new language.
24. I watch TV shows or movies or listen to the radio in the new language.
25. I try to think in the new language.
26. I attend and participate in out-of-class events where the new language is spoken.
27. I read for pleasure in the new language.
28. I write personal notes, messages, letters, or reports in the new language.
29. I skim the reading passage first to get the main idea, then I go back and read it more carefully.
30. I seek specific details in what I hear or read.
31. I use reference materials such as glossaries or dictionaries to help me use the new language.
32. I take notes in class in the new language.
33. I make summaries of new language material.
34. I apply general rules to new situations when using the language.
35. I find the meaning of a word by dividing the word into parts which I understand.
36. I look for similarities and contrasts between the new language and my own.
37. I try to understand what I have heard or read without translating it word-for-word into my own language.
38. I am cautious about transferring words or concepts directly from my language to the new language.
39. I look for patterns in the new language.
40. I develop my own understanding of how the language works, even if sometimes I have to revise my understanding based on new information.

Part C

41. When I do not understand all the words I read or hear, I guess the general meaning by using any clue I can find, for example, clues from the context or situation.
42. I read without looking up every unfamiliar word.
43. In a conversation I anticipate what the other person is going to say based on what has been said so far.
44. If I am speaking and cannot think of the right expression, I use gestures or switch back to my own language momentarily.
1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Generally not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Generally true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

(Write answers on Worksheet)

45. I ask the other person to tell me the right word if I cannot think of it in a conversation.
46. When I cannot think of the correct expression to say or write, I find a different way to express the idea; for example, I use a synonym or describe the idea.
47. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones.
48. I direct the conversation to a topic for which I know the words.

Part D

49. I preview the language lesson to get a general idea of what it is about, how it is organized, and how it relates to what I already know.
50. When someone is speaking the new language, I try to concentrate on what the person is saying and put unrelated topics out of my mind.
51. I decide in advance to pay special attention to specific language aspects; for example, I focus on the way native speakers pronounce certain sounds.
52. I try to find out all I can about how to be a better language learner by reading books or articles, or by talking with others about how to learn.
53. I arrange my schedule to study and practice the new language consistently, not just when there is the pressure of a test.
54. I arrange my physical environment to promote learning; for instance, I find a quiet, comfortable place to study.
55. I organize my language notebook to record important language information.
56. I plan my goals for language learning, for instance, how proficient I want to become or how I might want to use the language in the long run.
57. I plan what I am going to accomplish in language learning each day or each week.
58. I prepare for an upcoming language task (such as giving a talk in the new language) by considering the nature of the task, what I have to know, and my current language skills.
59. I clearly identify the purpose of the language activity; for instance, in a listening task I might need to listen for the general idea or for specific facts.
60. I take responsibility for finding opportunities to practice the new language.
61. I actively look for people with whom I can speak the new language.
62. I try to notice my language errors and find out the reasons for them.
63. I learn from my mistakes in using the new language.
64. I evaluate the general progress I have made in learning the language.
1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Generally not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Generally true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me
(Write answers on Worksheet)

Part E

65. I try to relax whenever I feel anxious about using the new language.
66. I make encouraging statements to myself so that I will continue to try hard and do my best in language learning.
67. I actively encourage myself to take wise risks in language learning, such as guessing meanings or trying to speak, even though I might make some mistakes.
68. I give myself a tangible reward when I have done something well in my language learning.
69. I pay attention to physical signs of stress that might affect my language learning.
70. I keep a private diary or journal where I write my feelings about language learning.
71. I talk to someone I trust about my attitudes and feelings concerning the language learning process.

Part F

72. If I do not understand, I ask the speaker to slow down, repeat, or clarify what was said.
73. I ask other people to verify that I have understood or said something correctly.
74. I ask other people to correct my pronunciation.
75. I work with other language learners to practice, revise, or share information.
76. I have a regular language learning partner.
77. When I am talking with a native speaker, I try to let him or her know when I need help.
78. In conversation with others in the new language, I ask questions in order to be as involved as possible.
79. I try to learn about the culture of the place where the new language is spoken.
80. I pay close attention to the thoughts and feelings of other people with whom I interact in the new language.
Profile of Results on the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)
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You will be given this Profile after you have completed the Worksheet for Answering and Scoring the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). This Profile will summarize your results on SILL and show the kinds of strategies you use in learning a new language. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers and no "best" average scores for each part, since people learn languages differently.

To complete this Profile, transfer your averages for each part of the SILL, and for the whole SILL, from the Worksheet.

Part | What Strategies Are Covered | Your Average on This Part
--- | --- | ---
A. | Remembering More Effectively: Grouping; making associations; placing new words into a context to remember them; using imagery, sounds, sound-and-image combinations, actions, etc. in order to remember new expressions; reviewing in a structured way; going back to review earlier material. | 
B. | Using Your Mental Processes: Repeating; practicing with sounds and writing systems; using formulas and patterns; recombining familiar items in new ways; practicing the new language in a variety of authentic situations involving the four skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing); skimming and scanning to get the idea quickly; using reference resources; taking notes; summarizing; reasoning deductively (applying general rules); analyzing contrastively via comparisons with another language; being cautious about word-for-word translating and direct transfers from another language; looking for language patterns; adjusting your understanding according to new information. | 
C. | Compensating for Missing Knowledge: Using all possible clues to guess the meaning of what is heard or read in the new language; trying to understand the overall meaning and not necessarily every single word; finding ways to get the message across in speaking or writing despite limited knowledge of the new language; for instance, using gestures, switching to your own language momentarily, using a synonym or description, coining new words. | 
D. | Organizing and Evaluating Your Learning: Overviewing and linking with material you already know; deciding in general to pay attention; deciding to pay attention to specific details; finding out how language learning works; arranging to learn (schedule, environment, notebook); setting goals and objectives; identifying the purpose of a language task; planning for a language task; finding practice opportunities; noticing and learning from your errors; evaluating your progress. | 
E. | Managing Your Emotions: Lowering your anxiety; encouraging yourself through positive statements; taking risks wisely; rewarding yourself; noting physical stress; keeping a language diary; talking with someone about your feelings/attitudes. | 
F. | Learning with Others: Asking questions for clarification or verification; asking for correction; cooperating with peers; cooperating with proficient users of the new language; developing cultural awareness; becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings. | 

YOUR OVERALL AVERAGE

60
Key to Understanding Your Averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Always or almost always used</td>
<td>4.5 to 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generally used</td>
<td>3.5 to 4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Sometimes used</td>
<td>2.5 to 3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generally not used</td>
<td>1.5 to 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Never or almost never used</td>
<td>1.0 to 1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph Your Averages Here**

If you want, you can make a graph of your SILL averages. What does this graph tell you? Are you very high or very low on any part?

---

**What These Averages Mean to You**

The overall average indicates how frequently you use language learning strategies in general. The averages for each part of the SILL show which groups of strategies you tend to use the most in learning a new language. You might find that the averages for each part of the SILL are more useful than your overall average.

Optimal use of language learning strategies depends on your age, personality, stage of language learning, purpose for learning the language, previous experience, and other factors. Nevertheless, there may be some language learning strategies that you are not yet using which might be beneficial to you. Ask your teacher for more information on language learning strategies.
Analysis of Styles and Strategies: Jack

Part I: Styles analysis
(Analysis adapted from Oxford’s Style Analysis Survey)

A. How you use your physical senses to study or work

Your scores reflect that you are a visual person, rather than an auditory or hands-on person. Visual means you learn best by seeing. Since this is your preference—and perhaps the way you learn best—you may want to emphasize activities such as reading books or watching videos in your language learning.

Because you also scored high on preferences for hands-on and auditory learning, I would recommend you try style-flexing. Style-flexing means doing activities that are consistent with your second or third preference of style. In other words, it means trying something that might not be your first choice! For example, you scored fairly high on hands-on learning, so you may enjoy doing activities that allow you to move around and do things (games, building models, etc). Auditory learning has to do with listening and speaking, so you may want to consider activities like listening to tapes or getting involved in discussions.

B. How you deal with other people

It is fairly clear that you are more introverted (prefer doing things alone) than extroverted (prefer to do things with other people). Therefore, you will probably excel at doing independent work, such as studying or reading by yourself or learning with the computer. Introverts also may like to work with one other person they know well.

However, since it seems that most language learning situations—both inside and outside the classroom—already emphasize learning language alone, I would encourage you to style-flex in this area. Even if it may feel uncomfortable, I would encourage you to take advantage of opportunities to be social in your learning (get involved in discussions and chances to work as a team, etc).

C. How you handle possibilities

You are a very intuitive person. This means you are future-oriented, able to seek out the major principles of a topic, like to speculate about possibilities, enjoy abstract thinking (you like to think about ideas and theories), and enjoy step-by-step instruction.

If you wanted to try style-flexing, the opposite of intuitive is the concrete-sequential approach. This means you are highly organized and like step-by-step procedures, as well as control.

D. How you approach tasks
You are more close-oriented. This means you tend to focus carefully on all learning tasks, meet deadlines, and plan ahead for assignments. In other words you are very serious.
Style-flexing in this area would mean being more open-oriented. This means you enjoy discovery learning (learning information in an unstructured way) and prefer to relax and enjoy your learning without concern for deadlines or rules.

E. How you deal with ideas

You are more of a global than analytic. This means that you enjoy getting the main ideas, guessing meanings, and communicating even if you don’t know all the words or concepts. You don’t focus on details; you focus on the big picture.
In order to style-flex, you may want to be more analytic by focusing more on the details.

Strategy analysis

Your general areas of strategy preference are remembering more effectively, using your mental processes, and compensating for missing knowledge. These are strategies you want to emphasize in your learning. General areas that you do not prefer are learning with others, managing your emotions, and organizing and evaluating your learning. Even though you don’t prefer them, you still may want to incorporate them into your language learning experience since it is valuable to try strategies that we don’t prefer. (see Oxford’s SILL page 60 for descriptions of strategies).

Vocabulary learning analysis

Part of the purpose of the two reading passages was to find out how well you are guessing at the meaning of vocabulary words from their context. In the first reading, you guessed at the meaning of seven of the words, and you looked at the dictionary to find the meaning for three of the words. This means that your are not relying too heavily on your dictionary, but are willing to make guesses. This is a very valuable strategy that you will want to continue. The total correct for your guesses was 4 ½ correct out of 17 questions. This means that you should try to focus on the accuracy of your guesses. This will come with practice, but I will give you a couple of suggestions. First, style-flex: you are a global learner, but in this case you may want to consider being more analytical—paying close attention to the grammatical details that may help you guess. When your teacher does any exercises on guessing at words in context, take advantage of this opportunity, asking her to help you if you have problems. Again, guessing is a skill that comes with practice. Considering the fact that in Vietnam, your teachers did not encourage you to guess, it is a relatively new skill you are trying to learn. Also, general improvement in reading and grammar should help you in your guessing.

The purpose of the exercise with the ten vocabulary words was to see how you are memorizing vocabulary. It may be helpful to look at the strategies that you are already using, for the reason of purposely continuing to use them. Also it will benefit you to see the strategies that you did not use on the test, so that you can begin using these new strategies.
Strategies you used:
Language transfer. “Physique” sounds like “physical.” “stipend” has the word “tip” in it, reminding you it is a “regular payment.”

Visualization You pictured a dentist working on someone’s open mouth to help you remember “palate”

Other strategies: You remembered a song with the name “Carol” in it to help you remember that a “carol” is a type of song.

Strategies you didn’t use, but might have:

Categorization. You might have tried to group the words “physique”, “corpse”, “spine”, and “palate”, since they all have to do with the body, or parts of the body. “Holler”, “utter” and “carol” are all things we say or sing.

Repetition. You might have tried saying the words out loud or writing them down, using them in a sentence.

Rhyme. “I will holler for a dollar.” “I will utter for some butter.” “A vulture has no culture.” “My spine is in a line.”

General comments and suggestions

I would suggest that you continue to look at the styles and strategies tests. We have determined your general preferences already. You want to continue these and strengthen these by doing the strategies that you prefer on purpose. One way you can do this is by looking at the questions on the tests, which will give you specific ideas of strategies you may want to try.

The second suggestion is that you journal about what you have learned from the test. Also, do some goal planning; what strategies do you want to use more of in the future?
Styles and Strategies Analysis: Marty

Styles analysis
(adapted from Oxford’s Style Analysis Survey)

1. How you use your physical senses to study or work

You are an auditory and visual learner. You prefer listening and speaking activities (discussions, debates, audio tapes, role plays, lectures). You also rely on your sense of sight, and you may learn best through visual means (books, video). These are your learning preferences, so focus on them.

Hands-on learning was not your preference. However, you may want to style-flex. Style flexing means that you sometimes use the style that you do not prefer. In this case, sometimes you may want to do hands-on learning activities such as doing projects, building things and working with objects.

2. How you deal with people

You are introverted, which means you like to do more work on your own such as studying or reading by yourself. You may like to work with just one other person, too.

In this area in particular I would encourage you to style-flex. The reason is that much of our education in the classroom emphasizes working alone, so style-flexing could bring more balance to your language learning. I would encourage you to join in on discussions, meetings, and opportunities to work with others.

3. How you handle possibilities

You are a very intuitive person. This means that you are future-oriented, able to seek out the major principles of the topic, you like to speculate about possibilities, enjoy abstract thinking, and avoid step-by-step instruction.

4. How you approach tasks

You are both open and closure oriented, so you are flexible enough to do both. Closure oriented means you focus carefully on all learning tasks, meet deadlines, plan ahead for assignments, and in general are a very serious learner. Since you are also an open learner, you are sometimes relaxed, and enjoy learning without concern for deadlines or rules.

5. How you deal with ideas

You are an analytic learner, which means you focus more on details, logical analysis, and contrasts. This may help you in situations like figuring out grammar rules.

Style-flexing in this area will mean you focus on key points or the main idea, being less concerned with the details.
Strategies Analysis
(Adapted from Oxford’s Strategy Inventory for Language Learning)

According to the SILL test, the strategies you use the most are learning with others, compensating for missing knowledge, and using your mental processes. These are the strategies that you are using the most, and thus perhaps are your preferences. Focus on these, and continue to use them-use them often!

Still, be flexible; you may also gain from trying to use more of the strategies that you are not using: managing your emotions, remembering more effectively, and organizing and evaluating your learning.

You can get specific ideas for strategies by looking at a certain category (such as part A: remembering more effectively) and trying out one of the strategies that you find in the questions.

Vocabulary learning analysis

Part of the purpose of the two reading passages was to find out how well you are guessing at the meaning of vocabulary words from their context. In the first reading, you looked up only one word, guessing at nine of the words. In general, it is a good strategy to guess at the meanings of words from the context, so I would encourage you to continue guessing. Of the words you guessed at, you guessed 6 of 19 correctly. To increase your accuracy, one suggestion I would give is to be more analytic, focusing on the details-the grammar clues-that surround the words. Guessing at the meaning of words is a skill that you can develop with practice, so don’t give up!

The purpose of the exercise with the ten vocabulary words was to see how you are memorizing vocabulary. It may be helpful to look at the strategies you are already using for the reason of purposely continuing to use them. Also, it will benefit you to see the strategies that you did not use on the test, so that you can begin using these new strategies.

Strategies you used:

language transfer: "physique" sounds like physical

Rhyme/ similarity in sound "holler" sounded to you like "roller"

Strategies you might have used:

Visualization: You could picture a vulture or a corpse in your mind.

Categorization: You might have tried to group words like "physique", "corpse", "spine", and "palate", since they all have to do with the body, or parts of the body. "Holler", "utter", and "carol" are all things we say or sing.

Repetition. You might have tried saying the words out loud, writing them down, or using them in a sentence.
Rhyme: “I will holler for a dollar”

Keyword mnemonics: (finding a native-language word or phrase with similar sounds, and creating a visual image that ties the word or phrase to the target language word). (the ideas for these strategies were taken from Weaver and Cohen’s Strategies-Based Instruction Manual)

General comments and suggestions

Again, I would encourage you to look at the styles and strategies tests, choosing some specific strategies that you think might be helpful. For example, you may want to look at part A of the SILL, which will give you specific ideas about how you may remember more effectively (this will also help you with memorizing vocabulary).

A second suggestion is that you journal about this information, writing about what you have learned, and also doing some goal planning about how you can use this information.
Styles and strategies analysis—Torn

Styles analysis
(Styles analysis information was adapted from Oxford’s Style Analysis Survey)

A. How you use your physical senses to study or work

In general, Tarak, you show that you will be flexible enough to enjoy many different styles.

For example, you scored equally high in the categories of visual, auditory, and hands-on. That means not only can you be effective in all of these areas, but you may want to aim for a balance in learning activities in which you use all three categories.

B. How you deal with other people

Again, here your scores are similar, so you should aim for a balance in introverted and extroverted language learning activities. Extroverted language learning activities may include social activities such as discussions and debates. Introverted activities are activities you do alone, like studying or reading by yourself.

However, I would suggest that since many student’s classroom language learning experiences have emphasized individual learning, you may want to include more extroverted language learning experiences for balance.

C. How you handle possibilities

Your scores are similar; you are both intuitive and concrete-sequential. Intuitive means that you like to seek out the major principles of the topic, like to speculate about possibilities, and you enjoy abstract thinking. However, you are also concrete-sequential, which means you enjoy learn things step-by-step, and you like control.

Here again, I believe that your flexibility can work to your advantage, because different language learning classrooms or situations will fit some kinds of learners better than others. You will most likely be able to adapt without too much frustration.

D. How you approach tasks

This is the only area where you have a strong preference; you are very closure oriented. This means that you are a very serious language learner, focusing carefully on all learning tasks. This is an advantage for you.

However, you may also want to consider style-flexing as well. Style-flexing means that you also try to do some things in the style that you don’t prefer. For example, you generally do not prefer open tasks, but there are advantages to being more open, too. In other words, if you sometimes remind yourself to not be too serious, but to relax and have fun while you learn, it may benefit you.
E. How you deal with ideas

This is another area where you are very balanced, so you should be able to adapt well to different situations. Because you are global, you will do well with doing things like getting the main idea and guessing meanings. Since you are also analytic, you can at times focus on the “details”.

In dealing with ideas and other areas where you are balanced, you will need to decide when to apply which ability (for instance, global vs. analytic).

Strategies analysis
(Adapted from Oxford’s Strategy Inventory for Language Learning)

The language strategies that you use the most are in the areas of organizing and evaluating your learning, managing your emotions, and compensating for missing knowledge. These are the strategies that you want to focus on in your learning.

However, you may also want to consider having some balance by using some strategies from the areas where you are weaker. For instance, you may want to look at and try some of the specific examples of strategies in the category for remembering more effectively.

Vocabulary learning analysis

Part of the purpose of the two reading passages you read was to see how well you are guessing at the meanings of words you don’t know. In the first reading you were allowed to use your dictionary if you wanted to, and you looked up eight words in the dictionary, guessing at the meaning of two of the words. In the second reading you were not allowed to use the dictionary at all. Of all the words you guessed at—twelve—you guessed seven correctly. This is quite good. My suggestion to you is that since you are guessing fairly accurately, to continue to guess, relying at your dictionary less.

The purpose of having you memorize the ten vocabulary words was to find out what strategies you are using to learn vocabulary. These are the strategies you used:

- Repetition. You read the words and definitions aloud three times.
- You put the words in a sentence.
- Sometimes you wrote the word down.

Visualization. You pictured the word “vulture.”

These are some of the strategies you might have used:

- Categorization. You may have grouped all the words that had to do with the body: physique, corpse, spine, and palate.

- Keyword mnemonics. You may have found a word in Arabic that has similar sounds with the word in English.
Rhyme/ rhythm. "I will holler for a dollar."
"My spine is in a line."

Language transfer. "Physique" looks like physical.

I would encourage you to continue to use the vocabulary strategies you have been using while trying to add new strategies as well.