

Synopsis in English of
***Searching for better language learning strategies: Studies on good language learners in the Japanese FL context.* Tokyo: Shohakusha.**

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Abstract

This article reports on three qualitative studies about good foreign language learners conducted in the Japanese EFL/FL context. The first study examines the learning behaviors appearing in the language learning biographies written by 40 college-level good learners of EFL. A second study investigates the strategies frequently used by 18 highly advanced EFL learners. The last study analyzes the strategy use reported in 69 books on “how I have learned a foreign language.” Results suggest that there are some strategies especially favored in the Japanese EFL/FL context and that the use of some strategies seems to be closely connected to the stages of learning. Some research implications are also discussed.

Key Words: Language learning strategies; English as a foreign language; Good foreign language learners; Learning biographies; Qualitative analysis

1. Introduction

Early studies on good language learners (GLLs), such as Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern and Todesco, (1978), Rubin (1975), and Stevick (1989), among others, show that GLLs tend to share some behaviors (i.e., strategies) for learning and thus indicate that research on their strategies might help facilitate our understanding on the learning process of a second/foreign language. Since then, a large number of empirical studies have been conducted to ascertain the strategies favored by GLLs and the factors affecting their use (see, for example, Oxford, forthcoming, for review). Recently, attempts to teach strategies also have been made around the world (Cohen, 1998; Dadour and Robbins, 1996; Ikeda and Takeuchi, forthcoming; Thompson and Rubin,

1996; among others).

Some studies, however, argue that the strategies frequently used by GLLs in an Asian EFL context differ drastically from those in the North American ESL context (Gu, 1996; LoCastro, 1994; Takeuchi, Mine, Yoshida, and Yoshida, 1999; Takeuchi and Wakamoto, 2001). They also argue that the strategies preferred in the beginning stage of learning are not the same as those preferred in the advanced stage (Kimura, 1999; Takeuchi, 2002). Researchers, therefore, begin to feel the pressing need to go back once again to the contexts in which they are doing research and “dig out” the learning strategies preferred by GLLs in these contexts, while paying attention to the stages of learning. The three qualitative studies to be reported below are attempts for that purpose.

2. Study 1

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the first study was to ascertain the strategies preferred by college-level GLLs in the Japanese EFL context. Comparisons were also made of strategies used by GLLs with those by “poor language learners” (PLLs).

2.2 Subjects and method

The subjects of this study were 153 female senior college students majoring in English, yet studying the language only in the Japanese EFL context.^{1,2} Their starting age of learning English was confirmed to be above the age of 12, which is considered to be after or near the end of the critical period (Scovel, 2001). No subjects had lived more than one year in English-speaking countries after starting to learn the language.

The subjects took a conventional 40-item cloze test (Mean: 25.52, SD: 3.95).³ A total of 24 students with a test score of above 30 constituted the GLL group, while the PLL group was made up of 24 subjects whose score on the test was below 21. The average scores of these two groups were confirmed to be statistically different on a *t*-test ($t=24.56$, $df=46$, $p<.0000001$). For further confirmation of proficiency difference, five subjects from each group were randomly selected and asked to record their spontaneous speech in English. A native speaker of English judged the samples.

The judgment indicated that there was a difference in fluency between these two groups: Three out of five in the GLL group were rated “very fluent (5)” and two were rated “fluent (4),” while three out of five in the PLL group were rated “average (3)” and two were rated “poor (2).”

Subjects in these two groups were then asked to write their language learning biographies (Schumann, 1997), or records of English learning, beginning at the age of 12 and up until recent days. The biographies or records were written in their native language and included reviews of their learning environment, their attitude toward learning, and their learning strategies in specific skill areas (with the period in which the strategies were mainly used). Training on how to write learning biographies had been given to the subjects beforehand. For detailed discussions on verbal reports such as learning biographies and dairies, see Bailey (1990) and Matsumoto (1994).

The author conducted the analysis of the records according to the pre-determined definitions and the categories of strategies. Some samples were selected randomly and re-analyzed by another researcher. The agreement of the analyses was approximately 80%.

2.3 Results

Metacognitive strategies

One of the most striking differences between these two groups was the volume of descriptions in the biographies. The volume provided by GLLs was much larger than that by PLLs. In addition, the descriptions by GLLs contained much more information on their learning than those by PLLs did. This might indicate that GLLs had more concrete awareness of their learning process and strategy use.

Another intriguing difference was that GLLs had tried very hard to find and increase their opportunities to use English as a means of communication. This effort seems to be especially important in an EFL context, in which relatively few occasions to use the language are available. According to the biographies, finding and increasing opportunities started just after their learning of English had begun. GLLs also expressed the importance of pushing themselves into a situation where they had to

use a slightly more advanced form of English to finish the task at hand. PLLs, on the other hand, reported that they tended to avoid such a situation. The following excerpt from one of the biographies is an example of stressing the importance of “pushing.”

(From the intermediate stage on) I have always tried very hard to push myself in a situation where task's demand goes a bit beyond my English ability. Pushing myself to the limit, I believe, is an indispensable step for the improvement of my English ability. (S1YY-S, Translation mine)

Strategies in a specific skill area

Listening

GLLs seem to strike a balance between “deep listening” strategies and “broad listening” strategies. The “deep listening” strategies include such activities as dictation, and demand deep processing of aural input. “Broad listening” asks listeners to look for the outline of the input. GLLs reported that they had spent much time on deep listening at the beginning stage of their learning and then shifted to broad listening. PLLs, on the other hand, reported few activities in deep listening, while they mentioned a lot about broad listening. The following two excerpts are from the biographies written by a GLL and a PLL respectively.

(From the beginning to early intermediate stages) I listened many times to tapes of recorded short stories and wrote down every single word that I understood. My emphasis was on dictation, not on understanding the meaning. (...) Recently, I try to put my focus on understanding the outline of the input, though. (GLL: S1KRi-L, Translation mine)

(From the beginning stage) English has always been background music to me. I have not paid any special attention to it. But it has always been there. (...) I don't care much about understanding the details. I just would like to know the rough meaning of the input. (PLL: S1SH-L, Translation mine)

Reading

Reading aloud many times is one of the most frequently mentioned strategies by GLLs. They reported that they had spent time on reading aloud especially at the

beginning stage of their learning. PLLs, on the other hand, did not mention it at all. Reading analytically is the strategy mentioned both by GLLs and PLLs. GLLs, however, seem to think much of this strategy, while PLLs do not. Analytical reading, according to some comments, seems to promote deep processing of passages. Reading a lot in the field where learners have interest is a strategy mentioned only by GLLs. They seem to like using this strategy at the intermediate stage of their learning.

Speaking

As for speaking, many GLLs claimed that they had memorized a large number of basic sentences at the beginning stage of their learning. In memorizing the sentences, they reported that they first grasped the meaning and then intensely listened to a taped recording of the sentences to be memorized. After the process, they repeatedly wrote down the sentences and read them aloud many times. In addition, GLLs reported that they spent time on pattern practice of the memorized sentences. After consolidating the basic sentences upon which their output is based, they reported that they had begun to speak in English to themselves. Trying to have conversations with native speakers of English, by using memorized sentences, was also mentioned frequently by GLLs. On the other hand, PLLs made very few comments on speaking. Some of them just reported that they tried to have conversations in English with native speakers of the language, but no further details were available. The following excerpt is from one of the biographies written by a GLL.

(From the beginning) I think I memorized more than 500 basic sentences that appeared in a radio course in English. In memorizing, I vocalized them many times, while listening to a taped recording of the sentences to be memorized. I also spent time on pattern practice (of the memorized sentences). (S1HK-S, Translation mine)

Vocabulary

Many GLLs wrote that they had embedded target words in sentences and memorized the whole sentences. They reported that they had vocalized and written them down many times while memorizing. Also, they guessed at the meanings of unknown words and later checked them in dictionaries. PLLs, on the other hand, reported that

they had preferred to make a word list and memorize words one by one from the list. PLLs did guess at the meanings of unknown words, but did not seem to confirm them later in dictionaries.

Pronunciation

Imitation seems to be a key strategy for good pronunciation and intonation. GLLs, with few exceptions, wrote that they made repeated attempts to imitate the taped recordings of natural English at the beginning and intermediate stages of their learning. They then recorded their own pronunciation and speech on tape and corrected it or had it corrected. In addition, beginning at the intermediate stage, some GLLs started “shadowing” practices, which are often used in training interpreters.⁴ No concrete descriptions on improving pronunciation were made by PLLs, which is a sharp contrast with GLLs. The following excerpt is from one of the biographies written by a GLL.

I was, and I still am, very much interested in pronunciation of English. So, from the beginning, I have tirelessly spent a lot of time on imitating the taped recordings of natural English spoken by native speakers of the language. I don't know why, but I like the sounds of English. (S1KY-P, Translation mine)

The aforementioned results show that EFL learners do share some of the strategies with ESL learners. Some of them, however, are unique to the Japanese EFL context. For example, memorizing basic expressions a lot, vocally repeating them, and pattern-practicing them are rarely mentioned strategies or strategies not emphasized in recent North American literature. This is also the case with reading aloud. The author, however, cannot conclude anything definite just by analyzing the learning biographies of a limited number of college-level GLLs. So, he now turns to an analysis of interviews with highly advanced learners of English to test the validity of the results reported in the first study.

3. Study 2

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of the second study was to investigate the strategies preferred by highly

advanced learners (HALs) of EFL and to test the validity of the first study.

3.2 Subjects and method

The subjects of the second study were 18 HALs of EFL. All of them were born and raised in Japan. About half of them were college-level instructors of English, while the rest were simultaneous interpreters, a diplomat, and company employees. All of them started the full-scale learning of English after the age of 12.⁵ They had had very little experience in English-speaking countries before they started their jobs. Their family language was Japanese. English proficiency of most subjects was evaluated and rated “highly-advanced” (being exceptionally good at English) by a native speaker of the language or by a Japanese teacher of English who had extensive experience in the field of TESOL. Some of the subjects were not formally evaluated. However, since they were interpreters and a diplomat by profession and were regarded as extremely competent in English by their colleagues, we could conclude that their proficiency of English was highly advanced.

The author interviewed the subjects on an individual basis in a relaxed atmosphere. The average time of the interviews was about an hour, and they were conducted in Japanese. Some of the subjects who were not available for the interviews answered a questionnaire that included the same set of questions that the author had asked in the interviews. Additional questions, if necessary, were asked of them by e-mail or telephone.

3.3 Results

Metacognitive strategies

A first finding is that HALs were fully aware of their learning process and the strategies they had used. They talked a lot about their own learning behaviors, and their explanations were very concrete and consistent, as was the case with the college-level GLLs. A second finding is that most of them reported that they had literally immersed themselves in English at the intermediate stage of their learning process. Asleep or awake, they fully devoted themselves to the learning of English. One subject commented:

Studying English had always been great fun for me. I had spent a whole month or so, (doing nothing except) listening to English radio programs, reading English books and comics, and memorizing useful expressions I found. I even listened to English tapes while I was taking a bath. But, everything was fun (S2N-1, Translation mine).

A third finding is that regularity is a key for the success of language learning. In the interview data, the author found many times words such as “everyday,” “every morning,” or “at least four times or five times a week.” These words seem to suggest that our subjects had done the same kind of activities regularly. One subject remarked:

Everyday, I saved about 30 minutes for listening to English on short-wave radio such as VOA. I also spent about one hour every night reading paperbacks or magazine articles in English. Yes, literally “everyday”. (S2T-1, Translation mine.)

As was the case with GLLs, the subjects in this study reported that they had tried to maximize their opportunities to use English. They were eager participants in occasions in which they could use the language. And, if they could not find such occasions, they even talked to themselves in English. According to one comment:

Having opportunities to use the language in communication increased the motivation for learning. This in turn led to better communication and consequently higher motivation. It was kind of a good circle, I think. (S2T-4, Translation mine.)

Lastly, remarks on “pushing oneself into using the language” were also often observed in this study. One subject commented:

Once I got used to speaking, I pushed myself into a situation where I had to speak a slightly advanced form of English. In a sense, I always tried to put some load on myself in terms of speaking English. (S2K-2, Translation mine.)

Strategies in a specific skill area

Listening

HALs seem to have put relatively more emphasis on deep listening than on broad listening. One subject commented:

According to my own experience, concentrating on each word in input was a good way to improve listening ability, at least at the beginning and the intermediate stages of my learning. I think just listening for meaning does not guarantee any improvements. You need to concentrate and listen many times to the unintelligible forms in the input, which leads to better listening ability. (S2T-3, Translation mine.)

Some HALs, however, did use broad listening strategies, too, at the latter stages of their learning, which indicates that they shifted strategies according to their learning stages.

Reading

In reading, translation is a strategy avoided by HALs. They forced themselves to abandon translating by reading a lot at a fast rate. Paperbacks, according to the interviews, were considered to be a good source for their input. One HAL commented:

I read really a lot. Paperbacks were my favorites. In reading, I tried not to translate. Reading a lot at a fast pace was a good way to avoid translation. (S2K-1, Translation mine.)

As for the treatment of unknown words in reading, most HALs preferred not looking them up in a dictionary. They just guessed at the meanings or looked them up only when the words appeared many times in the text.

Speaking

All HALs reported that they had memorized a large number of basic constructions and sentences, while increasing the opportunities to use them. It seems that memorizing and using went together hand in hand in the learning process of HALs.

One subject commented:

I memorized about 1,000 English sentences that included basic conversational expressions and important structures. They are, in a sense, the resources or foundation upon which my output is based. Just memorizing, however, did not assure me a good command of speaking English. I did a great deal of pattern practice. And, then, I tried to use them actively in conversations. The pattern practice and the active use really worked. (S2A-1, Translation mine.)

Vocabulary

As for vocabulary, as was the case with GLLs, many HALs wrote that they had embedded target words in sentences and memorized the whole sentences. They reported that they had vocalized and written them down many times in memorizing. Always checking the pronunciation of new words was also a strategy often mentioned by HALs.

Pronunciation

The interviews indicated that imitating and shadowing the way native speakers of English speak seem to be key strategies for good pronunciation. HALs, with few exceptions, also remarked that they had strong concern for pronunciation accuracy. Their concern was not limited to the field of segmental sounds. They seemed to have a strong desire to imitate the suprasegmentals such as intonation and rhythm. One subject said:

I broke two tape recorders in learning English. Why? Because I had re-played and imitated the tapes hundred of times, which might be fatal to tape recorders. I tried to imitate the sounds, the stresses, the rhythms, and the intonations. I tried to be a native speaker of English. (S2N-1, Translation mine.)

These comments are compatible with the findings of some empirical studies such as Purcell and Suter (1980) and Moyer (1999), in which concern for pronunciation accuracy and receiving training on suprasegmental aspects might be good predictors for native-like pronunciation in adult learning. Lastly, some HALs told that they had

watched carefully on the video the way native speakers moved their mouth, lips, and tongue.

Writing

As for writing, borrowing expressions and sentences from good samples is a strategy mentioned by some HALs. The interviews indicated that our subjects had found good samples on their own in reading. So, in a sense, reading a lot and borrowing expressions led to the expansion of their writing ability. They also reported that writing a lot and having their writing corrected was a good strategy for the improvement of writing skill. One HAL remarked:

I read a lot. I borrowed every useful expression and used it in writing. I also asked a native speaker of English to correct my writing. Then, I learned the corrected version by heart. That's all I did for improving my writing. You know, good writing does not come from nothing. You've got to read a lot and borrow expressions. You've got to have resources or foundation for writing. (S2K-3, Translation mine)

Grammar

Many HALs reported that they had thought much about grammar in their learning. They considered that grammar was a kind of scaffolding upon which they could climb up the hill of language learning. Subjects commented:

Knowledge of grammar was essential for my success in learning. I used and still am using the knowledge actively in many situations, in many ways. (S2T-1, Translation mine.)

I think focusing on forms and grammar was a good way to improve the accuracy of my speech. (S2S-1, Translation mine.)

Lastly, HALs often emphasized accuracy over fluency at the latter stages of learning. Since they reported to prefer emphasizing fluency over accuracy at the beginning stage, this seems to be an example of shifting strategies according to their learning stages.

The picture that has emerged is quite similar to the one found in the first study reported above. It is true that the use of some strategies is different. For example, GLLs in the first study did not mention much about “learning intensively,” but HALs talked a lot about the strategy. Likewise, GLLs did not report “emphasizing accuracy over fluency,” but HALs did report the behavior. There are indeed some differences, but the fundamental preferences observed appear to be very similar. So, for the purpose of further confirming the general preferences found, the author now turns to an analysis of the books written by successful foreign language learners on their learning.

4. Study 3

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of the third study was to confirm the general preferences of strategy use observed in the first two studies. In Japan, books on “how I have learned a foreign language” written by successful language learners (SLLs) are abundant. These books tell us, based on the writers’ experiences, how they had learned a foreign language. For the purpose of confirming the preferences found, therefore, the analysis of these books was conducted.

4.2 Subjects and method

A total of 69 books were analyzed in this study.⁶ Since some of the books were collections of essays on learning a foreign language, the data of 169 SLLs were available for the analysis. Their starting age of learning a foreign language was confirmed to be above 12 in all cases, and their proficiency was estimated through the descriptions in the books. In the analysis, the author read all 69 books and underlined the descriptions that contained learning strategies. These descriptions were then categorized according to the pre-determined definitions. In categorizing, some samples were randomly selected and checked by another researcher. No significant discrepancy in categorization was found.

4.3 Results

Metacognitive strategies

Special attention was paid by SLLs to the use of metacognitive strategies such as

“maximizing opportunities to use the language,” “learning intensively,” “learning regularly,” “pushing oneself into using the language,” and “having a concrete need/plan for learning.” Metacognitive strategies have been considered to be vital for successful learning in SL literature (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990). The results indicate that this seems to be also and especially true of a foreign language environment, such as Japan, in which contacts with the foreign language are relatively scarce, and thus strong commitment to learning and careful planning are indispensable for successful learning.

Strategies in a specific skill area

Listening

SLLs often mentioned deep listening strategies. Based on their own experience, they recommend, for example, using strategies such as listening carefully many times to the unintelligible parts of input and checking them later by using the script.

Reading

Reading aloud many times and reading a lot are the two strategies preferred most by SLLs. They seem to regard reading aloud as a strategy effective for internalizing the linguistic foundation or resources of the language they are learning. Through reading aloud many times, while paying attention to the phonological and the semantic aspects, they reported that they had internalized the linguistic system and obtained a “feel” for the language. This strategy was preferred especially at the beginning and early intermediate stages. After gaining a “feel” for the language, they reported that they had begun reading a lot in the field in which they had an interest.

Speaking

The most often used strategies were, once again, “memorizing basic sentences by vocalizing many times” and “pattern-practicing them thoroughly.” Many SLLs wrote that these strategies were helpful in increasing their linguistic resources and had them gain a “feel” of the language. The latter strategy was also effective for promoting the smooth utilization of the resources acquired. Another important finding is that at the intermediate and the advanced stages of their learning, SLLs emphasized accuracy over fluency. They seem to realize that once fluency is achieved, efforts for accuracy

are indispensable for attaining highly advanced ability in a foreign language.

Vocabulary

A first finding is that SLLs seem to think much of increasing basic vocabulary to a certain level (about 2,500 words) at the beginning stage of their learning. A second finding is that extra attention has been paid to pronunciation in their vocabulary build-up. They first checked the pronunciation of a new word and then memorized the word by reading it aloud many times. As for guessing, they certainly guessed at the meaning, but at the same time, they made a note of unknown words and later checked their meanings in dictionaries.

Pronunciation

Strong concern for pronunciation accuracy has also been observed among SLLs. They reported that they had listened to the sounds and prosody of a foreign language many times, imitated them as perfectly as possible, and then checked the differences, if any, between the models and their speech. The other strategies frequently mentioned by SLLs are watching the mouth and lips of native speakers, and shadowing.

Writing

The analysis suggests that reading a lot is a prerequisite for writing well. Reading materials can be good samples for their writing, and SLLs seem to have borrowed many expressions from the materials they read. Reading, however, does not automatically guarantee good writing. To improve their writing ability, SLLs reported that they had written regularly, had their writing corrected, and then memorized the corrected versions.

Grammar

To SLLs, grammatical knowledge seems to be indispensable. They often wrote that child language acquisition and adult language learning are different. For adult learning, they said, conscious knowledge of grammar should play an important role to compensate for the partial loss of innate ability to learn a language. Some SLLs also reported that grammatical knowledge had contributed to the consolidation of their fragmented understanding of the language, and also to the re-analysis of memorized

chunks.

5. Discussion

Table 1 is a summary of the findings, which seems to confirm that there are some strategies uniquely preferred in the Japanese EFL/FL context. They are a) metacognitive strategies related to maximizing input and, above all, the opportunities to use a foreign language; b) skill-specific strategies related to conscious learning; c) memory strategies related to internalizing the linguistic system; and d) cognitive strategies for practicing such as imitating, shadowing, and pattern-practicing.

As for a) above, since all the subjects in our studies were in the EFL/FL environment, opportunities to use the language had to be sought vigorously, which resulted in the unique use of some metacognitive strategies. As for b), in adult learning, as some empirical studies (e.g., DeKeyser, 2000) indicate, conscious learning seems to play an important role and thus the subjects often used some strategies related to conscious learning. As for c) and d), in the EFL/FL context, building and expanding the linguistic foundation or resources do not come as easily as it does in the ESL/SL context. Learners in the EFL/FL context must devote time and energy to memorizing a certain number of basic sentences, and also must be sensitive to foreign sounds/prosody and imitate them as perfectly as possible. Accumulating static knowledge, however, does not promise any success in learning. Learners have to spend time and energy on pattern-practicing and then putting the knowledge to practical use. This is why some memory strategies for internalizing the linguistic system and cognitive strategies for practicing are preferred uniquely in the EFL/FL context.

Another finding is that the use of some strategies is common not only to the learners in the EFL/FL context, but also to those in the ESL/SL context reported in the North American literature. For example, emphasizing fluency over accuracy at the beginning stage is a strategy also often mentioned in the ESL/SL literature. The author thus assumes that the use of the common strategies might well fit the underlying learning process, which is common to us all. On the other hand, the use of context-specific, or environmental-unique strategies might promote the survival of learners in the environment. So, the distinction between the common strategies and

the context-specific strategies could be important in categorizing strategies.

Lastly, the results indicate that the use of some strategies seems to be closely connected to a certain stage of learning. Subjects often reported a shift in their strategies according to their learning stages. More attention, therefore, should be paid to the concept of the stages of learning in the future research on strategies.

Table 1. Summary of the three studies reported

Strategies	PLLs	GLLs	HALs	SLLs	Stage
Metacognitive strategies					
Knowing their own strategies concretely		X	X	X	ALL
Having concrete need/plan for learning				X	
Practicing regularly			X	X	BEG-INT
Maximizing opportunities to use the language		X	X	X	BEG-INT
Learning intensively			X	X	INT
Pushing oneself into using English		X	X	X	INT-ADV ?
Strategies in a specific skill area					
Listening					
Deep listening		X	X	X	BEG-INT
Broad listening	X	X	X		INT
Reading					
Reading aloud		X	X	X	BEG-INT
Reading analytically	X	X	X	X	INT
Reading a lot		X	X	X	INT
Reading in a specific field		X		X	INT
Avoid Translation			X	X	ALL
Speaking					
Memorizing sentences		X	X	X	BEG
Pattern-practicing		X	X	X	BEG
Speaking to oneself in English		X	X	X	INT
Emphasizing fluency over accuracy			X	X	BEG-INT
Emphasizing accuracy over fluency			X	X	ADV
Vocabulary					

Increasing basic vocabulary				X	BEG
Embedding new words in sentences		X	X	X	BEG
Always checking pronunciation of new words			X	X	BEG
Vocalizing and writing many times		X	X	X	BEG-INT
Guessing and confirming meanings		X		X	INT
Making a word list and memorizing words	X				BEG
Pronunciation					
Paying special attention to sounds/prosody		X	X	X	BEG-INT
Imitating, (recording,) and correcting		X	X	X	BEG-INT
Shadowing			X	X	INT
Watching carefully NS's lips and tongue			X	X	
Writing					
Borrowing expressions from good samples			X	X	INT
Writing regularly/having their writing corrected			X	X	INT
Grammar					
Learning consciously/ Attention to forms			X	X	INT-ADV

Legend: "X" in Table 1 indicates that the strategy was frequently mentioned. "PLLs" means "poor language learners," while "GLLs" indicates "good language learners" in Study 1. "HALs" means "highly advanced learners" in Study 2, and "SLLs" stands for "successful language learners" in Study 3. "Stage" indicates the estimated learning stage in which the strategy was used most (BEG: Beginning, INT: Intermediate, ADV: Advanced, ALL: All stages). A blank in the "Stage" column means "not enough data available for estimating the learning stages in which the strategy was used."

Notes

1. The teaching method experienced by the subjects seems to be a mixture of grammar translation, audio-lingual habit formation, cognitive-code learning, and communicative methods. No single method had been emphasized in the course of their learning.
2. As Oxford and Nyikos (1989), among others, suggest, gender difference has a strong influence on the use of strategies. The author thus admits that the results obtained in this study might be applicable only to females.
3. Cloze procedure has been considered to be a method of tapping foreign language proficiency. See Oller (1979) and Turner (1989), among others, for further details. The author of this paper does not regard the procedure as the perfect method of probing

language proficiency, so he introduced a combination of a cloze test and a speaking test to distinguish GLLs and PLLs in Study 1. The speaking test was intended to measure fluency, which the author believes to be an integral part of language proficiency.

4. Shadowing is “an act or task in which (the) learner tracks the heard speech (in a foreign language) and vocalizes it as exactly as possible while listening attentively to the incoming information” (Tamai, 2001).
5. The teaching method experienced by the subjects of this study was a mixture of traditional grammar translation method and audio-lingual habit approach.
6. All of them were written in Japanese and published in Japan. Most authors (159 out of 169) were of Japanese nationality, and 26 of them were female. Foreign languages they had learned include Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Thai (in alphabetical order), but about 65% learned English (EFL). Originally, for Study 3, a total of 97 books were collected. 69 books were selected based on the following seven criteria established by the author of this article. The first five criteria involve the book author’s personal history: (i) foreign language proficiency (confirmed to be excellent by test scores, qualifications, and/or by an experienced language teacher); (ii) family background (i.e., no bilingual elements); (iii) academic background (no special language training worth mentioning at school); (iv) overseas experiences (very little or no experience); and (v) starting age of learning (no earlier than 12). The remaining two criteria concern the descriptions in the books: (vi) descriptions should be based on the book author’s personal experiences, not on his/her beliefs or philosophy; and (vii) descriptions should be concrete and with examples.

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