10-2019

Language Learning Strategies: What I do isn't always what I say I do

Valerie Knopp

Language Learning Strategies: What I do isn't always what I say I do

by

Valerie J. Knopp

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfilment of Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in English: Teaching English as a Second Language

October, 2019

Thesis Committee:
Choonkyong Kim, Chairperson
Isolde Mueller
James Robinson

Abstract

This study reviews language learning strategies used by adult English language learners (ELL) in a community-based Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program to determine what gaps there may be between what ELL say they do and what they actually do when employing language learning strategies (LLS). This study looks at factors (age, gender, L1, and level of education in the L1) that might impact the LLS the ELL say they use versus what they actually use in their language learning. This study focuses specifically on adult learners working on improving their academic abilities, preparing for college entrance exams, or improving employment opportunities.

The results of this study indicate that all participants used at least one or more LLS for both known and unknown target words with participants who learned to read and write English at an older age using more LLS for unknown words but approximately an equal number of LLS for known words as participants who learned English at an earlier age. The number of LLS participants said that they used versus the number they actually use did not indicate that L1 or gender was a factor.

Key words: ABE, ELL, LLS, learning strategies, adult basic education, language learning, personality

Acknowledgements

Participants in this study are to be commended that in addition to their English language learning, many of them are working full-time jobs, learning a new culture and language, raising families, and navigating an educational system quite unlike that of their home country. My sincere gratitude to these students and the teachers and leadership of the Central Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program for helping to make this study a reality. Special thanks to my committee members: Dr. Choonkyong Kim; Dr. Isolde Mueller; and Dr. James Robinson, who also served as my advisor through this journey.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Individuals are impacted by global issues on a daily basis, the world seems to be shrinking in size because of it, and language learning and teaching – particularly English – have risen in importance. One does not need to look too far to see ads to learn to speak a new language through a mobile phone app or via online language tutors, community education classes, and formal language classes. The abundance of platforms through which to learn a new language indicates there is a demand for learning, or a motivation to learn, an additional language. Underlying each of these language learning opportunities are assumed proven effective language learning strategies.

Before addressing what effective language learning strategies are and how language learners might use them, one first needs to define a learning strategy and a language learning strategy. Broadly defined, a *learning strategy* is the specific, conscious or unconscious approach in thought, process, technique, and action individuals use to understand, store, and remember content in order to plan, implement, and evaluate task performance and outcomes to know how to use what is learned (Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Gass & Mackey, 2007; Hardan, 2013; Oxford, 2003; Protheroe & Clarke, 2008). A *language learning strategy* more specifically addresses the techniques or methods learners use in or out of context in learning vocabulary form and meaning and which fall into two categories - direct and indirect (Nation, 2013; Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1975). Ehrman and Oxford (1990) define direct strategies as subconscious tasks and indirect strategies as conscious strategies which are classified as cognitive, metacognitive, memory-related, social, affective, and compensation.

Human behavior is universally inconsistent in that one often says one thing and does another. We make a New Year's resolution to exercise more, quit smoking, or some other self-improvement so we join a gym, sign up for a smoking cessation program, or vow to change an undesired behavior. While our intentions are good, unfortunately what we say we do is all too often not what we actually do. Effective language teachers teach language learning strategies (LLS) with the hope and expectation that language learners will use them. If asked, language learners may even claim that they use these LLS. Yet the question is, do they really? In a study of four English as a foreign language (EFL) writers to determine whether there was a relationship between their metacognitive knowledge and composition strategies and writing behaviors, Victori (1999) found that the two poor writers often reported using writing strategies that were not actually observed as having been used, citing instead "avoidance strategies" (p. 550) that attributed to their poor writing. These include not correcting errors the students had identified, not consulting a dictionary, and not planning or organizing the essay. What they said and what they did were incongruent. Teachers are also not immune from saying one thing and doing another. Chacón (2009), in her work with Venezuelan student teachers to create a culturally-sensitive learning environment, discovered that many of the student teachers stated they were not racist yet by virtue of how they treated indigenous students, the course materials they used, and even tacitly supporting culturally and racially biased curriculum, the student teachers began to realize that what they said they were doing was not what they were actually doing.

There is little empirical research to support what people in general say they do versus what they actually do, which is also true when it comes to language learning. Most data available

on what language learners say they do versus what they actually do are based on learners' self-reported behavior through survey responses. The underlying problem with surveys is that the information is self-reported, thereby often unreliable and based on what respondents think the interviewer wants to hear. Gu and Johnson (1996) found that the differences in vocabulary size and general proficiency were primarily a function of the participants' beliefs and strategies they studied, yet the researchers questioned how much the self-reported information truly reflected reality. Moir (as cited in Nation 2013), found that one of the causes of poor approaches to vocabulary learning is "trying to meet the perceived expectations of the teacher" (p. 229). Mackey and Gass (2005) state that participants may give answers or responses they think the researcher expects in order to please the researcher, known as the "halo effect." Time use methodology (Time Diary Method) and direct observation are two additional methods to assess what individuals say they do versus what they actually do. Time use methodology is a system used in planning and policy development to track and study human behavior by assessing exactly how individuals actually spend their time in a given time period (e.g., day to day or week to week) in comparison to how they say they spend it (Harvey & Pentland, 2002; NPR, 2012). Direct observation of behavior is used to determine what individuals actually do in order to compare it to what they say they do (Gass & Mackey, 2007). While time use methodology and direct observation are effective methods to assess human behavior in relation to self-reported behavior, both methods have their risks and drawbacks as they can:

- be expensive due to their time intensiveness;

- result in an ‘observer’s paradox’ which occurs when participants modify their behavior if they know they are being observed, thus influencing the data collection and outcome of the research; or
- produce a Hawthorne effect, which occurs when participants perform better because of the positive feelings they may have when included in a study, thus causing bias (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Harvey & Pentland, 2002; Nation, 2013).

Language learners are no different than people in general when they do not actually do what they say they do. Specifically, not using LLS that they say they use in their language learning. Self-report and self-observation, two types of second language acquisition verbal reporting types, seem to support that “what learners say they do is not always the same as what they actually do” (Gass & Mackey, 2007, p. 45). Best practices in data collection to mitigate any potential for the observer’s paradox or Hawthorne effect include: providing clear instructions for and structure of the task; asking participants open-ended questions and providing minimal training to avoid any potential of influence on the data collected; and written, audio, or video recording of the data collection (Gass & Mackey, 2007).

Interest in this research topic stems from personal volunteer tutoring experiences in a community-based, Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program. Over the course of years tutoring English language learners (ELL) from various language (L1) backgrounds, I have noticed that ELL frequently say that they use various LLS yet observe them using different strategies (or none at all). Moreover, my experiences indicate that the L1, cultural background, education level in the L1, gender, age, and motivation for the target language are factors in the LLS learners employ, as is supported in research by Grainger (2012).

This study reviewed language learning strategies used by adult ELL in a community-based ABE Program. The purpose of this study was to compare adult ELL (i.e., students) from a community-based ABE Program in the Midwestern United States and to determine what gaps may exist between what ELL say they do and what they actually do when employing LLS. Because cultural backgrounds can vary widely with the same L1 (e.g., a Spanish speaker from Mexico v. Spain) and motivation for the target language is a very broad research topic in itself, this study only considered factors of L1, education level in the L1, gender, and age that might impact the LLS the ELL say they use versus what they actually use in their language learning.

The significance of this study is it adds to the body of knowledge on language learning strategies by identifying possible gaps between what ELL say they do and what they actually do in their language learning, specifically with an adult population in a community-based education setting. This study may also have pedagogical implications in that when teachers better understand gaps between what ELL say they do and what they actually do, teachers can expand their repertoire of teaching LLS in order to increase students' success. It may also assist teachers to select the most appropriate type and method of teaching to solidify learning. The assumptions of this study are that ELL use fewer LLS than what they claim to use and that certain factors influence the LLS that the ELL use.

The research questions are:

1. What do students say they do when they do not understand a word in either conversation or written form?
2. What do students actually do when they do not understand a word in either conversation or written form?

This study considered what language learning strategies students say they use versus what they actually use when they encounter an unknown or unfamiliar word in conversation or written form. This study considered whether factors of gender, age, or level of education in the L1 affect the use of language learning strategies.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In the introduction, a learning strategy was broadly defined as the specific, conscious or unconscious approach in thought, process, technique, and action individuals use to understand content, and to plan, implement, and evaluate task performance and outcomes in knowing how to use what is learned (Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Gass & Mackey, 2007; Hardan, 2013; Oxford, 2003; Protheroe & Clarke, 2008). Language learning strategies (LLS) were defined as direct and indirect techniques or methods learners use in or out of context in learning vocabulary form and meaning (Nation, 2013; Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1975), and that time use methodology and direct observation support that what learners *say* they do and what they *actually* do in their language learning are not necessarily the same. Some of the challenges in data collection of comparing what learners say they do versus what they actually do is that most available data are self-reported through survey responses, which are often unreliable and may result in a halo effect, an observer's paradox, or a Hawthorne effect (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Harvey & Pentland, 2002; Nation, 2013). This chapter reviews the literature relative to communication and learning strategies, language learning strategies, vocabulary learning strategies, and learner characteristics in language learning.

Communication and learning strategies

According to Hall (2012), there are two types of strategic competence – communication and learning. Communication strategies are the knowledge and skills needed to resolve communicative difficulties and enhance communicative effectiveness; learning strategies are direct or indirect cognitive and memory-related activities to help in learning. This section

reviews communication and learning strategies in general before addressing learning strategies specific to language learning.

Communication strategies. Communication strategies are crucial in order to convey meaning and understanding between the sender and receiver of a message. Modalities may include verbal (e.g., tone of voice), non-verbal (furrowing of the eyebrows to show confusion), or visual (e.g., pictographs) in order to communicate a message. With respect to language learners, Dörnyei and Scott (1997) define communication strategies as "a plan of action to accomplish a communication goal" (p. 179) in order to solve language production problems at the planning stage rather than during actual communication. They classify communication strategies into *direct* (e.g., circumlocution), *indirect* (e.g., pretending to understand), and *interactional* (e.g., requesting clarification).

Whether or not an individual is learning an additional language, an important component of communication strategies is recognizing triggers of misunderstanding or seeking clarification (Nakahama, Tyler, & Van Lier, 2001; Rubin, 1975). Negotiating for meaning and understanding through comprehension checks or seeking clarification (e.g., "What do you mean…?") are necessary in communicative competence and language development, yet not all language learners use these checks when a message is not understood. Nakahama et al (2001) studied how meaning is negotiated between native speakers (NS) and non-native (NNS) to determine if unstructured conversation is as challenging as structured activities (e.g., two-way information gap task) in language practice. Three L1 Japanese EFL students were matched with three NS of English. The first part of the study was an unstructured, face to face conversation between the NS and NNS, with the given goal of the NS to establish a common ground with the NNS. The

premise of this activity was that in an open-ended conversation, interlocutors can change, avoid, or drop the conversation topic once they encounter communication difficulties. In the second part of the study, a two-way information gap activity, participants were given two similar pictures and were asked to identify differences between the two. Results of the study indicate that open-ended conversation provides NNS considerable learning opportunities and opportunities for repair negotiation at many levels over the structured activity. However, in a follow up interview with the NNS, they stated that the conversational activity was more challenging since it required that they pay attention to the entire conversation and not just lexical items as in the information gap activity. This indicates that an open conversational format can cause communication difficulties for NNS who may avoid rather than repair any communication gaps.

Negotiation for meaning or "check and clarify" is typically expected to be a natural communication strategy to seek clarification and comprehension; however, Foster (1998) asserts that it can be demotivating, annoying, and frustrating as it may cause feelings of incompetence or ineffectiveness in communicating in the target language. In a study of twenty-one part-time, intermediate level EFL students at a municipal college, Foster (1998) sought to determine: (a) what NNS do with negotiation of meaning within the classroom; (b) to what extent they would talk in general; and (c) whether they would modify their interactions when in a dyad or small group. Participants of various L1s completed four tasks – two with participants working in dyads and two with participants working in small groups of four to five. Participants in the dyads tended to produce more negotiated interactions for meaning than those in the small groups as measured by the limited indications of difficulties in understanding (87 of 918 possibilities). Participants who did not speak much or not at all, may have used a "pretend and hope"

communication strategy, which is used when there is a communication gap and the speaker (whether a NS or a NNS) pretends to understand the interlocutor in the hope that a future word or statement will shed some light on the gap and lead to understanding, which it often does. Foster (1998) found that the "pretend and hope" strategy was the more favored strategy of NNS to ensure understanding rather than a "check and clarify" strategy. Although not an ideal communication strategy, Rubin (1975) indicates that the "pretend and hope" strategy may be one that good language learners use by taking clues from the communication environment to reach understanding and meaning. Additional benefits of this strategy when used by NNS are that it allows those who might not have complete understanding and limited language ability to still contribute to the interaction, an opportunity to feel like a member of the English-speaking or target language group, and potentially feel that face was saved.

Learning strategies. Successful learning of any topic is not necessarily about cognitive ability or content knowledge, rather is about the metacognitive skills learners possess to plan, organize, implement, and monitor understanding to help in their learning, and then to evaluate progress toward the task goal (Protheroe & Clarke, 2008). Tseng, Dörnyei, and Schmitt (2006) assert that it is not merely what learners do that makes learning strategic, rather it is the creativity they must put into improving their learning that involves a measure of self-regulation.

While it may be tempting to deem certain learning strategies as good or bad, Oxford (2003) asserts that learning strategies are neutral until the context of their use is fully considered. She further states that in order for a learning strategy to be useful, particularly a language learning strategy, it must have the following conditions:

1. it relates well to the task;

2. it fits the learner's preferred learning style; and
3. the learner effectively uses the strategy and can connect it to other relevant strategies (p. 8).

Across learners, there is a wide range in the number and type of learning strategies that can either lead to success or potentially cause frustration when learning goals are not achieved. Knowing which type of learning strategy to use, and when to use it, is the difference between an effective learner and an ineffective learner. Effective learners have a broad range of learning strategies and not necessarily a particular number, know which strategy to use in a situation to achieve their learning goals, and are flexible in using different strategies for the task; ineffective learners have fewer learning strategies and are not as proficient in selecting and using appropriate strategies (Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Folse, 2004; Nation, 2001; Pressley & Levin, 1986; Skehan, 1991).

Language learning strategies

Language learning strategies (LLS) are defined as specific actions or thought processes language learners use to make learning easier, faster, and more effective, and which are self-directed to help in language acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information (Grainger, 2012; Nation, 2013; Oxford, 2003; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Much has been written about effective language learning strategies and what distinguishes good or effective language learners from less successful or ineffective learners (Brown 1994; Fan, 2003; Folse, 2004; Gu & Johnson; 1996; Nakahama et al, 2001; Nation, 2013; Nunan, 1989; Rubin, 1975). Identifying the most effective strategies for language learning, and not just vocabulary retention, is necessary in order for language learners to be successful.

Rubin (1975) studied the question that if individuals can achieve reasonable success in learning their first language through interaction within the L1 community, why does this ability decline for some individuals and not others when learning another language? She noted that the less successful (ineffective) learner seems to recognize that the successful (effective) language learner "always has the right answer" (p. 42) but never quite grasps why or what tricks lead to more effective learning.

Knowing what causes some individuals to be effective learners in a second language may provide opportunities to teach ineffective learners to become more successful. So what distinguishes effective learners from ineffective learners? Rubin (1975) identified three characteristics that all effective learners possess: aptitude, motivation and opportunity, with aptitude being the least likely characteristic that can be manipulated and that motivation and opportunity can be developed for successful language learning. Nunan (1999), in his study of learning needs of second language learners, and Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan, and Willingham (2013) in their study of the learning needs of learners in general, reached similar conclusions that by teaching learners specific learning skills or strategies, and giving them more responsibility for their learning (self-regulation), that they can develop skills critical to their success. Even though Dunlosky, et al. (2013) studied effective learners in general and not specifically language learners, they cite many of the same strategies that language learning researchers have found to be most effective for second language learners: using metastrategies; appropriately assessing the learning task and matching it with the best strategy; and evaluating the strategy for effectiveness and then to either commit to or abandon the strategy based on its usefulness to the learning.

Altmisdort (2016) found in a study of 212 Turkish university EFL students that effective language learners used more language learning strategies which are conscious attention to rules and form than ineffective learners who used more acquisition strategies which are similar to how children learn language through focusing on input and meaning to achieve language output.

Fan (2003) asserts it is the technique selected and the learner's discipline in using the strategies. Effective language learners rarely use a single strategy and when strategies are combined, it may make a difference in their learning. Moreover, learner motivation and a strong interest in learning the language are essential to successful language learning (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nunan, 1989; Rubin, 1975). For example, learning to recognize and appropriately use a word in natural context (e.g., conversation) rather than learning vocabulary words in isolation is the ultimate goal of vocabulary learning, which leads to language proficiency (Gu & Johnson, 1996). Table 1 lists the characteristics of effective and ineffective learners and language learners.

Table 1

Characteristics of effective and ineffective learners and language learners

Effective learners	Ineffective learners
Goal-oriented, intrinsic, active learner	Moment-oriented, extrinsic, passive learner
Initiates teacher interactions, conversations, and social situations	Limited teacher interaction; does what is assigned by the teacher
Broad content knowledge	Limited content knowledge
Understands purpose in learning	Negative attitude toward learning
Knows and uses multiple LLS; initiates and is enthusiastic about the learning process	Narrow repertoire of LLS; few metacognitive skills and strategies

Table 1 (continued)

Actively monitors and self-regulates learning and LLS used for effectiveness with task; modifies strategies used, as needed	Prefers authority-oriented, extrinsic strategies and wants teacher to identify learner's mistakes
Seeks out or creates opportunities to use TL with NS (e.g., listening to movies/TV/or radio in the TL, joining language club)	Uses rote learning; uses few supplementary learning opportunities to integrate learning
Attentive to meaning, form, and linguistic patterns in the TL; recognizes importance of vocabulary over grammar	Inefficient and ineffective use of learning strategies for the task
Comfortable with uncertainty; willing to take risks to communicate and convey messages in TL (e.g., appearing foolish, make up sentences)	Difficulties staying on task or focused in learning; short-time focus (i.e., learning for a test and not for intrinsic value of learning)

Note. Data from Altmisdort (2016); Chamot & Kupper (1989); Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan, & Willingham (2013); Folse (2004); Nation (2001); Pressley & Levin (1986); Rubin (1975); and Skehan (1991).

It tends to be that the broader the repertoire of strategies available for learners' use, the greater the impact on their level of success in language learning. Some language learning strategies identified as more effective than others include:

- using an organized approach to and taking responsibility for own language learning;
- studying vocabulary and using it inside and outside of the classroom;
- experimentation with grammar and words;
- negotiation of meaning and production techniques to keep a conversation going;
- living with uncertainty, i.e., not worrying about understanding every word;
- asking for meaning or checking for clarification;
- dictionary use (monolingual v. bilingual) and dictionary look-up strategies;
- notetaking, word lists, and word cards;

- mnemonics and other memorization strategies;
- using errors effectively;
- learning from context, context cues, and making intelligent guesses from context;
- chunking and learning collocations; and
- selective attention, learning tricks to maintain conversation even with less than 100% understanding, and filling in gaps of their own competence (Brown 1994; Coxhead, 2005; Fan, 2003; Folse, 2004; Gu & Johnson; 1996; Nakahama et al, 2001; Nation, 2013; Nunan, 1989).

Language learning strategies (LLS) fall into two broad categories – direct and indirect. Direct LLS require mental processing on the part of the learner in order to develop a system to study, learn, understand, and produce vocabulary and phrases that directly impact effective communication in the target language (TL); indirect LLS help to facilitate mutual understanding and meaning by producing opportunities to practice the TL without necessarily involving it in the learning process (Chilkiewicz, 2015; Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, & Küpper, 1985; Tam, 2013). These two broad categories of direct and indirect strategies can be further classified into five sub areas: c*ognitive, metacognitive, social, affective,* and *compensation* (Oxford and Nyikos, 1989). Oxford (2003) later added *memory-related* strategies to the list.

Cognitive strategies associate new with existing information in the long-term memory; metacognitive strategies help learners plan, arrange, focus and evaluate their own learning process; social strategies are used to interact with others and manage conversation; affective strategies involve "feelings, motivations, and attitudes related to learning" (Oxford & Nyikos,

1989, p. 291); compensation strategies include guessing meaning from context or using circumlocution when the meaning is not known; and memory-related strategies help learners link, learn, and retrieve the target language (L2) vocabulary by using acronyms, sounds, images, movement, or mechanical methods (e.g., flashcards). How language learners, regardless of their L1, might use these strategies determines whether a learner will be an effective or ineffective language learner. Table 2 lists the six language learning strategies, functions, and examples.

Table 2

Language learning strategies, functions, and examples

Strategy	Function	Examples
	Direct	
Cognitive	Steps of operation and problem solving to relate new to existing information for the long-term memory	Infer or guess in context Use of repetition or drills Summarize, take notes, highlight text
Compensation	To make up for lack of knowledge in target language	Guess meaning from context clues Use of mime or gestures Circumlocution; coin words Ask for help
Memory-related	Help learners link, learn, apply, and retrieve information	Use of acronyms, sounds, images, movement, flashcards, or groups of nouns or verbs to show relationship between words

Table 2 (continued)

Indirect		
Metacognitive	Helps learners plan, arrange, organize, and evaluate their own learning process	Focus on listening over speech production Overview and link new with known material Set learning goals and objectives Identify task purpose; plan and organize the learning task Practice, self-monitor, and self-evaluate
Social	Interact with others and manage conversation Seek opportunities to practice the target language	Ask questions; ask for clarification, verification, or correction Cooperate with others, especially proficient users of the target language Develop cultural understanding
Affective	Involves feelings, motivation, and attitudes toward learning to lower anxiety and encourage learning	Use of relaxation, meditation, music, or laughter or humor Take intelligent risks Use checklists and rewards Keep a language diary Discuss feelings with someone

Note. Data from Coxhead (2006); Ehrman and Oxford (1990); Hardan (2013); and Oxford and Nyikos (1989).

Recognizing the importance of language learning strategies is one thing; using them is another. In a study of 200 Iranian male and female EFL at seven different private language schools, Azar and Saeidi (2013) examined the relationship of learners' beliefs about language learning and the number, choice, and use of LLS. The researchers found that learners with a stronger belief in the value of the language learned used more LLS, and that the level of success between effective and ineffective language learners was the quality, not quantity, of the LLS used, as well as how the LLS used were matched with the task. So even if effective and ineffective learners used the same LLS, it was the knowing how to effectively pair the specific strategy with the task that determined the level of success in learning. Additionally, effective learners' beliefs about their language learning were more positive compared to negative beliefs held by ineffective learners.

Amirkhiz, Abu Bakar, Samad, Baki, and Mahmoudi (2013) found in their study of four dyads – two each of Iranian EFL and Malaysian ESL learners - that the EFL learners used more metalinguistic strategies than the ESL learners who focused more on communicative features of language learning. The authors assert that even though participants were of similar backgrounds (gender, age, language proficiency), the status of English in their home countries may have affected their use of LLS and language-related episodes (LRE). English is more of an institutionalized L2 for Malaysians who tend to use it for communication, as opposed to Iranians who do not use English very often in their society and so may focus more on the structure and mechanics of English and less on conversation and oral communication.

Chamot and Kupper (1989) conducted a three-year project comprised of three separate studies – descriptive, longitudinal, and teacher course development. The first two studies focused

on the LLS learners used, identified the differences in strategies used by effective and ineffective learners, and how strategy use might change over time. The third study focused on teacher learning strategy instruction so students knew how best to apply the learning strategies to become more effective language learners. Results of the first two studies identified that effective learners know how to use a variety of strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, and social-affective) for receptive and productive tasks, and know which are the most appropriate to achieve their learning goals. The ineffective language learners used strategies less frequently, had fewer strategies in their learning toolbox, and were not as competent in their choice of strategy for the task, often choosing the less effective strategies for the task.

Vocabulary learning strategies

Learning vocabulary is essential to language learning and can be classified into implicit or direct (e.g., guessing from context or inferring) and explicit or indirect (e.g., dictionary use) methods (Fan, 2003; Nation, 2013). Neither the direct nor indirect approach is better one over the other; effective language learners will use a combination of the two approaches to increase the success of their learning. There is an abundance of literature that identifies various vocabulary learning strategies which can vary from fifteen to nearly a hundred (Coxhead, 2005; Fan, 2003; Folse, 2006; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nation, 2013). Research shows that effective language learners use more and more effective strategies than ineffective learners and consistently supports that effective learners seldom use just one strategy in vocabulary learning (Fan, 2003; Folse, 2004; Gu & Johnson; 1996; Nation, 2013; Nunan, 1989).

Consider one example of a language learning strategy - guessing from context - learners may use and which may even be encouraged to be used by language teachers. According to Coxhead (2005), not all words can be guessed from a written context and this strategy may be

more difficult where there is only a verbal stimulus. Folse (2004) maintains that guessing from context is not an effective strategy for second or other language learners. Gu and Johnson (1996) found that even though L1 Chinese students valued guessing from context (direct strategy), learners who used dictionary look up strategies (indirect strategy) scored better than those who did not. Because language learners often infer the incorrect meaning of an unknown word in text when they guess the meaning without clues even if context clues are helpful to gain meaning, they are not effective for retention (Folse, 2004).

Fan (2003) conducted a study on the frequency of use and the perceived and actual usefulness of L2 vocabulary learning strategies for 1067 L1 Chinese (Cantonese) students from Hong Kong. One of the research questions was to determine the types of strategies learners use when learning high- and low-frequency words. A bilingual Chinese-English Vocabulary Learning Strategies questionnaire identified which strategies participants preferred to use in their L2 learning. Fan (2003) grouped the language learning strategies into nine categories: *management, sources, guessing, dictionary use, repetition, association, grouping, analysis,* and *known words.* Results of the data analysis of the students' rating of usefulness of various strategies indicate that the students only sometimes used identified vocabulary learning strategies even though they considered them useful. Interestingly, Fan (2003) found that one of the strategies students reported that they used is a repetition strategy of repeating or spelling a new word in their mind, in contrast to what Gu and Johnson (1996) reported of L1 Chinese students, who stated they frequently repeated words aloud as one of their repetition strategies.

Gu and Johnson (1996) conducted a study of 850 L1 Chinese ELL to analyze their beliefs and strategies in their English vocabulary learning, with the distinction between memory

strategies and vocabulary learning strategies. The study included an extensive literature review of various LLS that focused primarily on memorizing vocabulary lists through repetition, rote memorization, or using mnemonics for vocabulary learning and committing form-meaning pairs to memory. The researchers identified five types of learners: *readers, active strategy users, passive strategy users, encoders,* and *non-encoders*. Readers were self-initiated learners who rated guessing from context and focus on word form as effective learning strategies. This group believed vocabulary should be picked up by natural exposure and not memorization. Active strategy users used more guessing, dictionary, note taking and memorization strategies. Overall, it was hard work and motivation that most likely contributed to their success. This is similar to the findings of Victori (1999) that showed lack of commitment and the writers' self-reported laziness that resulted in lack of success. Passive strategy users relied on their belief in memorization and visual repetition as effective strategies but either their lack of effort or what they actually did, led to poor scores. Encoders and non-encoders either used or did not use encoding strategies.

Swain and Lapkin (1998) define language-related episodes (LRE) as instances when learners talk about their language production, question their use of it, or correct themselves or others, and are generally lexical or grammatical. A recent study by Heidari-Shahreza (2018) of 86 L1 Iranian elementary, intermediate, and advance level EFL learners considered how playful LRE (PLRE) can also aid in language learning. Playful LRE are when learners use humor as a fun, creative approach to supplement their focus on form in their language learning. The study considered three areas: a) "linguistic devices (e.g., pun, irony), b) instructional features (e.g., course relevance, target)…, and c) the functions (strategic attitude)" (p. 5). Results indicated that

each learner level used one of three types of PLRE – formal, semantic, and pragmatic – with learners of higher proficiency levels using more PLRE overall and each level using one type of PLRE more than another: pragmatic (elementary level); semantic (intermediate level), and formal (advanced level). In a study of ten intermediate L1 Iranian EFL ranging in age from 23-32 years and paired into groups, Alijanian, Ketabi, and Moinzadeh (2018) analyzed the interaction features used in learners' lexical LRE by using a dictogloss activity. The intent of the study was to have learners focus their attention on communicative interaction and away from form-focused language learning as they negotiated meaning to resolve any communication failures. Results indicated that more proficient learners used LRE frequently and that overall, use of LRE encouraged metalinguistic awareness and self-regulation of the learners.

Vocabulary learning strategies involve a wide range of strategies in the ongoing process of vocabulary learning. Solely relying on memorization is not a guarantee of authentic language learning and production. Extensive input through conversation, reading, and media in the L2 are also crucial to language learning. Suffice it to say, there is no silver bullet in language learning or a best strategy. Language learners must employ a variety of language and vocabulary learning strategies to be successful in the target language and the strategies that they select and use will determine this.

Learner characteristics in language learning

Skills in the L1 form the foundation for L2 aptitude, proficiency, and achievement, and the differences between L1 skills and L2 aptitude of high- and low-proficiency L2 learners can be significant (Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, & Humbach, 2012). Nation (2001) and Sparks et al, (2012) found that the amount of reading in the L1 and the earlier the age of literacy account for increased language knowledge, successful learning, and overall academic performance.

Conversely, failure to successfully read in the early years of school likely leads to significant problems learning new information in later years (i.e., learning an L2). Skehan (1991) groups differences between individual learners into four areas that can influence successful language learning: language aptitude, motivation, learner strategies, and learning style. Table 3 summarizes each of these areas.

Table 3

Characteristics of language learners

Characteristic	Description
Language aptitude	Implies there is a talent for language learning not based on previous learning experience; relatively stable and varies between learners.
Motivation	Either intrinsic (e.g., satisfaction of learning and doing well) or extrinsic (e.g., external rewards or consequences of learning).
Learner strategies	Used by all learners and based on the selected strategy, implies an ability to predict success in learning, and that there is some connection with ability in the L1.
Learning style	Preferred method of learning and processing (e.g., auditory, visual, kinesthetic, communicative, analytical v. memory, concrete v. passive).

Adapted from "Individual Differences in Second Language Learning," by P. Skehan, 1991, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, Vol. 13(2),* pp. *275-298.*

In a nine-year longitudinal study of 54 high school L2 learners (first through tenth grades) who had completed two years of an L2 (French, German, or Spanish) by the end of their tenth grade year, Sparks et al (2012) found a relationship between L1 skills, particularly literacy, and success in L2 proficiency and achievement. The stronger a learner's reading skills in the L1,

the stronger the outcomes in L2 learning. The first goal of the study was to determine whether individual differences in high school L1 literacy levels, vocabulary, and cognitive ability – after adjusting for these same factors in the earlier grades – accounted for differences in L2 proficiency and aptitude in order to determine if it supported the cognitive efficiency hypothesis. The second goal was to examine whether adjusting for the same effects of L1 abilities in the early grades (literacy, vocabulary, and cognitive ability) and volume of reading in the L1 accounted for any differences in L2 proficiency to support the environmental opportunity hypothesis. Results of the study found that print exposure (e.g., reading materials) builds a general knowledge base which "can influence performance in processing capacities for language-related tasks" (Sparks et al, 2012, p. 498). This supports the work of Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) that learners' volume of reading, or extensiveness of reading, explained the effect of reading comprehension and vocabulary development over time. Those who successfully read and comprehended at an earlier age tended to read more over time, thus increasing their comprehension skills and achievements.

Language learners are motivated for and by various reasons; the commonality among them all are internal (intrinsic) and external (extrinsic) factors necessary for successful language learning (Dörnyei, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic factors are the individual learner's determination to achieve a goal and the satisfaction once it is achieved; extrinsic factors are outside support from family, friends, or employers; possibility of education or a better job; improved social standing; or as a way to socialize into the target language's community (Tomita & Spada, 2013). Oxford and Nyikos (1989) describe the social strategies that motivate learners to learn an L2 in order to interact with others in conversation, as well as the affective strategies

that involve feelings and attitudes related to the learning. Ammon (as cited in Conrad, 1996) asserts that in relation to English, the social power of the language can influence how it is perceived by those learning it or their attitude toward it. Furthermore, the function of the language – how it will be used in particular sociocultural situations – can influence learners' response to learning the language if they feel dominated by it. Yoshida (2010) found that external (environment, context, social situation) and internal (attitude, self-concept of language use) factors influenced learners' motivation for language learning.

Research has found that personality types – extrovert and introvert – can be a predictor of preference for LLS that learners use. Using the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire to determine extroversion or introversion and a Language Learning Strategy Inventory to determine the preferred LLS in a study of 866 Sri Lankan English language learners, Liyanage and Bartlett (2013) found a relationship between the LLS and personality traits relative to five distinct learning contexts: "listening in class, speaking in class, listening and speaking outside of class, reading in class, and writing in class" (p. 599). The results indicated that the level of learner introversion or extroversion was a predictor of the preference for particular LLS (metacognitive, cognitive, or social affective) and was context dependent.

Like Liyanage and Bartlett (2013), Kayaoğlu (2013) used the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire to determine extroversion or introversion; however, the researcher used Oxford's (1989) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) to assess the preferred LLS. In this study of 106 extroverted and 94 introverted students in an intensive English center at a Turkish technical university, Kayaoğlu (2013) found that both introverts and extroverts had similar use of specific LLS, although introverts used all of the LLS and used interpersonal communication

strategies more frequently than extroverts. Introverts were found to be more concerned with specific LLS, whereas extroverts used more cognitive strategies (e.g., analyzing, expression, using formulas and patterns, repeating, practicing sounds, and writing systems). Introverts more frequently used self-monitoring strategies that allowed them to evaluate their overall progress and performance, and they also interacted more with teachers. Extroverts scored higher only on practice situations (a metacognitive strategy) and used more social strategies (e.g., asking peers) than introverts. Other than communicative strategies (direct), introverted learners used metacognitive strategies (indirect) more frequently than extroverted students. The use of affective LLS showed no statistical significance between introverted and extroverted learners.

The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) and SILL are two common instruments used to assess language learner motivation and strategy use. Tseng et al (2006) contended that these instruments do not accurately measure the effectiveness of LLS learners used as the MSLQ focuses on general trends of learner traits and strategies used, and the SILL focuses on quantity of specific LLS behavior and not quality. In other words, using more LLS does not automatically equate to an effective language learner. Tseng et al (2006) developed an instrument to address the construct of learner self-regulation and identified five control areas: commitment, metacognitive, satiation, emotion, and environmental. Metacognitive, satiation, and emotion control will not be reviewed in detail as commitment and environmental controls are more relevant to this study. Commitment control helps preserve or increase the learner's commitment to the original learning goal while being mindful of rewards or consequences if the goal is or is not met. Environmental control uses a positive learning environment to support the learning goals and eliminate any negative influences (e.g., distractions).

Oxford and Nyikos (1989) found that successful language learners use the strategies that work best for themselves regardless if they are introverts or extroverts. Liyanage and Bartlett (2013) had conflicting results on whether extroverted or introverted learners were the best language learners. Some researchers and language teachers argue that extroverted students are more successful language learners since they "are more likely to be positively and energetically engaged with the activities and performances involved in language learning" (Liyanage and Bartlett, 2013, p. 599) while others espouse the view that introversion is a better predictor of successful L2 language learning as these students develop coping skills to reflect and logically process any fears or anxieties about the L2 learning or testing. These differing viewpoints by researchers, language teachers, and personality theorists led Liyanage and Bartlett (2013) to the opinion that there is a "chameleon character" (p. 599) about the link between personality type and L2 learning success, which they attribute to gaps in the literature and weakness in research design of previous studies. They contend that this is due to poor operationalization of the constructs of personality and psychological types, and cognitive and learning styles. They also assert that these terms have been used interchangeably and without consideration to the learning context, which Liyanage and Bartlett (2013) considered, that might have caused any association between personality type to cognitive and learning styles or LLS preference, resulting in chameleon-like outcomes of the relationship between personality types and successful L2 learning.

Yoshida (2010) found that learners' self-concept or fear of embarrassment when making a linguistic error can inhibit use of the target language in a Japanese foreign language class. If fear of making a mistake outweighed the desire to use the language, the learners were less likely

to draw on language learning strategies. As the learners' confidence in their language ability increased and anxiety decreased, they were more likely to take a risk to use the target language. Learner personality, anxiety level in use of the target language, in what context might the anxiety level increase based on personality type, and educational background and literacy levels can also affect motivation in language use. Yoshida (2010) studied Japanese foreign language learners and found that learners' self-concept in using the target language had a significant effect on whether they were willing to take a risk to use the language in a classroom setting.

Summary

The literature clearly supports that language learners use a variety of strategies in their language learning and vocabulary acquisition. It is also evident from the literature that various factors of the learners (e.g., L1 and cultural backgrounds, age, gender, motivation for language learning, and personality type) impact the effectiveness of language learning. While there is a copious amount of research about language learners and language learning strategies, there is not as much on what learners say they do versus what they actually do in their language learning. Furthermore, data collection about learners' language learning strategy use or the time spent on learning (time use methodology) are often self-reported and therefore, not always reliable, resulting in a halo effect, an observer's paradox, or a Hawthorne effect. This is relevant to my study in examining what gaps might exist between what learners say they do versus what they actually do in learning the target language.

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine what gaps there may between what English language learners (ELL) in a community-based Adult Basic Education Program say they do and what they actually do when employing language learning strategies. The research questions are:

1. What do students say they do when they do not understand a word in either conversation or written form?
2. What do students actually do when they do not understand a word in either conversation or written form?

Participants

Participants in this study are a convenience sample of intermediate and advance level, non-native English speaking students in a community-based Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program in the Midwestern United States. Other than a materials fee, the ABE Program is at no cost to participants, most of whom attend classes to increase employability, complete general education requirements for a high school or general education diploma, or prepare for the U.S. citizenship test. Participants are from various language backgrounds, with the predominant language and culture Somali. Participation in this study was voluntary and no monetary or academic compensation was provided. Participant consent was obtained prior to participation in this study (see Appendix E for a complete version).

Seventeen students agreed to participate in the study; however, one student was unable to sufficiently understand the vocabulary on the permissions form, therefore was eliminated from the study. A total of sixteen participants were involved in and completed all aspects of the study, with an equal number of men and women participating. Participants' L1 included: Arabic, French, Somali, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Other. The L1 for participants in the "Other" category

are not identified due to the uniqueness of the L1, which could potentially identify these participants. To avoid inadvertently revealing participants' identities, instead of listing individual home countries, with the exception of Somalia, the home country of a majority of participants, participants are identified by global regions: East Asia, Western Europe, Middle East, Central America, and West Africa. One participant stated "U.S." and another stated "uncertain" for a home country due to having been in a refugee camp in Ethiopia for many years. Both of these participants' L1 is Somali. The average length of time participants have been in the United States is just under seven years with the most recent participant arriving 18 months ago and the longest 27 years ago, which incidentally was also the oldest participant. Some participants provided the exact date (month, day, year) and time of their arrival in the U.S., others provided a month or season (e.g., summer) and year, while still others gave a total number of years and no specific year. Time living in the U.S. in years was calculated to the nearest one-quarter of a year (three months). See Table 4 for participant demographics (gender, age, L1) and time living in the U.S.

Table 4

Participant demographics and time living in the U.S.

Participant (n=16)	Gender	Age (M=33.5)	L1	Time living in U.S. (in years)
1	Male	45	Spanish	17
2	Male	32	Somali	3.25
3	Male	44	Somali	8
4	Male	28	Somali	9

Table 4 (continued)

5	Male	31	Arabic	2
6	Male	29	Somali	10
7	Female	50	Other	1.5
8	Male	23	Somali	4.5
9	Male	24	Somali	2.5
10	Female	24	French	3.5
11	Female	27	Somali	3.5
12	Female	54	Vietnamese	27
13	Female	35	Somali	12
14	Female	23	Somali	2
15	Female	43	Other	5
16	Female	25	French	1.5

The length of time participants have studied English fell into two majority groups - one group that had studied fewer than three years (37.5%) and another group that had studied five to fewer than ten years (31.3%). All L1s were represented in these two groups, with the exception of Vietnamese and one from the "Other" language group. Three participants (18.8%) had studied English ten or more years; one participant (6.3%) had studied English three years to fewer than five years; and one participant (6.3%) had studied English less than a year (two weeks). Most participants (62.5%) speak with NES on a daily basis, two (12.5%) speak with NES on a weekly basis, and four participants (25%) provided an incongruent answer as to how often they speak with NES. Nine participants (56.3%) speak more than one language at home. Of the seven

participants that only speak one language at home, five speak Somali and the other two speak English. Both of these participants are married to American NES.

Participants' self-reported ages at which they learned to read and write in their L1 based on their best recall varied from under age 5 years to over age 10 years. Sixteen years of age was the oldest age that a participant learned to read in the L1 and 18 years the oldest age learned to write in the L1; this was the same participant and the L1 is Somali. The age at which participants reported that they learned to read in English ranged from 5 to 34 years of age, and to write in English the range was approximately 9 years of age to 34 years, with two participants reporting that they are unable to write in English at this time or are still learning to write in English. Some were unable to recall a specific age so provided a grade level, while others have not yet mastered writing in English. Table 5 lists the ages that participants learned to read and write in their L1 and English.

Table 5

Ages learned to read and write in L1 and English

Participant (n=16)	Age read in L1	Age write in L1	Age read in English	Age write in English
1	4-5 years	5-6 years	32 years	Unable at this time
2	3-4 years	17 years	31 years	31 years
3	7 years	7 years	34 years	34 years
4	16 years	18 years	24 years	Still learning
5	6 years	6 years	5th grade	6th grade

Table 5 (continued)

6	5 years	5 years	20 years	20 years
7	2nd grade	2nd grade	3rd grade	3rd grade
8	12 years	12 years	15 years	15 years
9	9-10 years	Unknown	20 years	20 years
10	3-4 years	3-4 years	9-10 years	9-10 years
11	5-6 years	6 years	15 years	16 years
12	5 years	6 years	28 years	28 years
13	6 years	7 years	20-21 years	20-21 years
14	5 years	13 years	21 years	22 years
15	7-8 years	7-8 years	15 years	15 years
16	5-6 years	5-6 years	5-6 years	9 years

Materials

Two instruments were used for data collection – a biodata questionnaire and a four-part questionnaire titled, "What do students actually do or say they do?"

Biodata Questionnaire. The biodata questionnaire included fourteen questions about participants' age, gender, L1, English language learning background, and the motivation to learn English, factors that the literature indicates influence the language learning strategies (LLS) learners employ (Dörnyei, 2000; Grainger, 2012; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Tomita & Spada, 2013). The questionnaire was designed in such a way as to promote an informal conversational style rather than a formal interview in order to establish rapport with

each participant prior to data collection for the two research questions. (See Appendix A for a complete version of the questionnaire.)

Questionnaire – "What do students actually do or say they do?" The purpose of this four-part questionnaire was to determine what participants *actually* do when they encounter an unfamiliar word in either written or verbal form versus what they *say* they do when encountering an unfamiliar word in written or verbal form. Although some form of Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) is commonly used when studying language learner strategies used (Azar & Saeidi, 2013; Kayaoğlu, 2013), because of the number of questions on the SILL, the English proficiency level of participants in this study, and the limited time allotted for each of the interviews, it was ruled out as a data collection instrument. The following describes in detail each of the four parts of the questionnaire.

Part I consisted of fourteen general questions about participants' experience learning English and their L1 background in order to ascertain what students *actually* do when they hear an unfamiliar word. Ten of the questions had planted, low-frequency words from the Academic Word List (AWL) sublists 9 and 10 (Coxhead, 2011). The ten target words were *adjustment, convince, reluctant, adjacent, conceivable, protocol, intermediate, devote, encountered,* and *anticipate*. These words were selected because it was expected that they would be unfamiliar to participants; many students in the ABE Program indicate an intention to go on for higher education and would need to know these AWL words; and the words are relatively common in everyday conversations in English. Although not by deliberate design, eight of the questions were closed-ended (1, 3, and 5-10) and six were open-ended (2, 4, and 11-14).

Part II consisted of ten questions in a structured interview format that asked participants what they do when they encounter an unfamiliar word in different situations (e.g., in class or a store, with a child or friend, or at the doctor's office) and modalities (hearing or seeing) to determine what students *say* they do when they hear or see unfamiliar words. None of the ten target words were included in this part of the questionnaire.

Part III consisted of two subparts to explicitly ask participants if they knew the meaning of the ten target words in order to verify whether they knew the meaning or the target words or not. Participants were first asked "Can you tell me what _____ means?" for each of the ten planted target words used in the Part I questions. The second part consisted of prepared index cards with each of the ten target words that were used to show participants the target word and to again explicitly ask, "Can you tell me what _____ means?" The target words were hand-printed in black marker on white, unlined index cards, one word per index card. The purpose of the written index cards was to allow participants an opportunity to demonstrate whether they knew a target word or not in order to verify whether participants knew or did not know the target words first introduced in Part I.

Part IV consisted of a short text, approximately sixty words in length, with five of the ten target words embedded within the paragraph. The purpose of this part of the questionnaire was to observe what participants do when they encountered an unfamiliar word in written form. The five target words were not identified in any way (e.g., underlined, bold, or italics). (See Appendix B for a complete version of the four-part questionnaire.)

Additional materials. Audio recorder to record participant interviews; notebook and pen for field notes; bilingual dictionaries (English/L1) provided by the researcher; and personal electronic device provided by participant, if applicable.

Research Design and Procedures

This study is a within groups, correlational design to measure what students say they do versus what they actually do when hearing or seeing unfamiliar English words and whether and what type of language learning strategies they may employ. The dependent variable is the language learning strategy; independent variables are L1, gender, and age. Recruitment for participation in this study was done by visiting three individual ABE classes of ELL to orally present the purpose of the study and the informed consent form. Students in the classes were provided an opportunity to ask questions of this researcher before volunteering. Information about the study and consent was left with the classroom teachers so that students could ask the teachers questions if they felt more comfortable asking the teacher rather than asking an unfamiliar researcher. Some participants immediately agreed to participate, while others signed up with their teachers for the researcher to schedule a mutually agreeable date and time to meet.

Data collection

Data were collected through individual, face to face interviews between participants and the researcher. Participants were not told in advance what the interview would entail so that they could not prepare in advance (i.e., study a vocabulary list). The data collection consisted of four parts with each part audio-recorded and the researcher taking field notes. An Olympus VN-8100PC digital voice recorder was used to audio-record the interview. The recorder was tested with each participant prior to the interview and played back to verify that voices of both the participant and researcher could be clearly heard, and to help participants feel comfortable

having their voice recorded and have the recorder play during the interview. The recorder was left on the table between the participant and interviewer and was stopped immediately after the formal data collection so as not to record any follow up questions or discussion the participant might have. Field notes were taken during the interviews to record any facial expressions or other body language of the participants.

All interviews were prearranged and scheduled at a time convenient for the participant and conducted on a weekday evening or a Saturday morning. Interviews were held at an ABE Program site in a private area such as a classroom or study area. Average interview length was twenty-seven minutes with shortest and longest interviews 17:58 and 54:23 minutes, respectively. Only one participant asked if the recorder could be turned off approximately halfway through the interview. When told it would help the researcher to accurately record and remember the information, the answer was accepted even though the participant's facial expression belied acceptance.

The Biodata Questionnaire was administered by the researcher reading each question aloud to participants in a one-to-one setting and manually recording the answer on the questionnaire. Each question was read slowly and clearly, yet fast enough to replicate natural conversational speech. If a participant requested to have the question repeated, or if it appeared that the participant did not understand the question by making a facial gesture, shaking of the head, or stating "I don't know," the question was read again once to the participant, with care to enunciate each word yet still ask at a normal rate of speech. No feedback was provided if participants asked for clarification. If the participant did not understand the question or asked about a particular word in the question, the researcher moved on to the next question and told

participants each of the questions could be reviewed at the end of the interview. No assistance was provided to participants by way of explanation, definition, or synonym of the target word if they did not understand a word. No question was read more than twice.

All responses for the "What do students actually do or say they do?" Questionnaire were audio-recorded and notes taken by the researcher to record any facial expressions or other body language. Part I and Part II consisted of the researcher reading each question. If a participant did not know a word or understand the question, it was repeated once. If the participant still did not understand the question or asked about a particular word in the question, the researcher moved on to the next question and told participants each of the questions could be reviewed at the end of the interview. No assistance was provided to participants by way of explanation, definition, or synonym of the target word if they did not understand a word. No question was read more than twice.

In Part III of the questionnaire, the researcher verbally asked "Can you tell me what _____ means?" for each of the ten target words to verify whether or not the participant knew the target words when explicitly asked and to determine if it was consistent with what they say they do when encountering an unfamiliar word if they did not indicate knowledge of it in Part I. Each participant was given the opportunity to give a definition of the word after being verbally asked and then was shown an index card with the target word written on it and was again asked, "Can you tell me what _____ means?" In Part IV, participants were given approximately five minutes to read a short text of approximately sixty words in length that had five of the ten target words embedded within the paragraph. Participants were told, "While you read, I am here if you have questions" and could ask specific questions of the researcher; could use a dictionary –

either a hard copy bilingual (L1/English) that was provided or an online version, if participants had their own device; and write or mark on the paragraph. During this time, the researcher took field notes to record any strategies participants used when encountering any unfamiliar word.

Participants were given credit for knowing the target word for any closed-ended questions in Part I, even if they sounded uncertain, as the verification section of the questionnaire (Part III) revealed whether or not the participant truly knew the target word. At the end of each interview, participants were thanked for their time given to participate in the study.

Permissions

Participants' rights were protected during this study by the use of a participation agreement stated at the beginning of the survey and interview that outlined the purpose of the study and confidentiality of the answers. Participants had an opportunity to opt out of the interview and survey at any time. Participants were assigned a participant number and gender for the purpose of results reporting. See Appendix E for the Informed Consent Form.

Summary

This chapter identified participant demographics, materials and procedures used in the study, and how participants' rights were protected during the data collection. The next chapter reviews how data were coded and analyzed.

Chapter IV: Results

Data Coding and Analysis

Data were coded on an Excel spreadsheet using multiple worksheets for the four parts of the "What do students actually do or say they do" questionnaire (Appendix B). On the left vertical side, each worksheet listed the participants, numbered one through sixteen, in order of the dates they were interviewed.

Biodata questionnaire. These data were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet. Demographic data (gender, age, L1, and home country) were recorded in the Methodology section under "Participants" so will not be repeated here.

When asked, "How long do you think you'll live in the U.S.?" (Q2), most participants (44%) indicated they intended to remain in the U.S. until they complete their education. Another 19% of participants indicated that they intend to return to their home countries, and more than one-third (37%) provided an incongruent answer to this question or gave the length of time they have been living in the U.S. - the same or similar answer to the question, "When did you come to the United States?" (Q1). See Figure 1 for how long participants intend to live in the U.S.

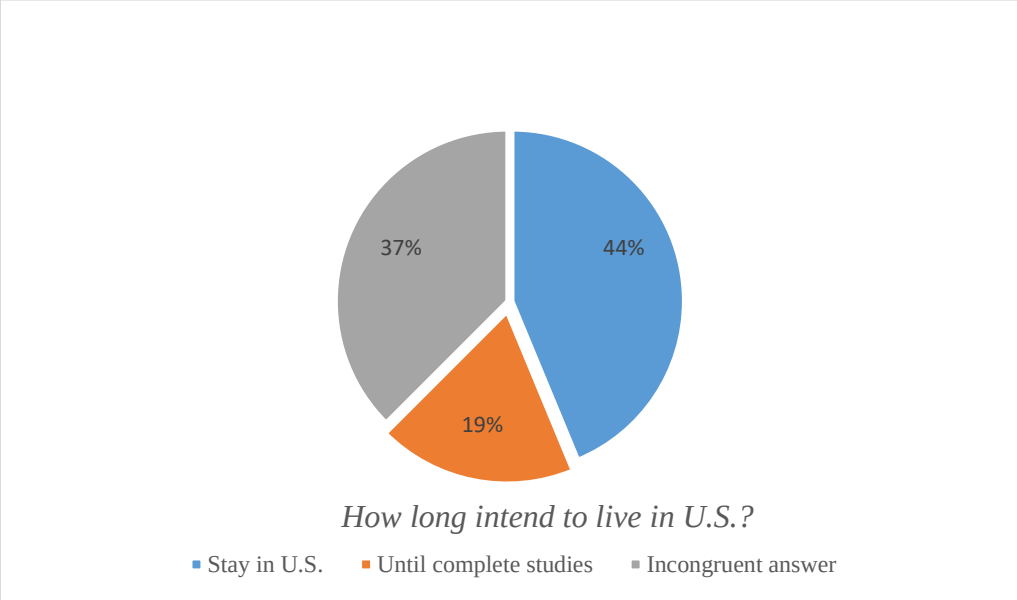

Figure 1: How long intend to live in the U.S.

Although a primary reason for involvement in the ABE Program is to improve English for academic and employment purposes, the number one reason participants cited they want to learn English (Q3) is "meeting and talking to others/social situations." See Figure 2 for percentages for each of the main reasons participants want to learn English. Most participants (9) cited "*meeting and talking to others/social situations"* as the main reason they wanted to learn English and "*education/go to school"* as a secondary reason. Three participants cited "*education/go to school*" as the main reason, two participants cited "*to improve self*," and one participant cited "*employment/job.*" One participant responded "it's good" as the main reason to learn English. Because it was unclear what was meant by this, this answer is considered incongruent with the question and is recorded as "*other*." Even though a few participants are married to native English speakers, none cited '*talking with family"* as the main reason to learn English.

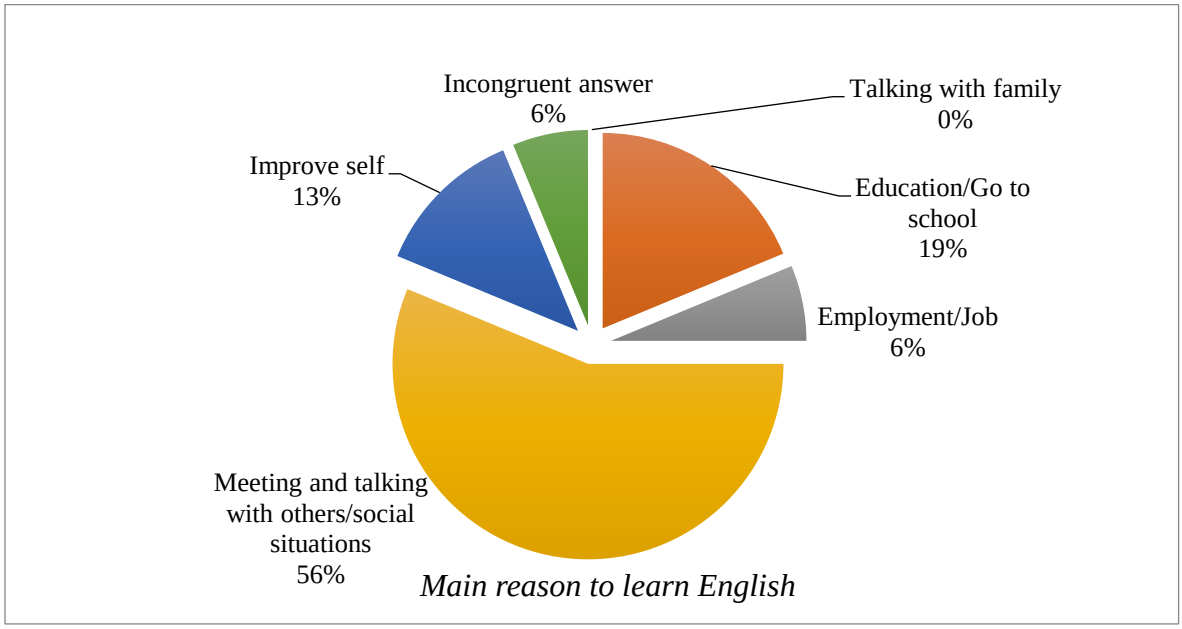

Figure 2: Main reasons participants want to learn English

Most participants have studied English (Q4) more than one but fewer than three years with the shortest length of time formally studying English two weeks and the longest time period more than twenty-five years. The majority of participants (10) stated they speak with NES at least daily (Q5), two participants stated they talk with NES on a weekly basis, and four participants responded with an answer that employed the "pretend and hope" LLS in that while the answer made sense grammatically, it did not answer the question.

Participants who self-reported learning to write in their L1 and to read or write in English (Q8 - Q11) at an older age, tended to use more LLS when they did not know the target word(s). Participants who self-reported learning to read and write in the L1 at a younger age tended to use fewer LLS for unknown words. With the exception of three participants (3, 4, and 12), most participants used fewer than two LSS for known words. Table 6 lists the self-reported education levels of participants based on the ages they learned to read and write in their L1 and English, and the average number of LLS they used for the unknown and known ten target words in this

study. When participants self-reported an age range (5-6 years old) for reading or writing in their L1 or English, the lower age was used to code the data (i.e., 5 years old). The Exploration School's U.S. grade equivalencies ("Age/Grade Conversion Chart," 2018) was used to approximate an age for participants who reported a grade level (e.g., second or fifth) when they learned to read or write in either their L1 or English.

Table 6 *Age read and write in L1 and English, and average number of LLS*

Participant	Age in L1		Age in English		Average LLS used for target words	
(n=16)	Read	Write	Read	Write	Unknown	Known
8	12	12	15	15	3.7	1.6
13	6	7	20	20	3.5	0.7
2	3	17	30	32	3.3	1.8
3	7	7	34	34	3.0	4.0
4	16	18	24	28	2.8	2.7
12	5	6	28	28	2.8	2.2
14	5	13	21	22	2.5	0.8
1	4	5	32	N/A*	2.4	1.2
5	6	6	10	11	2.3	1.7
9	9	N/A*	20	20	2.3	1.5
10	3	3	9	9	2.3	1.1
15	7	7	15	15	2.0	1.5
7	7	7	8	8	2.0	1.0
16	5	5	5	9	2.0	0.7

Table 6 (continued)

6	5	5	20	20	1.8	1.2
11	5	6	15	16	1.5	1.0

*N/A: Participant is learning to write or did not know at what age was able to write in L-1 or English.

Questionnaire - "What do students actually do or say they do?" An Excel spreadsheet was used to record results for each of the four parts of this questionnaire. The first worksheet listed across the top the ten target words used in Part I and Part III and grouped them each into four sections, labeled as follows:

Section 1: Participant knew the target word based on Part I (normal conversation)

Section 2: Participant knew the target word based on Part III (being explicitly asked)

Section 3: Participant showed a LLS in Part I

Section 4: Participant showed a LLS in Part III

In each section, participants were coded as a "1" if they knew the target word or used a LSS and a "0" if they did not know the target word and did not use a LLS. Participants were given credit that they knew the word if they demonstrated linguistic knowledge during conversation (Part I) or metalinguistic knowledge when they were directly asked the word meaning (Part III). As a matter of review, the ten target words in this study are *adjustment, convince, reluctant, adjacent, conceivable, protocol, intermediate, devote, encountered,* and *anticipate*. It is important to mention that during the recruitment process in the classrooms and unbeknownst to the teacher, the class was learning two of the target words in this study (convince and adjustment) and they were listed on the whiteboard at the front of the class.

However, the three participants from this class did not show knowledge of this word when participating in the study.

The next nine worksheets, one each for Part II questions two through ten (Q2-Q10), recorded what LLS participants say they do (a) when they want to learn new or more words in English, and (b) when they hear or see an unfamiliar word in various situations. Part II, Q1, "How interested are you in learning new vocabulary words?" was not recorded as it is merely an introductory question and not germane to the data analysis. Using a data categorization process similar to Fan (2003), each worksheet categorized the LLS into six major groups and the individual items, with each item assigned a number. The six major groups and items were: *cognitive* (7 items), *compensation* (8 items), *memory-related* (4 items), *metacognitive* (9 items), *social* (11 items), and *affective* (5 items) for a total of 45 LLS items. See Appendix C for a complete list of the six language learning strategy groups and individual items.

Participants were coded with a "1" for each LLS they say they used and a "0" if the participant did not identify using a particular LLS. For example, if when asked "To learn new words in English, what do you do?" (Part II, Q2) the participant said "I read in English," it would be coded as 2(8) for the compensation strategy group, item 8. The answer "I practice the word in a sentence" and also "I read to myself first and then ask my wife if I have questions," would be coded 4(5) and 4(6) for the metacognitive group, items five and six, giving this participant a subtotal of one LLS in the compensation group and two LLS for the metacognitive LLS group, for a total of three LLS to Part II, Q2. The LLS that participants say they used in response to Q2-Q10 were subtotaled for each of the major groups (*cognitive, compensation, memory-related,* and *metacognitive*) and then a total sum of the LLS that participants say they use for all six

groups was recorded. Means were calculated for the total number of LLS participants say they use by dividing the total LLS by nine (Q2-Q10). See Table 7 for total LLS participants say they use for Part II Q2-Q10, the sum total LLS participants say they use, and the average number of LLS they say they use.

Table 7

Total LLS participants say they use

Participant	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Total Say Used	Means Say Used
11	4	5	3	2	2	3	2	1	2	24	2.67
2	3	0	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	18	2.00
9	5	2	4	2	1	1	1	0	2	18	2.00
10	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	18	2.00
1	4	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	16	1.78
15	2	2	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	16	1.78
8	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	2	2	15	1.67
3	2	0	3	1	1	3	2	1	1	14	1.56
4	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	13	1.44
5	2	2	2	1	0	3	0	1	2	13	1.44
16	1	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	13	1.44
7	1	0	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	11	1.22
12	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	0	1	11	1.22
14	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	0.89

Table 7 (continued)

6	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	6	0.67
13	3	1	1	3	2	1	3	0	1	1	1.67

Following a similar recording format as for Part II responses, one worksheet per target word was used to order to record whether participants knew the target word in Part I, whether participants use any LLS in Part I or Part III, and if so, how many LSS they used.

In Part I and Part III, many participants used the memory-related strategy of sounding out or repeating the target word when explicitly asked, "Can you tell me what _____ means?" In the Biodata Questionnaire, the question "How long do you think you'll live in the U.S.?" seemed to cause confusion for some participants who responded with the numbers of years they have been in the U.S. or the year in which they arrived in the U.S. Nearly half (7) of the participants stated they intend to remain in the U.S. and not return to their home country, three participants stated they intend to return to their home countries after completing the ABE Program and a post-secondary program, and six participants did not indicate an understanding of the question as they answered by giving the length of time they had been living in the U.S. or the time of year they arrived (e.g., 2 years, since Thanksgiving, in July when it was hot).

Oral is one modality that was reviewed in this study, the other was writing, so a written component was added (Part IV). It is important to note that Parts I and IV are not the same format so the two parts cannot be fully compared. The purpose of including a short text (Part IV) was to observe what participants do when they encounter an unfamiliar word in written form. There was no goal for the participant and they were not told that there was a specific purpose or that it would be discussed later. They were simply asked to read the text and let the researcher

know of any questions. It may not have been evident that participants were actually reading, and only one participant (#3) initially fit this concern; however, most participants read the text aloud or silently to themselves so it was evident that they were reading. Table 8 lists the total LLS used by each participant in the six major groups for Part IV.

Table 8

LLS used in Part IV reading text

	Language Learning Strategy Group						
Participant	Cognitive	Compensation	Memory-related	Meta-cognitive	Social	Affective	Total Used
3	3	2	1	3	3	1	13
6	2	1	1	2	3	0	9
7	2	2	0	3	1	1	9
4	1	2	1	1	2	1	8
5	1	3	0	2	2	0	8
13	2	2	0	2	2	0	8
2	3	1	0	2	1	0	7
9	2	0	1	1	3	0	7
12	3	1	2	0	1	0	7
14	0	2	0	2	2	1	7
8	1	1	1	2	1	0	6
16	2	1	0	1	1	0	5
10	2	0	1	1	0	0	4
11	1	1	0	1	1	0	4

Table 8 (continued)

1	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
15	0	1	0	0	0	0	1

Data were analyzed using categorical statistics and descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, and standard deviations. Results of a paired sample t-test (t=4.490; df =15; p = .000) did not show a statistically significant difference in strategy uses between known words (m=1.544, SD =.8524) and unknown words (m=2.513, SD=.6260). Results indicate that participants used fewer strategies for known target words than they used for unknown target words. Results of a Pearson Correlation two-tailed test did not indicate any statistical significance between what participants say they do and what they actually do when encountering a known or an unknown word. For known words the correlation coefficient = -.027 and P-value = .920 and for unknown words the correlation coefficient = -.020 and P-value = .941.

These statistical analyses indicate that based on what participants say they do, it cannot be predicted if it is what they actually do when they do not know a word. Based on the small sample size of this study and the results of the statistical analyses, results are not generalizable to all language learners.

Summary

This section provided detailed results of participant demographics, the procedure used for data coding, and analysis of the results. The next section will discuss the results of data collected from each of the four parts of the Biodata Questionnaire, pedagogical implications, and limitations and delimitations of this study.

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to compare what adult ELL in a community-based ABE Program say they do versus what they actually do when they encounter an unfamiliar word in either conversation or written form. It was expected that the outcome of this study would indicate that students self-report that they use language learning strategies (LLS) more frequently than they actually do. It was also expected that those with more education in their L1, and who learned to read and write in their L1 at an earlier age, would use more LLS in the target language (English). No prediction was made whether women or men were more likely to use LLS so these data were not analyzed. It is important to keep in mind that all responses to types and frequency of LLS used was self-reported by participants, and while there was some indication of inconsistency between what they say they do when encountering an unknown word and what they actually do, the interview and observation was only a short time period (average length of less than 30 minutes) and in a 1:1 interaction with this researcher.

The frequency that participants provided incongruent responses to some questions on the Biodata Questionnaire indicate that within a less formal setting, participants may be less likely to use any LLS in order to remain engaged in conversation if they know the lexicon but not the semantics. Even though the Biodata Questionnaire was a series of structured questions, they were asked in a more informal, conversational style. This yielded similarities to the findings of Nakahama et al (2001) that during unstructured, face to face conversation between NS and NNS, NNS have considerable opportunities for repair negotiation even though conversation was more challenging than a structured activity since it required attention be paid to the entire conversation. In these situations, NNS may avoid rather than repair communication gaps. In the

more relaxed, conversational style of Part I, participants tended to use more LLS than they did when explicitly asked for a word's meaning as in Part II when questions related more specifically to language learning and participants often used the "pretend and hope" strategy. This was most evident in the answers to Q1 and Q2. When asked, "How long do you think you'll live in the U.S.?" (Q2) more than one third (37%) provided an incongruent answer or gave the length of time they have been living in the U.S., a same or similar answer to Q1 "When did you come to the United States?" With the exception of Participant 5, all participants who responded with an incongruent answer are L1 Somali, and all are male except participants 13 and 14. Below are samples of incongruent responses.

Participant 2: "Oh, living in the USA? Maybe since two or twenty years."

Participant 5: "26 months."

Participant 8: "It's four years. Four years and six months."

Participant 9: "After 2016 up until now. Three years."

Participant 13: "12 years."

Participant 14: "I live two years."

This seems to indicate that these participants used a "pretend and hope" strategy that Foster (1998) found was the more favored strategy of NNS to ensure understanding as opposed to the "check and clarify" strategy. Even though in this instance the "pretend and hope" strategy did not help to reach understanding and meaning, it did allow the participants to still feel that they were contributing to the conversation despite not completely understanding or having limited language ability (Rubin, 1975).

The four participants who provided incongruent responses to how often they speak with NES (Q5) also appeared to have used the "pretend and hope" strategy, despite being asked the question a second time when the first response was incongruent with the question. Their specific responses are below:

Participant 4: "Sometimes."

Participant 5: "Hunh? Sometime if there the other person speak slowly, I can understand main idea about it. Not all the words but I can, if he speak slowly. But if he speak with the other native, no."

Participant 8: "Native English speakers? I often, like one years and a half."

Participant 9: "One or two times."

Many of the target words were Latin-based or similar to words in romance languages (e.g., Spanish or French), which ran the risk that participants with an L1 of Spanish or French might have been able to determine the meaning of the target words. Only two such instances occurred with participants 1 (L1 Spanish) and 10 (L1 French) with the target words <encountered> (Participant 1) and <adjacent> (Participant 10). Only after they were given the meaning of the word upon completion of the interview did they notice the similarities between English and their L1. Below are their responses:

Participant 1: "Now looks like Spanish *encuentro.* Make more sense."

Participant 10: "Yeah, it's exactly we say in French. But even in French I would not be able to explain."

Some participants provided only a yes or no response to the closed-ended questions in Part I so it was not always clear if they truly understood the question and the embedded target

word. This would be something to change for any future study to make all questions open-ended to avoid the yes/no possibility and to better ascertain whether or not the participants actually knew the target word.

During Part I, participant 10 successfully and coherently responded to Q12 “What problems have you encountered learning English?” indicating linguistic knowledge. However, she lacked the metalinguistic knowledge when asked explicitly to provide a definition when directly asked in Part III, Q7 “Can you tell me what the word <adjacent> means?” This is not uncommon even with NES if asked to provide an explicit definition of a word or explain why a particular grammar structure is correct, and supports Alipour (2014) that linguistic comprehension is often easier than linguistic production.

A criterion of this study was that participants must be intermediate or advance level ELL. This was explained during the recruitment process and at the time of collecting the signed permissions form. Interestingly, seven participants hesitated on the question and did not know the word either linguistically (Parts I and III) or metalinguistically (Part II). In Part II, participants who did not provide a strategy to Q9 “When a clerk in the store says a word you don’t know, what do you do?” seemed to be confused by the word <clerk> thus were unable to provide an answer on either the first or second time the question was asked. Only one participant (Participant 10) demonstrated a LLS by explicitly asking the meaning of the word <clerk>. That participants were unable to provide a definition to a target word when specifically asked is not uncommon in that even in a person’s L1, one may know what a word means and know how to use it yet falls short of giving a specific definition when explicitly asked. However, the behavior of this small group of participants for this study seems to support what Gu and Johnson

(1996) questioned of how much self-reported information from language learners truly reflects reality. Within this study, it seemed that some participants demonstrated the "halo effect" (Mackey & Gass, 2005) when asked what they do to learn more and new words or when they encounter unfamiliar words. Direct observation of behavior is beneficial to determine what individuals actually do in order to compare it with what they say they do (Gass & Mackey, 2007). Part IV of this study's main data collection instrument allowed a short time to observe what participants actually did when encountering unknown words and interestingly, many used LSS they did not mention during the formal interview (e.g., underlining, making notes, reading aloud) and did not use others that they say they used even though directly told that they could (e.g., ask the teacher/researcher, use a dictionary). This supports findings of Gass and Mackey (2007) that learners do not always actually do what they say they do.

When explicitly asked the definition of the ten target words (Part III), two words seemed the most difficult for participants: <intermediate> and <anticipate>. Participants often replaced these words with <mediate> and <participate>, respectively most likely because these words sound more or less like the target word, a strategy Dörnyei and Scott (1997) identify on their Inventory of Strategic Language Devices. When asked specifically what a target word meant, many of the participants used "other repetition," a strategy that is often used to gain time by the language learner (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). Even though affective LLS can have a powerful effect on language learners as they help learners manage their feelings to relax or reward themselves in their learning (Hardan, 2013), affective strategies were rarely used by participants in this study. Only Participants 9 and 11 say they used affective strategies and both reported using the same strategy of keeping a language diary. Participant 9 reported using this strategy in response to Q2

"To learn *new* words in English, what do you do?" and Participant 11 reported using this strategy in response to Q3 "To learn *more* words in English, what do you do?"

An interesting observation during Part III was that initially participants would negotiate for meaning but as they knew fewer words or were less confident about a word's meaning, they began to use more monosyllabic answers or simply say, "I don't know." This appears to support Foster (1998) that frequent negotiation of meaning or the need to "check and clarify" conversation can be demotivating and annoying and perhaps create feelings of incompetence in communicating in the target language.

At the end of the interview, if participants wanted to know definitions of the target words, they were shown each word on the index card and were allowed to copy down the word or take a picture of it with their phone with the promise that they would not share it with anyone so as not to taint the data collection and results of this study. Definitions used for the target words are listed in Appendix D.

One participant, at the end of the interview, said that maybe we would see each other the next day and that "I got to go to sleep. Work tomorrow." It was clear that after an approximate twenty-minute interview conducted in the evening that this was effortful for the participant and also indicates the effort that these individuals put in to work, adjusting to a new country and culture, and learning English.

Pedagogical Implications

Due to heterogeneity of these intermediate learners in this ABE Program, it may benefit teachers to explicitly teach a variety of language learning strategies (LLS), as well as why the LLS are effective in order to enable learners to take more responsibility for their own language learning and development so that they become more effective learners (Wong & Nunan, 2011).

This would be especially beneficial for learners who have similar demographics as participants in this study so that they know *why* particular LLS can help them make progress in their language learning and consequently in other academic content areas. While seeking the best or most effective method for teaching language learning strategies, it is important to consider the students' self-identified needs and desires to learn the target language so as to find effective strategies the learner can use when the teacher or a native speaker is not available (Rubin, 1975). It is important to consider not only the learners' L1 when determining most effective LLS but also their culture as this can determine the type of LLS learners' choose to use (Folse, 2004). Learners from more communicative, social cultures may benefit from small group or communicative learning and teaching interventions as evidenced in Amirkhiz et al (2013).

If not already in practice, teachers may want to assess the LLS the learners are using and compare that to the academic progress or level gains learners are or are not making. If learners who are making level gains (effective learners) use the types and amount of LLS identified earlier in this study, how do these compare with learners not making level gains (ineffective learners)? Once this assessment is completed, learners should be instructed in various LLS that can help them increase their language learning and be encouraged to use them. Encouraging learners to keep a language journal of the types of out-of-class LRE and LLS they use (e.g., wrote out word definition, used in a sentence) and in what context (e.g., engaged in conversation with NES) may be a tool teachers can use to motivate ineffective learners to take more responsibility for and be more cognizant of specific ways to increase their language learning. The language journal could be reviewed and discussed individually between teacher and learner or it could be used as a share item at the beginning of class so all learners benefit. This may

encourage learners to use a wider range of LLS to expand their learning opportunities to increase progress in their language learning (Nunan, 1999; Wong & Nunan, 2011). Another method may be to implement a sentence journal in which learners create sentences from any new vocabulary from class or that they have recorded in their language journal. Learners can work in small groups to make any corrections and then share with the whole class. Through this process, learners will have created an "error journal" to record their original and corrected sentences as reminders to correct form (Coxhead, 2006).

Limitations

While every effort was made to interview participants in the same venue, due to participants' schedules, gender, and cultural beliefs, interviews were not conducted in the same location. Somali males were interviewed in a more visible space e.g., glass study room at the public library or in an open classroom space. Some participants were located at the main ABE Program location while others had their language classes at the public library and interviews were conducted there. For the ease of participants, many of whom work full-time, have dependent children, or limited access to transportation, this researcher went to the site where the participants took their English classes. Additionally, some participants participated in this study after working a full day and having two hours of class so may have presented as fatigued and may not have performed as well as participants who scheduled an interview time based on their best availability. This is a relatively small sample of students from the population within the ABE Program; however, the results seem to accurately reflect the learners in the program even if they might not be generalizable to all English language learners.

Sections of the "What do students actually do or say they do?" questionnaire could have been presented in different ways for the following parts:

Part I: Make all questions open-ended to eliminate any "yes/no" answers and to provide a clearer understanding whether the participant truly understood the question and target word(s).

Part II:

- Ensure that all questions have the same semantic construction with the modality fronted in the question. EX: Q8 *When you hear a word …, what do you do?* instead of Q9: *When a clerk in the store says a word you don't know…*
- Modify Q7 to *When you hear a word on TV…* instead of "…*see a word*."
- Q9: Use <salesperson> or <cashier> instead of <clerk> as many participants asked what a clerk was so may have been distracted by the word and not fully responsive to the question. Another possibility is with the widespread use of online shopping, a clerk may becoming an obsolete term to use and unfamiliar with non-native English speakers.

Part III: Verbally ask the definitions of all of the target words first and then go back to show the individual words written on the index cards. Some participants, anticipating that they would see the target word written, asked to see the index card or immediately said "I don't know" without any indication of attempting to define the word.

Part IV:

- Present this section with a paragraph for actual engagement that gives a stated purpose for the participant, such as "The purpose of this section is to read it aloud, ask any questions about word or content, and give me a short summary of what the story is about."

- Without a stated purpose, participants may not have felt a "need" to be reading. Add a purpose so that it is evident which LLS participants used or did not use to eliminate any methodological flaw.

Delimitations

This study addresses learning and communication strategies and not learning or communication styles (Brown, 1994) to assess learners' receptive and productive areas of language learning in an adult basic education class. Participants are adults and only from a voluntary, low-fee ABE Program in central Minnesota. The L1, education level in the L1, gender, and age were considered in this study; cultural background and motivation for the target language were not considered.

Summary

This chapter provided interpretation of the data from this study, pedagogical implications, and limitations and delimitations of this study. The next chapter will summarize the study and provide suggestions for future research.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

As the world has become more globalized, language learning and teaching – particularly English – have risen in importance and demand, resulting in an abundance of learning platforms such as mobile phone apps, online language tutors, community education classes, and formal language classes. Underlying each of these learning platforms are assumed effective language learning strategies.

Broadly defined, a *learning strategy* is the specific, conscious or unconscious approach in thought, process, technique, and action individuals use to understand, store, and remember content in order to plan, implement, and evaluate task performance and outcomes to know how to use what is learned (Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Gass & Mackey, 2007; Hardan, 2013; Oxford, 2003; Protheroe & Clarke, 2008). Specifically, a *language learning strategy* (LLS) addresses the techniques or methods learners use in or out of context to learn vocabulary form and meaning, and fall into two categories - direct and indirect LLS (Nation, 2013; Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1975). Direct LLS are subconscious tasks; indirect LLS are conscious strategies classified as cognitive, metacognitive, memory-related, social, affective, and compensation (Ehrman & Oxford, 1990).

Effective language teachers teach LLS with the hope and expectation that language learners will use the LLS taught. Unfortunately, human behavior is universally inconsistent in that one often says one thing and does another. In the case of language learners, they may claim that they use the LLS their teachers teach yet the question is, do they really? The literature supports that what language learners say and do are not always congruent (Chacón, 2009; Gass & Mackey, 2007; Victori, 1999). Most data available on what language learners say they do

versus what they actually do are based on self-reported behavior through survey responses which are often unreliable *because* they are self-reported. Other methods of data collection methods such as time use methodology and direct observation also have risks and drawbacks in that they can be expensive, are time intensive, and may result in an "observer's paradox," a "halo effect" or a "Hawthorne effect" (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Mackey & Gass; 2005; Nation, 2013).

This study reviewed LLS used by sixteen adult English language learners (ELL) in a community-based Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program. The purpose of the study was to determine what gaps may exist between what ELL say they do and what they actually do when employing LLS when they do not understand a word in either conversation or written form. The study considered factors of L1, education level in the L1, gender, and age that might impact the LLS the ELL say they use versus what they actually use in their language learning.

Participants in this study represented six different L1, multiple educational levels in the L1, ranged in age from 23 to 54 years, and had various primary reasons that they wanted to learn English. All participants in this study used at least one LLS for unknown and known target words with most using more than two LLS for unknown target words and one to two for known words regardless of the factors considered in this study (age, gender, L1, and level of education in the L1). Most participants who learned to read and write English at older than age fifteen years used more LLS for unknown target words but often used an equal number of LLS for known words as those participants who learned English at an earlier age. The average number of LLS participants said that they used versus the number they actually use did not indicate that either L1 or gender was a factor.

The heterogeneity of the learners and class composition may be challenging for teachers as they aim to help learners make learning level gains in English and other content matter, to verify that learners are learning what teachers teach, and to close any gaps between the two (Nunan, 1999). According to Nunan (1999), if teachers use a learner-centered educational model – teaching what learners say they want to learn, in essence turning over the responsibility of learning to the learner – teachers may feel devalued in their professional role if learners now have the responsibilities that normally should lie with the teacher. However, based on the profile of ELL in this study and their stated goals to learn English, a learner-centered model may benefit teachers and students in order to maximize the teaching time to help students achieve their language learning goals more quickly. By teaching specific and most effective LLS so that students take more responsibility for their learning may help to close gaps between what the ELL say they do and what they actually do in their language learning.

Suggestions for Future Research

Suggestions for future research are to increase the sample size of the study and to conduct the study with a homogenous group (e.g., same L1, same ages, or same education levels in the L1).

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Appendix A: Biodata Questionnaire

Date: _____ Participant No. _____ Gender: M F

Age: _____ L1: _____ Home country _____

1. When did you come to the United States? _____
2. How long do you think you'll live in the U.S.? _____
3. What is the main reason you want to learn English? (circle one)
    a. Talking with family
    b. Education/Go to school
    c. Employment/Job
    d. Meeting and talking to others/Social situations
    e. Improve self
4. How many years have you studied English? _____
5. How often do you speak with native English speakers? _____
6. At home, what language do you speak most often? _____
7. At home, do you speak more than one language? No Yes

    If yes, what language? _____ Who speaks it? _____
8. How old were you when you learned to read in your first language? _____
9. How old were you when you learned to write in your first language? _____
10. How old were you when you learned to read English? _____
11. How old were you when you learned to write in English? _____

Appendix B: Questionnaire – What do students actually do or say they do?

PART I – General Questions: Some of these questions have planted low-frequency words (underlined) that are expected to be unfamiliar to participants in order to determine what they ***actually*** do when encountering an unfamiliar word. Target words are from AWL sublists 9 and 10 (Coxhead, 2011a and Coxhead, 2011b).

1. Are there things (food, family, school) that are alike between your home country and the United States?
2. What is the hardest thing about being away from your home country?
3. Do you have other family members who live in the United States?
4. When you moved to Minnesota, what was the hardest adjustment?
5. Did someone convince you to move to Minnesota?
6. Were you reluctant to live in a cold weather state?
7. Can you name some of the countries adjacent to your home country?
8. Was it conceivable that you would ever live in a place that is as cold as Minnesota?
9. In your home country, is there any protocol for men and women to interact with each other?
10. Do you consider yourself an intermediate English student?
11. How much time do you devote to learning English?
12. What problems have you encountered learning English?
13. After you finish your English classes, what do you anticipate doing?
14. What do you like to do in your free time?

PART II – Structured Interview: This section will review what students ***say*** they do when they encounter an unfamiliar word to determine if it is consistent with what they ***actually*** do (Part I).

1. How interested are you in learning new vocabulary words?
2. To learn new words in English, what do you do?
3. To learn more words in English, what do you do?
4. When you hear somebody say a word you don't know, what do you do?

5. When you see a word in a book you don't know, what do you do?
6. When you hear the teacher say a word you don't know, what do you do?
7. When you see a word on TV you don't know, what do you do?
8. When you hear a word at the doctor's office you don't know, what do you do?
9. When a clerk in the store says a word you don't know, what do you do?
10. When a friend or classmate says a word you don't know, what do you do?

PART III – Verification: This section will verify if participants actually know the target words from Part I if they never asked about them. It will determine whether they did not ask about the word(s) because they 1) already knew the word(s), 2) did not 'catch' the word(s), or 3) simply pretended to know the word(s). If participants are unable to provide a definition or explanation of the target word when asked orally, an index card with the target word will be shown to the participant who will again be asked, "Can you tell me what _____ means?" "Can you tell me what _____ means?"

Q4. adjustment _____

Q5. convince _____

Q6. reluctant _____

Q7. adjacent _____

Q8. conceivable _____

Q9. protocol _____

Q10. intermediate _____

Q11. devote _____

Q12. encountered _____

Q13. anticipate _____

PART IV: **Directions:** Please read the following paragraph. You may ask questions, use a dictionary (hard copy or online), or any other method to help you.

When Adan's family moved to Minnesota from his home country, he did not anticipate how cold the winter would be. Even the lakes froze! His mother had family in Minnesota but still had to convince his father to move here. Adan was also reluctant to move, but decided to devote himself to learning about his new home and all that he encountered.

Appendix C: Language Learning Strategy Groups and Items

Strategy Group	Strategy Item
1. Cognitive	1. Guess in context 2. Repetition 3. Take notes 4. Summarize 5. Pretend & hope 6. Check & clarify 7. Highlight or underline
2. Compensation	1. Guess meaning 2. Mime or gesture 3. Circumlocution 4. Coin words 5. Ask for help 6. Use interpreter 7. Write it down 8. Read in target language
3. Memory-related	1. Sound out the word 2. Draw a picture 3. Use acronyms 4. Use sounds
4. Metacognitive	1. Focus on listening over speech production

	2. Overview and link new with known material 3. Set learning goals and objectives (anticipate doing) 4. Identify task purpose (plan and organize the learning task) 5. Practice in a sentence 6. Advance organization (pre-read silently, then go back to read aloud and/or ask questions) 7. Ignore (directed attention) 8. Self-monitor 9. Review words in notebook
5. Social	6. Ask questions 7. Ask interlocutor 8. Ask teacher 9. Ask friend or family member 10. Ask for verification 11. Ask for correction 12. Ask for clarification or to repeat 13. Cooperate with others (especially proficient users of target language) 14. Develop cultural understanding 15. Use a dictionary (manual or online) 16. Use YouTube or closed captioning
6. Affective	1. Use relaxation, meditation, music, or humor

	2. Take intelligent risks 3. Use checklists & rewards 4. Keep a language diary 5. Discuss feelings with someone

Adapted from "Frequency of Use, Perceived Usefulness and Actual Usefulness of Second Language Vocabulary Strategies: A Study of Hong Kong Learners," by M. Fan, 2003, *The Modern Language Journal, Vol. 87(2),* pp. *224-241*.

Appendix D: Target Word Definitions

Adjustment: A small change, alternation, or movement to reach a desired fit or result.

Reluctant: Unwilling or hesitant.

Convince: Cause someone to believe firmly that something is true; persuade someone to believe something as true.

Anticipate: To expect or look forward to something.

Encountered: To meet somebody or discover or experience something; usually something new.

Devote: To give most of your time, energy, and attention to somebody or something.

Intermediate: Located between two places; having more than a basic knowledge of something but not yet advanced.

Protocol: A system of fixed rules and formal behavior used at official meetings.

Conceivable: That you can imagine or believe.

Adjacent: Next to or near something.

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT

Project: Language Learning Strategies: What I do isn't always what I say I do

Principal Investigator (PI)	**Faculty Advisor (FA)**
Valerie Knopp	Dr. Choonkyong Kim
320.308.5136	Department of English
vjknopp@stcloudstate.edu	WB 101
320.308.5136	320.308-3245
	ckim@stcloudstate.edu

You are invited to participate in a project about how students learn English. Benefits of this project is that it may help teachers know the best ways to help students learn English and for students to know what works best to learn English.

If you agree to be part of this project, you will be asked to participate in an interview about your background as an English language learner and what you do to learn English. At the end of the interview, you will be asked to read a short (approximately 60 words) text. It will take less than one hour to complete the interview and reading the text. The interview will be audio but not video recorded and the researcher will take notes during the project.

- ☐ Your participation is **voluntary**. You may stop out at any time.
- ☐ This is NOT a test of your ability, and there is no personal risk or discomfort with this study.
- ☐ Your name will NOT be used in data analysis or report.
- ☐ All data will be handled confidentially during collection, analysis, and reporting.
- ☐ If you decide not to do this, it will NOT affect your current or future relationship with the St. Cloud Area ABE Program, St. Cloud State University or any other college or university, or the researcher.
- ☐ Your participation will NOT affect your grade level in any St. Cloud ABE Program class.
- ☐ The result from the research may be presented or published. Your name or personally identifying information will NEVER be used.
- ☐ If you are interested in the results of this project once it is completed, please contact the Principal Investigator (contact information above) or online at the *St. Cloud State University Repository* (https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/).
- ☐ You will not receive any monetary, academic, or other reward if you choose to participate.
- ☐ You will not receive any monetary, academic, or other reward if you choose **not** to participate.

If you give your permission to use the data for research, please sign below.

Are you at least 18 years of age? **NO** ___ **YES** ___

If you answered NO, please stop. Thank you. If you answered YES, please continue.

Name in Print: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: IRB Protocol Determination

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION FOR LIFE

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Valerie Knopp

Email: vjknopp@stcloudstate.edu

IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION: Exempt Review

Project Title: Language Learning Strategies: What I do isnt always what I say I do

Advisor Choon Kim

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

-Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Chair:

Dr. Benjamin Witts
Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis
Department of Community Psychology,Counseling, and Family Therapy

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan
Interim Associate Provost for Research
Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB# 635 - 2387	**Type:** Exempt Review	**Today's Date:** 1/2/2019
1st Year Approval Date: 1/2/2019	**2nd Year Approval Date:**	**3rd Year Approval Date:**
1st Year Expiration Date:	**2nd Year Expiration Date:**	**3rd Year Expiration Date:**