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an awareness-raising activity, grammar visualization as a strategy training
activity, and speaking through role play as a strategy practice activity.
Next, the paper offers a critical look at the SBBI manual and at efforts to
update the material, such as revising inventories of learners' style and
language strategy preferences. Finally, a recent application of the manual to
language and culture learning strategies for study abroad is reported on.
(Author/KFT)

Preparing Teachers for Styles- and Strategies-Based Instruction

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ABSTRACT

The focus of the paper is on one aspect of language teacher education, namely, that of having teachers view styles- and strategies-based instruction as a crucial aspect of the instructional process. The paper starts by reviewing learning style preferences, language learner strategies and the differing approaches to describing strategies, the role of motivation, and the notion of styles- and strategies-based instruction (SSBI). The history behind the development of a course to teach SSBI as well as the development of an SSBI manual for teachers is then described briefly. Three sample tasks from the manual are provided as illustrative of activities in the manual B vocabulary learning as an awareness-raising activity, grammar visualization as a strategy training activity, and speaking through role-play as a strategy practice activity. Next, the paper offers a critical look at the SSBI manual and at efforts to update the material, such as through revising inventories of learners= style and language strategy preferences. Finally, a recent application of the manual to language and culture learning strategies for study abroad is reported on.

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Focus on the Processes of Language Teacher Education

This paper takes the view that styles- and strategies-based instruction is a valuable area for teacher development and for language instruction. How often have we heard a testimonial from some language learner that s/he studied three years of high school French or Spanish or German but does not remember a word of it today? Why is it that "seat time" in a language classroom does not necessarily translate into language achievement. One small part of the explanation may be that the learners are not as engaged in learning the language as the teacher is in teaching it. No matter how motivated the teacher is to transmit his/her passion for the target language to students, if those very students are not engaged aware of how they will learn that language most effectively – given their learning style and language strategy preferences for any given task – then whatever goes on in the classroom may have somewhat or substantially limited impact.

That is why in recent years language educators have been paying extra attention to the processes of language learning and considering means for supporting that effort more fully (see, for example, Oxford, 2001). One way is through styles- and strategies-based instruction, where the teacher not only teaches the language but also assists learners in: (1) developing their awareness of their own preferred learning styles, (2) determining the nature of their current language learning and language use strategy repertoire, and (3) both enhancing their current strategy repertoire while at the same time complementing it with additional strategies that may be of benefit, given their

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style preferences and the task that they need to accomplish in the target language. Let us now review some basics concerning learning style preferences and language strategies before discussing styles- and strategies-based instruction.

Learning Styles

Learning styles are the learners= typical preferences for approaching learning. We learn in different ways and what suits one learner may be inadequate for another. Learning styles seem to be relatively stable, and so teachers may not have such a direct influence on this learner. However, teachers *can* modify the learning tasks they use in their classes in a way that may bring the best out of particular learners with particular learning style preferences. It is also possible that learners over time can be encouraged to engage in *style-stretching* so as to incorporate approaches to learning they were resisting in the past. For example, let us say that a given reader may have been so global in her approach to reading academic texts that she was missing specific details that could have assisted her in deriving meaning from the texts. With proper encouragement from the teacher, she can become more versed at both maintaining her global perspective, while at the same time paying more attention to particulars as well.

Learning style researchers have attempted to develop a framework that can usefully describe learners' style preferences, so that instruction can match

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these. Although numerous distinctions are emerging from the literature, the following style preferences are considered particularly relevant and useful to understanding the process of language learning (see Reid, 1995; Ehrman, 1996):

- being *visual* (relying more on the sense of sight and learn best through visual means B books, video, charts, pictures), *auditory* (preferring listening and speaking activities B discussions, debates, audiotapes, role-plays, lectures), or *hands-on* (benefiting from doing projects, working with objects and moving around).

- being more *extroverted* (enjoying a wide range of social, interactive learning tasks B games, conversations, debates, role-plays, simulations) vs. being more *introverted* (preferring more independent work (e.g., studying or reading by oneself or learning with the computer or enjoying working with another person).

- being more *abstract* and *intuitive* (future-oriented, enjoying abstract thinking, and happy speculating about possibilities) vs. more *concrete* and *thinking in step-by-step sequence* (present-oriented, preferring one-step-at-a-time activities and wanting to know where they are going in their learning at every moment).

- preferring to *keep all options open* (enjoying discovery learning where they pick up information naturally and prefer to learn without concern for deadlines or rules) vs. being *closure-oriented* (focusing carefully on all learning tasks

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and seek clarity, meeting deadlines, planning ahead for assignments and staying organized, and wanting explicit directions and decisions).

- being more *global* (enjoying getting the main idea and comfortable communicating even if they don=t know all the words or concepts) vs. more *particular* (focusing more on details and remember specific information about a topic well).

- being more *synthesizing* (summarizing material well and noticing similarities quickly) vs. being more *analytic* (pulling ideas apart, doing well on logical analysis and contrast tasks, and tending to focus on grammar rules).

Now that we have looked at some significant style variables, let us consider language learner strategies.

Language learner strategies

Language learner strategies are strategies having the explicit goal of improving the learner=s knowledge and understanding of the L2, as well as strategies for using the language that has been learned or for getting around gaps in language proficiency. Second-language researchers first noticed the importance of various *learning strategies* when they were examining the 'good language learner' in the 1970's (see, for instance, Rubin, 1975). The results indicated that it was not merely a high degree of language aptitude and motivation that caused some learners to excel but also the students' own active and creative participation in the learning process through the application of

individualized learning techniques (for a review, see Cohen, 1998). Research has found that the 'good language learner' is in command of a rich and sufficiently personalized repertoire of such strategies.

What has become increasingly clear as the field of strategy work has developed is that strategies can be classified in a number of equally useful ways, each providing its contribution to the descriptive process. Needless to say, the very same strategies may appear in these different classifications, but the focus is different. The following are some of the more common approaches to strategy description:

- By function: language *learning* strategies vs. language *use* strategies. In this classification system, strategies to increase target language knowledge and understanding are distinguished from strategies aimed at using what has already been learned. They include *retrieval, rehearsal, communication,* and *cover* strategies. (The last refers to strategies that learners use to look good when they do not have full control over language material.)

- By purpose: *metacognitive, cognitive, affective,* and *social* strategies. *Metacognitive strategies* are defined as strategies for planning what the learners will do, monitoring what they are doing, and evaluating what they did. *Cognitive strategies* include the language learning strategies of identification, grouping, retention, and storage of language material, as well as the language use strategies of retrieval, rehearsal, and comprehension or production of words, phrases, and other elements of the target language.

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Affective strategies serve to regulate emotions, motivation, and attitudes (e.g., strategies for reduction of anxiety and for self-encouragement). *Social strategies* include the actions which learners choose to take in order to interact with other learners and with native speakers (e.g., asking questions to clarify social roles and relationships or cooperating with others in order to complete tasks). Strategies are usually directed at increasing the learners' exposure to target-language communication and to interactive practice.

Note that in reality the very same strategy (e.g., interrupting an ongoing conversation to ask for clarification) may serve all four of the above purposes for a strategy. The learner is monitoring her listening and has found that she does not understand what was just said so she decides she needs to stop the flow and check it out. This part is metacognitive. The actual act of interrupting and clarifying involves cognitive processing of language material in the target language. The act of seeking clarification by interrupting can also serve as an affective strategy if it makes the learner feel better to get that kind of closure on what is going on. Interruption for clarification can also serve as a social strategy – knowing how to do it without offending the speakers.

- By skill area: listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary learning, and translation strategies. *Listening strategies* deal with increasing exposure to language, becoming more familiar with sounds, and for better understanding language in conversation. *Reading strategies* include those for building

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reading habits in the target language, for developing basic decoding skills in reading, and for determining what to do when encountering unknown words and structures. *Speaking strategies* are for practicing for speaking, engaging in conversations, and when not able to think of a word or expression. *Writing strategies* include both basic encoding strategies, as well as those for, say, writing a particular genre of text such as a letter or essay, and for dealing revision of the text one it has been written. *Vocabulary strategies* include those for memorizing new words, for reviewing and recalling vocabulary, and for making use of new vocabulary. *Translation strategies* refer to strategies for selectively engaging in translation to a more dominant language as a means of enhancing language learning and use, as well as strategies for avoiding the use of translation as a crutch by working directly through the target language as much as possible.

- By proficiency levels: strategies for beginning, intermediate, or advanced learners.

- By culture: strategies for learners of languages with strikingly different cultures. For example, there are strategies for determining socially appropriate ways to break into a conversation in the target language so as not to offend the interlocutors.

- By language: strategies for learning language-specific material – for example, *kanji* (pictographic characters) in Japanese.

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- <u>By age</u>: strategies for language learners and users at different age levels –
  e.g., strategies for elementary-school full language immersion pupils vs.
  strategies for senior citizens who are immigrants to a new country.

There are even more ways of classifying strategies but some of these
have fallen into disuse such as the "good/poor strategy" and the "direct/indirect"
distinctions. It has been demonstrated that strategies are not inherently good or
bad but rather may be appropriate or inappropriate for a given learner at a
particular instant on a given task, given the manner in which the learner is using
that strategy. In addition, where direct strategies are intended to refer to those
involving direct use of language and indirect strategies refer to strategies a step
away from this (such as most metacognitive or affective strategies), the reality is
that the distinction can become blurred and may not be that useful.

The relationship between learning style and language learner strategies

What is becoming increasingly clear is that there is an important link
between the style preferences that learners have and the language learning and
use strategies that they select in order to accomplish language tasks. Several
M.A. studies at the University of Minnesota have demonstrated this link. One
study showed a relationship between being more *intuitive* in cognitive style
preference and being more likely to use the strategy of *inferencing* while reading
(Gallin, 1999). In other words, the three ESL readers in this case study who
were better at inferring the gist were also more intuitive in terms of their style

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preference. And the one reader who was clearly not intuitive was good at some details but was not so good at inferring the gist. The investigator concluded that whether or not learners prefer intuitive vs. concrete-sequential learning styles might affect the strategies they use while reading in a second language.

The other study looked for relationships between learning style preferences and listening strategy use among thirteen advanced ESL learners (Chi, 2001). The strongest relationship between style and strategies was between the style preference of *synthesizing* (i.e., summarizing material well, guessing meanings and predicting outcomes, and noticing similarities quickly) and summarizing strategies (r = .70, p < .01), planning strategies (r = .74), and social strategies (r = .78). Learners who had a more open style preference (i.e., enjoying discovery learning, and learning without concern for deadlines or rules) also reported using more social strategies (r = .69). In addition, those learners who more auditory and tactile-kinesthetic in style preference also reported using more social strategies. In addition, more concrete-sequential learners reported using fewer resourcing strategies (e.g., looking up unknown words in a dictionary) (r = -.72).

The development of summer institutes in styles- and strategies-based instruction and the writing of a manual

Now that we have described what learning styles and strategy preferences can involve, we arrive at what is recently being referred to as *styles- and strategies-based instruction* (*SSBI*). SSBI entails a learner-focused

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approach to teaching which integrates strategy training with embedded strategy practice in the foreign language classroom. The ultimate goal is to help students become more effective, efficient, and responsible second or foreign language learners.

The work in SSBI has its roots in a series of colloquia that were held in the 1970's at TESOL Conventions. Among the principal players in that era were Joan Rubin, Anna Chamot, Michael O'Malley, Rebecca Oxford, Anita Wenden, David Mendelsohn, Carol Hosenfeld, and the author of this paper. These colloquia focused on the work that each of these people were doing individually and collectively to apply insights from research on language learner strategies to second and foreign language instruction. It was not until the early 1990's, however, that the author arrived at the University of Minnesota and that this information started to be transmitted to instructors at this institution.

Before any funding was available, the author gave a series of sessions directly to language learners, under the auspices of the university counseling services. In parallel, he led several-hour workshops for language teachers. The problem with this approach was that the number of language learners who could be reached was limited, and the impact on teachers was also limited because of the limited nature of the sessions. What was needed was reaching teachers through a regular course with an established, written curriculum.

It was with this plan in mind that once the strategies work started to receive funding through the University of Minnesota's National Language Resource Center (NLRC) at the Center for Advanced Research on Language

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Acquisition (CARLA), Susan Weaver was hired and set about to teach a Spring trimester seminar on SSBI. The first seminar was taught in the Spring of 1993, and then a subsequent one in the Spring of 1994. Each of the two seminars had at least fifteen participants, usually including both professors, education specialists, and teaching assistants representing some ten or more languages.

In part as a result of the findings from a research study which demonstrated the benefits of strategies-based instruction at the University of Minnesota with French and Norwegian intermediate learners (Cohen, Weaver, & Li, 1996; Cohen, 1998, Ch. 5), plans were made to open up the seminars into international summer institutes, with Susan Weaver, Andrew Cohen, and Rebecca Oxford as instructors. These institutes started in the summer of 1996, with the sixth taking place in the summer of 2001. The institutes have drawn teachers of second and foreign language from all levels, K-university, many languages, and from many regions of the world. On the basis of the two seminars just for University of Minnesota language instructors and the first international summer institute, an SSBI training manual was developed (Weaver & Cohen, 1999).

Participants in the basic 5-day (30-hour) SSBI institute are expected to obtain or refine their knowledge of and ability to conduct SSBI with learners as part of their instructional program. The participants also learn how to create their own materials and explore ways to incorporate these strategies materials into their language curricula. Participants in a new 3-day (18-hour) SSBI advanced

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course acquire or enhance their ability to conduct SSBI workshops with their colleagues and/or to conduct research in some aspect of SSBI.

A closer look at the SSBI Manual

The SSBI teacher manual (Weaver & Cohen, 1999) contains 30+ hours of scripted lessons for use by teachers and teacher developers dealing with styles- and strategies-based instruction. The manual integrates theoretical background information with practical suggestions. It is replete with material to provide teachers knowledge, tools, and scripted classroom activities about styles and strategies in order to enhance their students= learning. So, for example, along with activities that describe categorizations of styles and strategies, the manual provide instruments for collecting style and strategy information from learners that can benefit both the instructors and the learners. The manual has activities that are primarily for awareness-raising, others primarily for training for learners in SSBI, and others focusing on practice. The latter part of the manual concentrates on activities aimed at getting participants self-sufficient with regard to developing their own SSBI activities in their language classrooms. The ultimate goal is to encourage students to take an active role as partners in the learning process.

Now let us look at sample awareness raising, training, and practice activities:

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- A sample *awareness-raising* activity, involving vocabulary learning strategies: Students receive 10 difficult words to learn in 4-5 minutes (in English or other language). Then the teacher reads aloud a vocabulary test -- with half of the items calling upon participants to define the word and half to produce the word from a synonym. Finally, the participants engage in a discussion about vocabulary learning strategies.

- A sample *strategy training* activity, involving strategies for learning grammar: In this activity, learners listen to a short passage with their eyes closed and visualize images in their minds. The focus is on Aused to@ and the passage is about what they, the learners, did at age 10 at grandfather=s farm in the summer. After the eyes-closed exercise, the students turn to their partner and share.

- A sample *strategy practice* activity, involving the use of speaking strategies in a role play calling for the speech act of complaining: This activity starts with a jigsaw exercise with three groups, discussing *pre-speaking, while-speaking*, and *after-speaking* strategies respectively. Then, students within each of their groups perform role play with a partner from that group. Next, the students in each of the three groups discuss the strategies that they used in role-playing. Finally, groups of three are formed with a representative from each of the "pre-speaking," "while-speaking," and "after-speaking" strategy groups respectively, so that there is sharing across groups in triad jigsaw.

The SSBI manual is intended to be adequately scripted so that those who have taken the summer institutes can conduct the activities themselves or guide their colleagues in conducting them. The best way for teachers to get a sense of how they work is to participate in them as if they were their own students. Then they should feel more comfortable trying them out with their students.

The future for SSBI – workshops, institutes, and manual writing projects

The future looks bright for SSBI work. Already requests have come in for outreach talks, workshops, and institutes. One encouraging sign that SSBI is gaining momentum is that association of teachers of less-commonly-taught languages in the U.S. are interested in training their teachers to use it in the classroom. For example, teachers of African languages included a 4-hour SSBI workshop at their annual conference in April of 2001 at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and also a 5-day course in their 3-week summer institute at the same institution. Another positive sign is that the Defense Language Institute is holding two parallel 5-day, 15-hour SSBI courses for 60 of their language instructors in August of 2001. The DLI has over 850 instructors, teaching military personal those less commonly taught languages that are critical to U.S. interests.

SSBI workshops continue to be offered in numerous locations both with the U.S. and abroad. For example, over the last several years, SSBI workshops have been held for foreign language teachers at Brandeis University in Waltham,

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MA, as well as abroad -- in Medellín, Colombia, in Rio Cuarto, Argentina, and most recently in Edirne, Turkey.

An application to manual writing has also been undertaken in developing language and culture learning strategies materials for study abroad. Building on previous research and teacher resources, CARLA received funding in 1999 from USDE to create a set of user-friendly materials designed to support language and culture learning strategy use among language students planning to study abroad. Michael Paige, a Professor of Educational Policy and Administration and an expert in cross-cultural strategies, has teamed up with the author in a project to produce a series of manuals for language and culture strategies for study abroad students, instructors, and program advisors (Paige, Cohen, Lassegard, Chi, & Kappler, in preparation). These manuals are already through several drafts and are currently being field-tested both in the U.S. and abroad. The following is a description of the three manuals:

1. A Self-Access Manual for Students: This manual is intended to assist students in being more effective at selecting strategies for learning and using the target language both before, during, and after study abroad. In addition, the manual aims at supporting student efforts to be more effective at learning about and functioning within other cultures through a series of awareness-raising activities and tips on how to be more strategic while living in another culture. The manual is written in a highly-accessible, user-friendly language, will have an easy tab system so that students can readily find the kinds of language and culture tips they want, and will be replete with quotes from other students who have

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already done study abroad. It will include both language-strategy and culture-strategy screening devices which will indicate to the student those areas in the manual which they may wish to read in greater detail.

2. An Instructor=s Manual: The language material in this manual is based largely on the SSBI manual, while the cultural material is similar to that found in the Student Self-Access Manual. This manual has a series of activities to assist language instructors in integrating language and culture strategies-based materials into language courses, helping to foster students' language and culture learning strategies prior to their studying abroad or while they are already in the experience of study abroad.

3. A Program Advisor=s Manual: This manual is for use in study abroad pre-departure orientation programs -- to provide program advisors with an explanation of the rationale behind the student self-access manual. In other words, the advisors' manual underscores the pointers to be passed on to students as to value of using self-access manual both in their pre-study abroad preparation, while in their overseas experience, and after re-entry into their home setting. This manual also contains a reduced-font version of the Student Self-Access Manual so that advisors can see what students receive.

Once these prototype manuals are completed, CARLA's next step is to fully explore the range of options in which these materials can be used effectively. As our test case, we have chosen to concentrate on the Spanish language contexts of language learning and study abroad offered at the University of Minnesota. The Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the

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Global Campus have demonstrated a commitment to work with CARLA to demonstrate how the study abroad manuals can be used in a wide range of teaching and study abroad contexts. These contexts range from student self-study to credit-bearing courses designed to improve the language and culture learning strategies of students who plan to study abroad.

A segment on how to use the Study Abroad Manuals is being included in a training for returning TAs in the Spanish department in August 2001. The focus of the training will be how to select and use specific activities within the manuals in their language classes. In Fall semester of 2001, a special section of SPAN 3015 (the first language course of the third year of Spanish) is being set up as a special "study abroad" section. It is common that students take this course just before or after a study abroad experience and is thus a good venue for materials from the study abroad manuals to be piloted. In addition, a re-entry class will most likely be offered for 1-2 credits through the Foreign Studies Minor Program.

Concluding Remarks

As can be seen from this paper, efforts are underway to encourage second language teachers to consider incorporating principles and practice of SSBI into their classrooms, if they are not doing so already. Both research, action programs, and manual writing efforts have been aligned on the principle that SSBI enables teachers to relieve themselves of part of the burden of imparting language knowledge and skills to students. Through SSBI students

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become empowered to be more effective second language learners in partnership with the teacher.

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