

Action Research as another Literacy Skill
To Improve Academic Performance:
A Case Study of Empowered Language Learning

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Introduction

Even though action research has been increasingly employed in many fields of practice to enhance performance in any important endeavor, hardly any study has been reported on the application of action research conducted by learners to improve their academic performance.

While the author was reflecting on his previous epistemological study of action research in his recent publication (Ariizumi, 2005) he was convinced that action research could be more widely applied to any valuable practice when extra efforts that action research requires (e.g., record keeping, evaluation, systematic reflection, and so forth) are justified in the situation. Is ‘learning’ important enough to apply action research to improve it?

Since learning for learners is compared to practice for professionals, and the quality of learning significantly affects learners’ later life, learning can be a meaningful practice where the employment of action research is adequate. This case study—an action research conducted by a college student focusing on his learning improvement—should exemplify a new application of action research. Moreover, such an application of action research may be proved the most empowering literacy skill that the future general education will adopt as a curricular staple. Since the learner characteristic such as “flexibility and appropriate use of learning strategies,” which

was identified as the final general characteristic of good learners in the one of the most comprehensive studies of learner strategies (Chamot et al, 1988, quoted in Ellis, 1994, p. 550), seems to be obtainable through learner-initiated action research.

Background

During the fall 2002, Mike (the name is changed), a junior at Lafayette College, was struggling in all the courses including the third semester Japanese language course that the author was teaching. Being intellectually curious, Mike seemed to have much potential to succeed in the undergraduate courses. However, as the 5th semester GPA in Figure 1 shows, his academic performance was not as good as an ambitious student like him wished it to be.

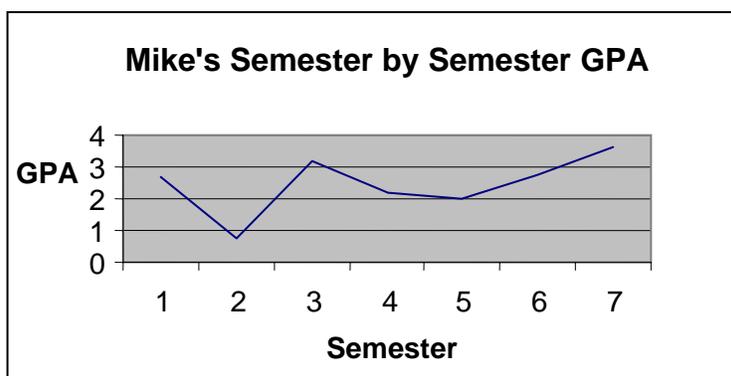


Figure 1

*Each number on the horizontal axis denotes the following semester: 1=Fall 2000, 2=Spring 01, 3=Fall 01, 4=Spring 02, 5=Fall 02, 6=Spring 03, 7=Fall 03

Although during that fall semester when Mike made more efforts regretting his poor academic performance in the previous semester, he became further behind in his learning, which

seriously disappointed him. When Mike visited the author a few weeks after the beginning of the semester, he was extremely worn out with distress and highly emotional. Noticing such a predicament, the author invited him to try action research to improve his learning.

Method and Procedure

The author (Ariizumi, 1998) identified five major principles that make action research meaningful and successful.

1. Ownership with Accountability
2. Mastering Locality and Context
3. Total Involvement in Practice
4. Growing through Dialectic Process
5. Systematic Reflection

Based on these principles, the author directed Mike to a conscientious application of action research. For example, the author secured Mike optimal ownership from the beginning. Instead of making Mike follow any rigid action research procedure, the author asked Mike to be a research assistant who assumed to develop his own research agenda under the author's guidance.

During the first few sessions, the author taught Mike the basic concepts of action research and the five empowering principles were reiterated, and they brainstormed about how to go about this action research project. Consequently, Mike decided to do the following responsibilities and activities:

1. To keep log in which he describes his learning experience in as much detail as his circumstances allow it.

2. To learn about the literature that teaches him learning strategies to improve his learning.
3. To interview his fellow students to learn about their learning techniques and strategies.
4. To periodically visit and share his findings with the author.

To make sure that Mike was moving forward in the right direction, the author regularly met with Mike—usually once a week spending between 20 and 70 minutes. Generally, 10-15 minutes may be enough to follow up the learner’s progress; in this case study Mike was very engaged in this project and he was eager to explain in details about his positive experiences, consequently those meetings last longer than minimal necessity.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1 shows Mike’s steady progress. His GPA was 2.0 for fall 2002, which improved to 2.75 for Spring 2003 and jumped to 3.72 for Fall 2003. In addition to the improved GPA, during that fall semester of 2003 he took initiative to get approval from the registrar’s office for an extra course he added to the regular fulltime working load for the first time in his undergraduate study. This means that he achieved that high GPA with the 25% increase in course working load.

Gradual and Painstaking Progress at the Beginning

Mike's change was gradual at the beginning of this action research project. At that time Mike was still at an exploration stage where he experimented with new ideas. Some passages in his final report explain this trial and error stage.

Since I was learning Japanese, I firstly started looking into methods of helping me remember vocabulary and grammar, and memorize the drills and conversations on the tapes. For this, I went to the language lab about 2 times a week, listened to the audiotapes on reserve for about one hour to one hour and a half and tried to repeat what was being said. This at first proved to be inefficient so I started getting copies of the tapes and I would listen to them in my room the nights before my classes. I would also look at the text first before listening to the tapes to have an idea of the translations of the text. This was a painstaking job to be doing every Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday, but I felt I had to do it if I was going to get better.

As illustrated here, his learning process was gradually refined. One of the key factors that make action research successful in steadily improve performance is that it provides ample opportunities to become metacognitively aware about learning procedure. When Mike describes, explains, and reflects on his learning procedure, as the above excerpt effectively demonstrates, he is firmly building a foundation for successful improvement. The author believes that an action research process is not a quick remedy. It may not result in a quick improvement. Another point is that as Mike mentioned it as a "painstaking job;" action research requires much effort from the practitioner. This gradual and intensive refining process is also verified in another Mike's account. He continues,

At the same time I had one-hour meetings with my tutor once a week. These hour sessions spent together, we would look at the written home works, the grammar and he would teach me tricks for remembering when to use certain forms of words, and how to learn vocabulary. We initially started with folding the page in half, and having the words in one language on one side, and the translation folded over. This method was not too helpful for me because I could memorize the translation from say Japanese to English, but then I couldn't remember the English to Japanese. You would think it's the same thing, but that's not true. I had to switch back and forth until I thoroughly understood both the English and Japanese forms of the word I was trying to learn. Then we also practiced drills verbally back and forth until I had a fairly good grasp of what I was doing.

During this action research process, he continuously acquainted different techniques that bring learning to higher effectiveness. The important point to mention here, however, is that, as he repeatedly admitted in his writing, those techniques developed by someone else do not always work appropriately in his particular learning situation without accommodations. Many learners neither can make this kind of adjustments nor know where their problems lie in their learning because they cannot evaluate their learning performance. One of the most empowering features of action research is to enable the learner to meaningfully and comfortably evaluate their own learning so that he/she can adjust his/her way of learning to produce optimal results.

Mike's subsequent statement illuminates another important aspect of action research experience.

That usually worked in the short term, but the next day I always used to forget and freeze in class. So I had to learn to employ other techniques from a play that I was doing, forcing myself to learn lines for a play by repetition, with a partner, walking in circles and saying out aloud.

By reflecting on and keeping record of his learning process, he repeatedly came to the awareness of critical situations and phenomena that affect his learning. This process often leads to various unexpected connections to other more productive learning experiences of him and others. In this case what he had already learned in practicing for play performance gave some hints to improve his language learning. These hints are usually overlooked when learners are in a hurry to finish assignments or their mind is so preoccupied by the desire to quickly complete homework. Action research creates an extra dimension in the learner's mind so that he/she can more mindfully face the learning situation and eventually improve the productivity of his/her learning.

Action Research Fosters Competence to Transfer Learning Skills

Until learners can transfer the knowledge and skills from a learning situation to a real life application, their learning remains unproductive. Current education doesn't seem to be very successful in this regard (Marini, 1995, p. 1). Action research appears to have a potential to empower learners to develop this productive competence. Mike wrote

I was having trouble with tests and exams because I simply was not familiar enough with my textbook material. I had not learned effective ways of making verb charts with conjugations, so I had trouble with all the tenses and irregular verbs. For this, I went to my tutor once again, and he gave me tips on how to study and learn, and simply not try to memorize the verb lists. He taught me how to make stem sentences that I could use for the verbs or how to use different adjectives with one stem sentence. He taught me all the irregular verbs, and told me to underline, highlight or do anything in the book to make sure that next time I see them, I could recognize them. This I later came to find out would be one of my key successes for remembering things. Part of my problem at that time was, I simply did not annotate, put notes around my work, or highlight anything, so when I came to page that I had already read, it still looked mint new and I could not really tell you what it was all about. I would have to read several things first before I could recall that I had read it. That was true for many of the previous chapters I had read and we'd covered in class. So, I found once I started annotating and highlighting my books, I could easily pick out any page and tell you... "Arhh this is about X, Y, or Z based on the highlights and few notes."

The above quote accentuates the process through which the competence of transfer is developed in Mike. Firstly, Mike, in his daily reflection, becomes aware of the problematic areas in his learning. Then, he seeks for ideas for improvement. In this case, he sought for advice from his tutor. Thirdly, while he is receiving instructions from a source to solve a very specific problem, he receives some general ideas. In this case, he learned basic skills such as highlighting and annotating. Those generic skills seem to enhance his learning capacity in other subjects. To improve a very particular situation, Mike needs to improve his generic learning skills as well. Thus, once he succeeds in this particular learning difficulty, he can use the same generic-learning skills developed there in different situations. Since he is carefully observing what he is doing in order to write in his log and he is also reflecting on what has occurred in this learning process, it

is more likely that he becomes more familiar with the application process of such generic learning skills than he is when he is just carrying out his learning tasks. Therefore, his likeliness to succeed in transferring those skills to other learning situations will increase.

Open-endedness and Flexibility of the Improvement Process Based on Action Research

While any instructor-driven training session may end its influence once the trainee masters the skills that the instructor intended to teach, the action research based learning improvement never ends as long as the learner wants to continue his/her efforts. The following quote from the Mike's record illustrates this point:

My tutor and professor are not, however, the only people that helped me realize how to improve my learning, Regular visits to the library, and looking up methods of studying, and other survival skills for learning helped me realize that there are many things that I could be doing to improve my performance but I simply just don't do. For example, with exam time nearing, I would start freaking out, getting restless, worried and I would procrastinate profusely. I would preoccupy my mind with worrying, then sit and try to study, find it's not working for me, go waste time, feel guilty that I was not studying and it would be an on going cycle of worries. Bulgarian psychologist, Dr. Georgi Lozanov, suggests six main principles for being successful with in the classroom.

1. Remove all negative mental block that cramp the natural learning ability. Desuggest the idea that your ability is limited.
2. Relax-information is rapidly and effortlessly absorbed in relaxed state.
3. Create a mental map of the information you are going to learn.
4. 'Active Convert'-the medium is the message. Music, rhythm, drama, visual stimuli are a part of the learning process.
5. Take a short break. 'Receptive Convert'-subconscious time to absorb the review process involving sound and visual stimuli.
6. Sleep on it followed by 'Activations'-series of games, or puzzles and/or activities devised to review the previous day's work.

How much of this did I learn to use on a regular basis? I would have to say almost all of it. I find that nowadays, I tend to focus on creating the right atmosphere for me to study or else I can't effectively concentrate. I will sleep, take time off to relax or whatever necessary so that when I do sit to get work done, I get work done. I think it is getting to this pro-active learning stage that action research has really helped me gain the most of my academic experience.

At this stage, he is gaining confident in using and orchestrating various learning strategies, which fact characterizes an effective learner. So, there is no doubt that he is going to succeed in

learning with this attitude and being killed in strategic learning. In action research where the learner is carefully endowed with ownership, this kind of proactive efforts will easily germinate in any situation, which fact eventually leads the learner to significant improvements in learning.

Proactive Evaluation

As it was mentioned above, many learners cannot evaluate their performance well, which means that they cannot guide themselves to more productive learning. Lacking of evaluation is like a voyage without a steering wheel. In this regard, action research can produce plethora of information through which the learner can meaningful evaluate their learning quality and navigate his/her learning to a successful destination. Mike interestingly describes this aspect.

‘Practice makes perfect’ only if it is done pro-actively. By this, I mean thinking about the material and actively evaluating whether you are learning it or not, and being able to judge that yourself.

I believe that being able to review, and evaluate what and, how you have learned is very important in action research. This process helps you to become self sufficient, independent in your learning and helps improve your success rate I think. Waiting for the instructor’s evaluation, grades or exams is not a very effective way to gauge your performance. By that time, it is a little too late to respond, or effectively maintain progress. That is why, I kept a daily journal which helped me to keep my strategies for learning, and improve on. This idea of improving upon is also crucial for the one who is to become ‘perfect’ so as to say. Just practicing material already learned and not trying to improve on it can lead to a stagnant phase whereby progress is difficult to achieve.

The author believes that a similar awareness to the one mentioned above may occur to any learner, but that, in general, learners’ focus is on learning itself and such awareness, even if it occurs, remains a back burner. Therefore, it does not have a power to bring the learner to action. Since action research engages the learner’s attention long enough, his/her behavior can be significantly affected by the new awareness generated by action research.

Suggestions for this New Application of Action Research

In this section, the author summarizes a few major points that may help the interested readers successfully apply action research to improve their or others' learning.

1. Orientation

Since action research requires practitioners of conscientious and continuous efforts, it is wise to carefully choose whom it should be applied and thoughtfully organize the orientation to the person. Unless a learner is provided with structure, time, and support (e.g., action research is taught as a course or as a part of the course contents), the learner may feel overwhelmed by the extra work that action research requires of him/her while he/she may already be behind in schoolwork. When a learner starts this form of action research on their own without being mandated by a course requirement and so forth, save the learner is considerably self-directed and diligent as well as purely interested in this endeavor, it may not be likely for him/her to continue action research. As Mike described it as a “painstaking” procedure, action research, when it truly works, requires not only continuous efforts but also whole-hearted engagement in the process.

Secondly, the facilitator must mindfully secure the ownership of the research for the learner. Brainstorming sessions may be effective for the learner to come up with his/her own research focus and agenda. Questions such as “What do you like to achieve by this project?” “How do you describe the problematic situation of your learning?” “What might be your strategy to move on from this point?” “Where do you find the relevant information that addresses this issue?” will facilitate the ownership and independence of the learner-researcher.

Thirdly, the facilitator is advised to encourage the learner to do library research so that he/she can gain from the relevant research findings that expand his/her understanding on learning

strategies, especially the metacognitive strategies. Studying research works helps the learner see the learning process from a third-person perspective, which allows him/her to critically examine his/her learning process from diverse points of view. The metacognitive strategies are particularly helpful for the learner to become aware of the issues that affect his/her learning.

2. Follow-up

Once the learner has started action research successfully, the facilitator can set back a little and let the learner move forward independently. However, it is suitable to have periodical meeting to follow up the progress. Weekly or bi-weekly regular meeting is desirable. It may not be necessary to have a long meeting. Just 10-15 minutes may be sufficient. During these meetings, the learner can share his/her findings and receive extra ideas from the facilitator to further the research and improvement.

3. Motivation through Expanding Research Scheme

Research experience can be stagnated if the learner is routinely and mechanically following the action research cycle of Plan, Action, and Evaluation, without much external input. Especially when the learner cannot evolve the research agenda and objective, it is beneficial for the facilitator to help the learner see different possibilities. For example, the author encouraged the learner to help younger learners learn more strategically once the learner became confident in his learning. Another example was that the author invited Mike to apply for the NCUR (National Conference on Undergraduate Research) conference presentation. Both cases worked positively to motivate Mike further to continue his efforts in his action research.

There are many opportunities around learners where they can share their findings formally or informally with the peers and others. Those sharing experiences give the learner more meaningful reflection by placing him/her at a different standpoint. Teaching is one of the best ways to learn and by teaching the sense of self-worth and self-confidence wax stronger, which further motives the learner. Mike's report's conclusion reiterates important points and expresses how he feels about his future action research.

At this rate, I am trying to keep a continuous progress with my action research as I have completely learned to apply myself for all my classes. I think this type of flexibility has helped me to become a more confident learner, I think I know when to study, how to study but I really need to keep pushing myself further or else action research won't be happening.

The author believes that there are hundreds of thousands of learners who have a similar potential to make a significant progress in their learning if they are carefully introduced to the basic principles of action research and coached at least for the initial few small cycles (Plan, Action, and Evaluation) of the action research process.

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Appendix

(Mike's final report)

On the Edge of Action Research: Now what?

The idea of becoming an avid learner can only best be described by the phrase 'practice makes perfect' but as I have come to learn, practice does not always guarantee perfection. Many people can practice, imitate and regurgitate for hours on end without producing the necessary results desired. What does it take to truly master and control a subject or skill? In my case, what does it take to truly master the art of becoming a self-motivated learner? The answer for me is process called Action Research.

Over the last year and a half, I have been working on improving my academic goals and focusing on motivating myself to achieve the best that I can achieve. At first, I signed up for tutors and mentors, I went to extra help sessions, and I was constantly asking my classmates what it was that they were doing to achieve their superior grades. I was constantly seeking methods of improving my grades from other people until it was suggested to me that I try Action Research. At first I had no idea what Action Research was, so this is my paper explaining what it is, and how I went about pursuing this goal of learning about Action Research, how it helped me and how I plan to use it as a tool to help other students.

Action Research is a "systematic enquiry designed to yield practical results capable of improving a specific aspect of practice and made public to enable scrutiny and testing" The Standards Site (<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research/glossary>)

Looking at the definition above, I will dissect each part and try to explain what I did for my research starting with the 'systematic enquiry.' I met up with my professor and we firstly discussed what action research is. He told me essentially that it's the process of learning to understand how to acquire knowledge, how to store it and how to retrieve it consistently, upon being asked for it, (which is important because that shows mastery). He first got me on the path of learning about meta-cognition. Metacognition is a psychology term which "refers to the ability of learners to be aware of and monitor their learning processes"¹ Metacognitive skills are those that are necessary to help understand how something was performed. So in my case, I had to learn assess how I was learning and I had to assess I how I was managing my time. In essence I was learning to recognize and be alert of what methods of learning I was employing, what was working for me and not necessarily somebody else, and ultimately I was keeping track of this and engaging with what I was doing. Engaging with my material was very important to the study because this is what started helping me to start molding my learning habits, but I had to learn this first.

What methods of learning did I employ to yield practical results? Since I was learning Japanese, I firstly started looking into methods of helping me remember vocabulary and grammar, and memorize the drills and conversations on the tapes. For this, I went to the language lab about 2 times a week, listened to the

¹ Peters, M. "Does Constructivist Epistemology Have a Place in Nurse Education?" Journal of Nursing 39, no. 4 (April 2000): 166-170

audio tapes on reserve for about one hour to one hour and a half and tried to repeat what was being said. This at first proved to be inefficient so I started getting copies of the tapes and I would listen to them in my room the nights before my classes. I would also look at the text first before listening to the tapes to have an idea of the translations of the text. This was a painstaking job to be doing every Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday, but I felt I had to do it if I was going to get better.

At the same time I had one-hour meetings with my tutor once a week. These hour sessions spent together, we would look at the written home works, the grammar and he would teach me tricks for remembering when to use certain forms of words, and how to learn vocabulary. We initially started with folding the page in half, and having the words in one language on one side, and the translation folded over. This method was not too helpful for me because I could memorize the translation from say Japanese to English, but then I couldn't remember the English to Japanese. You would think it's the same thing, but that's not true. I had to switch back and forth until I thoroughly understood both the English and Japanese forms of the word I was trying to learn. Then we also practiced drills verbally back and forth until I had a fairly good grasp of what I was doing. That usually worked in the short term, but the next day I always used to forget and freeze in class. So I had to learn to employ other techniques from a play that I was doing, forcing myself to learn lines for a play by repetition, with a partner, walking in circles and saying out aloud.

I learned to walk and speak my drills so as to internalize them. I would carry my book, learn the drills and close my eyes and walk whilst saying phrases and sentences in my hallway. I know this is a rather unconventional way of doing it, but another thing I used to do was try to recite the phrases in the bathroom or in the showers. I think the combination of having to think about the language without my books, or thinking with the shower on made me think even harder about what it was I was trying to retrieve. But spatial thinking still proved to be very tough for me, especially when we had difficult vocabulary to describe something simple, so my tutor suggested using visuals and real life applications of the drills. This way, he had me pointing out to magazines and saying, this is an X...or that is a Y... and during our sessions he would bring all sorts of other artifacts that we would practice our lessons on. Did this help me? I think it did because sometimes the professor would bring the same artifacts to class, and it was easier to associate the vocabulary word by seeing the object, rather trying to retrieve purely from special thinking. All this concentrated effort on my part helped me improve my oral repertoire dramatically and the professor was noticing it, but my written work was still not up to par.

I was having trouble with tests and exams because I simply was not familiar enough with my textbook material. I had not learned effective ways of making verb charts with conjugations, so I had trouble with all the tenses and irregular verbs. For this, I went to my tutor once again, and he gave me tips on how to study and learn, and simply not try to memorize the verb lists. He taught me how to make stem sentences that I could use for the verbs or how to use different adjectives with one stem sentence. He taught me all the irregular verbs, and told me to underline, highlight or do anything in the book to make sure that next time I see them, I could recognize them. This I later came to find out would be one of my key successes for remembering things. Part of my problem at that point in time was, I simply did not annotate, put notes around my work, or highlight anything, so when I came to a page that I had already read, it still looked mint new and I could not really tell you what it was all about. I would have to read several things first before I could recall that I had read it. That was true for many of the previous chapters I had read and we'd covered in class. So, I found once I started annotating and highlighting my books, I could easily pick out any page and tell you..."arhh this is about X, Y, or Z based on the highlights and few notes."

My tutor and Professor are not however the only people that helped me realize how to improve my learning. Regular visits to the library, and looking up methods of studying, and other survival skills for learning helped me realize that there are many things that I could be doing to improve my performance but I simply just don't do. For example, with exam time nearing, I would start freaking out, getting

restless, worried and I would procrastinate profusely. I would preoccupy my mind with worrying, then sit and try to study, find it's not working for me, go waste time, feel guilty that I was not studying and it would be an on going cycle of worries. Bulgarian psychologist, Dr Georgi Lozanov, suggests six main principals for being successful with in the classroom.

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How much of this did I learn to use on a regular basis. I would have to say almost all of it. I find that nowadays, I tend to focus on creating the right atmosphere for me to study or else I can't effectively concentrate. I will sleep, take time off to relax or whatever necessary so that when I do sit to get work done, I get work done. I think it is getting to this pro-active learning stage that Action Research has really helped me gain the most of my academic experience. As I said in the beginning, 'practice makes perfect' only if it is done pro-actively. By this, I mean thinking about the material and actively evaluating whether you are learning it or not, and being able to judge that yourself.

I believe that being able to review, and evaluate what and, how you have learned is very important in Action Research. This process helps you to become self sufficient, independent in your learning and helps improve your success rate I think. Waiting for the instructor's evaluation, grades or exams is not a very effective way to gauge your performance. By that time, it is a little too late to respond, or effectively maintain progress. That is why, I kept a daily journal that helped me to keep my strategies for learning, and improve on. This idea of also improving upon is crucial of one is to become 'perfect' so as to say. Just practicing material already learned and not trying to improve on it can lead to a stagnant phase whereby progress is difficult to achieve. I think it's good to be creative with your learning methods. Every once in a while, try to find out how can I do it better next time? What worked well and what didn't. What's a more interesting way to do the same thing I did last week? For me, I found out watching movies was very effective for killing the monotony of simply learning Japanese grammar. I started watching Japanese cartoons and dramas, some with subtitles and others without. This proved to be really interesting for me, because not only was I picking up on some of the language and its' little quirks, but I was also able to pick up on the cultural norms and other aspects of Japan I wouldn't normally learn in the class. I also used to dabble with a few Japanese students on campus to see if I could apply what I learned in class. This proved challenging, but however, learning from friends can be useful because the can laugh at your mistakes, but at the same time correct them too. I had no regrets trying to speak the few Japanese students on campus.

How can Action Research be useful to other students? I firmly believe that once I learned to teach myself, I became very confident with my own work to the point that I could use myself as a success model and pass my information down to other students. This idea of modeling has been studied before and "is most simplistically defined as learning through observing or watching others and the imitating what they do."² I was thinking that I could use myself as a tool to teach other students how to learn.

² Sherri, L. Nist and Kate, Kirby. "Teaching Comprehension and Study Strategies Through Modeling and Thinking Aloud.

This semester I went out and made some questionnaires about Language Learning as it pertains to Japanese language students. The questionnaire was of evaluative purposes to try to gauge motives for learning the languages, methods of studying employed, and time spent studying the material. I also shared this information with another student doing a similar research project to try to collaborate on our findings. After looking at the questionnaire I made a few observations that I think could be fixed

Overall, the students were studying Japanese because they had family or friends speaking the language and they too wanted to learn it. Most of the students had the curiosity for language and culture, but it was interesting that all these students had taken another language before. Learning the reading and writing skills seemed to be area of most emphasis when asked what they found to be most important in language learning.

It seemed to me also that students found learning Japanese a little tougher than most other languages because they could not understand cultural contexts and hierarchical structures of the language. However, it also occurred to me that most students study Japanese for a maximum of 10 hours a week. That's approximately 2 hours a day, and I hardly think that 2 hours is enough for doing the careful attention to details that is emphasized with Action Research.

Another response that surprised me was the fact that students barely go for extra help, yet they all agree that the language is difficult. The fact that most of their goal setting were based on quizzes, exams and the instructor could be detrimental because this could be that they are only working towards the grade rather than achieving good command of the language.

I think that if the students put in a little more time into analyzing and understanding their study habits, they would certainly be taking one step in the right direction. Regular visits to the instructor or tutor for extra help can also be helpful. But what I have learned to be the most effective method of gaining results is for the student to be self-assessed and self managed. This means, going over notes when appropriate, knowing when to get help, keep track of their performance and find ways to keep motivated. It was also suggested by a student that film watching is helpful. I couldn't agree more with this student; I know it helps me.

Having clearly learned what troubles some of students, I met up with a couple of students independently to discuss what troubles them most about their class and tried to see what I could do to help them. I tried to give them a guided example of what I had done to deal with some of the problems that they were encountering. I helped give possible solutions to the problems, but I let them know that, it was up to them-selves to figure out a method that works for them. As I have already mentioned, this crucial because my learning habits or strategies may not work for everybody. However I felt that teaching these students about Action Research helped shift their mindset on how much responsibility they are putting into their work. Having gained awareness of the process and what they need to do may have helped them start looking in the right direction.

Now I had to turn to the task of actually trying to make it happen for the rest of the class. My professor suggested I look into preparing a special activity, oral activity or video show to do with the class. The intended idea behind this was to "have students think aloud for us so that we can determine where and why their understanding" might be lacking, or simply broken down. This think aloud process is supposed to help also the students become aware of what they don't know because when they have to say what they are thinking helps them monitor their own understanding.

My independent applications or lesson plans never materialized, but I'm currently in the process of working strategies to do a 5-10 minute class presentation to use strategies of Metacognition. I would like to set up a video, give my introduction of my research, and let the students loose to watch the video. As they are watching I intended to ask them to think aloud and tell me what they do and don't understand. Whether they understand the contexts or not? I would like to come up with meaningful data that I could use to help them internalize the material that they are watching.

At this rate, I am trying to keep a continuous progress with my Action Research as I have completely learned to apply myself for all my classes. I think this type of flexibility has helped me to become a more confident learner, I think I know when to study, how to study but I really need to keep pushing myself further or else Action Research wont be happening.