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**TEACHERS AS LANGUAGE LEARNERS: A STUDY OF THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEIR BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE
LEARNING AND THEIR LEARNING STRATEGY USE.**

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BY

Rita Tognini (B.A., Grad. Dip. Intercultural Studies, B. Ed)

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Award of
Master of Education**

**at the Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences
(School of Education)**

Date of submission: November, 2000.

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ABSTRACT

This longitudinal study of teachers undertaking intensive courses in Italian and Japanese investigated the relationship between their beliefs about language learning and the learning strategies they used. Fourteen teachers participated in the study, which employed a range of approaches for data collection. These approaches were qualitative in orientation, but also included some quantitative elements. A social interactionist perspective of second language learning research provided the broad theoretical framework for the study.

The study found that learners in the two language groups used a similar range of learning strategies, with direct strategies dominating over indirect strategies and cognitive direct strategies being most frequently used. 'Paying attention' emerged as the strategy most frequently used by both the Italian and Japanese learners. The study identified three significant categories of beliefs about language learning held by the learners which related broadly to communication, to practice and accuracy and to self-efficacy.

The study demonstrated a pattern of association between certain beliefs and strategies, particularly at the individual level. At this level, the clustering of strategies around particular beliefs suggested that these beliefs could be acting as organisational foci for the strategies. Patterns of association also emerged across and within language groups, with beliefs associated with understanding/making meaning showing the strongest association with a number of strategies.

The study revealed that the nature of the relationship between beliefs and strategies is a dynamic and complex one. It showed that learners believed in the importance of focusing on both 'meaning' and 'form' and demonstrated how all learners attempted to use strategies that promoted their learning in both areas. Tensions experienced by learners in managing these two aspects of their language learning suggested 'established' and 'emerging' connections between belief and strategies. Most of the learners appeared to have well established connections between their beliefs and strategies as far as 'form' was concerned. Some learners appeared to be in the process

of forging or consolidating links between beliefs related to ‘meaning’ and the strategies they used. This sometimes led to tensions as they worked to align their practices and beliefs. The study also demonstrated how the relationship between learners’ beliefs and strategies was shaped by past experiences of language learning. Strong concepts of self-efficacy appeared to positively influence learners’ capacity to recognise and utilise strategies that maximised their learning.

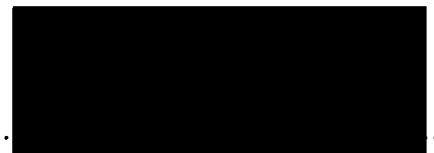
The findings of this study have implications for pedagogy and future research. In terms of pedagogy, this study underscored the individual nature of each learner’s preferred strategies and how these are shaped by beliefs. It also highlighted the evolving nature of both beliefs and strategies and the need for instructors to understand and work with, rather than against them. Equally importantly, the study pointed to the role of the classroom learning context in shaping the development of both beliefs and strategies. In terms of future research, the study identified a number of areas for further investigation. There have been surprisingly few studies of teachers’ beliefs about language learning. Those that have been carried out have involved very small numbers of teachers and have generally been restricted to university contexts. The relationship of teachers’ beliefs about language learning to their beliefs about language teaching, especially in the case of the beginning teacher, is another area that offers scope for research. Investigation of the learning strategies of younger second language learners has been limited and could benefit from further work, especially with younger learners of Asian languages. Finally, the topic of this study, the relationship between learners’ beliefs and their language learning strategies, warrants further investigation.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Date:

Nov. 2000

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|---|
| BALLI | Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| FSI | Foreign Services Institute |
| ILC | Intensive Language Course |
| LOTE | Languages Other Than English |
| SAL | Student Approaches to Learning |
| SILL | Strategy Inventory for Language Learning |
| SLA | Second Language Acquisition |
| TAFE | Technical And Further Education |
| TESOL | Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages |
| TL | Target Language |

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CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

Second language acquisition research constructs the language learner in various ways. The three most widely accepted constructs of the learner in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature have been described by Breen (1996), who also proposed a fourth construct. As he observed, the construct that has dominated SLA thinking for at least twenty years, and remains deservedly influential, casts the learner in an interpretative role. In this role, the learner's attention is directed primarily to making meaning of language that is presented in the learning context. Another construct sees the learner as taking an accommodating role, adapting his/her conceptual apparatus to what is being learned, but also reshaping the new knowledge that is being dealt with. A third, and more recent construct, envisions the learner as strategic, directing his/her energies towards managing the process of learning by means of learning and communication strategies. The construct proposed by Breen, that of the learner as a discursive practitioner, is offered as one complementary to the other three. This portrays the learner as navigator and negotiator of a complex social context (the classroom) and process (the language lesson), within which the target language data is presented and with which the learner interacts to effect his/her learning.

The present study, which investigates the relationship between learners' beliefs about language learning and their learning strategies, is concerned primarily with one of these constructs: the language learner as a strategic entity. It seeks to describe the influence of beliefs about language learning on the learner's strategic behaviour, and examines the operation of this influence in the context of the classroom and the language lesson. However, as Breen has noted, these roles are complementary. As a consequence, this study also provides glimpses of the learners in their other roles. Hopefully, such glimpses enrich the insights the study offers about their strategies for learning and how they relate to their beliefs.

The investigation of strategies used by language learners and the study of learners' beliefs about language learning commenced at about the same time, in the latter part of the seventies. These two areas of study appear to have had a similar genesis: research into what makes a 'good' language learner (Naiman, Frohlich, Stern & Todesco, 1978). Research in both areas was stimulated by a desire to account for individual differences in second language learning and to document the contribution of conscious learning to language acquisition. This study draws on and aspires to make its own contribution to these two areas of second language learning research.

Background To The Study

Australian society since the second world war has been one rich in unplanned and planned linguistic initiatives. The last twenty years have been fertile in planned linguistic endeavours, especially in education. The Report by the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, *A National Language Policy* (1984) supplied the vision which gave impetus to many of these initiatives. This vision was translated into public policy by Lo Bianco in the report, *National Policy on Languages* (1987). *Asian Languages and Australia's Economic Future* (1994), a report prepared for the Council of Australian Governments on a proposed National Asian Languages/Studies Strategy for Australian schools, was the influential but more narrowly focused contribution of the nineties to shaping Australia's linguistic landscape.

These reports significantly influenced the way policy makers viewed the importance of languages other than English in education and resulted in the allocation of public money to maintain and promote the learning and teaching of a range of languages in formal contexts. In Western Australia, the publication of *A National Language Policy* (1984) led to the establishment of a Ministerial Working Party which reviewed the provision for the teaching of languages in primary and secondary schools. The Working Party published a broad ranging report on the area, *Languages for Western Australians* (1988). This resulted in the development of the following formal policies for the teaching of languages in government schools: the *LOTE Strategic Plan (1991 -1993)*; and, the *LOTE 2000: New Horizons Strategy* (1995).

The *LOTE 2000: New Horizons* Strategy made a commitment to significantly expand language programs over a five year period. It proposed that all government school students from Years 3-10 study a language by the year 2000. The staffing implications of this provision resulted in the Education Department of Western Australia funding intensive courses for teachers already employed in their schools who had some pre-existing skills in a language. These courses aimed to upgrade the teachers' language proficiency to a level that would enable them to teach their target language, especially at primary level. These Intensive Language Courses (ILC) were first offered in 1994 and continue to be offered today. Courses have been offered for the major languages taught in government schools - Mandarin, French, German, Japanese, Indonesian, Italian. To date, more than 600 teachers have participated in the courses.

The Intensive Language Courses described in this study were of 120 hours duration and were presented in three stages over a period of seven months: two 30 hour stages and a 60 hour stage. They were taught by suitably qualified providers (universities, TAFE colleges, other private organisations) selected by means of an annual tender process. They were offered at four levels (Beginners, Levels 1,2 & 3), subject to demand, and had the following broad aims:

- to raise significantly the participants' LOTE proficiency levels;
 - to give access to a range of materials which could be used in the teachers' own classrooms;
 - to broaden the participants' socio-cultural understandings of the LOTE; and,
 - to increase the participants' confidence in using the target language in the classroom.
- (Education Department Information Brochure for the Intensive Language Courses, p.1)

The Intensive Language Courses were available, free of charge, to government school teachers who wished to improve their proficiency in their target language. Participants were required to apply to undertake the course of study. Those who were

selected to undertake the course had to agree to continue their language study to Level 3. They were also required to complete a Languages other than English (LOTE) Methodology Course before teaching a language program, if they did not already have formal methodology qualifications in the area.

Significance Of The Study

This study is significant for four reasons. The study set out to discover the connection between the two variables (ie. language learner strategies and beliefs) that have often been studied independently, but whose relationship has only begun to be documented. There now exists a significant body of research on language learning strategies and learner beliefs about language learning. However, as Skehan (1989) observed, exploration of the relationship between the strategies used by learners and other learner variables, such as beliefs, has not been adequately addressed. Indeed, few studies examining the relationship between learner beliefs about language learning and their strategy use appear to have been conducted. This research therefore aims to contribute to our understanding of this relationship.

Most existing research into language learning strategies and beliefs has been carried out with students enrolled in English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) or foreign language courses. This study investigated teachers, a group of language learners who in Western Australia alone number more than 600. The courses in which they were enrolled are the product of the rather unique Australian policy initiatives described above. However, the growing demand for teachers of languages in various parts of the world means that such courses can hardly be a uniquely Australian phenomenon. Indeed, Professor Denise Murray, in her closing address to the Australian Council of TESOL Associations Conference held in Brisbane in July, 2000, indicated that Taiwan is planning to significantly expand its provision for English language teaching by instituting intensive courses in the language for practising teachers.

These learners - practising teachers studying a language in order to gain sufficient proficiency to enable them to teach that language at primary or secondary level - have

received little research attention. This is despite the fact that, over the last ten years, courses similar to the Western Australian ILC have been conducted across Australia to address the issue of teacher supply. Given their dual role as teachers as well as learners, it is important to understand how this group approaches the language learning process and to discover what is unique about their learning strategies and beliefs and what they share with more frequently investigated groups of learners. It is also important to understand how their beliefs about language learning relate to the learning strategies they employ.

Finally, the inclusion of a group of learners studying an Asian language (Japanese) as well as a group studying a European language (Italian), contributes to the significance of this study. Until recently, most of the research into learning strategies and learner beliefs about language learning has been carried out with students of European languages or ESL/EFL students. More research in these areas involving Asian languages is essential, given the prominence given to the teaching of these languages in Australia's language policymaking.

Purpose Of The Study

This study was motivated by three key interests, in the first instance, an interest in investigating the language learning process from the learners' perspectives and trying to document and understand their perceptions of that process. The second was a professional interest deriving from the researcher's background in language teaching and preparation of language teachers. The third was a fascination with the research opportunities created by the initiatives that resulted from the public commitment to linguistic and cultural diversity in education occurring in Australia from the late seventies through to the mid-nineties. This final interest was stimulated by involvement in a small-scale study which examined how experienced teachers who retrained as language teachers took on that role (Breen, Briguglio & Tognini, 1996). This activity drew attention to many initiatives that could be useful sites for research.

There is a natural intersection between the first two interests. Indeed, it appeared that research interest in second language learners' strategic learning behaviour and in their beliefs about language learning in the eighties and nineties seemed to proceed in tandem with investigation of teachers' beliefs about their work and their classroom practice. This latter research has produced a growing body of evidence that teachers' behaviour in the classroom is influenced by their beliefs as shaped by key experiences, especially their own learning experiences (Freeman & Richards, 1996; Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver & Thwaite, 1998). By exploring the connection between teachers' own learning strategies and beliefs, this study hopes to gain insights that will help us to better understand the ways in which language teachers work, as well as their efforts as language learners.

The relevance to this study of the third of the interests listed above perhaps needs some explanation. English has been the language investigated in a great many studies of second language learning and teaching over the past 15-20 years. This is an understandable phenomenon given the dominance English has achieved as a world language in that period of time. However, in the interests of balance, more research involving other languages is also needed. This is especially true in Australia where a large number of languages other than English is spoken, taught and studied. Indeed, it could be argued that, from a linguistic point of view, Australian society is a virtual laboratory with a plethora of particularly intriguing linguistic experiments occurring, the majority of which remain unstudied. The Intensive Language Courses being conducted by the Education Department of Western Australia and in which a large number of teachers have participated and continue to participate appear to be a local but significant example of such ongoing linguistic experimentation. The opportunity to investigate the learning strategies and beliefs of a small group of the teachers involved in these courses would have been difficult to ignore.

The purpose of this research was both descriptive and interpretative. It set out to elicit, describe and compare the language learning strategies used by two groups of teachers, one studying the Japanese Level 1 Intensive Language Course and one studying the Italian Level 1 Intensive Language Course. It also aimed to discover and compare the

beliefs about language learning held by these teachers (individually and as language groups), to discover what influenced teachers in their choice of learning strategies and to explore the relationship between the learning strategies they chose to use and their beliefs as learners.

Organisation Of The Thesis

The remainder of this thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter Two reviews the literature on learner beliefs about language learning and on learning strategy research and presents the research questions for the study. The methodology used in the study is described in Chapter Three. Chapters Four and Five are descriptive, presenting the findings of this study regarding the strategies participants reported using and what they believed about language learning. The pattern and nature of the relationships between learners' beliefs about language learning and their learning strategy use are examined in Chapters Six. Chapter Seven concludes the study by reviewing its main findings, examining issues highlighted by the research and identifying possible areas for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses two areas of research literature related to the present study, both concerned with individual differences in language learning. The first research area is that of learner beliefs about second language learning. The other is that of second language learning strategies. In examining the research literature from these two areas, particular attention will be given to studies which have investigated the relationship between learner beliefs and use of strategies by language learners. The chapter is divided into two parts, reflecting the two areas of research literature under review.

Beliefs About Second Language Learning

Definition

What are we referring to when we talk of learner beliefs in the context of second language learning? Wenden (1998: 516-517) has pointed out that in the FL/ESL literature, metacognitive knowledge, or knowledge about learning, is also referred to as learner beliefs. She acknowledged that “there is no clear consensus on the distinction between knowledge and beliefs” but drew attention to the tacit recognition of difference implied by the use of one term rather than the other. Wenden attempted to distinguish between metacognitive knowledge and learner beliefs by describing knowledge as “factual, objective information acquired through formal learning” and beliefs as “individual subjective understandings, idiosyncratic truths which are often value related and characterised by a commitment not present in knowledge”. She also drew attention to the suggestion made by Flavell (as cited in Wenden, 1998) that beliefs about learning are a component of metacognitive knowledge.

In the context of this study, a ‘belief’ is broadly defined as a personal theory, assumption or philosophy based on or developed from prior experience. Following Wenden, learner beliefs will be regarded as components of metacognitive knowledge.

Overview

Beliefs are an important component of human behaviour. They are a key construct in disciplines which deal with this behaviour and with learning related to it. Language learning, and second language learning in particular, are areas about which people in general, and learners in particular, tend to have strong beliefs. Language educators have long realised that their learners bring complex beliefs about the nature of language, about the learning process, and about their own strengths and limitations to their language learning tasks. Current views of the language learner as an active participant in the language learning experience mean that the investigation of learners' beliefs systems is an important aspect of current research in second language learning, especially learning which takes place in the classroom context.

The importance of beliefs (and more broadly metacognitive knowledge) as a variable in second language learning has been recognised for some time. Seminal studies of learner beliefs and learners' metacognitive knowledge were conducted in the eighties by Wenden (1986; 1988) and Horwitz (1988a; 1988b). The focus of this earlier research was documentation of the content of learners' belief and knowledge. Interest in the area has continued to grow over the last ten years, with research reporting on developments "which provide insights into research methodology and the development, nature, and influence of learners' knowledge and beliefs." (Wenden, 1999: 437)

This section of the chapter begins by reviewing the earlier work of Wenden and Horwitz which focused on documenting the content of learner's beliefs and knowledge. It moves on to subsequent studies which have drawn on the work of these researchers, particularly in the area of methodology, and discusses some key issues related to this area. Finally, it reviews and discusses more recent research that has, in Wenden's words 'moved beyond the basics' to investigate the development, nature and influence of learners' knowledge and beliefs. Particular attention will be given to studies that have investigated the influence of learners' beliefs on language learning strategy use.

Content Of Learners' Beliefs

Wenden and Horwitz have made a major contribution to knowledge about the content of learner beliefs. One of the key areas investigated by Wenden (1986) was the aspects of their language learning that learners were capable of talking about, other than strategies. Using semi-structured interviews, she found that the twenty five adults involved in her study reported knowledge about the following dimensions of language learning: (1) language; (2) language proficiency; (3) outcomes of strategies; (4) personal factors; and, (5) beliefs about how best to approach language learning.

Wenden (1988) reported the results of a close analysis of data related to the fifth dimension listed above. This analysis identified twelve explicit statements that represented learners' beliefs. These statements were categorised into three main groups, corresponding to the overall approach to language learning taken by learners in each group. They are: use the language; learn about the language; and, personal factors are important. Interestingly, Wenden reported that most of the students seemed to have one of the categories as their preferred set of beliefs. The beliefs encompassed by each category are summarised in Table 2.1 (see page 11).

The principal objective of much of Horwitz' research has been "to determine the prevalence of certain common beliefs about language learning among typical groups of language learners" (Horwitz, 1988b: 284). In contrast to Wenden, who used semi-structured interviews to collect retrospective self-reports from learners, Horwitz developed a structured questionnaire to gather data about learner beliefs called the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI).

The BALLI canvasses learner opinions on five major areas: (1) difficulty of language learning; (2) foreign language learning aptitude; (3) the nature of language learning; (4) learning and communication strategies; and, (5) motivation and expectations. Learners are required to read and rate each of the 34 BALLI items on a 1-5 scale that ranges from strong agreement to strong disagreement. The BALLI gives information about responses by learners to individual items, rather than providing a global score about beliefs.

Table 2.1: Beliefs About How to Best Approach Language Learning (from Wenden 1988)

| Use the language | Learn about the language | Personal factors are important |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Learning the natural way</i> (It's not necessary to be in a classroom to learn.)• <i>Practice</i> (Language must be used as often as possible.)• <i>Think in your second language</i> (When using the language, the focus must be on the meaning of the communication.)• <i>Live and study in an environment where the language is spoken</i> (Living in the target language country is important.)• <i>Don't worry about mistakes</i> (Accuracy is important but this shouldn't get in the way of using the language.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Learn grammar and vocabulary</i> (Grammar and vocabulary are fundamental to successful learning because they are the building blocks of language.)• <i>Take a formal course</i> (This will ensure systematic learning and exposure to the correct form of the language.)• <i>Learn from mistakes</i> (Feedback about mistakes is important to effective language learning.)• <i>Be mentally active</i> (The learner must make a deliberate and conscious effort to learn.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The emotional aspect is important</i> (Feelings have strong influence on language learning and must be taken into account.)• <i>Self concept</i> (How learners feels about themselves and their capacities can facilitate or inhibit learning.)• <i>Aptitude for learning</i> (Innate ability is an important factor in making progress.) |

Horwitz (1988b) used this instrument to examine the beliefs of 241 undergraduate foreign language students enrolled in either German, French or Spanish at the University of Texas. The study found that there was a similarity of beliefs among the learners of these three languages in all of the five areas and suggested some of these beliefs would not be helpful in dealing with the more difficult and time consuming aspects of language learning. An example of this comes from the students' responses to questions about the difficulty of language learning. The study found that a sizeable group of students had rather unrealistic expectations about the time it would take them to achieve fluency in their target language. While most of the students felt that they were studying a language of average difficulty, over one third of the students in each language group felt that a maximum of two years would be sufficient for learning another language and a further five to eight percent felt this could be achieved in under a year (Horwitz 1988b: 286).

The matter of foreign language aptitude also yielded some interesting results. Cross tabulation of various items related to this area suggested that many of the students did not see themselves as particularly gifted language learners, but believed that the task of language learning required an average rather than exceptional ability. This was evidenced by strong support across the board for the idea that everyone can learn another language. There was overwhelming support for the notion that learning a second language is easier for children rather than adults, but little support for the concept of differential language learning ability based on gender, or an ability related to the humanities, rather than science and mathematics. The students surveyed, on the whole, felt that Americans were not good at language learning.

The study uncovered a number of beliefs about the nature of language learning, about language learning and communication strategies and about students' motivations and expectations that had implications for curriculum and instruction. Many of the students appeared to hold restricted views about the nature of language learning, viewing it principally as a matter of translating from English or learning grammar rules or new vocabulary words. Traditional learning strategies of repetition and practice in the language laboratory were endorsed by a majority of students. On the other hand, support for strategies that concentrated on the development of communicative competence was qualified. Many of the students agreed that guessing was an appropriate strategy in second language learning, but forty eight percent of German students and fifty seven percent of French students felt that if beginning students were allowed to make errors they would probably find it difficult to correct them at later stages of their learning. The importance of correct pronunciation was stressed by at least forty percent of students from each of the groups. Finally, students' responses to items relating to motivation and expectations indicated that they possessed only moderate levels of intrinsic instrumental or integrative motivation, as many of them did not have a strong desire to get to know people from their target culture and were not convinced that their second language studies would have positive consequences in terms of employment.

Did the research conducted by Horwitz (1988a; 1988b) and Wenden (1986;1988) identify similar kinds of learner beliefs ? Wenden (1988) addressed this issue by comparing the framework of beliefs she had deduced from the learners in her study (see Table 2.1, page 11), with the items contained in the BALLI (Horwitz,1988b). She found areas of commonality, and gaps. Fifteen of the 34 BALLI items could be classified in terms of the three categories described by Wenden (1988) and listed above in Table 2.1. In addition to this, five of the fifteen were restatements of beliefs included in these categories. The BALLI items that related to language aptitude and other items were not reflected in Wenden’s findings. These differences, Wenden concluded, pointed to the need to develop a more comprehensive set of belief statements.

Recent studies have pursued that objective. Large scale studies by Yang (1999) and Sakui and Gaies (1999) adopted a different approach to questionnaire research than that taken by Horwitz. Both these studies used factor analysis to generate categories of beliefs from information obtained by means of questionnaires. Yang used the BALLI with her 505 Taiwanese EFL universities students and Sakui and Gaies developed a 45 item questionnaire (which was translated into Japanese to guard against problems with reliability owing to language difficulties) for the 1296 Japanese university EFL students who participated in their study. Each study identified four key factors around which beliefs clustered. These factors, which correspond to the three categories identified by Wenden (1988) and encompass similar areas to those included in the BALLI, are summarised in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2: Categories of Belief Revealed by Factor Analysis

| Yang (1999) | Sakui and Gaies (1999) |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self efficacy and expectations about second language learning • perceived value and nature of learning spoken English • beliefs about foreign language aptitude • beliefs about formal structural studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a contemporary (communicative) orientation to learning English • a traditional orientation to learning English • the quality and sufficiency of classroom instruction for learning English • foreign language aptitude and difficulty |

Yang also proposed a theoretical construct of language learning beliefs composed of two main dimensions: *metacognitive*, which referred to learners' beliefs or knowledge in this dimension, and *motivational*, which referred to learners' beliefs about motivation. Most motivational beliefs were included in the first two factors listed in Table 2.2, while metacognitive beliefs were included in the last two factors.

Benson and Lor (1999), who investigated the language learning beliefs of Hong Kong university students, adopted a different research approach in pursuing this objective. They drew on 'Student Approaches to Learning' (SAL) theory from educational psychology to explore whether they could identify a higher order of conceptions of language and language learning that conditioned beliefs. SAL differs from information processing theory (which has its origins in cognitive psychology) in that it begins "from the perspective of the learner and recognises the crucial importance of the content of the learning task and its context" (Benson and Lor, 1999: 461). They proposed a different picture of learner beliefs involving three interrelated levels: conception, belief and approach. 'Conception' is the higher, more abstract level which governs beliefs. 'Approach' is the level at which conceptions and beliefs are made evident.

Data collected by means of interviews in Cantonese with sixteen students revealed three broad domains of beliefs: beliefs about language learning; beliefs about self and beliefs about the learning situation. Analysis of the fourteen discrete beliefs within the first domain identified two conceptions of language and language learning underlying these discrete beliefs: quantitative and qualitative. The conception of language that is 'quantitative' constructs language learning as a process of collection, absorption and assimilation of information, while the 'qualitative' conception of language constructs learning as a process of making sense of an unfamiliar environment. Benson and Lor (1999) found that the quantitative/qualitative distinction appeared to apply to specific beliefs relating to beliefs about self and the learning situation.

Most of the learners in the study conducted by Benson and Lor (1999) expressed what the researchers considered to be 'quantitative conceptions' of language learning and

adopted approaches consistent with these conceptions. A few expressed 'qualitative conceptions' and some moved from one to the other depending on the area of learning they were talking about. Benson and Lor (1999) pointed to the importance of context in shaping conceptions and approaches. They argued that the preference for quantitative conceptions and approaches by the majority of the students investigated needed to be understood in terms of their functionality in the Hong Kong context, with its exam-oriented secondary system. Conversely, a context in which learners were able to immerse themselves in target language use would be expected to render more qualitative conceptions and approaches. Both qualitative and quantitative conceptions and approaches were equally functional in their particular context. Benson and Lor (1999) suggested that the movement between the quantitative and qualitative conceptions and approaches evidenced in some students should be interpreted positively. They saw this movement as an indication that students were beginning to make the transition from the school to the university context. In the school context, the key purpose of language learning, to pass examinations, was well served by quantitative conceptions and approaches. The university context favoured qualitative conceptions and approaches because the main purpose was to become more effective users of the language as a means of communication for educational and professional purposes.

The Development And Nature Of Beliefs

The BALLI has been used in at least thirteen published studies and doctoral dissertations since its publication. These studies involved a variety of student and teacher populations. In a recent paper, Horwitz (1999) reviewed these studies for possible cultural and situational influences on learners' beliefs. She reported a large degree of commonality of beliefs across all the groups involved. Indeed, Horwitz found that the within-culture differences identified by two of the studies reviewed appeared to be at least as notable as the differences across cultural groups revealed by other studies. These studies are discussed below.

The learners of Japanese studied by Oh (as cited in Horwitz, 1999) responded differently from other groups of American learners on issues relating to the difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning and expectations about job opportunities. The fact that Oh's subjects were students of Japanese makes her findings particularly relevant for this study.

Kern (1995) examined instructors' as well as students' beliefs and changes in beliefs. His study found instructors reported different beliefs from students on a number of items related to the nature of language learning and both groups differed from American learners of German, Japanese and Spanish in their views of the role of translation in language learning. The instructors revealed a high level of consensus on more than one third of the BALLI items. There was very high consensus (100% agreement or disagreement) on four items. They were: "everyone can learn to speak a foreign language" and "it is important to repeat and practice a lot" (agreement); "learning a foreign language is a matter of translating from English" and "you shouldn't say anything in a language until you can say it correctly" (disagreement).

Differences in beliefs between the instructors and students were clearest in relation to four items. Instructors tended to disagree with the statements, "it's important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent" and "it's easier to speak than to understand a foreign language", while students tended to agree. The instructors also expressed strong disagreement with the notions that "learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules" and "learning another language is a matter of translating from English". A sizeable proportion of their students had different reactions to these two propositions, with which they either agreed or felt neutral about.

The issue of what teachers believe about language learning was addressed by Fox (1993), who used questions adapted from the BALLI as one of the instruments in her study of the relationship between communicative competence and beliefs among Graduate Teaching Assistants (TA) of French. She found differences between TA beliefs about language and the model of communicative competence developed by Canale and Swain (1980) and suggested that TA beliefs "may not be consistent enough

to result in coherent teaching practices” (Fox, 1993: 321). For example, when evaluating the usefulness of activities they took part in as learners, almost half judged grammar and completing grammar exercises as essential. At the same time, three quarters also disagreed with the statement that “learning French is mostly a matter of learning grammar rules”, and one third thought that it was not necessary to know the foreign language culture to speak the foreign language.

Learner Beliefs and Communicative/Traditional Teaching Approaches

Differences in beliefs about the nature of language learning and learning and communication strategies such as those found by the study carried out by Kern (1995) seem to reflect the distinction made between ‘focus on meaning’ and ‘focus on form’ in the second language learning literature and the ‘communicative’ as opposed to the ‘traditional’ approach, in pedagogy. Wenden (1988) found that the learners she studied seemed to have a preference for sets of beliefs that seem to mirror these distinctions, which she labelled, ‘use the language’ and ‘learn about the language’.

Evidence that many of the learners’ beliefs may correspond to the distinction teachers frequently make between pedagogy that has a communicative orientation (and therefore stresses focus on meaning) and that with a more traditional orientation which stresses focus on form, was also found by Sakui and Gaies (1999). The Taiwanese university EFL learners studied by Yang (1999) showed a similar polarisation of their beliefs about formal structural studies, with some holding strong views about the need for a more formal, structural approach to learning and teaching and others rejecting this view equally vigorously. The notions of qualitative and quantitative conceptions and approaches to language learning outlined by Benson and Lor (1999) also reflect this distinction.

Changing Beliefs

The complex nature of learners’ beliefs and how they interact with the instructional context was explored by Kern (1995), who used a pre-test/post-test

technique to investigate changes in students' beliefs over the fifteen weeks of his study. He found a substantial degree of change in some beliefs over this period of time, but only when he analysed responses to items at an individual level. His findings on the teacher's role in changing student beliefs illustrate this. Global analysis of responses indicated that teacher beliefs did not generally influence student beliefs in a significant way. However, analysis of individual responses suggested that some students' beliefs became more closely aligned with those of their teachers over the period of instruction.

The study conducted by White (1999) of novice adult distance learners of Japanese and Spanish also found evidence of changes in their beliefs as a result of their experiences in that instructional context. The potential for context to influence beliefs was acknowledged by Sakui and Gaies (1999). Benson and Lor (1999) argued that conceptions and beliefs are likely to be functionally conditioned in a given context. The approach to learning manifest by the learner therefore emerges from the interaction of his/her conceptions and beliefs with a particular context. They pointed to the potential value of the notion of approaches to learning in "helping us to understand the functionality of conceptions and beliefs and the ways in which they may be open to change." (Benson and Lor, 1999: 471)

Methodological Issues

Two principal methods have been used to investigate learner beliefs. The first involves talking to the learners through interviews or focus groups, followed by analysis of what they have said (Wenden, 1986;1988). The second concentrates on developing inventories of possible beliefs, fashioning these into closed questionnaires and asking learners to respond to them (Horwitz, 1988a; 1988b; Kern, 1995).

Elaboration of these two approaches is evident in more recent research. Phenomenography, which acknowledges the importance of subjective interpretations of reality in analysing actions, seems to be gaining favour as a method which builds on the approach taken by Wenden. This approach is reflected in the work of White (1999) and Benson and Lor (1999). It is difficult to see the exact difference between research that is

explicitly based on phenomenography, such as the two studies cited above, and the approach used by Wenden, which also uses learner perceptions of reality as a starting point. Further, the use of multiple approaches to data collection, which is a feature of White's research, is not unique to phenomenography.

Sakui and Gaies (1999) drew attention to a significant development in the approach derived from Horwitz' work. This involved moving away from the grouping of questionnaire items into logically-derived categories and focusing the analysis of data on differences and similarities of response patterns within categories (Horwitz, 1988a; 1988b; Kern, 1995). The alternative approach used a statistical procedure such as factor analysis of responses to questionnaire items to obtain a set of empirically-derived categories of beliefs (Cotterall, 1995; Sakui and Gaies, 1999; Yang, 1999).

Two other developments, which represent a kind of cross-pollination between these two approaches, deserve comment. First, is the move to use the respondents' first language to collect data on beliefs, where respondents have been ESL/ EFL learners. Studies of the beliefs of foreign language students have usually been carried out in their first language. This practice also appears to be occurring more often in studies involving ESL/EFL students. The study conducted by Benson and Lor (1999) interviewed students in their first language. Both Sakui and Gaies (1999) and Yang (1999) translated their questionnaires into Japanese and Mandarin respectively. Cotterall (1999), who for obvious practical reasons used English to investigate the beliefs of 131 EFL learners from seventeen different language backgrounds, nevertheless acknowledged the problematic nature of this decision. The reasons for using the respondent's first language in this area of research (ie. to ensure that there are no reasonable impediments to respondents presenting their view of reality; and to control the reliability of responses) appear to be equally valid for both qualitatively and quantitatively oriented methodologies.

The second development is the use of interview data to complement data collected by means of closed questionnaires (Sakui and Gaies, 1999). This is discussed in the section which follows.

Limitations

Two basic approaches to methodology in research about learner beliefs were described above, one characterised by a qualitative orientation and the other characterised by a more quantitative orientation. Examples of cross fertilisation between these two approaches were also discussed. The remainder of this section will examine some of the limitations of each of these approaches.

Data about learners' beliefs obtained through interviews or other techniques such as 'think alouds' have been a rich source of material for the area. However, Wenden (1986) enumerated a few methodological caveats about such data in relation to her study, which bear repetition. These caveats are summarised below:

- Semi-structured interviews are generally conducted to allow the interviewee to take the lead. However, interviewees are often directed to reflect upon particular areas of experience through the initial questions asked by the interviewer.
- What is reported by interviewees as the result of being asked in an interview to look back on their language learning shouldn't be equated with what they actually do or have done in particular instances of language learning. This data could reflect (1) actual knowledge of what was done; (2) generalisation of what was done in a particular instance to other situations; (3) memory of the task rather than the action taken and reporting of what would have been an appropriate action in those circumstances; and, (4) application of general knowledge about what should be done in a particular situation.

Data from retrospective self-reports can therefore be a mixture of "personal fact, inference based on personal fact and popular belief" (Wenden 1986: 197) and may not be related to personal experience. Nevertheless, Wenden is convinced that such data remain a valuable source of learners' beliefs or metacognitive knowledge. She advised, however, that such data should be interpreted with some caution.

Much has been discovered about learners' beliefs through studies based on the BALLI. However, the use of this type of instrument to collect data about learners' beliefs also has raised questions about the nature of the data collected. Two key issues

that have been explored in a number of recent studies are: (1) the reliability of responses to questionnaire items; and, (2) the use of complementary sources of data to ensure this reliability.

The first of these issues was examined by Block (1998) in a recent study. This investigated how 24 students at an English language centre in Spain interpreted their end-of-course evaluation. Drawing on previous research by Alderson (1992) which highlighted how questionnaires circumscribe subjects' conceptions of and responses to issues under investigation, Block addressed two key questions: (1) the extent to which different students interpreted questionnaire items in a similar fashion; and (2) the extent to which the numbers on the 1-5 scale had the same meaning and importance for different students. A form of semi-focused interview involving conversations with students about their responses as they completed the course evaluation questionnaire in his presence was used to explore these questions. An analysis of students' comments revealed a high degree of variance in the way they interpreted the questionnaire items and a great deal of intra-rater and inter-rater inconsistency.

The issue of reliability of questionnaire data was a major focus of the research carried out by Sakui and Gaies (1999). Their study used a purpose-designed Likert-type questionnaire, which was translated into Japanese to eliminate issues of reliability related to language. The reliability of its items was tested by developing three versions of the questionnaire - Original, Scrambled and Alternate. The Scrambled version aimed to test consistency of response over time and contained the same items as the Original version, but in a different order. The Alternate version, which used different wording and sequenced items differently, sought to measure sensitivity of responses to the wording of items. The Original version was administered to all the subjects. The Scrambled and Alternate versions were completed by small subsets of 44 and 54 students respectively, four weeks after they had done the Original version.

This study also addressed the issue of complementary data by using interviews to test the reliability of questionnaire responses. A number of students who had completed both the Original and Scrambled versions of the questionnaire were interviewed, either

individually or in small groups. The aim was to find out what they could remember about the experience of responding to the questionnaire and to discover what additional information they could give about their beliefs.

Both the test-retest procedure adopted with the questionnaires and the interviews provided Sakui and Gaies (1999) with reasonable evidence of the stability and consistency of students' responses to the questionnaire. Importantly, however, the interviews also provided a number of insights about learner beliefs and about questionnaires as instruments for collecting data about them that are relevant to this research. For example, the interviews revealed that what appeared to be inconsistency in responses over time could, in fact, be due to actual changes in the learners' beliefs. They lent support to the views expressed by Benson and Lor (1999) about the importance of context, by pointing to the fact that beliefs may not be uniform, but situationally conditioned. The interviews also drew attention to the potential for items to be interpreted uniquely, however meticulously they are constructed.

The interview data from the study by Sakui and Gaies' illustrated the complexities of learner behaviour in responding to questionnaires. They showed that some respondents were aware of the relationship between items and that others answered particular items to describe their beliefs in ways that the questionnaire did not allow. A student who could not decide how to answer an item dealt with her uncertainty by choosing the opposite response in the retest to the one she had given in the test, thus hoping one might cancel out the other. These insights demonstrate that interview data can complement questionnaire data in important ways. They also confirm the value of multiple sources of data collection in this research area.

The Influence Of Beliefs On Learning Strategies

Wenden (1999) identified the influence of learners' knowledge and beliefs on their language learning as one of the areas of emerging interest. A number of studies concerned with second language learning strategies have pointed to the likelihood of

beliefs having an important role in strategy use (Abraham and Vann, 1988; Oxford, 1989; Nyikos and Oxford, 1993; Oxford and Ehrman, 1995).

Some possible relationships between beliefs and behaviour were suggested by Wenden (1988:121), who found that learners who emphasised the importance of using language would often employ communicative strategies, while those who “emphasised the importance of learning about the language tended to use cognitive strategies that helped them to better understand and remember specific items of language.” A similar symmetry was implied by Benson and Lor (1999) in their suggestion of congruence between qualitative or quantitative conceptions of language learning and students’ use of qualitative or quantitative approaches to it.

Few studies have directly examined the relationship between learner beliefs and their strategy use. A significant recent example of work in this area was produced by Yang (1999). How second language/foreign language learners’ beliefs about language learning related to their learning strategy use was the specific focus of the large scale study carried out by Yang (1999) involving Taiwanese university EFL students. An English Learning Questionnaire, which was translated into Chinese, was devised by Yang to collect her data. The Questionnaire was composed of the BALLI, Oxford’s (1990) *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL), and several author designed open-ended questions.

Quantitative analysis involving several statistical procedures (computation of descriptive statistics; principal component analysis and factor analysis; and, Pearson correlation and canonical correlation) was carried out on the responses to the two inventories. Content analysis for recurring themes performed on responses to the open-ended questions provided a qualitative dimension to the analysis.

The results of this study yielded considerable empirical evidence that beliefs are important determinants of language learning behaviour. The relationship between beliefs about second language learning and strategy use as revealed by analysis using the Pearson product-moment correlations and canonical correlation are summarised in Table 2.3.

As can be seen in Table 2.3, the results of the canonical correlation analysis demonstrated a strong relationship between the first two belief factors and learners' strategy use. Learners with strong beliefs about self-efficacy (their own judgements about their performance capabilities in a given area) reported using strategies from all six factors, and drew on functional practice strategies in particular. The strong belief expressed by these learners about the importance of repetition and practice and the need to have an excellent pronunciation is consistent with their choice of oral-practice strategies that focused on formal rather than functional or communicative aspects of language learning.

Table 2.3: Summary of Relationship Between Beliefs and Strategies (Yang 1999)

| Learners' Beliefs Factors | Pearson product-moment correlation analysis | Canonical correlation analysis |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self efficacy and expectations about second language learning • perceived value and nature of learning spoken English • beliefs about foreign language aptitude • beliefs about formal structural studies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • closely related to all six strategy factors * • closely related to all six strategy factors • connected to three strategy factors: functional practice, cognitive memory and metacognitive strategies • significant negative correlation with functional practice strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • significant relationship between beliefs about self-efficacy and all six strategy factors • significant relationship between beliefs about the value and nature of spoken English and more frequent use of formal oral-practice strategies |

* **Strategy factors identified by Yang:** Functional practice strategies; Cognitive-memory strategies; Metacognitive Strategies; Formal oral-practice strategies; Social strategies; Compensation strategies.

Learner beliefs and their relationship to strategy use have recently engaged the attention of researchers concerned with learner autonomy. Cotterall (1999) found evidence of autonomy favouring behaviours in relation to what her adult EFL subjects believed about the role of the teacher, the nature of language learning and what they believed and knew about various strategies. She also found evidence of autonomy inhibiting behaviour that appeared related to students' weak sense of self-efficacy. The

inability of these students to use strategies for monitoring and evaluating learning was linked to a lack of confidence. They also lacked confidence in their ability to write accurately in English.

The group of adult learners of Japanese and Spanish studying by distance mode investigated by White (1999) adjusted and revised their beliefs as they gained experience in that particular instructional context. White argued that this provided support for the assertion that beliefs help individuals to understand and adapt to the circumstances in which learning has to take place. This study also pointed to another possible nexus between beliefs and learning strategies. It found that learners' locus of control (internal or external) and their capacity to tolerate ambiguity related to how they viewed their role in the self-instructional context and the strategies they adopted for learning in this context. For example, learners whose locus of control remained external showed limited capacity to tolerate difficulties with their work and the sense of that they were making little progress. These learners found it difficult to persevere and proceed without interaction with the instructor.

Language Learning Strategies

Overview

Research into second language learning strategies began in the mid-seventies with studies that attempted to identify the characteristics of effective learners. Studies which focused on the 'good language learner' (Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco, 1978; Rubin, 1975) identified strategies reported or observed being used by students that seemed to help these students in their language learning.

Subsequent research on learning strategies investigated and documented the language learning strategies used by child, adolescent and adult second language learners in a range of instructional settings and contexts. These studies included learners of foreign languages and well as ESL (O'Malley, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, Kupper,

1985; Mangubhai, 1991; Chamot, 1995; Kouraogo, 1993; Nyikos and Oxford 1993; Oxford and Ehrman, 1995; Vogely, 1995; White, 1995; Grenfell and Harris, 1998).

The development of systematic categorisation schemes for the identification of second language learning strategies became one of the key preoccupations of subsequent research in this area (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). Allied to this was the need to explore theoretical issues related to strategy use and to develop a coherent theoretical framework that explained the contribution of strategy use to second language learning.

The relationship between the strategies used by learners and their language proficiency became the focus of investigation early in the evolution of this area of research (Politzer 1983; Politzer and McGroarty, 1985) and continues to exercise the interest of researchers today (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford and Ehrman, 1995; Green and Oxford, 1995). Another area that emerged early on, and continues to be addressed, was research on training second language learners to use learning strategies.

Investigation of the variables that influence strategy choice was one of the key themes in second language learning strategy research in the late eighties and early nineties (Ehrman, 1989; Ehrman and Oxford, 1988; Nyikos and Oxford, 1989; Nyak, Hansen, Krueyer and McLaughlin, 1990). The relationship between learners' metacognitive knowledge and beliefs and their language learning strategies emerged as an area of interest towards the end of the eighties and was explored by Wenden (1986; 1988), in particular. It has re-emerged as an area of research interest in recent times, especially in studies exploring issues related to the development of learner autonomy (Benson and Lor, 1999; Cotterall, 1999; White, 1999; Yang, 1999).

This brief overview of research on second language learning strategies has outlined key themes pursued within the area over the last twenty five years. As O'Malley (1990: 220) has noted, the research falls into three broad categories:

“Studies to define and classify strategies, studies to describe strategies in greater detail and the types of tasks with which strategies are effective, and studies to validate the influence of strategic processing on learning.”

Because of the particular focus of this study, the detailed discussion of the research literature that is to follow will concentrate on relevant studies from the first two of O'Malley's categories. It will begin by examining how second language learning strategies are defined. Following this, it will report on attempts to develop a theoretical framework which relates learning strategies to second language acquisition. It will then present two taxonomies of language learning strategies which have been developed. Finally, it will review the findings of studies which have investigated the use of learning strategies by children, adolescents and adults in varying contexts, and those which examined factors which affect strategy use, with particular reference to beliefs.

Definitions And Theoretical Issues

General learning strategies have been described as "a sequence of procedures for accomplishing learning" (Schmeck, 1988: 5) and, "combinations of cognitive (thinking) skills implemented when a situation is perceived as one demanding learning" (Schmeck, 1988: 17). There is no single agreed definition of language learning strategies. Ellis (1994), who noted that definitions of these strategies have tended to be *ad hoc* and atheoretical, listed the following five definitions taken from the literature:

"In our view strategy is best reserved for general tendencies or overall characteristics of the approach employed by the language learner, leaving techniques as the term to refer to particular forms of observable learning behaviour" (Stern, 1983).

"Learning strategies are the behaviours and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learner's encoding process" (Weinstein and Mayer, 1986).

"Learning strategies are techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning, recall of both linguistic and content areas of information" (Chamot, 1987).

"Learning strategies are strategies which contribute the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affect learning directly" (Rubin, 1987).

"Language learning strategies are behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable" (Oxford, 1989).
(Ellis, 1994: 531)

Ellis (1994) pointed to potential problems with all of these definitions. The problems can be summarised as:

- lack of clarity as to whether learning strategies are to be perceived as behavioural (and therefore observable) or mental;
- lack of clarity as to which particular behaviours are to count as learning strategies;
- uncertainty as to whether learning strategies are to be seen as conscious and intentional or subconscious;
- concerns about whether learning strategies have an effect on interlanguage development and whether this effect is direct or indirect; and,
- different views about what motivates the use of learning strategies.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990), drawing on cognitive information processing theory, proposed a cognitive-theoretical framework for describing both second language acquisition and learning strategies. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), cognitive information processing theory based on the work of Anderson (as cited in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990) distinguishes between *declarative knowledge*, or what we know *about*, which is seen as 'static' information in the memory, and *procedural knowledge*, what we know *how to do* or 'dynamic' information in the memory. This theory posits that skill learning involves three stages: (i) the cognitive or conscious stage, which results in declarative knowledge; (ii) the associative stage during which elements of the skill are consolidated and strengthened; and (iii) the automatic stage where the skill is performed more or less autonomously or subconsciously.

Within this theoretical construct, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) seem to support the view that language learning strategies must initially be conscious or declarative forms of knowledge that are gradually proceduralised to the point where the learner uses them unconsciously. However, Ellis (1994) draws attention to the fact that learning strategies can be studied only in their conscious or declarative form and therefore for the purposes of research can be defined as "production sets that exist as declarative knowledge and are used to solve some learning problem" (Ellis, 1994: 533).

Following Tarone (1981), O'Malley and Chamot (1990) distinguished between learning, communication and production strategies. They proposed that motivation for use as the key way of distinguishing between the learning and communication strategies. Thus, the motivation for use of communication strategies is to communicate meaning to a listener, whereas the motivation for use of learning strategies is to learn the target language. Using motivation as the distinguishing criterion is not unproblematic, for the reasons enumerated by Tarone (1981: 290):

“(1) we have no way of measuring that motivation; (2) it may be that one’s motivation is both to learn and to communicate; and, (3) one may unconsciously acquire language even if one is using a strategy solely to communicate a meaning. If a structure works in a particular situation to communicate meaning, does it later become a part of the linguistic systems?”

Tarone (1981: 290) goes on to say:

“In theory, while learning strategies and communication strategies may be indistinguishable *in some cases* (italics added) in our observation of linguistic behaviour, there appears to be a difference between them as well as clearly observable bits of behaviour which reflect that difference.”

It is interesting to speculate on the cases in which learning and communication strategies tend to conflate and to consider whether this conflation occurs in particular contexts but not others. For example, is it more likely to occur in the classroom context than in more naturalistic situations and does it occur because acts of communication in the classroom are often driven by a need to learn some aspect of language rather than a communicative need?

Green and Oxford (1995: 262) defined language learning strategies pragmatically as “specific actions or techniques that students use, often intentionally, to improve their progress in developing L2 skills.” Oxford (1990) does not accept a strict demarcation between learning, production and communication strategies, arguing that it is often difficult to separate these three strategies and that they all result in learning. In the following definition she proposed a comprehensive view of learning strategies which encompassed communication and production strategies:

“All appropriate language learning strategies are oriented toward the broad goal of communicative competence. Development of communicative competence requires realistic interaction among learners using meaningful, contextualised language. Learning strategies help learners participate actively in such authentic

communication. Such strategies operated in both general and specific ways to encourage the development of communicative competence” Oxford (1990: 8).

Given the absence of a universally accepted theoretical framework that explains the nature and operation of language learning strategies and the consequent debate about how to define them and their relationship to production and communication strategies, this study will not choose one or other of the available definitions. Rather, following Ellis (1994), language learning strategies will be ‘defined’ in terms of their main characteristics. These characteristics are listed in Table 2.4 below.

Table 2.4: Characteristics of Language Learning Strategies (Ellis 1994: 532-533)

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Strategies refer to both general approaches and specific actions or techniques used to learn an L2.2. Strategies are problem-orientated - the learner deploys a strategy to overcome some particular learning problem.3. Learners are generally aware of the strategies they use and can identify what they consist of if they are asked to pay attention to what they are doing and thinking.4. Strategies involve linguistic behaviour (such as requesting the name of an object) and non-linguistic (such as pointing at an object so as to be told its name).5. Linguistic strategies can be performed in L1 and L2.6. Some strategies are behavioural while others are mental. Thus some strategies are directly observable, while others are not.7. In the main, strategies contribute indirectly to learning by providing learners with data about the L2, which they can then process. However, some strategies may also contribute directly (for example, memorisation strategies directed at specific lexical items or grammatical rules).8. Strategy use varies considerably as a result of both the kind of task the learner is engaged in and individual learner preferences. |
|--|

Classification Systems For Learning Strategies

Early research into language learning strategies demonstrated that students used these strategies when learning and proposed schemes to describe and classify them. Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (1978) developed a taxonomy based on five primary classifications: active task approach; realisation of language as a system; realisation of language as a means of communication and interaction; management of affective demands; and, monitoring performance. The taxonomy developed by Rubin (1981) consisted of two primary classifications: strategies that directly affect learning and processes that contribute indirectly to learning.

A number of other taxonomies for language learning strategies were developed following the research referred to above. The two most influential were produced by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990). The taxonomy produced by O'Malley and Chamot, based on an information-processing theoretical model, classifies strategies into three main groups: *metacognitive*, *cognitive* and *social/ affective* strategies.

Metacognitive strategies involve

“thinking about the learning process, planning for learning and monitoring comprehension or production while it is taking place, and self-evaluation after the learning activity has been completed” (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990: 8)."

Cognitive strategies are more directly related to individual learning tasks and involve the direct manipulation and transformation of learning material. *Social/affective* strategies have to do with cooperative learning and interacting with peers to achieve common goals.

A very comprehensive system of learning strategies has also been developed by Oxford (1990). Oxford's system contains two classes of strategies, *direct* and *indirect*. Each class of strategy is further divided into three groups and each group has a set of specific strategies associated with it. This system is reproduced in full in Table 2.5 below.

Table 2.5: Oxford's (1990) Strategy System

| DIRECT STRATEGIES | | INDIRECT STRATEGIES | |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|
| i. <i>Memory strategies</i> | a. Creating mental linkages b. Applying images and sounds c. Reviewing well d. Employing action | i. <i>Metacognitive strategies</i> | a. Centering your learning b. Arranging and planning your learning c. Evaluating your learning |
| ii. <i>Cognitive strategies</i> | a. Practising b. Receiving and sending messages c. Analyzing and reasoning d. Creating structure for input and output | ii. <i>Affective strategies</i> | a. Lowering your anxiety b. Encouraging yourself c. Taking your emotional temperature |
| iii. <i>Compensatory strategies</i> | a. Guessing intelligently b. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing | iii. <i>Social strategies</i> | a. Asking questions b. Cooperating with others c. Empathizing with others |

Oxford's *direct* strategies are for "dealing with new language and working with the language itself in a variety of tasks and situations" (Oxford 1990: 14). They consist of *memory*, *cognitive* and *compensation* strategies. *Indirect* strategies are for the general management of learning and are made up of *metacognitive* strategies for coordinating the learning process, *affective* strategies for regulating emotions, and *social* strategies for learning with others.

The system developed by Oxford (1990) includes elements that are common to the taxonomies of both Rubin (1981) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and can be mapped on to the latter taxonomy in most regards. Oxford's system reflects the different view held by her about the lack of clear distinction between learning and communication strategies. Ellis (1994: 359) judged Oxford's "organisation of specific strategies in a hierarchy of levels and the breadth of the taxonomy impressive", but was critical of its failure to distinguish clearly between strategies for learning L2 and those for using it. Ellis also questioned the classification of 'compensation strategies' as *direct* learning strategies, as most others schemes represented them as a separate type of strategy.

The taxonomy developed by O'Malley and Chamot and that developed by Oxford have both been used widely to investigate language learning strategies in greater detail. This fact is reflected in the studies reviewed below, which present findings on the range and frequency of strategy use for groups of learners most relevant to this research.

Range And Frequency Of Strategy Use

Adolescent and adult learners of either ESL/EFL or foreign languages have been the principal source of data for a great deal of language learning strategy research. Skehan (1989) points to the 1976 study of pre-school ESL learners carried out by Wong-Fillimore as a notable exception. Other more recent studies of younger learners include the investigation of elementary foreign language immersion students from kindergarten to grade six conducted by Chamot (1995) and the work of Purdie and Oliver (1999) involving children between eight and twelve years of age. As the subjects of this study

are adult learners, the following discussion will concentrate primarily on the research conducted with adolescents or adults.

The broad picture that has emerged from studies of the language learning strategies used by adolescents or adults reveals that learners at all levels report using strategies from the three main groups identified by O'Malley (1990), namely, *metacognitive*, *cognitive* and *social/affective* strategies. The studies show, however, that the frequency of use for each of the three strategy groups varies between different learners, depending on their level of study, age, gender and type of course they were studying. This picture, and the differences revealed by more detailed levels of analysis, are discussed with reference to a number of studies. Those by O'Malley, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, Kupper (1985) and White (1995), that used the classificatory system devised by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), are considered first. Studies by Nyikos and Oxford (1993), Oxford and Ehrman (1995) and Green and Oxford (1995), that used Oxford's (1990) classificatory system, are then examined.

The 70 high school ESL students investigated by O'Malley *et al* (1985) described 638 instances in which they used learning strategies. Fifty three percent (53%) of these were cognitive strategies, 30% were metacognitive strategies and 17% social/affective strategies. As beginning and intermediate students were involved, this study provided information about differences and similarities of strategy use within the three strategy groups. Both beginning and intermediate students used cognitive strategies such as repetition, note taking and imagery. However, intermediate students made less use of translation and imagery than did the beginning students and more use of contextualisation and resourcing. The metacognitive strategies most frequently used were those associated with self-management and advanced preparation. Intermediate students showed a somewhat higher level of usage of both of these strategies. A metacognitive strategy used more frequently by beginning students was that of selective attention. Although strategy combinations were reported for one fifth of all strategies recorded, metacognitive strategies were not often reported in combination with cognitive strategies. Social/affective strategies most frequently used by both beginning and intermediate

students were cooperation and questions for clarification. There was little difference in the level of usage of these strategies by the two groups of students.

O'Malley *et al* (1985) also examined strategy use according to language activity. They found that strategies were most frequently mentioned in relation to discrete language activities such as vocabulary learning and pronunciation. These researchers wondered if the lower use of more complex and integrative strategies such as listening for inference and oral presentation reflected the fact that fewer opportunities for using these strategies were provided in the classroom context. Use of appropriate strategies is also an issue for foreign language students, as indicated by Nyikos and Oxford (1993), who suggest that lack of strategy-related awareness on the part of students may contribute to this use of a restricted set of strategies.

In contrast to the findings of O'Malley *et al* (1985), the comparative small-scale study of undergraduate learners of French and Japanese carried out by White (1995) showed that the most frequently reported category of strategy use for both target languages was metacognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies were the next most highly reported, with a frequency not a great deal lower than metacognitive strategies. Affective strategies, such as self-talk, and social strategies, such as working cooperatively with peers to solve a problem, were the least frequently reported for both language groups. However, affective strategies were reported slightly more frequently than social strategies.

This study found that there were only relatively minor differences in the kind of metacognitive, social and affective strategies used by learners of the two different languages. The cognitive strategies used to interact with the target language (TL) materials differed, however, according to language group. Clear differences between the two groups emerged in relation to the use of note-taking, elaboration, repetition and translation.

Although note taking was used by learners of both languages, the purposes for which they used it differed. For the students of Japanese, note taking consisted predominantly of writing out or repeatedly copying material in the TL in order to

memorise it. In contrast, the use of note taking by the students of French involved writing down key ideas or points in order to more meaningfully access material being dealt with in class. Elaboration (association between new and old information and between different parts of the learning materials) was used frequently by the students of French, but not at all by those studying Japanese. The Japanese learners, however, relied much more heavily on repetition and translation than did their French counterparts. White's conclusion is that only some of these difference in use of cognitive strategies can be attributed to the difference between the two languages (in particular, the script). Some could be attributed to the nature of the course materials, as the Japanese materials reflected a mixture of grammar-translation, audio-lingual and structural approaches, whereas the French materials were more communicative in approach.

Two of the three studies that used the classification system developed by Oxford (1990) investigated the strategy use of adult foreign language learners (Nyikos and Oxford, 1993; Oxford and Ehrman, 1995), while the other involved adult learners of English in Puerto Rico, characterised by the researchers as a hybrid ESL/EFL environment (Green and Oxford, 1995). All three were large scale studies involving 1200, 520 and 374 learners respectively. All three also used the 121 item, Likert scale self-report survey, the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL), the results of which were analysed using a range of statistical techniques, including factor analysis. The studies by Oxford and Ehrman (1995) and Green and Oxford (1995) also utilised a number of other instruments to collect data. The research methodology adopted by these studies contrasts with that used by O'Malley *et al* (1985) and White (1995). O'Malley *et al* (1985) collected data using classroom observation and interviews, and White employed an adaptation of a verbal report procedure known as the 'yoked subject' technique¹.

¹ White (1995:173) described her use of the procedure in the following way: "Subjects were presented with a representative section of TL course materials and asked to imagine they were talking to a student who was planning to enrol in the course the following year. The prospective student wanted to know how those already in the course worked through the materials and how they went about learning the language when studying on their own."

Nyikos and Oxford's (1993) study included undergraduates learning the following foreign languages: French (400); Spanish (306); German (300); Russian (23) and, Italian (22). Five factors governing strategy use were identified by the study: (1) formal, rule-related processing strategies; (2) functional practice (authentic language use) strategies; (3) resourceful, independent strategies; (4) standard academic strategies; and, (5) conversational input elicitation strategies.

There is a clear link between the three main classification groups used by O'Malley *et al* (1985) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990), and the factors identified by Nyikos and Oxford (1993). The strategies grouped under factor one are essentially cognitive strategies aimed at comprehension and control over linguistic information, while those grouped under factor three and many under four are clearly metacognitive strategies. Factors two and five share social and communicative characteristics, with those associated with factor two emphasising out-of-class opportunities for language use through social interaction.

The pattern of strategy use that emerged from Nyikos' and Oxford's (1993) study is similar, but not identical, to that reported by O'Malley *et al* (1985). The foreign language students in the Nyikos and Oxford (1993) study revealed a marked preference for use of cognitive strategies (factor one), followed by strategies from factor four (standard academic strategies). Few strategies that promoted social interaction and communication (factor two) were utilised and there was a very low use of metacognitive strategies (factor three). In addition, the respondents displayed negative attitudes toward particular types of strategies. Those that seemed to provoke the most intense reaction included relatively simple but effective memory techniques such as colour coding, drawing pictures of new words to encode them visually, acting out words, and towards communicatively oriented strategies such as playing foreign language games and singing songs.

As the researchers pointed out, this strong favouring of cognitive over other strategies by these students is explicable in terms of the emphasis placed on abstract

thinking in academic settings and the pressure to obtain good grades. Nyikos and Oxford (1993) also speculated about the possible influence of two negative learner beliefs on the learners' strategy use. These beliefs can be summarised as follows: it wasn't worth making the kind of significant personal investment in learning required by strategies from factors two and three, in particular, when they were not rewarded by evaluation and grading procedures; and, some of these strategies were perceived as gimmicky and therefore not suitable for students who took themselves seriously. These speculations did not appear to entertain the possibility that strategies viewed as 'gimmicky' were just not appropriate for adult learners, however potentially effective!

Thirty four foreign languages were represented in the study carried out by Oxford and Ehrman (1995). Participants were students at the Foreign Services Institute (FSI). The study found that the most frequently used strategies were compensation strategies (guessing, paraphrasing), followed by social strategies, then cognitive strategies. However, students who were viewed as effective and having a high aptitude tended to use cognitive strategies. Although the study reported moderate overall use of strategies by the group as a whole, the researchers noted that the level of use by these learners was higher than that found among other groups of foreign language students in schools, universities and other settings. They suggested that this may have been due the fact that these learners were relatively experienced in learning languages and that they were undertaking training in an intensive context which shared some of the characteristics of more naturalistic learning contexts.

The study of Puerto Rican ESL/EFL students by Green and Oxford (1995) set out to discover the patterns of strategy use at three different levels of proficiency. It sought, in particular, to identify those strategies used equally frequently or infrequently across proficiency levels. The sample included students in Pre-basic, Basic and Intermediate courses. The study discovered that metacognitive strategies were those most frequently used by all three groups. It also found that the more proficient and more successful learners demonstrated a greater level of strategy use than other learners. Thus, Intermediate students reported a higher level of use of metacognitive,

compensation and social strategies than Pre-basic students, but a similar level to Basic students. A variation to this pattern emerged with cognitive strategies, with Intermediate students reporting greater use of these strategies than Basic students and Basic reporting greater use than Pre-basic students.

An important finding by Green and Oxford (1995) related to the one third of the individual strategies on the SILL that were used more frequently by successful students. These included, for the most part, active use of the target language with a consistent emphasis on practice in naturalistic situations. Strong evidence of the key role of strategies that involved active use of the target language was also provided by factor analysis. Two factors, one encompassing strategies for active, naturalistic use of English and the other encompassing cognitive and social strategies for conversation practice emerged as important in explaining differences between groups of students. The first factor, in particular, accounted for 21% of the total variance in the study. The researchers considered that these findings suggested a relationship between strategy use and proficiency that could be characterised by “an ascending spiral in which active use strategies help students attain higher proficiency, which in turn makes it more likely that students will select these active use strategies” (Green and Oxford, 1995: 288). Yang (1999) appeared to be implying a similar relationship when she suggested a cyclical relationship between learner’s beliefs, motivation and strategy use.

The identification of what Green and Oxford (1995) termed ‘bedrock’ strategies was another important outcome of this study. ‘Bedrock’ strategies were strategies used frequently and moderately frequently by both successful and unsuccessful learners. Green and Oxford (1995) argued that ‘bedrock’ strategies should not be viewed as unproductive or as not making a difference to learning. However, these strategies are not sufficient in themselves for the achievement of higher levels of proficiency. Successful learners, they suggested, reached higher levels of proficiency because they employed ‘active use’ strategies more frequently than the less successful learners. The successful learners also utilised the ‘active use’ strategies in combination with the ‘bedrock’ strategies more often than did the other students.

Gender, Tasks And Beliefs

Oxford (1989) identified a wide range of factors that influenced language strategy choice. This section will consider the impact of gender, task and beliefs on strategy use. Differences in strategy use between females and males have now been documented in a number of studies. Ehrman and Oxford (1988), in a study of the effects of sex differences, career choice, and psychological type on adult language learning strategies found that women in their study reported using a greater number of strategies than men. The subjects of this exploratory study were 79 Foreign Services Institute (FSI) personnel - students, instructors and professional language trainers in about equal numbers. A later large scale study of FSI students (Oxford and Ehrman, 1995) found only a few significant differences in strategy use according to gender. This study found that females used more compensation strategies than males and that they scored more highly on overall strategy use. The researchers noted that although the pattern of gender differences was similar to other studies, the difference between females and males was not as strong. They attributed this result to the fact that the profile of the females in this group was atypical in terms of the general USA female population.

A statistically significant relationship between gender and strategy use was discovered by Green and Oxford (1995). Females in their study recorded a higher overall level of strategy use than males. They also used strategies associated with social and affective factors to a greater extent than males. The affective strategies appeared to play an important role in supporting social strategies such as asking for help, especially in conversational situations. Females also used sensory memory type strategies (eg. reviewing, planning, skimming, making summaries) and other strategies that support sensory memory to a greater extent than males.

The importance of social/affective strategies for female learners was also reported by Bacon and Finnemann (1992). These researchers found that women in their study used a significantly greater number of Global/Synthetic or intuitive strategies and fewer Decoding/Analytic strategies than men. Their findings also suggested that women's

social behaviour in relation to language learning differed from men's, and that women were more active in seeking oral input.

The range and frequency of learning strategies used with different tasks has been investigated by a number of studies, with listening comprehension being singled for some attention (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Vogely, 1995). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) reported on a study in which they used a think-aloud procedure to investigate ESL students' listening comprehension strategies. They used this technique in order to capture the mental processing that occurs in the short-term memory and that is otherwise lost in retrospection. Their findings indicated that the strategies used varied depending on the phase of the listening comprehension process. In the perceptual processing phase, students used selective attention and self-monitoring strategies. In the parsing phase, however, they used grouping strategies which enabled them to listen for large chunks and strategies which helped them to draw inferences from the context. Strategies involving elaboration from world knowledge, personal experiences or self-questioning were used in the utilisation phase (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990).

In a longitudinal study of students of Russian and Spanish, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) looked at strategy use across tasks that focused on vocabulary, listening, cloze and writing. Their findings clearly indicated that specific tasks elicited particular types of strategies. No clear pattern of shift in strategy use over a school year emerged from the study and changes in use of strategies appeared to be linked to the type of task assigned by teachers.

Vogely (1995) investigated the strategies university students of Spanish perceived they used while performing an authentic listening comprehension task and the relationship between their strategy use and listening ability. She also examined students' beliefs about what made a good listener. The study found a discrepancy between student's beliefs about what constituted a good listener and the strategies they used. For example, although most students recognised what were effective listening strategies, a significant number did not report using them. This applied to both top-down strategies such as listening for gist and using background knowledge, and bottom-up strategies

such as understanding the meaning of each word and focussing on the detail of text. The study also found that self-confidence was an important factor in success in listening comprehension and that the weaker of the two groups in her study expressed the greater lack of confidence in this area.

Although it has often been acknowledged that learner beliefs are important factors in choice and use of learning strategies, there has been little research that has explored this topic directly and in depth. Wenden (1988), White (1999) and Cotterall (1999) considered this issue as part of their exploration of learner beliefs and their contribution was examined in the final section of the first part of this chapter. The study conducted by Yang (1999), which represents the most detailed investigation of this topic, was discussed in detail in the first part of this chapter. This study provided considerable empirical evidence that beliefs are important determinants of learning behaviour. The review of the literature in the two areas has also suggested some broad points of connection between beliefs and strategy use. These are discussed in the following section, together with an embryonic conceptual framework for describing the proposed relationship.

Beliefs And Strategy Use: Points Of Intersection

Three of the studies of learner beliefs discussed in the first part of this chapter proposed categories of beliefs that seemed to correspond to orientations discussed in literature on second language learning pedagogy as 'focus on meaning' and 'focus on form'. Current thinking about these orientations (Doughty and Williams, 1998) perceives them as complementary, both in terms of their contribution to acquisition and how they should be addressed through pedagogy. Wenden (1988) pointed to categories of belief related to 'use of the language' and 'learn about the language'. Sakui and Gaies (1999) pointed to beliefs related to 'traditional orientation' and 'communicative orientation'. Finally, Benson and Lor (1999) presented their 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' conceptions of learning. Considered together with the 'bedrock' and 'active use' strategies identified by Green and Oxford (1995), these categories of belief

suggest a conceptual framework for describing points of intersection between learning strategies and learner beliefs. This framework, which consists of intersecting axes formed from continua representing beliefs and learning strategies, is shown in Figure 2.1 below.

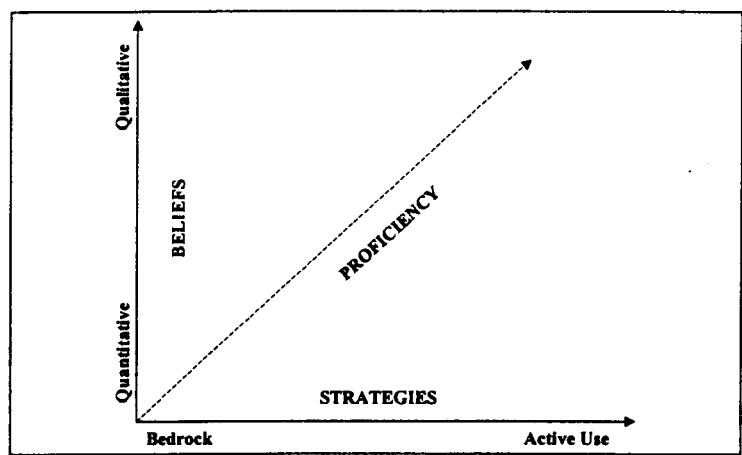


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework: Intersection of Beliefs and Strategies.

The framework consists of a vertical axis which represents the continuum from quantitative to qualitative beliefs or conceptions of learning and a horizontal axis which shows the continuum from ‘bedrock’ to ‘active use’ strategies. The terms used in the vertical axis are borrowed from Benson and Lor (1999) and are meant to encompass similar concepts proposed by Wenden (1988) and Sakui and Gaies (1999). Those used in the horizontal axis are taken from (Green and Oxford, 1995). It is hypothesised that successful learning or movement towards proficiency, involves the intersection of elements of beliefs and strategies. The vector shows an ‘ideal’ trajectory for this learning. However, it is recognised that individual learners will take quite individual and probably non-linear pathways in their learning. The vector is represented by a broken rather than solid line to acknowledge this.

Theoretical Framework

A social interactionist perspective of second language learning research provides the broad theoretical framework for this study. This perspective constructs learners as

being strategic ie. actively contributing to their own learning as well as being interpretative and accommodating and discursive (Breen, 1996). This construct of the learner as a strategic entity is a relatively recent one and has been part of an expanded focus that goes beyond what the learner learns or acquires to an examination of the process by which learning occurs (Oxford, 1990). It encompasses investigation of the relationship between strategies used by the learner and a range of other variables, including their beliefs.

Figure 2.2 illustrates the hypothesised relationship between a learner’s choice of learning strategies, and the factors which influence this choice, with particular reference to beliefs. The framework proposes that actual learning strategies arise in the intersection between the two spheres that constitute the formal or classroom language learning process: that of *learner* or sphere internal to the learner and that of *learning context* or sphere external to the learner. A cyclical relationship between the elements in each sphere is proposed.

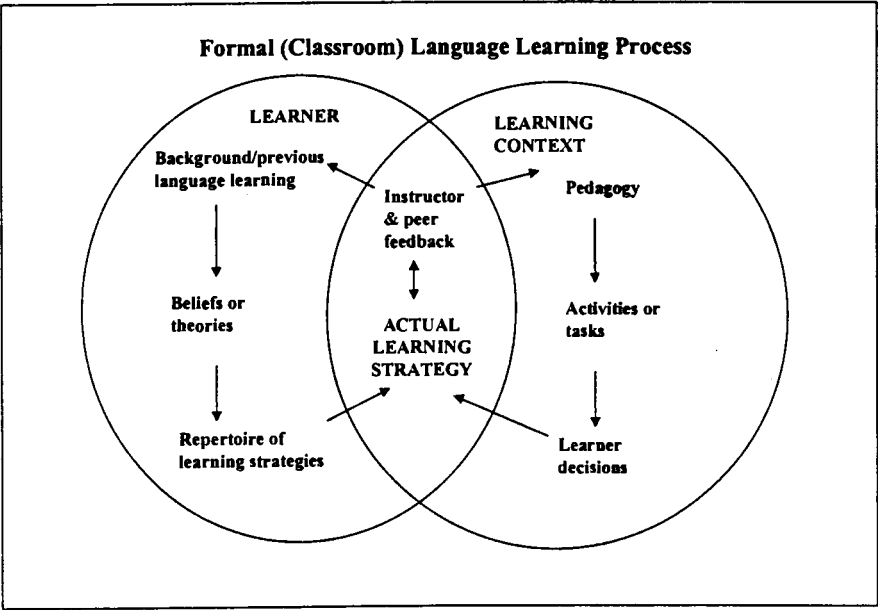


Figure 2.2: Conceptualisation of the Relationship Between Learners’ Beliefs and Strategy Choices

A brief illustration may clarify the nature of the relationships proposed by this framework. The learner enters into the language learning process with a suite of beliefs or theories of about learning, in general, and language learning in particular. These *beliefs or theories* are derived from the learner's individual characteristics, background and experiences, including his/her experiences as a language learner (referred to by the term *background/previous language learning experience* in the diagram in Figure 2.2). The learner also enters the language learning process with a repertoire of learning strategies derived from his/her previous language learning experiences. These are described as the learner's *repertoire of learning strategies* in Figure 2.2.

The other sphere, the *learning context*, co-exists and intersects with the *learner* sphere. *Pedagogy, activities or tasks* and *learner decisions* are the key elements of the learning context. *Pedagogy* refers to the values and practices through which the instructor and the learners jointly construct the learning process. The term encompasses the instructor's approach to second language learning and teaching, the instructional materials used, the classroom organisation and the nature of the relationship between the instructor and the learners. It also reflects the values and practices of the learning institution and the wider community. Learning *activities or tasks* produced by the instructor from within this context lead to *learner decisions*, which are manifested as *actual learning strategies*. *Instructor and peer feedback* may influence both the actual learning strategies as well as affect the relationship between elements within each of the spheres.

Methodological Issues

The challenge of research into learner beliefs and language learning strategies lies in the fact that beliefs are internal mental processes and states, and that strategies share these same characteristics, to a large degree. Therefore, data gathered about these phenomena provide indirect rather than direct evidence of the processes and states being investigated. This makes the nature of the data and how they are gathered, analysed and interpreted central concerns in the research process (Freeman, 1996).

Not surprisingly, then, many of the methodological issues faced by research into learner beliefs are shared by learning strategy research. Similar methodological techniques are used and there appears to be discussion in both areas about the relative strengths and weaknesses of current approaches, whether qualitative or quantitative in orientation. Wenden's (1986) caveats about interview data in relation to learner beliefs are equally valid for research on learning strategies that employ similar techniques. Block's (1998) exploration of the reliability of responses to questionnaire items is of relevance to this area.

While there is debate about the most appropriate ways of collecting and analysing data in the area of learning strategies, there has also been a degree of experimentation. Oxford and Crookall (1989) described a range of methods used to collect data in language learning strategy research: lists, interviews, think-aloud procedures, note taking, diaries, surveys and training studies. They pointed to the particular strengths of each of these techniques and advised on the use of multiple methods which drew on both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gathering and validating data.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) also reviewed a range of procedures for collecting data on learning strategies and endorsed approaches utilising multiple procedures. They pointed out that they have used multiple data collection techniques which have been selected for consistency with the purpose of particular studies. In their work, studies which involved broad surveys of the types of strategies used by students also employed both small group interviews and questionnaires. On the other hand, studies investigating ways in which strategies are used with individual tasks used think-aloud procedures together with individual interviews and group-administered questionnaires. O'Malley and Chamot also drew attention to the fact that different data collection procedures can lead to different conclusions about the character and use of learning strategies, and emphasised the need to both acknowledge and anticipate such differences.

The reliance of the present study on the use of self-report data warrants an examination of the issues related to the use of such data. Cohen (1988) reviewed the advantages and shortcomings of self-reports and concluded that they have considerable

potential value in the study of language learning, especially given the relative difficulty of accessing learning strategies and beliefs for investigation. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) identified two areas for concern: (1) the extent to which self-reports truthfully represent underlying mental processes; and, (2) the potential changes in mental processes resulting from the questions asked during data collection. They reviewed the criticism of self-reports to detect strategic modes of processing on second language tasks by Seliger (as cited in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990), in particular, and concluded that these criticisms were, on the whole, unjustified.

Summary

Beliefs are an important component of human behaviour. Research over the last twenty years has demonstrated that individual language learners come to their language learning experience with a range of beliefs that are likely to have significant implications for their language learning. A number of recent studies (Benson and Lor, 1999; Sakui and Gaies, 1999; Yang, 1999) has suggested that a significant proportion of these beliefs may be related to what Wenden termed 'use the language' and 'learn about the language' - ie. beliefs that correspond to what in second language pedagogy is usually referred to as 'focus on meaning' and 'focus on form'. Some more recent research into learner beliefs has examined the role of beliefs in shaping autonomous learning. Findings from this research have emphasised the importance of concepts of self-efficacy in successful language learning.

Language learning strategy research had its origin some twenty five years ago with studies which sought to identify the 'good' language learner. The focus of this research soon shifted to describing and classifying strategies used by learners in the language learning process, to documenting the relationship between strategies and tasks and to attempting to understand how language learning strategies contribute to the development of proficiency.

The epithet 'research then theory' has often been used to describe the approach taken to work in this area. However, to date, there is no one agreed theoretical model to

explain the role of learning strategies in second language acquisition. The most significant theoretical model for language learning strategies has been provided by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), who based their work on cognitive information processing theory. Their cognitive framework included a taxonomy of learning strategies which classified them as *cognitive*, *metacognitive* and *social/affective*. Oxford (1990) has also produced a comprehensive classification scheme for learning strategies. It differs from that of O'Malley and Chamot (1990) in that it classifies strategies as either 'direct' or 'indirect' and includes compensation strategies among the 'direct' strategies. Whereas O'Malley and Chamot (1990) see a clear distinction between learning and communication strategies, Oxford (1990) does not accept this strict demarcation, arguing that these strategies are often difficult to separate and that they both lead to learning.

Many variables which affect learning strategy use have been investigated: language, age, gender, task, motivation, proficiency, personality type and career choice. While the potential importance of learner beliefs on strategy use has long been recognised, this relationship has not been thoroughly researched. The study by Yang (1999) of the relationship between the beliefs and strategy use of a large group of Taiwanese undergraduate EFL learners found a significant relationship between these two variables, but especially between beliefs about self-efficacy and learning strategy use. This study is one of the few in-depth investigations of the influence of beliefs on strategy use in the second language learning context. A possible framework for this relationship, drawn from research in these two areas, has also been proposed.

Research into learner beliefs and language learning strategies is second order research². Researchers in these two areas have tended to use similar methodological techniques (surveys, questionnaires, interviews, retrospective self-report, think-aloud, yoked subject technique). While these techniques yield rich data, they also raise issues of validity and reliability. Research approaches using these techniques have taken both quantitative and qualitative orientations. The importance of using multiple approaches in

² Second order research refers to research that collects indirect rather direct evidence about the phenomenon it is studying. Investigation of internal mental processes such as learning strategies and learner belief relies heavily on indirect evidence obtained through various kinds of learner self-reports.

studies of both learner beliefs and learning strategies has been stressed by a number of researchers. This study endeavoured to adopt this approach in its methodology, which is described in the next chapter.

Research Questions

This literature review has demonstrated that there has been considerable research activity in the area of learner beliefs and that of learning strategies. However, few studies have investigated the relationship between learner beliefs about language learning and their strategy use. Furthermore, none of the studies reviewed has investigated either the learning strategies or the beliefs of teachers in the role of language learners. Drawing on the research described above, the current study therefore seeks to answer the following questions in relation to this particular group of learners:

1. What beliefs about language learning do the teachers in the Intensive Language Courses hold?
2. What language learning strategies do they use?
3. What influences their choice of strategies?
4. What is the relationship between the teachers' beliefs about language learning and their strategy use?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this study is characterised by features found in a number of recently published studies. The study is qualitative in orientation, but also encompasses some quantitative elements. It employs a range of approaches to data collection in order to obtain multiple perspectives on the issues being investigated and uses interviews to validate the data obtained by means of questionnaires and written self-reports. Lastly, the study was carried out longitudinally and involved data collection in the classroom context.

The chapter begins by describing the participants involved in the study and by providing a snapshot of their language learning and professional experience. It then outlines the salient characteristics of the research design and reviews some of the theoretical issues related to aspects of the design. A description of the research instruments used in the study and documentation of the procedures used for data collection follow. The data analysis undertaken for each aspect of the study is described in detail. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the limitations of the study.

Participants

The subjects of this study were fourteen teachers participating in either an Italian or Japanese Level 1 Intensive Language Course being conducted at a TAFE College during 1997/1998. All the teachers enrolled in Level 1 of the two courses in 1997 (n=24) were invited to join the study. Nineteen volunteered to be involved. However, five of these were not able to participate beyond the initial stages of data collection because they withdrew from the course, transferred to a higher level course or took up a scholarship overseas. They were therefore excluded from the data analysis, leaving a total of fourteen participants.

Eight of these fourteen participants were from the Italian course and six from the Japanese course. Of the eight learners of Italian seven were female and one was male. All six learners of Japanese were female. All participants except one in the Japanese course had studied their target language sometime in the past; the Japanese learner who had not previously studied the language had, however, lived in the country for a period of time.

There was considerable variation among participants in the recency, context and length of previous study of the target language. Recency of study of the target language ranged from four to thirty years. Previous language learning had occurred in various contexts and included extended study at high school and/or university, participation in shorter term courses at TAFE and/or study in the target language country while holidaying and working there. The length of study also varied considerably - from fifteen weeks to more than five years.

Most of the participants spoke and/or had studied one language other than English apart from the one they were learning in the course. Several of them spoke and/or had studied up to three other languages. The language most commonly spoken or studied was French.

Participants' teaching experience ranged from six months to 24 years. The average years of experience of those doing the Italian course was just under fourteen and a half. This was considerably higher than that of their counterparts in the Japanese course, whose average teaching experience was nine years.

There was a degree of contrast between the two language groups in terms of the years levels taught and the areas in which teachers were working. The Italian group was evenly split between primary and secondary teachers. In contrast, all members of the Japanese group taught at primary level. One of this group also taught lower secondary as well as primary classes. Five of the Italian group were already teaching either French or Italian, and three of the Japanese group were teaching Japanese. Of the six participants not teaching a language, three were generalist primary teachers, one was a primary

support teacher, another a primary teacher librarian and yet another a secondary reading resource teacher. Table 3.1 presents a summary of relevant background information about the teachers from the Italian and Japanese ILC courses who participated in this study. Pseudonyms are used when referring to the participants to protect their confidentiality.

Table 3.1: Summary of Participants' Background Information

| Participant | ILC Language | Previous study of ILC language | Other languages studied or spoken | Years teaching | Current teaching area |
|-------------|--------------|---|-----------------------------------|----------------|--|
| Marion | Italian | Italian course, Further Education College, UK; TAFE Italian course, WA | French | 20 | English, Reading Resource Yrs 8-10 |
| Thea | Italian | Beginner course in Italian as part of first degree | French, German | 22 | French, Yrs 8-12 |
| Sofia | Italian | Italian, Years 8-12 at High School | French | 10 | Year 1 |
| Virginia | Italian | Beginner Italian course, Years 11-12 | French | 20 | French, Yrs 8-12 |
| Jessica | Italian | Italian, Years 8-12 at High School | Calabrese dialect | 3 | Italian, K- 7 |
| Martha | Italian | Worked in Italy and did four month language course ; two years study of Italian at university | French | 2.5 | Italian, Years 7-9; ESL, Yrs 8, 11, 12 |
| Joshua | Italian | TAFE Italian course | French | 24 | Primary teacher librarian |
| Amy | Italian | Italian Years 8-10 at High School | Fruilano dialect | 14 | Italian, K- 8 |
| Rebecca | Japanese | | French, German, Indonesian | 7 | Support teacher primary |
| Harriet | Japanese | Some formal study while working in Japan for 18 months; TAFE Japanese course | French, German, Spanish | 15 | School of the Air, K-7: some Japanese |
| Simona | Japanese | 15 week Japanese conversational course | French | 23 | Year 2/3 teacher |
| Emma | Japanese | Japanese, Years 8-12 at High School | - | 7 | Year 2 teacher |
| Megan | Japanese | Two years study of Japanese at High School and two years at university. | - | 6 months | Year 3 primary, Japanese Years 6-9 |
| Carmen | Japanese | Japanese at university level | Italian | 1.5 | Japanese Years 3-7 |

Research Design

This study was designed to provide a rich account of the beliefs about language learning and the learning strategies of the fourteen teachers who participated in this study. It also aimed to discover the relationship between the learners' beliefs and their choice of language learning strategies.

As reported in the literature review, research into learner strategies and learner beliefs, like research into teacher thinking, depends on data that are "by nature, indirect evidence of the internal mental processes and states that the researchers are seeking to document" (Freeman, 1996: 366). Because of this, much of the data collection in both areas has relied heavily on self-reports of one kind or another. Previous research studies have used a variety of techniques to collect this data. These have included questionnaires and surveys, interviews, think-aloud procedures, written self-reports, diaries and note taking. Although a great deal of the research into both learner strategies and beliefs about language learning has been qualitative, there is also a significant body of work that is quantitative in orientation. Much of the work that is more quantitative has used questionnaire instruments developed by Horwitz (1988a) and Oxford (1990).

There has been ongoing discussion in the literature about the validity and reliability of data collected by means of techniques relying on self-reports. Nevertheless, the use of self-reports and interviews is widely accepted in classroom-based research into second language learning and in the investigation of beliefs (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Wenden, 1986). Despite caveats, self-reports remain a key means of tapping into learners' mental processes and are regarded as yielding valuable data (Cohen, 1988; Wenden, 1986). There seems to be consensus in one issue - the need to adopt multiple approaches to data collection. Oxford and Crookall (1989) in their review of language learning strategies research recommended the use of multiple methods (both qualitative and quantitative) for gathering and validating data in that area. O'Malley & Chamot (1990) expressed similar sentiments. The value of combining multiple approaches has been demonstrated in more recent studies into beliefs (Cotterall, 1999; Sakui & Gaies,

1999; Yang, 1999). Block (1995) highlighted the potential pitfalls of using questionnaire data as the only source of information about learner beliefs and opinions. Sakui & Gaies (1999) used interviews validating questionnaire data and found them particularly useful both for this purpose and for exploring individual interpretations of forced choice type items in questionnaires.

The study by Benson & Lor (1999) demonstrated some of the benefits of exploring different approaches to investigating beliefs. Freeman (1996), discussing an appropriate methodology for investigating the separate but related area of research into teacher learning and thinking, made an observation that has resonance of learner strategies and beliefs:

“When research enters the domain of meaning, hermeneutic analysis and interpretation... There is a need to view validity in such research as a judgement that links the participants, the researchers and the wider community that uses the research.” (in Freeman and Richards, 1996: 373)

The research design developed for the present study involved gathering data by a number of processes over a seven month period. The orientation of the research was predominantly qualitative. Written learner self-reports, semi-structured interviews and classroom observation by the researcher were the principal data collection processes used. Quantitative data were collected by means of a written questionnaire. The gathering of data through these different processes ensured that a significant degree of triangulation could be achieved. In particular, the data from the interviews conducted with participants were used to validate data collected by means of the questionnaires and the written self-reports. They were also used to explore issues related to participants views of and beliefs about their language learning, their strategies use and the relationships between these two areas.

Research Instruments

Two written questionnaires were used as part of the data collection process: a background questionnaire devised by the researcher which sought information about the participants' background and language learning and teaching experience; and, an adapted version of Horwitz' (1988a) *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI).

Both questionnaires were produced in two versions, one for the learners of Italian and one for the learners of Japanese (see Appendices 1 and 2 for the background questionnaires and Appendices 3 and 4 for the BALLI).

As detailed in the literature review, the BALLI assesses beliefs in five major areas: (1) difficulty of language learning; (2) foreign language aptitude; (3) the nature of language learning; (4) learning and communication strategies; and (5) motivation and expectations. In a recent article, Horwitz (1999) has pointed out that since its publication, the BALLI has been used in thirteen published studies and doctoral dissertations. It has been used to collect data about beliefs in EFL/ ESL and foreign language contexts and with a variety of student populations. The studies reviewed by Horwitz (1999) have predominantly dealt with adult language learners, especially those undertaking undergraduate foreign language or EFL/ESL courses (Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Yang, 1999). However, Kern (1995) included a small number of instructors in his study and Fox (1993) used it with small groups of language teaching assistants working in a university context.

Several adaptations were made to the BALLI for the purpose of this study. These adaptations were made to reflect the particular language participants were studying and their professional experience. In order to take into account the latter, two versions of the BALLI were prepared, one for the learners of Italian and one for the learners of Japanese. In these versions, the references to “English” in individual items were replaced with ‘Italian’ or with ‘Japanese’, as appropriate. A number of other adaptations were made, which were incorporated into both versions. They are listed below.

1. The term ‘foreign languages’ was replaced with ‘languages other than English’ , which is more appropriate to the Australian context.
2. The term ‘people in my country’ was replaced with ‘Australians’.
3. An additional six items were added to take into account the subjects’ background as teachers. Items number 7, 23, 30, 31, 33 and 37 are those that were added.

4. 'It is necessary to know about the foreign language culture in order to speak the foreign language' was changed to 'It is necessary to know about Italian/Japanese culture in order to speak Italian/Japanese well'. This change was made to reflect the fact that the role of teacher requires a high level of proficiency.

Both the background questionnaire and the adapted BALLI were trialed with intermediate Italian and Japanese ILC classes. The wording of several of the questions in the bio-data questionnaire was amended to ensure greater clarity before being used with the participants in this study. No changes were made to the content of the BALLI, but minor adjustments were made to the layout to facilitate its use.

A pro-forma devised by the researcher and adapted from self-report pro-formas developed by Breen (1997) and Gimenez (1995) was used to collect the self-report data (see Appendix 5). The pro-forma asked participants to do three things: (1) recall and report the main learning events or activities on which they perceived in each lesson focused; (2) for each learning event or activity listed, record the strategy or strategies they used to help themselves learn; (3) explain why they chose that way of learning. The pro-forma was also trialed with the intermediate Italian and Japanese ILC classes and the wording of the instructions revised to eliminate ambiguities before it was used with the participants of this study.

Cohen (1988) noted that researchers have made use of three basic types of learner research data: 'self-report', 'self-observation' and 'self-revelation'. The self-report pro-forma used in this study collected the first two types of data from the participants. The first task on the pro-forma, which required participants to detail the main learning events or activities of the lesson, involved self-report data. The second and third tasks on the pro-forma required participants to *inspect* particular behaviours retrospectively and involved both self-report and self-observation.

Interviews, by their nature, demand significant degrees of self-reporting and self-observation. In this study, interviews were used to further investigate beliefs revealed through the completion of the questionnaire, to explore strategies used for

particular learning events or activities and to discuss reasons for choice of particular strategies.

Procedures

Data were gathered over seven months between July 1997 and January 1998, during the three periods of face to face instruction that took place as part of each Intensive Language Course. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the Education Department of Western Australia. Course participants were sent a letter outlining the objectives and scope of the study and inviting them to be involved. The researcher also conducted a brief information session for both classes from which data was to be collected, before initiating that process and asking participants to complete a consent form.

Permission to administer the questionnaires and collect the self-report data during class time was obtained from the course instructors and the Head of Languages Department of the institution conducting the courses for the Education Department. Selection of the lessons for collection of the self-report data was decided in consultation with the course instructors. Table 3.2 gives an overview of the schedule of data collection.

Table 3.2: Date Collection Schedule

| ILC Face-to-face instruction | Data collected | | |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|
| July (1 week) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Background questionnaire• BALLI | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First self-report | |
| October (1 week) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Second and third self-reports | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First interview |
| January (2 weeks) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fourth - seventh self-reports | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Second and third interviews |

As indicated in Table 3.2 above, in the first period of data collection, information about participants' background and experience as language learners and teachers was collected through the background questionnaire. The adapted version of the BALLI, completed by participants at the same time, gave a snapshot of their beliefs in a range of areas related to language learning. The bio-data questionnaire and BALLI were completed by participants during time set aside for this purpose in one of their language lessons.

Participants also wrote their first self-report on a lesson during the initial period of data collection. In the two subsequent periods of data collection, participants wrote self-reports on a further six lessons. All the self-reports were written during time set aside for this purpose at the end of each lesson.

The researcher observed all the lessons about which self-reports were written and took field notes during these lessons. The field notes served several purposes. They were an *aide-mémoire* for the researcher. More importantly, the researcher's observations were reflected back to participants during interviews. This was usually done to stimulate comment about aspects of a lesson or particular learning behaviours reported on by a participant or to probe explanations offered about these events.

Self-report data was collected for different types of lessons - lessons which dealt with vocabulary and grammar, those which concentrated on listening/reading comprehension and lessons which set out to develop oral interaction skills. A brief summary of the content covered in the seven lessons observed, by language group, is provided in Table 3.3.

During the second and third periods of data collection, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine of the fourteen participants. Six of these participants were learners of Italian and three learners of Japanese. The remaining five participants chose not to be involved in the interviews.

Table 3.3: Summary of Content of Self-report Lessons

| | ITALIAN | JAPANESE |
|--------------|--|--|
| One | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of conjugation of regular and irregular verbs in present tense. Pair work using irregular verbs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of everyday vocabulary to practise marker indicating whether nouns are animate or inanimate Barrier game using above vocabulary. |
| Two | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revision of vocabulary about transport. Pair work using train timetable (one way information gap activity). Reading passage about going on holidays. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practise of particles related to the past and the future by constructing sentences using vocabulary from a blackboard grid. Worksheet activity on the above. Each student makes up a sentence for others to guess using grid on worksheet. |
| Three | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video showing a tourist asking for and getting directions at a tourist bureau. Individual writing activity giving directions on how to get to a places in the streets nearby. Two listening comprehension activities on giving and following directions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and practice of vocabulary and structures needed for ordering a simple meal in a restaurant. Role play using the structures and vocabulary practised in previous item. |
| Four | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on the theme of television including presentation and practise of relevant vocabulary and structures. Oral reading of a passage comparing and contrasting television programs in Italy and Australia. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practise of the past tense, focusing on verb ending and sentence structure for questions. Students guess others' weekend activities, then check guesses by questioning them. More advanced students asked to follow up: affirmative responses with "How was it?" Students write a description of what class members did during the weekend. |
| Five | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation of written questions for a survey of fellow students' television viewing habits. Students conduct the survey, record, summarise and write out the results. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of vocabulary and structures weather and seasons by the class reading a passage together on this topic. Taped listening comprehension activities and questions on these topics. |
| Six | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of vocabulary and structures related to shopping. Describing food purchased and discussion of likes and dislikes regarding various foods. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Giving and receiving birthday gifts using an origami 'gift box' made by students, following target language (TL) instructions from the teacher. Responding to the question, "When is it your birthday?" Practice of gift vocabulary. |
| Seven | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students answer questions about three passages they listened to: a description of someone shopping, a recipe and a resume of a film. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students listen to teacher reading a story in the TL and order a series of cards about it. Students write a story based on another series of cards and read it to the class. |

Each of the three semi-structured interviews was about 45 minutes in duration. Interviews were conducted before or after classes, at a time negotiated with the participants. They were conducted at a time as close as possible to the lesson for which participants completed a self-report. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed into written text.

The purpose of the interviews was to enable the participants to reflect on, explore and discuss their beliefs about language learning, their language learning strategies and the relationship between the two. Participants' responses to the BALLI, their self-reports and the researcher's field notes were used as a stimulus for explanation and commentary during the interviews.

The first interview probed the learners' responses to aspects of the BALLI and explored what they perceived to be the contribution of their experience as teachers to these beliefs. The second and third interviews focused on the self-reports completed for particular lessons and asked the participants to comment and elaborate on their choice of learning strategies and give reasons why they chose them. These interviews also explored with subjects the influence on strategy choice of such factors as instructors' teaching style and approach to pedagogy and the nature of the activity or task. In addition to this, information was sought on learning strategies used outside the classroom context (ie. when doing homework). This was done in order to evaluate the influence of the instructor's teaching style and the nature of the task on participants' strategy choice.

A feature of this study was the repeated contact between the participants and the researcher over the seven months period of data collection. This contact contributed to the development of a dialogic process, especially during the second and third interviews. The dialogic process facilitated the discussion key issues emerging from the data, for the purposes of clarification and/or elaboration.

Data Analysis

Four instruments were used to collect the data for this study: a background questionnaire; the BALLI; self-reports; and interviews. How each of these data sources was analysed is described below under the heading of background information, learning strategies, beliefs, and relationship between beliefs and learning strategies.

Participants' Background Information

Information from the background questionnaire was used to develop a picture of the participants' language learning and professional backgrounds and experiences. Responses to the questionnaire were collated and a profile of individual participants, their second language learning backgrounds and professional experience was drawn up (see Table 3.1 above). This information was used as a starting point for discussion in the first interview.

Learning Strategies

The self-reports completed by participants for seven lessons provided the principal source of data on learning strategies. The taxonomy of learning strategy type developed by Oxford (1990) was used to analyse and classify the strategies listed by participants in their self-reports. As Table 3.4 on the following page shows, this taxonomy classifies learning strategies as direct or indirect. These two categories each contain three main sub-categories, for which exemplifications are given.

A profile of the frequency of strategy use based on Oxford's taxonomy was produced for each participant. Individual profiles were aggregated to give an overview of the frequency of strategy use for each of the two language groups and for the sample as a whole.

Table 3.4: Oxford’s (1990) Strategy System

| DIRECT STRATEGIES | | INDIRECT STRATEGIES | |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|
| i. <i>Memory strategies</i> | a. Creating mental linkages b. Applying images and sounds c. Reviewing well d. Employing action | i. <i>Metacognitive strategies</i> | a. Centering your learning b. Arranging and planning your learning c. Evaluating your learning |
| ii. <i>Cognitive strategies</i> | a. Practising b. Receiving and sending messages c. Analysing and reasoning d. Creating structure for input and output | ii. <i>Affective strategies</i> | a. Lowering your anxiety b. Encouraging yourself c. Taking your emotional temperature |
| iii. <i>Compensatory strategies</i> | a. Guessing intelligently b. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing | iii. <i>Social strategies</i> | a. Asking questions b. Cooperating with others c. Empathising with others |

The numerical frequency gained for each strategy by this method of analysis and classification was somewhat distorted as it did not take into account repeated use of particular strategies by individual participants. To produce a list of most frequently used strategies without this bias, the aggregated data was re-analysed to take into account those strategies used at least once by *all* participants, those used at least once by *most* participants and those used at least once by *some* participants. The list of strategies produced by this second level of analysis was that utilised in discussion of strategy use and its relationship to beliefs about language learning.

Beliefs About Language Learning

Information about the participants’ beliefs about language learning was derived from three sources: the BALLI; self-reports; and, interviews. Because of their nature, each of these instruments was analysed using a different approach. Simple descriptive statistical analysis of the BALLI was used to develop a profile of individual participant’s

beliefs about language learning, and that of the language group to which they belonged. The information provided from the analysis of the BALLI was organised according to the areas covered by the BALLI: difficulty of language learning; foreign language aptitude; the nature of language learning; learning and communication strategies; and, motivation and expectations. Analysis focused on developing an overview of beliefs for each of these areas, by language group.

The BALLI yields a particular view of learners' beliefs about language learning. The nature of the instrument means that a decontextualised and somewhat one dimensional representation of learner beliefs emerges. Moreover, as Block (1995) and Sakui & Gaies (1999) have noted, this type of instrument circumscribes both the aspects of language learning the learner can express an opinion about and the way these responses can be expressed. Also absent are the qualifications and tensions that often characterise individual beliefs.

The self-report and interview data were used to validate and expand upon the information derived from the BALLI. This data provided a rich source of information about the participants' beliefs that was contextualised and gave a strong sense of which beliefs had particular resonance for individual participants. A content analysis of the section in the self-reports in which participants explained why they had used particular strategies to help themselves learn was then undertaken. Three main types of data were derived from this section of the self report: statements which expressed particular beliefs directly; statements which implied specific beliefs; and statements which were descriptions of strategies or elaborations about strategies described rather than beliefs. Only the first two types of statements were considered in the analysis. Analysis of these statements showed that they could all be grouped under one of the following logically-derived categories: practice; memory; correctness; focus on understanding/meaning; intuition/pragmatism; and, self-encouragement. Statements grouped under each of the categories were further analysed for common underlying ideas and summarised into one or two sentences that expressed the key beliefs for each category.

Analysis of the transcripts of the interview drew on a methodological process adapted from Wenden (1986; 1988) and Freeman (1996). The process consisted of content analysis (with minimal *a priori* expectations) in order to identify recurring statements which pointed to participants' beliefs. This yielded a set of statements about learner beliefs which were common to all or most learners.

An overview of the aggregated and summarised statements of beliefs from the three sources (the BALLI, the self-reports and the interviews) was developed using the five areas from the BALLI listed above. The overview showed which beliefs were common across the three data sources. A framework of beliefs was derived from this overview covering three core belief categories: communication; practice and accuracy; and self-efficacy.

Relationship Between Beliefs And Learning Strategies

Data from both the self-reports and interviews were analysed to discover if there were a relationship between learner beliefs and use of learning strategies. Content analysis of the self-reports was undertaken to identify points of connection between the strategies participants reported using to help them learn and their explanations of why they chose that way to help them learn. Analysis also sought to identify patterns of association. Because of the large number of strategies used by individual participants, analysis focused on determining the pattern of relationships between the eleven most frequently used strategies and the six main areas of belief identified in the self-reports. A matrix giving an overview of this pattern of relationships for the two language groups was developed. In addition to this, profiles showing the pattern of relationships for a number of individual learners from each language group were also developed.

Following Wenden (1986; 1988), the transcripts of the interviews were analysed for recurring statements which encapsulated the relationship between the learners' beliefs and the strategies they used. Analysis also sought to identify recurring statements which pointed to the nature of this relationship. A profile of relevant statements was compiled for each participant. These profiles revealed complex individual patterns of relationships

between beliefs and strategies. Three themes which emerged from the learners' discussion of their strategies and beliefs in the interviews provided a framework for discussion of the nature of the relationship between learners' beliefs and their strategy choice. The themes are:

- Focus on meaning and focus on form;
- Past and present experiences of language learning; and,
- Factors enabling and constraining learning.

Limitations

This was a relatively small-scale descriptive study involving fourteen participants. The size and nature of the sample, and the particular methodology used, places limitations on the generalisability of any findings produced by the study. Each of the two language groups studied was necessarily representative of itself rather than of a larger population either of teachers or of language learners. Nevertheless, both the methodology and the sample also offered a number of advantages and had some inherent strengths. The longitudinal nature of the study was a strength. The methodology yielded a large amount of data which provided rich, useful and intriguing insights into the learner's contribution to his/her second language learning. As teachers or potential teachers of a second language, the participants provided information about their approach to second language learning which may have implications for the preparation of language teachers. Indeed, the study raised as many questions as it answered, thus pointing to areas for further research.

Summary

Key elements of the methodology employed in this study have been described in this chapter. The study involved a small number of participants and its methodology was largely qualitative in orientation. It sought to capitalise on the small sample and collect in-depth data on its participants. It did this by using a number of different approaches to

data collection. These different approaches were used in an attempt to gain multiple perspectives on the questions being investigated. The study's qualitative orientation was also reflected in the type and level of analysis undertaken. Except for some simple descriptive statistical analysis of the BALLI data and aspects of the self-reports, this involved in-depth analysis of content. The results of this analysis are presented in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 4

LEARNERS' STRATEGY USE

One of the questions this study set out to answer was, “What language learning strategies are used by the teachers undertaking Intensive Language Courses?” This chapter presents the study’s findings in relation to this question. To avoid confusion, the teachers who were the subjects of this study are referred to as ‘learners’, from this point onwards.

This chapter describes the learners’ strategy use from a number of perspectives. To begin with, an overview of the patterns of strategy use, by language group and by individual learners, is provided. The overview includes both broad and more fine-grained information. The similarities and differences of strategy use between the two language groups are then discussed. An examination of the strategies most frequently used by both language groups follows. Lastly, the behaviours that these strategies encompass are documented and discussed. These behaviours are illustrated by edited quotes from the transcripts of interviews conducted with the learners.

Patterns Of Strategy Use

Overview

The learners described a large variety of strategies in their self-reports. These strategies were classified according to Oxford’s (1990) system. The learning strategies reported were identified and grouped as those that were indirect (metacognitive, affective and social strategies) and those that were direct (memory, cognitive and compensation strategies). The frequency of strategy use over the seven lessons for each of these categories was calculated for the two language groups and for individual participants.

This overview begins by presenting summary information on the frequency of strategy use for the different categories of strategies, by language group (see Table 4.1).

The general pattern of strategy use documented in Table 4.1 is one of greater use of direct than indirect strategies, for both language groups. Cognitive strategies are those most frequently used by both the Italian and Japanese learners. A high level of use of metacognitive strategies is evident for both language groups and use of memory and compensatory strategies is also fairly high. The relatively high level of use of metacognitive strategies by these learners is perhaps predictable, given their background as teachers and the proportion of them that are experienced language teachers. Both language groups are characterised by low use of affective and social strategies.

Table 4.1: Use of Indirect and Direct Strategies, by Language Group

| LANGUAGE | INDIRECT STRATEGY | | | DIRECT STRATEGY | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | <i>Metacognitive</i> | <i>Affective</i> | <i>Social</i> | <i>Memory</i> | <i>Cognitive</i> | <i>Compensatory</i> |
| <i>Italian (n. 8)</i> | 79 | 3 | 6 | 42 | 101 | 40 |
| <i>Japanese (n.6)</i> | 55 | 8 | 4 | 30 | 79 | 21 |
| Total | 134 | 11 | 10 | 72 | 180 | 61 |

A number of other studies has reported a similar general patterns of strategy use. Most notable are Nyikos & Oxford’s (1993) study of a large groups of undergraduate foreign language students and the study by O’Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, Kupper (1985) which involved beginning and intermediate ESL high schools students. These studies found that cognitive strategies were those most frequently used by learners, but that use of metacognitive strategies was also high. Low levels of use of social/affective strategies were also reported by these studies.

However, patterns of strategy use different from those discussed above were found by several other studies. Adult learners of Japanese and French (a language cognate to Italian) studied by White (1995) reported making greater use of metacognitive than cognitive strategies. This greater use of metacognitive than cognitive strategies was also demonstrated by ESL/EFL learners at Pre-basic to Intermediate levels studied by Green and Oxford (1995). Foreign service personnel in intensive courses studied by Ehrman and Oxford (1988) reported high levels of cognitive strategy use. However, in

contrast to the other studies reported, these learners made the greatest use of compensatory strategies.

The pattern of strategy use presented in Table 4.1 is also generally reflected at the level of the individual learner, as is demonstrated in Table 4.2. There were, however, some variations to this pattern which deserve comment. Two learners, Marion and Harriet, reported using equal numbers of direct and indirect strategies. Like the learners reported on by White (1995), they used more metacognitive than cognitive strategies. Moreover, there was considerable variation in the number of metacognitive strategies reported, especially among the learners of Italian. This is only partly explained by the fact that three of these learners completed fewer than seven self-reports, as three of the Japanese learners also completed less than seven self-reports. Analysis at an individual level also showed that use of affective and social strategies was not reported by all participants, but only by a few individuals in each language group.

Table 4.2: Use of Indirect and Direct Strategies, by Individual Learners

| PARTICIPANT | INDIRECT STRATEGY | | | DIRECT STRATEGY | | | TOT |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|-----|
| <i>Italian</i> | <i>M/cogn.</i> | <i>Affective</i> | <i>Social</i> | <i>Memory</i> | <i>Cognitive</i> | <i>Compensation</i> | |
| Marion | 17 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 13 | 8 | 48 |
| Thea | 9 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 12 | 4 | 37 |
| Sofia | 13 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 15 | 5 | 39 |
| Virginia | 14 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 17 | 5 | 38 |
| Martha (5)* | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 12 | 6 | 26 |
| Jessica | 11 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 33 |
| Joshua (6)* | 7 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 16 | 2 | 31 |
| Amy (4)* | 4 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 19 |
| <i>Japanese</i> | | | | | | | |
| Rebecca | 10 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 22 | 9 | 50 |
| Harriet | 14 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 12 | 2 | 34 |
| Simona | 16 | 4 | 0 | 10 | 16 | 1 | 37 |
| Emma (6)* | 7 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 20 |
| Megan (6)* | 8 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 28 |
| Carmen (6)* | 10 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 11 | 4 | 28 |

* Participants who did not complete self-reports for all seven lessons have the number lessons reported on, in brackets, next to their name.

A Closer View

The patterns of strategy use described above present the major trends but not the details. A more detailed view, including a description of the actual strategy types reported by the learners, is provided in this section. This information was generated by further classifying the strategies learners reported using according to Oxford's classification system (see Chapter 3, Table 3.4). The types of strategies reported within each category and their frequency, by language group, is presented in Table 4.3 below.

The more detailed picture given in Table 4.3 reveals several things. It shows the broad range of strategies reported, collectively, by the two groups of learners. The range includes most of the specific strategies listed in Oxford's classification system. There were, however, a number of notable omissions. These were:

- all 'Lowering your anxiety' strategies (ie. using progressive relaxation; deep breathing or meditation, using music; using laughter);
- three of the four 'Taking your emotional temperature' strategies (ie. using a checklist; writing a language learning diary; discussing your feelings with someone else); and,
- most of the 'Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing' strategies (ie. using mime or gesture, avoiding communication partially or totally, selecting the topic, adjusting the message, coining words, using a circumlocution or synonym).

Two aspects of the information presented in Table 4.3 invite comment. Some strategies were reported as having been used only once by both language groups. Examples of this include, 'working cooperatively with peers', 'placing words in a new context' and 'representing sounds in memory'. Others were reported as having been used exclusively by either the learners of Italian or of Japanese. For example, only the learners of Italian reported using 'planning for a language task', 'listening to your body', 'asking for clarification', 'getting the idea quickly', 'analysing contrastively', 'adjusting the message' and 'using circumlocution or synonyms'. On the other hand, 'self monitoring', 'working with better TL speakers', 'becoming aware of other's thoughts and feelings', 'reasoning deductively' and 'switching to mother tongue' were reported exclusively by learners of Japanese.

Table 4.3: Learning Strategies Reported, by Language

| INDIRECT | It | Jp | DIRECT | It | Jp |
|---|----|----|---|----|----|
| Metacognitive | | | Memory | | |
| <i>Centring your learning</i> | | | <i>Creating mental images</i> | | |
| • overviewing/linking with already known material | 10 | 4 | • placing words in new context | 1 | 1 |
| • delaying speech to focus on listening | 2 | 4 | • associating/elaborating | 13 | 10 |
| • paying attention | 35 | 28 | <i>Applying images and sounds</i> | | |
| <i>Arranging and planning your learning</i> | | | • using key words | 12 | 9 |
| • organising | 5 | 8 | • using imagery | 4 | 3 |
| • setting goals and objectives | 5 | 4 | • representing sounds in memory | 1 | 1 |
| • seeking opportunity for practice | 7 | 2 | <i>Reviewing well</i> | | |
| • identifying the purpose of the task | 8 | 4 | • structured reviewing | 10 | 2 |
| • planning for a language task | 2 | 0 | <i>Employing action</i> | | |
| <i>Evaluating your learning</i> | | | • using physical action | 1 | 3 |
| • self monitoring | 0 | 5 | | | |
| Affective | | | Cognitive | | |
| <i>Lowering your anxiety</i> | | | <i>Practising</i> | | |
| | | | • repeating | 14 | 16 |
| <i>Encouraging yourself</i> | | | • formally practising with sounds & writing systems | 1 | 7 |
| • taking risks wisely | 3 | 2 | • recognising & using formulas and patterns | 6 | 4 |
| • making positive statements | 1 | 4 | • recombining | 6 | 15 |
| <i>Taking your emotional temperature</i> | | | • practising naturalistically | 3 | 5 |
| • listening to your body | 1 | 0 | <i>Receiving & sending messages</i> | | |
| | | | • getting the idea quickly | 2 | 0 |
| | | | • using resources for receiving & sending messages | 3 | 4 |
| | | | <i>Analysing and reasoning</i> | | |
| | | | • reasoning deductively | 0 | 5 |
| | | | • analysing contrastively across languages | 1 | 0 |
| | | | • analysing expressions | 1 | 3 |
| | | | • translating | 13 | 13 |
| | | | <i>Creating a structure for input & output</i> | | |
| | | | • taking notes | 47 | 4 |
| | | | • highlighting | 3 | 2 |
| Social | | | Compensatory | | |
| <i>Asking questions</i> | | | <i>Guessing intelligently</i> | | |
| • asking for clarification | 5 | 0 | • using linguistic & other clues | 25 | 13 |
| <i>Cooperating with others</i> | | | <i>Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing</i> | | |
| • working cooperatively with peers | 1 | 1 | • getting help | 13 | 6 |
| • working with better TL speakers | 0 | 1 | • adjusting the message | 1 | 0 |
| <i>Empathising with others</i> | | | • using circumlocution or synonyms | 1 | 0 |
| • becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings | 0 | 1 | • switching to mother tongue | 0 | 2 |

From Table 4.3 the broad similarity of the strategies used by the two language groups can be seen. For example, reported use of affective and social strategies is consistently low for both groups, while reported use of strategies in the other categories ranges from high to low for the two groups. This presents a pattern of usage for both language groups that concentrated on a selected number of strategies.

The numerical frequency given for each strategy in Table 4.3 provides only part of the picture of learners' strategy use. It does not distinguish between those strategies used by the majority of learners within each language group and those used repeatedly by individual learners. To obtain this additional level of information, the frequencies presented in Table 4.3 were analysed to take this individual bias into account. This involved grouping strategies into three categories: the strategies used at least once by *all* learners within each group, those used at least once by *most* learners and those used at least once by *some* learners. *Most* learners were defined as six or seven learners of Italian and four or five learners of Japanese. *Some* learners were defined as four or five learners of Italian and three learners of Japanese. This analysis produced somewhat different patterns of use, which are summarised in Table 4.4 on the following page.

As can be seen from Table 4.4, only nine of the strategies are common to the two language groups. Varying degrees of commonality at each level are also evident. Just two strategies were used by *all* learners in each language group, and only one of these strategies was common to both groups. The two strategies reported as being used by *all* the learners of Italian were: 'taking notes' and 'paying attention'. 'Paying attention' was also used by all the learners of Japanese. 'Recombining' was the second strategy common to all learners of Japanese.

A greater number of strategies was used by *most* or *some* of the learners of both languages, only some of which were common to the two groups. *Most* of the learners of Japanese reported using more than twice the number of strategies than *most* of the learners of Italian. However, the three strategies reported by *most* of the learners of Italian ('using linguistic and other clues'; 'using key words'; and,

‘associating/elaborating’) also featured among those listed by *most* of the learners of Japanese.

Table 4.4: Most Frequently Used Strategies, by Language

| | Italian | Japanese |
|---|---|--|
| Strategies used at least once by <i>all</i> learners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking notes • <i>Paying attention</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Paying attention</i> • Recombining |
| Strategies used at least once by <i>most</i> learners (6 or 7 Italian learners; 4 or 5 Japanese learners) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using linguistic and other clues • Using key words • Associating/elaborating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using linguistic and other clues • Using key words • Repeating • Translating • Associating/elaborating • <i>Organising</i> • Formally practising with sounds and writing systems • Getting help |
| Strategies used at least once by <i>some</i> learners (4 or 5 Italian learners; 3 Japanese learners) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeating • Translating • Structured reviewing • <i>Identifying the purpose of the task</i> • Getting help • <i>Overviewing and linking with known material</i> • Recognising and using formulas and patterns • Recombining • Using imagery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practising naturalistically • <i>Self monitoring</i> • Recognising and using formulas and patterns • <i>Delaying speech to focus on listening</i> |

(Strategies in italics are indirect, metacognitive strategies)

The number of strategies used by *some* of the learners of Italian was more than twice as many as those used by the learners of Japanese, thus suggesting a slightly more individualistic approach on the part of these learners. There was less commonality between the two language groups at this level, with ‘recognising formulas and patterns’ being the only common strategy. There were, however, areas of commonality across levels, as three of the strategies used by *some* of the learners of Italian (‘translating’; ‘repeating’; and, ‘getting help’) were also used by *most* of the learners of Japanese.

The predominance of direct strategies, and direct cognitive strategies in particular, is also evident in Table 4.4. It is also apparent that all of the indirect strategies included

are metacognitive strategies. This pattern is broadly consistent with those shown in Tables 4.1-4.3.

Individual Learners' Perspectives

The preceding sections of this chapter provided global and some more detailed information about the strategies used by the learners participating in this study and discussed broad patterns of strategy use at the language group and individual levels. A set of the most frequently used strategies for each of the two language groups was also identified. However, learning strategies are by their nature, individual. Individuals invariably have unique perspectives on strategies they use, shared or not. The remainder of this chapter therefore examines and discusses some individual learner perspectives on selected strategies from Table 4.4. In addition, it considers salient points of comparison and contrast between the two language groups. Particular attention is given to the strategies used by *all* learners and those used by *most* learners. 'Paying attention', the strategy used by *all* learners in both language groups is considered first, followed by 'taking notes'. 'Using linguistic and other clues', 'using key words', 'associating/elaborating' and 'translating' are then discussed as a group. 'Recombining', one of the two strategies used by all the learners of Japanese is considered together with 'repeating', and 'practising naturalistically'. Individual learner perspectives on the strategies discussed will be illustrated by reproducing edited excerpts of the written transcripts of individual interviews.

Paying Attention

The prominence of 'paying attention' as a learning strategy for both language groups is hardly surprising, given that the learners in this study were highly motivated adults voluntarily participating in language lessons in a classroom setting. Many of the activities or learning tasks provided by instructors, by their nature, required the learners to listen intently. Learners did this in order to understand and 'take in' new material; to reproduce words phrases or sentences; to provide an oral response in the case of question

and answer discussion sessions, pair work or games; and, to give a written response for aural comprehension exercises. What is of interest, therefore, is not so much that the learners used this strategy, but how they used it and their perception of how they felt it contributed to their learning.

For a number of learners from both language groups, ‘paying attention’ involved “tuning in” to the target language in a very deliberate manner, almost as one tunes into a piece of music. The musical analogy was hinted at by Marion when discussing a lesson about television, which included conversation on this topic between the teacher and the class. Marion pointed out that it was early in the week and she was still “tuning in” to the teacher, suggesting that with cumulative exposure she expected to be able to ‘tune in’ with greater facility:

*I felt to a degree stretched, having to focus in. I was really concentrating on the text and listening to her. At that time on the second day of this week I was still **tuning in** to the teacher and as the week goes on it gets better and better and easier and easier. (Marion)*

“Tuning in” for some of the learners meant intense concentration on the language input. This was regarded as essential to being optimally receptive to this input and crucial to converting input to intake. Harriet spoke of “concentrating as hard as she could” when listening. For Marion, such intense concentration on input was a key learning tool:

I can concentrate really hard and that’s what I do, because that is where I learn. If I learn something, I’ve learnt it. (Marion)

Simona, who reported the highest incidence of this strategy of all the learners, suggested that tuning into the language involved a level of commitment by the language learner that may not be there when they are just routinely *paying attention*.

The listen and look part was because things were presented visually and orally. The other bit is sort of what I do myself, vocalising it or sub-vocalising it. But it seems to me there’s an element of attention, that you need to really sort of tune in and tune out everything else. I find that with the listen and look bit. (Simona)

Thea regarded “tuning in” as intently as she could as essential, because her limited knowledge of the target language meant that she could not predict content in the way she would do when listening to English.

You have to listen carefully. You have to pay attention. I find I can't really let my concentration lapse. It's a full-on thing I guess because I'm not very confident. I can understand more than I can actually speak, but I think that concentration is absolutely vital. You really have to listen because in English I think we just half listen because we can predict what's being said or we don't need to listen hard to understand. But with the teacher doing everything in Italian, I have to really concentrate on it. I can't afford to go off in a daydream or be doing something else, because I lose the thread too quickly. So I really have to zero in. (Thea)

These learners' comments appear to have a common leitmotif: that of using 'paying attention' as a way of priming themselves, making themselves more aware of and therefore more receptive to the comprehensible input to which they were being exposed. 'Paying attention' also seemed to be involved in the processing of the input for meaning, as Simona's and Thea's comments seem to demonstrate:

You sort of listen to what they say, and then you think, yes, that's what it means. It's like double checking things to make sure what they've said is right and checking that it makes sense. (Simona)

I was thinking of it [the input] in my head, going back to whatever the words were and thinking, yes, this is what you say about that. (Thea)

Learners' comments indicated, however, they not only used 'paying attention' to focus on meaning, but also used it as a way of consciously focusing on form. This often seemed to involve 'noticing' in the sense used by Schmidt (1990), that is, "a conscious apprehension and awareness of some particular form of the input" (Leow, 1997: 469). Learners' attention frequently appeared to be directed to 'noticing' grammatical features of the language. Simona reported using this strategy in order to help her reflect on how the structure of sentences in Japanese worked when particular adjectives were being used. Jessica, a background learner of Italian, felt she needed to focus on grammar and listened especially for particular grammatical rules. Thea described how she 'noticed' the verb endings as she listened to the teacher speak to the class in the target language:

The fact that the teacher speaks Italian is fantastic. I was hearing the verbs being used and I was thinking, you use that ending for that person. (Thea)

'Noticing' as an exercise in focusing on form was often carried out when attending to the output produced by fellow students. This usually involved monitoring other students' use of the target language in order to notice and mentally correct any

errors they made. This, as Harriet reported, helped to “affirm what I knew.” Virginia described how she used this strategy for the same purpose:

I was probably more aware of other people making mistakes than me making mistakes, because when you're speaking you think you're saying the right thing even though you're not. Actually, that was one thing I found a very good learning point, listening to other people and being aware of their mistakes. It reinforced the correct form. I only twigged to it the last day or so. My ear was probably better attuned, because it was mainly oral and also a bit of the grammar had come back. (Virginia)

Rebecca revealed quite a sophisticated capacity to ‘notice’ particular features of her fellow learners’ language. She liked to work with speakers of Japanese who were more competent than herself. The extract below shows how she was paying attention to their output on a number of levels and using it to assess their performance, as well as her own. The context was a role play which involved using basic structures provided by the teacher, but included an extension activity which gave the more advanced students an opportunity to use the language a bit more spontaneously.

I was listening to their speed, their fluency, and whether they added little frills, which they didn't. They basically stuck to the text too, so I could understand it. When they started filling out the last one, where they had to do their own thing, the Level 1 learners were doing quite ambitious activities. I think I was the only beginner who filled out that section. I just did something very simple, like ‘Did he go to the park?’ I think it's very important when you're learning a language to listen to different levels, particularly those at a slightly better level. (Rebecca)

Several learners offered evidence that they were aware that ‘paying attention’ in an interactive context provided them with feedback that was very useful to their learning. Harriet suggested this when discussing the importance of attempting to communicate in the target language:

It's important that you learn to try and communicate in the language, even if it's not perfect grammar. That's how I learn, by listening to what comes back from when I put something in. (Harriet)

Marion was quite explicit about the importance of this feedback for her learning:

I like to have a proper conversation and that's when I learn, and I also learn with people mirroring back the correct language to me. I love it when the teacher just jumps in and gives me the right word or changes the ending, you know, when I've got it wrong. (Marion)

Martha, who became used to receiving negative feedback when learning the language in Italy, interpreted its absence as confirmation of the fact that she had not made a mistake:

You have a question in you voice, in your intonation, and you say, "Me lo dai?" And they will say, " Si, si." Then you'll think, I've said it okay because otherwise they'd change it for me." (Martha)

The contribution of focus on form to second language acquisition and its role in second language pedagogy has aroused a great deal of interest in the last five years, as evidenced by Doughty and Williams' (1998) recent book on this topic. The focus of most of the research reported in this volume has been the teacher rather than the learner. The reflections presented above of the learners involved in this study suggest that adult learners, especially those with prior second learning experience, seem to include focus on form (in its various manifestations) as part of the learning strategy of 'paying attention'. There are a number of possible reasons for this. The emphasis placed on form by the instructor and/or the activities used and past exposure of many of these participants to teaching that placed high value on grammatical accuracy are two of the more obvious explanations.

Taking Notes

'Taking notes' presents the most striking difference in strategy use between the two language groups. Learners of Italian reported using it 47 times, compared to four times by the learners of Japanese. In addition, all the learners of Italian reported using the strategy, while only two learners of Japanese did so. Most of the learners of Italian reported using the strategy four or more times, with one of them using it ten times. Of the two learners of Japanese who used this strategy, one reported using it three times and the other only once. These findings contrast with those of White (1995), whose study of the strategy choice of a small group of adult learners of Japanese and French showed that the Japanese group used note-taking strategies to a greater extent than did the French group.

The main reasons given by the Italian learners for using this strategy were to aid later learning, to make their learning more concrete and to help impress in their memory whatever was being learned. Virginia did it "to learn later", to refer to and use language items at a later date, and "to remember more easily". For her it was also a

“backstop, a way of assuring that details are remembered” when involved in an aural comprehension exercise. ‘Taking notes’ served the same purposes for Sofia, as it did for Virginia. Additionally, Sofia hoped that if she saw a word or phrase written down correctly, then this would help her write it correctly. Sofia was also eager to exploit the cognate nature of much Italian and English lexicon and felt that accurate written notes helped ensure she did not misinterpret words and their meanings. Thea concurred with the reasons given by her fellow learners and added several of her own. ‘Taking notes’ helped make the learning process concrete for her. When she wrote down words she wanted to remember in a sentence, the context frequently enabled her to work out the meaning without using an English translation. She described the approach she took when talking about one of the lessons on which she reported during an interview:

I still got two pages of notes. Not only words that the teacher wrote up, also things that were said. I wrote them down and worked out later that ‘amaro’ meant bitter. (Thea)

Rebecca, the Japanese learner who reported three of the four instances of ‘taking notes’ for that language group, made use of the strategy for similar reasons to those given by the learners of Italian. She emphasised in her interview that careful note taking was very important to enable her to organise her learning efficiently. Rebecca used ‘taking notes’ to promote accuracy, to assist with review and revision, to “jog the memory”. In addition, she used ‘taking notes’ to assist her learning and her mastery of the various scripts by recording language items in three versions:

I’ve studied the script quite hard. I’m reading it a lot more easily now, so it’s not a case of symbol by symbol decoding. When I take notes I write in three columns. I write out the hiragana or the kanji, then I write out the romanji equivalent of that and then I write out the English translation, so I’ve sort of got three columns, and if I’m in a rush I’ll look at the romanji rather than trying to decode the hiragana. (Rebecca)

Rebecca’s use of the note taking strategy is consistent with that of the learners of Japanese in the research carried out by White (1995). As reported in the literature review, White found a qualitative difference in the use of this strategy between the two language groups. ‘Taking notes’ for White’s learners of Japanese (as for Rebecca) involved writing out, that is, copying in order to memorise material. In contrast, the learners of French in White’s study tended to concentrate on noting down key points or

main ideas in order to extract meaning from the content of material presented. This difference does not appear to be reflected in the current study, despite Thea's comment about working out the meaning of the word *amaro* from her notes. The comments from the learners of Italian cited the preceding paragraphs and their practice, as observed by the researcher, point to the fact that, like White's learners of Japanese, most of them used 'taking notes' primarily as an aid to memory.

Rebecca's elaborate process of note taking also suggests a possible explanation for the high incidence of 'taking notes' among learners of Italian. It is likely that it was simply easier for learners of Italian to take notes because they were not learning another script, and that they availed themselves of this advantage. Another possible explanation relates to the influence of prior language learning. Overall, the Italian learners were somewhat older than their Japanese counterparts. Five of them had studied other languages at school at a time in the past when there would have been as emphasis on note taking as a major learning strategy. The influence of prior language learning on the strategies learners adopted is acknowledged. A third possible explanation presents itself from the learning context. There appeared to be a greater orientation towards imparting significant blocks of vocabulary content in the observed Italian lessons than in the Japanese lessons. This orientation may well have influenced the level of 'taking notes' among the learners of Italian.

Strategies For Making Meaning

This section examines a group of strategies used by learners to help them make meaning from the linguistic input they received. They include a compensation strategy, 'using linguistic and other clues, two memory strategies, 'using key words' and 'associating/elaborating' and the cognitive strategy of 'translating'.

The comparatively high frequency of use of compensation strategies by both groups of learners in this study is interesting given that these were the strategies most frequently used by the adult learners in intensive courses studied by Ehrman and Oxford (1988). Although learners of Italian reported 'using linguistic and other (non-verbal)

clues' to aid them with their learning to a greater extent than the learners of Japanese, for both groups of learners, these particular strategies account for two thirds of the compensatory strategies they reported. 'Getting help' was the other most frequently used compensatory strategy for both language groups.

The strategies of 'using linguistic and other clues' seem to have been employed in similar contexts for both groups of learners. These were usually contexts that focused wholly or partly on listening such as: aural comprehension activities; pair work; discussions; and games. The use of linguistic clues dominated over non-verbal clues, with only one learner in each of the language groups not reporting having used the non-verbal clues. Linguistic clues used often included vocabulary in texts or vocabulary lists prepared by the learners themselves related to particular topics. Non-verbal clues were most commonly visual clues provided by the instructor. However, several of the Italian learners stressed the importance of following the lips of their interlocutor as an aid to comprehension and one of the learners of Japanese reported listening to the background noises on an aural comprehension tape to help guess the answer to questions.

'Using key words' was a strategy often used with more formal activities such as aural and reading comprehension to extract global meaning. The approach described by Harriet seemed to be typical:

I don't try to understand everything. I just try to pick out the words I know and kind of work them into the context and go on from there. (Harriet)

Learners from both language groups reported applying this approach in two ways. The first seemed to involve an almost intuitive recourse to the strategy with oral and written texts that presented few difficulties. This usage was possibly due to the fact that learners would have routinely taught this strategy to their own students, both in English and second language classes. The second involved a more deliberate (often hopeful rather than confident) application of the strategy when faced with oral and written texts that were difficult or very difficult. An aural/written comprehension given to the Japanese class which all learners, but especially the beginners, found very difficult, saw four of the beginning learners of Japanese using this strategy.

The fact that Japanese is a scripted language and that it is very different from the European languages studied by the learners at school or acquired during travel, is of relevance to the discussion about the two remaining strategies: ‘associating/elaborating’ and ‘translating’. ‘Associating/elaborating’, for the learners of Japanese, meant mainly either making associations with their general knowledge or with aspects of Japanese language and/ or culture that they had already absorbed. On the other hand, the learners of Italian who had studied French at school, even many years ago, drew on this knowledge to a considerable degree. The cognate nature of Italian and French meant these learners recognised similarities in vocabulary and structures and used these clues to help them guess meanings of words or phrases or to approximate expressions in situation requiring oral communication. For six of the eight learners of Italian, use of strategies involving ‘association’ meant drawing on their knowledge of French as well English, in addition to any other general knowledge that may have been appropriate. The two learners who were teachers of French drew consistently on their knowledge of that language. Thea noted in her self-report on the lesson exploring the topic of television that she “used her knowledge of French and English to determine the meanings of words” and that she linked ‘destra’, the Italian word for right with ‘droite’, its French equivalent. Virginia also noted how she drew on her knowledge of French :

I do try to relate it to French. Any word I don't know I think of the French meaning and see if I can get close to it. (Virginia)

The extra hurdle the different script posed for the learners of Japanese is highlighted in their use of the strategy of ‘translating’. For the learners of Italian, this strategy involved using the dictionary to check the meaning of words or to find equivalents for an English word or phrase in the target language. ‘Translating’ for three of the learners of Japanese in particular (Rebecca, Simona and Harriet) involved translating from *hiragana* to *romanji*. This was done for a number of reasons: to work out where sentences began and ended in a text; to be able to decode text more quickly and easily and thus keep up with the lesson; and, to facilitate spoken exchanges in pair work and other activities where the written text was often used for contextual support. The

elaborate note-taking technique used by Rebecca and discussed above is clearly related to this particular use of the strategy of 'translation' by the learners of Japanese.

Practising Strategies

This section presents the perspectives of individual learners on three strategies use to practise language: 'repeating'; 'recombining'; and 'practising naturalistically'. These three strategies are considered together because they form a continuum that encompasses rote-like strategies at one end and more spontaneous use of language at the other. All three featured in the strategies used most frequently by Japanese learners, whereas only the first two were included for learners of Italian.

For both groups of learners in this study, 'repeating' frequently involved sub-vocalising as well as vocalising elements of language they needed to memorise. Learners were inclined to create opportunities to engage in this kind of practice rather than just wait for the instructor to do so. These included, practising to themselves or in their heads, mentally rehearsing, mentally providing responses required of fellow students and mentally anticipating teacher questions and the kind of answers required. Rebecca stated that she "talked around the place all the time."

Every time I go to the lift I translate which floor it is in Japanese. I get right into it, even phoning up friends I go Moshi, Moshi and all that sort of stuff. I make it a game. Play mental games with myself. (Rebecca)

Virginia summed up this approach when she remarked, "I'll often just push things through my mind in Italian." It seems that for Virginia, 'recombining' and 'repeating' helped develop her "intrapersonal voice", which (Clark, 1997:4) described as "the still small voice in the head through which one speaks to oneself internally and thinks...the one we develop for thinking out problems and planning things in our head."

Differences emerged between learners about the extent to which they were prepared to use 'repeating' strategies which had a strong rote component. On the whole, the learners of Japanese appeared to be more accepting of strategies that involved drill-like 'repeating', with Simona making considerable use of them. Several learners of Italian (Marion, Martha) expressed a strong preference for doing this kind of practice in

more naturalistic contexts. Virginia reported using the ‘repeating’ strategy half a dozen times. She saw little value in drilling *per se*, but felt that the process of repetition gave her time to generate other language. Her comment below on this matter brings to mind observations made by Skehan (1998) about learners’ need to minimise processing demands when engaging in spoken communication:

If you’re repeating something all the time it’s going in, it’s also giving you time to think of something else and string words together. If you’ve got a good memory, maybe you don’t need to, but I think the majority of people do.
(Virginia)

Thea, on the other hand, did not include ‘repeating’ strategies in her self-reports. However, in her interviews, she emphasised the importance to her learning of reciting verb endings and saying things aloud.

‘Recombining,’ which involves using known elements of language in new contexts or ways, was reported as being used by all learners of Japanese. Only four of the learners of Italian reported using this strategy and two of them reported using it just once. The strategy was used to a greater extent by the four more advanced learners of Japanese than by the two relative beginners, who reported using it only once each. All learners, however, seemed to be seeking to extend their language capacities in some way in using this strategy. Harriet, one of the more advanced learners, reported using this strategy to extend her language skills by seeking to practise things in different ways. Rebecca, who was more of a beginner, created her own sentences in her head based on sentences she had read. Both Emma and Carmen, more advanced learners of Japanese, used familiar structures or those provided by the text book and made new sentences by inserting their own vocabulary. This approach was taken by Simona as well.

Although the self-report data tended to suggest that practising naturalistically was used rather more by learners of Japanese than learners of Italian, the interviews highlighted the importance to both groups of learners of actively using the language, especially in communicative contexts, if at all possible. Thea’s perception of the role this type of production played in her learning was shared by most learners:

I think production is hugely important because it makes concrete everything that you’ve learned and it actually makes you use things in a situation, not in a nice structured grammar exercise, but actually pulling in all sorts of things too because you’re not just using what you’ve learned today to answer a question. (Thea)

Thea's comment on production quoted above is indicative of a conviction held by the majority of the participants in this study about the importance of output in their language learning. In their interviews, most learners described ways in which they tried to use language actively, both in and out of the classroom. An example of the former is the weekly conversation class attended by Marion where the participants talk and the native speaker facilitator provides feedback in the target language on their effort. The diaries the learners of Italian were asked to keep as part of their course work also provided an excellent opportunity for outputting in the language, as Virginia attested:

I do try and utilise expressions, grammar points that we've learned when I do the daily diary. And that's to practice, revise, bring it together. (Virginia)

These learners' use of outputting in the target language as a conscious learning strategy is of interest in the context of investigation of the role of output in second language acquisition, and its contribution to promoting focus on form (Swain, 1998, in Doughty and Williams, 1998).

Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed description of the learning strategies used by the participants in this study and has drawn attention to the points of connection between its findings and those of previous studies. It has presented the broad pattern of strategy use by language group and noted the significant similarities and differences between the learners of Italian and those of Japanese in the strategies they used. The chapter has also provided insights on strategy use from the perspective of individual learners. While these insights have highlighted the unique ways individuals employ particular strategies, they have also drawn attention to common approaches to and common concerns. Interestingly, learners' comments about two of the learning strategies examined, 'paying attention' and 'practising naturalistically', seem to reflect the current preoccupation with balancing focus on meaning with focus on form in language learning and teaching (Doughty and Williams, 1998). This antiphon between meaning and form is one that will emerge again in the next chapter, which considers the beliefs about language learning held by the participants of the present study.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNERS' BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

Learning a second language as an adult is often a challenging task. It can be exhilarating and confronting by turns. It is often both at the same time. Adults bring to this task all their past experiences both as learners and language learners. The *bagaglio linguistico* or linguistic baggage that they carry with them includes a set of beliefs about language learning, in general, and second language learning, in particular. A significant body of knowledge now exists about the nature of learners' beliefs about language learning. The current study drew on the previous research in the area (Horwitz 1987, 1988, 1999; Cotterall 1999; Kern 1995; Wenden 1986, 1987, 1998, 1999; White 1999; Yang 1999) in its investigation of the beliefs of adult language learners learning Italian and Japanese.

This chapter profiles the learners' beliefs about second language learning as revealed by three different sources of data: an adapted version of Horwitz' *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI); learners' self-reports on language lessons; and, interviews conducted with nine of the fourteen learners who participated in this study. The BALLI provided information about learners' beliefs in range of areas. The nature of this instrument meant that the information obtained was not especially contextualised, nor did it offer any richness of detail. The data from the learners' self-reports, on the other hand, yielded a body of highly contextualised information about learners' beliefs. The interviews gave learners the opportunity to reflect and comment on their responses to the BALLI and on their self-report information, and to provide new and/or different perspectives on their beliefs.

The findings of the BALLI are outlined in the first part of this chapter. They are followed by a description of the beliefs deduced from the self-reports. The relationship of these beliefs to those documented by the BALLI is examined next. Following this, the perspective on these beliefs offered by the interview data is discussed and the set of

beliefs emerging from the interviews described. Finally, a summary of the key beliefs from the three sources is presented, from which an framework of beliefs is proposed.

The BALLI

The BALLI explores the following five areas of beliefs: difficulty of language learning; foreign language aptitude; the nature of language learning; learning and communication strategies; and motivation and expectations. The learners' beliefs as revealed by this instrument are presented and discussed under these five areas. A table containing summary statistical information, by language group, accompanies the discussion of the findings in each area. In this discussion, the 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' responses are usually considered as one category (agreement). Similarly, the 'disagreed' and 'strongly disagreed' responses are generally aggregated to the single category of disagreement. This approach seemed appropriate given the small sample size of each language group and the fact that the majority of responses frequently clustered around the 'agree' or 'disagree' categories. It facilitated clarity of discussion while preserving the essential integrity of the data.

Difficulty Of Language Learning

Responses to the BALLI items relating to the difficulty of language learning showed that the two language groups had different perceptions about the challenges learning their target language posed. They also had different views about the relative difficulty of understanding as opposed to speaking a second language, and of reading and writing as opposed to speaking and listening that language. As in other studies (Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995), a minority of both Italian and Japanese learners expressed the conviction that they could learn a language well by devoting an hour a day to it over one to two years. These findings are discussed in detail below.

Table 5.1: Responses to ‘Difficulty of Language Learning’ BALLI Items

| | 1. (strongly agree) | 2. (agree) | 3. (neither agree nor disagree) | 4. (disagree) | 5. (strongly disagree) |
|--|---------------------|------------|---------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| <i>3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian (n=8) | 2 | 4 | 2 | | |
| Japanese (n=6) | 6 | | | | |
| <i>4. Italian/Japanese is (a) a very difficult language (b) a difficult language (c) a language of medium difficulty (d) an easy language (e) a very easy language.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | | 5 | 3 | |
| Japanese | 1 | 4 | 1 | | |
| <i>5. I believe I will learn to speak Italian/Japanese very well.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 2 | 6 | | | |
| Japanese | | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| <i>7. It is easier for teachers than others to learn a language other than English.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Japanese | | | 4 | 2 | |
| <i>16. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to learn it well? (a) < a year (b) 1-2 years (c) 3-5 years (d) 5-10 years (e) You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 2 | 2 | 4 | |
| Japanese | | 2 | 2 | 2 | |
| <i>27. It is easier to speak than to understand a language other than English</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| Japanese | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| <i>40. It is easier to read and write Italian/Japanese than to speak and understand it.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 1 | 2 | 5 | |
| Japanese | 1 | 2 | | 2 | 1 |

As Table 5.1 shows, the two language groups responded similarly to BALLI items 3, 7, 16 and 27 and somewhat differently to the other items. All the learners of Japanese were very strongly convinced that some languages were easier to learn than others. Most of the learners of Italian agreed with this view, though not unanimously. There were differing views between the two groups about the relative difficulty of their target language, with the learners of Italian thinking that that language was either of medium difficulty or that it was easy, while the majority of learners of Japanese believed that theirs was a difficult or very difficult language to learn. This possibly explains why all of the learners of Italian thought they would learn to speak their target language well, while only half of the Japanese felt that they would do so.

There was a divergence of views of the time needed to learn a second language well. Two learners of Japanese and two of Italian believed they could learn that language well in one to two years. A similar number for each language felt they could accomplish

this in three to five years. Four of the learners of Italian and two of Japanese were of the opinion that it would take five to ten years to achieve this goal. Only one of the learners of Italian appeared to be convinced that it would be easier for teachers than for others to learn a second language, with a good proportion from each group remaining undecided on this issue.

Contrasting views existed between the two groups about whether it was easier to speak than to understand a second language. The majority of the learners of Italian disagreed that speaking that language was easier than understanding it, whereas half the learners of Japanese took the opposite view, believing that speaking a language was easier than understanding it.

The issue of whether it is easier to read and write either of the two languages rather than speak and understand them occasioned a contrasting responses from the two groups. Almost all the learners of Italian disagreed or were uncertain that reading and writing were easier than speaking and understanding. The Japanese learners, however, were evenly split on this matter.

Foreign Language Aptitude

Responses to the BALLI items about language aptitude detailed in Table 5.2 below revealed that the two groups of learners held similar convictions about matters related to this area of beliefs. A majority of both language groups agreed that it is easier for children than adults to learn a language other than English.¹ These views are consistent with those expressed by learners studied by Horwitz (1988b) and Kern (1995). Learners in both groups also strongly supported the idea that everyone can learn another language. This finding is not surprising, given the commitment to universal participation in second language programs in government schools.

¹ One of the learners of Italian strongly disagreed with the notion that it is easier for children than adults to learn a language other than English. In discussing her response during the first interview, she gave the knowledge and experience adults brought to language learning as the main reason for not being convinced of the superior language learning capacities of children.

Table 5.2: Responses to ‘Foreign Language Aptitude’ BALLI Items

| | 1. (strongly agree) | 2.(agree) | 3. (neither agree nor disagree) | 4. (disagree) | 5. (strongly disagree) |
|---|---------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| <i>1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a language other than English.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian (n=8) | 2 | 5 | | | 1 |
| Japanese (n=6) | 1 | 4 | 1 | | |
| <i>2. Some people have a special ability for learning languages other than English.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | |
| Japanese | 4 | 1 | 1 | | |
| <i>6. Australians are good at learning languages other than English.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Japanese | | | 4 | 2 | |
| <i>11. It is easier for someone who already speaks a language other than English to learn another one.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 4 | 2 | 2 | |
| Japanese | | 4 | | 2 | |
| <i>12. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning languages other than English.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Japanese | | | | 3 | 3 |
| <i>17. I have a special ability for learning languages other than English</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Japanese | | 3 | 2 | | 1 |
| <i>20. Women are better than men at learning languages other than English.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 2 | | 4 | 2 |
| Japanese | | | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| <i>39. Everyone can learn to speak a language other than English.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 2 | 4 | 2 | | |
| Japanese | 2 | 4 | | | |

Most of the learners were of the opinion (and the learners of Japanese more strongly so than their Italian counterparts) that some people have a special ability for learning a second language. However, only a minority of individuals in both groups felt that they possessed this special ability. Close to half of the learners of Japanese were undecided on the matter and three learners of Italian didn't agree this was the case, one of them strongly. Whether the learners' assessment of their own ability was prompted by modesty or by a realistic appraisal of their own capacities is impossible to judge and well beyond the scope of this study.

Whatever their perceptions of their own abilities as language learners, two thirds of the learners of Japanese and half of the Italian learners agreed that it was easier for someone who already spoke a language other than English to learn another one. Neither group appeared to be convinced that Australians were good at second language learning.

However, neutrality seemed to be the preferred position on this matter, with two thirds of the Japanese and half of the Italian learners neither agreeing or disagreeing with this notion.²

There were clearer positions on issues of gender and language aptitude, and on mathematical or scientific ability and language aptitude. The majority of both groups of learners disagreed with the proposition that women are better than men at learning a language other than English. However, two learners of Italian endorsed this view and two learners of Japanese were undecided on the issue. The notion that people who are good at mathematics and science are not good at languages was rejected by all of the learners of Japanese and all but two of the learners of Italian. These two neither agreed nor disagreed with the notion.

The Nature Of Language Learning

The BALLI items that relate to this area of beliefs cover two broad themes: the knowledge or skills that comprise the most important part of language learning; and situational and other factors that affect language learning. As can be seen in Table 5.3 on the following page, the two groups of learners differed somewhat in their views on both these areas. These differing views are examined in detail below.

The majority of the learners of Italian disagreed with the view that vocabulary learning and translation were the most important parts of language learning. Their response about grammar was slightly more equivocal. Half did not consider it to be the most important part of language learning. Of the remainder, however, four neither agreed nor disagreed on this matter. In contrast, the majority of the Japanese learners disagreed that grammar and translation were the most important part of language learning, but were inclined to either agree or be undecided about vocabulary.

² This neutral or negative perception of Australians as language learners was not shared by one of the learners of Italian, the only male involved in the study. Unfortunately he was not interviewed, so it was not possible to explore the reasons for his different response.

Table 5.3: Responses to ‘Nature of Language Learning’ BALLI Items

| | 1. (strongly agree) | 2.(agree) | 3. (neither agree nor disagree) | 4. (disagree) | 5. (strongly disagree) |
|--|---------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| <i>9. It is necessary to know about Italian/Japanese culture in order to speak Italian/Japanese well.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian (n=8) | | 1 | 1 | 6 | |
| Japanese (n=6) | 1 | 3 | | 2 | |
| <i>13. It is best to learn Italian/Japanese in Italy/Japan.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | |
| Japanese | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | |
| <i>18. The most important part of learning a language other than English is learning vocabulary words.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 3 | | 4 | 1 |
| Japanese | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | |
| <i>25. The most important part of learning a language other than English is learning the grammar.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 1 | | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Japanese | | 1 | | 3 | 2 |
| <i>29. Learning a language other than English is different from learning other academic subjects.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | |
| Japanese | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>32. The most important part of learning Italian/Japanese is learning to translate from English into Italian/Japanese.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | | 2 | 6 | |
| Japanese | | | 1 | 4 | 1 |

The extent to which language learning was different from or similar to other kinds of academic learning brought mixed responses. Two thirds of the Japanese learners agreed with this proposition. However, less than half of the Italian group concurred, and a similar number were neutral on the matter.

There were differing views between the two groups about the role of culture in language learning. The majority of the Japanese learners agreed that it was necessary to know about the culture of the target language in order to speak it well. In contrast, the majority of the learners of Italian disagreed. Somewhat surprisingly then, all but two of the Italian learners considered that it was best to learn the language in Italy. Paradoxically, those learners of Italian who disagreed with the view that it is necessary to know about the target language culture in order to speak the language well, strongly supported the notion that it is best to learn the language in the target language country (item 13). The responses by the Japanese learners to these two items did not display this inconsistency.

To summarise, the learners did not appear to hold strongly traditional beliefs about the nature of language learning. Their responses to the items relating to translation and grammar, in particular, contrasted with those of the students in Horwitz' (1988) study. It also appeared that Japanese learners were more convinced than the Italian learners of the contribution a knowledge of culture can make to acquiring a good level of proficiency in a language. The ambivalence the learners of Italian in this regard reflects similar attitudes expressed by students studied by Horwitz (1988b) and Kern (1995).

Learning And Communication Strategies

The BALLI items dealing with learning and communication strategies reflect particular conceptions about the nature of language learning. The responses to these items, detailed in Table 5.4 below, indicate that the learners involved in this study have a communicatively oriented view of language learning rather than a traditional one. The learners' backgrounds as teachers and language teachers may have encouraged them to take on this orientation.

As can be seen from Table 5.4, there was universal endorsement from learners in both language groups about the importance of practising a lot as part of language learning. All learners also expressed strong support for practising their oral skills by speaking with fellow class members. There was moderate support from the learners of Japanese for practising with tapes and cassettes, a strategy that most of the learners of Italian neither agreed or disagreed with. However, a majority of these learners believed in the importance of reading as much as possible when learning a second language. The learners of Japanese were divided on this issue: half agreed on the importance of reading as much as possible, while the remainder were neutral or strongly disagreed. Those who agreed were the more advanced learners, who had a greater capacity than those less advanced to use the written language as a learning tool. The learner who strongly disagreed with this item was also one of the more advanced group. As she did not participate in the interviews it is impossible to know precisely why she held this view.

Table 5.4: Responses to ‘Learning and Communication Strategies’ BALLI Items

| | 1. (strongly agree) | 2.(agree) | 3. (neither agree nor disagree) | 4. (disagree) | 5. (strongly disagree) |
|---|---------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| <i>8. It is important to speak Italian/Japanese with an excellent pronunciation.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 1 | | 7 | | |
| Japanese | | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| <i>10. You shouldn't say anything in Italian/ Japanese until you can say it correctly</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 1 | | 3 | 4 |
| Japanese | | | | 4 | 2 |
| <i>14. I enjoy practising Italian/Japanese with the Italians/Japanese I meet.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 4 | 4 | | | |
| Japanese | 2 | 3 | | 1 | |
| <i>15. It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in Italian/Japanese.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 3 | 5 | | | |
| Japanese | 4 | 2 | | | |
| <i>19. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 4 | 4 | | | |
| Japanese | 2 | 4 | | | |
| <i>22. I feel timid speaking Italian/Japanese to other people.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Japanese | | 5 | | 1 | |
| <i>24. If beginning students are permitted to make errors in Italian/Japanese, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 1 | | 4 | 3 |
| Japanese | | 1 | | 4 | 1 |
| <i>28. It is important to practise with tapes and cassettes.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 1 | 1 | 5 | 1 | |
| Japanese | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | |
| <i>30. It is important to read as much as possible when learning a language other than English.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | |
| Japanese | | 3 | 2 | | 1 |
| <i>31. It is important to practise speaking with other class members.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 6 | 1 | 1 | | |
| Japanese | 4 | 2 | | | |

On the issue of the role of error in language learning, both groups clearly disagreed with the notion that a student shouldn't say anything in the language until it can be said correctly. The majority also disagreed with the view that allowing beginning student to make errors meant that it would be more difficult for the student to speak correctly later on. All except one learner of Japanese (who was undecided on the matter) agreed or strongly agreed that guessing an unknown word in the target language was an appropriate language learning strategy to use.

The importance of an excellent pronunciation brought a mixed response. The majority of the learners of Italian remained neutral on this issue, while half of the learners

of Japanese considered it important. The majority of learners from both groups indicated they enjoyed practising their language with speakers from the target language country. While most of the Japanese learners felt timid about speaking their language with native speakers, only two of the learners of Italian felt this way.

There was a considerable degree of consistency among all the learners about the most important strategies for language learning. Responses to items 10 and 24 suggested that learners saw errors as important aspects of language learning. The majority of learners in both groups were prepared to guess words they did not know and seemed to favour naturalistic forms of practice over more mechanical forms. Given the opportunity, they were prepared to try to interact with native speakers, despite feeling timid about doing so. Predictably, reading as much as possible in the target language was favoured to a greater extent by the learners of Italian than those of Japanese.

Motivation and Expectations

The influence of motivation and expectations on language learning is widely acknowledged. The responses of the majority of learners to these BALLI items indicated that they considered motivation and expectations to be important factors in second language learning. There were some differences in expectations between the two groups, with the Italian learners having less optimistic expectations than their Japanese counterparts.

As Table 5.5 shows, all the learners agreed (the majority strongly) with the items about wanting to learn to speak, read and write their target language well. All the learners also indicated their desire to have friends from the target language country. The majority of the Japanese learners appeared to have integrative motives for improving their language skills, while only a minority of the Italian learners shared this reason for learning. However, it was evident from the interviews that the Italian learners already had close contact with Italian people in the community. This may have made the need to seek out people from that language background less pressing.

Table 5.5: Responses to 'Motivation and Expectations' BALLI Items

| | 1. (strongly agree) | 2.(agree) | 3. (neither agree nor disagree) | 4. (disagree) | 5. (strongly disagree) |
|---|---------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| <i>21. Australians feel it is important to able to speak a language other than English.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian (n=8) | | | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Japanese (n=6) | | | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| <i>23. Australians feel it is important to able to speak Italian/Japanese.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Japanese | | 1 | 4 | 1 | |
| <i>26. I would like to improve my Italian/Japanese so I can get to know Italian/Japanese people better.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 2 | 1 | 4 | | 1 |
| Japanese | 2 | 2 | | 2 | |
| <i>33. Learning Italian/Japanese will increase my career opportunities as a teacher.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 1 | 2 | 5 | | |
| Japanese | 4 | 2 | | | |
| <i>35. I want to learn to speak Italian/Japanese well.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 7 | 1 | | | |
| Japanese | 6 | | | | |
| <i>36. I would like to have Japanese/Italian friends.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 4 | 4 | | | |
| Japanese | 1 | 5 | | | |
| <i>37. Learning a language other than English at school improves young people's job prospects when they leave school.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | | 3 | 5 | | |
| Japanese | 2 | 3 | 1 | | |
| <i>38. I want to learn to read and write Italian /Japanese well.</i> | | | | | |
| Italian | 7 | 1 | | | |
| Japanese | 5 | 1 | | | |

Neither group had very high expectations about the importance Australians place on learning a second language or on learning their language in particular, with the learners of Italian being more pessimistic on this issue than their Japanese counterparts. Some of the learners of Italian were also inclined to reserve their judgement about whether learning the language would improve their career prospects. The majority of Japanese learners, however, strongly agreed or agreed that this would be the case. This difference of views between the two groups possibly reflects the expansion in the teaching of Japanese that has occurred in Western Australia over the past five years. It may also reflect the fact that as a somewhat older group, the learners of Italian had already achieved their career goals and were studying their target language for reasons other than career advancement.

The Self-Reports

The beliefs about language learning described in this section of the chapter are derived from the self-reports completed for the seven lessons summarised in Chapter 3, Table 3.3. Part C of the self-report pro-forma (see Appendix 5), which asked the learners to explain why they chose the particular ways of learning they had listed in Part B of the pro-forma, provided the data from which these beliefs were deduced.

The explanations given by the learners in Part C of the pro-forma either directly expressed particular beliefs or implied them. Aggregation of these statements, by language group, and comparison of the sets of statements for each group revealed a large degree of consistency across the two languages. Further analysis showed that the statements made by individual learners could be grouped under beliefs related to one of following six categories: practice; memory; correctness; focus on understanding/meaning; intuition/pragmatism; and, self-encouragement.

Statements relating to ‘practice’ often reiterated the importance of practising regularly or stressed the importance of having opportunities to practise in ways that were communicative and interactive. Several examples of the type of statements interpreted as expressing beliefs about ‘practice’ are:

“Practice makes perfect.”

“To consolidate and make sure of these words before using them.”

“Practice and repetition help me learn. Focusing on new learning and trying to use the words help me.”

“I’ll have to practise these madly. I felt very inadequate.”

The first example explicitly expresses a belief about the value of practice. The others imply this belief through the intended action or outcome sought.

Statements stressing the importance of ‘memorisation’ were frequent indeed. These statements were often accompanied by assertions about the usefulness of writing things down. For example, a statement like, “Writing the words helps my memory retention” was fairly common. Sometimes, as in the following explanation, statements related to ‘memorisation’ referred to strategies the learner was using to retrieve language learned in the past:

“I am gradually remembering more of the Italian I learned years ago and am trying to remember as much as I can. By anticipating the teacher’s questions, I am forcing myself to dig deep and jolt my memory.”

Assertions about ‘correctness’ tended to be of two types. The first type was about intake and stressed the importance of learning new material correctly. For example:

“I made a special note of the correct pronunciation so I could remember it in the future.”

“I wrote down everything - words with articles and sometimes in sentences to show agreement of adjectives, so that I would have my own list to use during future activities.”

“Getting it right is important.”

The second was about output and the need to aim for correctness without allowing this objective to have pre-eminence over communication.

A considerable number of the explanations provided related to beliefs about the need to focus on understand/meaning. Many of these explanations were in response to activities which involved a component of listening comprehension. For example, one learner stated, “By focusing on the key words I could understand the main idea of each sentence”. Another’s comments underscored the need for learners to make sense of the language they were dealing with:

“Rather than muddle through not quite knowing if I was on the right track I thought it best to verify if what I was doing was correct. I concentrated on the reading because I lost track of the listening.”

Explanations interpreted as belonging in the “intuition/pragmatism” category included: “logical”; “it was the only way to keep up with this activity, really”; and, “it’s what I do, I don’t know why”. Statements such as “aids confidence and saves time”, “I tried to relax and have fun” and “to see if I could do the task without assistance” were interpreted as beliefs about the importance of self-confidence to language learning.

The categories of beliefs discussed above, together with the broad belief(s) deduced from the explanations provided by learners are listed in Table 5.6 below. Statements consistent with beliefs related to ‘correctness’ and ‘understanding/meaning’ were offered as explanations for particular strategy choices by all learners across most of the lessons. All the learners of Italian and four of the learners of Japanese also offered

explanations related to beliefs about ‘self-encouragement’ in more than half of the lessons on which they reported. Explanations related to beliefs about the need for constant practice were given by all except one of the learners of Japanese but by only four of the eight learners of Italian. The greater emphasis placed on this belief by the learners of Japanese may be the result of the particular challenges of that language, in particular the script. Half of the learners from both language groups provided explanations related to the need to practise in communicative and interactive ways. Explanations related to beliefs about ‘memory’ and ‘intuition/pragmatism’ were given by most of the learners from each language group.

Table 5.6: Learners’ Beliefs Derived from the Self-report Data

| |
|---|
| <p>1. Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant practice is essential. • It is important to have opportunities to practise in ways that are communicative and interactive. <p>2. Memory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorisation is an important part of language learning. <p>3. Correctness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to learn new language components correctly. • It is important to aim to be correct when using the language. <p>4. Focus on understanding/meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is essential to understand/make meaning from language learning activities. <p>5. Intuition/pragmatism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of strategies is not always entirely conscious. • The need to get things done sometimes determines choice of strategies. <p>6. Self-encouragement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to have confidence in myself as a learner and to feel comfortable with what I do. |
|---|

The Self-Report And BALLI Data Compared

How do learners’ beliefs derived from the self-reports compare with those elicited by the BALLI? The areas of correspondence between these two sets of beliefs are shown in Table 5.7 below. This Table demonstrates that selected beliefs identified by the BALLI can be mapped against beliefs in the ‘practice’, ‘correctness’, ‘understanding/meaning’ and ‘self-encouragement’ categories derived from the self-

report data, but not against the other two categories. It shows which belief statements from the self-report data link to the BALLI items listed. For example, BALLI item 19 corresponds almost exactly with the first belief statement in the 'practice' category from the self-reports and BALLI items 31 and 14 fit well with the second belief statement in this category. Similarly BALLI item 24 links to the first beliefs statement under 'correctness' and BALLI item 10 to the second statement. The number of learners from each language group who provided evidence of these beliefs in their self-reports and who agreed or disagreed with related BALLI items is indicated in brackets.

The different approach to expressing beliefs taken by particular data collection instruments is highlighted in Table 5.7. A comparison of the belief statements from the 'understanding/meaning' category and the corresponding BALLI item 15 illustrates this, as does BALLI item 5 and the belief statement in the 'self-encouragement' category. In both instances, the BALLI statement is concrete and particularised, whereas the self-report statement is broad and abstract. Table 5.7 also shows that there can be a negative correspondence between the self-report and BALLI statements of beliefs. This is evident in BALLI item 17 and the belief statement in the 'self-encouragement' category. However, acknowledging that one does not have a special ability for learning another language can also be interpreted as a form of self-acceptance.

As noted above, the self-report categories of 'memory, and 'intuition/pragmatism' did not have any matching BALLI beliefs. However, beliefs about the importance of memory in language learning are in evidence in the interviews, as are those expressed in the 'intuition/pragmatism' category. They will be discussed in the following section.

Table 5.7: Comparison of Self-report and BALLI Data on Beliefs

| SELF-REPORTS | BALLI |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constant practice is essential. <i>(Reported by half of the learners of Italian and all except one of the learners of Japanese.)</i> It is important to have opportunities to practise in ways that are communicative and interactive. <i>(Reported by half the learners from each language group.)</i> | <p>19. It is important to repeat and practice a lot. <i>(All learners agreed)</i></p> <p>31. It is important to practice speaking with fellow class members. <i>(All learners except one agreed)</i></p> <p>14. I enjoy practising Italian/Japanese with the Italian Japanese I meet. <i>(All learners except one agreed)</i></p> |
| <p>2. Memory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memorisation is an important part of language learning. <i>(Reported by all except one of the learners from each language group.)</i> | |
| <p>3. Correctness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to learn new language components correctly. <i>(Reported by all learners.)</i> It is important to aim to be correct when using the language. <i>(Reported by all learners.)</i> | <p>24. If beginning learners are permitted to make errors in Italian/Japanese it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on. <i>(All learners except one disagreed)</i></p> <p>10. You shouldn't say anything in Italian/Japanese until you can say it correctly. <i>(All learners except one disagreed)</i></p> |
| <p>4. Focus on understanding/meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is essential to understand/make meaning from language learning activities. <i>(Reported by all learners.)</i> | <p>15. It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in Italian/Japanese. <i>(All learners agreed)</i></p> |
| <p>5. Intuition/pragmatism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choice of strategies is not always entirely conscious. <i>(Reported by half of the learners from each language group.)</i> The need to get things done sometimes determines choice of learning strategies. <i>(Reported by half of the learners from each language group.)</i> | |
| <p>6. Self-encouragement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to have confidence in myself as a learner and feel comfortable with what I do. <i>(Reported by all learners of Italian and four out of six learners of Japanese)</i> | <p>5. I believe that I will learn to speak Italian/Japanese very well. <i>(All Italian learners agreed, only half of Japanese learners)</i></p> <p>17. I have a special ability for learning languages other than English. <i>(Most learners disagreed)</i></p> |

(Bracketed statements in italics in the Self-report column refer to the number of learners from each language group who provided explanations related to these beliefs in their self-reports. In the BALLI column, they refer to the numbers who agreed or disagreed with particular the BALLI items listed.)

The Interviews

The first part of this chapter outlined the learners' beliefs about language learning as revealed by the BALLI and those derived from their self-reports. It also examined the relationship between the beliefs from these two data sources. In order to further explore these beliefs, three interviews were conducted with nine of the learners (six of them learners of Italian and three of Japanese) who volunteered to be involved in this additional level of investigation. As part of the interview process, learners were invited to comment on their responses to the BALLI and to discuss particular self-reports they had completed prior to each of the interviews.

This section presents the picture of learners' beliefs that emerged from the analysis of the interview data. It then considers this information in relation to that provided by the BALLI and the self-reports and discusses points of connection and tension. Finally, it proposes a framework which relates (and integrates) information on learner beliefs from these three data sources.

Beliefs Common To All Learners

Analysis of the interview data identified a range of beliefs about language learning that were broadly consistent with those revealed by the BALLI and the self report. Some of these beliefs were common to all learners while others were espoused by most, though not all, of the learners. Common to all learners were a set beliefs about the nature of language learning which are summarised below:

- The most important part of language learning is learning to communicate in the target language.
- Learning a second language involves frequent use of the language to communicate with others.
- Language learning involves a willingness to take risks.
- Making mistakes is an important part of the second language learning process.

- Accuracy and correctness are important in second language learning, especially in certain contexts.
- Language learning requires sustained effort and practice.

These beliefs appeared to be interrelated and seemed to function as core or superordinate beliefs for learners. The discussion of these beliefs which follows is illustrated by edited excerpts taken from the written transcriptions of the interviews with the learners.

The first of the above beliefs emerged very directly from discussion of BALLI items 18 ('The most important part of learning a language is learning a language other than English is learning the vocabulary words') and 25 ('The most important part of learning a language other than English is learning the grammar') as well as in the discussion of learners' self-reports. It connects to the belief statement derived from the self-reports, 'It is essential to understand/make meaning from language learning activities' (see the 'understanding/meaning' beliefs category Table 5.6).

The learners all expressed the view that vocabulary and grammar were important and necessary aspects of language learning. For example, the following comments made by Thea about her response to BALLI 18 (with which she agreed) were also echoed by other learners:

I don't think that taking a list of words and learning them off by heart is necessarily going to make you a fluent speaker of a language. I think there I was thinking of vocab as being the tools of the language, because you can't say a whole lot if you haven't got the words and it doesn't matter how well you know the grammar. (Thea)

Rebecca, who had worked in Japan for some time, made the following observation on this matter when responding to a question about whether she had picked up any of the language:

Lots of vocabulary, but no sense of grammar and really, what's good about this course now is putting together the grammar to make it all hang together. (Rebecca)

Jessica expressed a similar sentiment when she stated, "One of the reasons for attending the course was to focus on grammar." As a background speaker, Jessica felt she needed this focus on this aspect of language learning in order to improve.

Because most of the learners were not very advanced in the acquisition of their target language, a considerable amount of their energies as learners was directed towards these aspects of language learning. Nevertheless, all of them clearly regarded learning of vocabulary and grammar, not as ends in themselves, but as tools for being able to communicate in the target language. Harriet's comment on this matter reflects the views of all the learners interviewed:

You need to know some grammar and you need to know some vocabulary, otherwise you're not going to be able to speak the language at all. But to me, it's more important that you learn to try and communicate in the language. To try and get across what you want to get across and if it's not perfect grammar and you haven't used quite the right word, then maybe that's not such an important issue. (Harriet)

Second language learning as an activity that involves risk-taking is not a topic explicitly addressed in the BALLI, though it is implied in items 10, 15 and 22. It was mentioned twice by learners in their self-reports - once as a strategy (Marion) and once as a belief (Thea). Interestingly enough, however, the need to be able to take risks as a language learner emerged as an important motif in the interviews. There was strong consensus about the importance of a willingness to take the risk of using the language, especially for communicative purposes. Indeed, risk-taking as it related to language learning was usually associated with oral interaction. As Harriet observed:

In the beginning stages you've just got to learn to speak. That's what's important. If you won't take any risks, there won't be much learning. (Harriet)

The importance of risk-taking to language learning emerged very strongly in discussion of BALLI item 1, (*It is easier for children than adults to learn a language other than English.*). Most of the learners constructed children as being instinctive risk-takers. Children, they argued, were less constrained by pre-existing ideas about what they could and couldn't do. They were less inhibited about making mistakes and therefore more willing to just 'have a go'. In contrast, as adults in the early phases of learning another language, the learners themselves were acutely aware of the possibility of making errors, of not getting the language quite right, of not being understood and therefore appearing foolish or stupid. Although this made 'having a go' much more

difficult, it did not diminish the necessity to do so. Rebecca acknowledged this when she described her perspective on this issue:

You've got to be prepared to humiliate yourself to a certain extent, to just say, 'I'm absolutely zero in this and I'm going to start right from the beginning' and not feel proud or shy or embarrassed or stupid. (Rebecca)

Simona described how she approached this matter:

It's really good to have a go. You get these funny looks when you say something. He [the Japanese native speaker who gives individual support to the learners] sort of raises an eyebrow and says, that article wasn't right. Sometimes I think I've forgotten what I'm supposed to put in there and we go through it bit by bit and in the end you understand what it's supposed to be, so I think the process is really important. (Simona)

Supporting the belief about the need to take risks by making active use of the language was the conviction that making mistakes was an important part of the learning process. This view certainly appeared to underpin the learners' responses to BALLI 10 and 24. Some learners, however, felt more comfortable about making mistakes than others. At one end of the spectrum was Marion, who accepted this as part of the way she worked and who valued a capacity to communicate in the language above accuracy:

I'm a very quick worker. But I make a huge amount of mistakes because I'm a quick worker, but that's not important to me, you know. (Marion)

Harriet, who was still terrified by the idea that she might make a mistake, was probably at the other end of the spectrum.

I'm scared to make a mistake. I still get what's almost like a mental block when I'm asked to say something in Japanese. I freeze when somebody asks me something. I figure the more practice I have at getting it out, even if it's not correct, the better. (Harriet)

Interestingly, a concern for accuracy and correctness coexisted with the a belief about the need to take risks and acceptance of mistakes as part of language learning. The interviews demonstrated that learners distinguished between intake and output when judging the importance of correctness. There was consensus among learners that correctness was important when it came to language intake and its associated practice activities. Rebecca's viewpoint that accuracy of language intake was an essential aspect of being an efficient learner was expressed by several other participants:

I don't see the point of memorising something incorrectly, memorising mistakes that you have to unpick later. (Rebecca)

However, when it came to actually using the language, especially in communicative contexts, most of the learners agreed with Virginia, who felt that accuracy was not a major goal in the early stages of second language learning. Simona's cautious caveat to this, shared by Rebecca, was that eventually "they should be having a go with the right thing rather than the wrong thing." Martha's view of the situation, which probably best reflected the view of the majority of the learners, underscored the opportunity for learning mistakes provided:

I think you'll acquire a language more effectively if you're not too worried about making mistakes and just accept the fact that you're going to, but can improve through listening to others. (Martha)

The conviction, expressed by all of learners, that second language learning required sustained effort and practice, is predictable, given the nature of the language learning enterprise and given the learners' backgrounds as learners and teachers. What is possibly more illuminating is what learners had in mind when they talked of practice. Some learners like Thea and Sofia, emphasised rote-like activities that focused on memorisation. Others, like Rebecca, "talked around the place" all the time and played mental games as a form of practice. Marion and Martha preferred the trial and error offered by social interaction.

Other Beliefs Shared By Learners

Other beliefs that emerged from the interviews, which were expressed by most but not all of the learners are summarised below:

- Learning a second language that uses a different script from L1 is more difficult than learning one that uses the same script.
- Everyone can learn a second language. However, some learners seem to learn it more readily than others.
- Language learning involves an ability to really listen (tune into the language) and to imitate.
- Language learning requires a lot of memory work.

- Language learning activities should be challenging and provide opportunities for interaction and practice in more naturalistic contexts.
- Everyone learns in different ways.
- Motivation and interest are key factors in second language learning.
- Self-confidence is very important to successful second language learning.
- Knowledge of the target language culture helps one to learn to speak that language well.

The first of these beliefs relates to items in the BALLI that concern the difficulty of language learning, while the second and the third are about foreign language aptitude. Following these are three beliefs which have to do with learning and communication strategies and three beliefs concerned motivation and expectations about language learning. A brief discussion of each of these beliefs follows.

The interviews lent evidence to the common sense view that learning a language that uses a different script from L1 imposes a considerable extra burden on language learners. This burden is particularly acute for adult second language learners because of their reliance on note-taking as a learning strategy. The problem was compounded for learners of Japanese from the current study because of this language's use of several different scripts. Both Rebecca and Harriet had learned a number of European languages. Their experiences as learners of Japanese had strengthened their conviction that learning a language based on an alphabet that is different from L1 was much more difficult than learning a language that used the same script. Harriet felt particularly hampered by the script in learning Japanese for several reasons. To begin with, she was not predominantly a visual learner, so having to learn one new script, let alone several, did not particularly facilitate her learning. She also felt that her limited access to the written language retarded the development of her oral language "because I can't reinforce it with the visuals and that makes it hard for me." Underlying the issue of script is also the cognate nature, or otherwise, of the language being learned. Thea, who like most of the learners of Italian had studied French, drew extensively on this language to help her learning and frequently commented on the advantages this conferred. She observed:

We're working with tools that we've already been using, basically. We've got the same alphabet, the same sorts of words being formed, basically the same sorts of structures, word order, that sort of thing. (Thea)

The interviews both confirmed and provided a useful additional perspective on the belief that everyone can learn to speak a language other than English. Most learners qualified their adherence to this belief with the observation, often drawn from experience, that some learners seem to possess this capacity to a greater degree than others. Interest, motivation, a willingness to take risks, a high level of facility in L1 were identified as factors that contributed to this heightened capacity. Listening was identified as a crucial skill by a number of the learners from both language groups. Listening meant a capacity to attend to the language with great concentration and intensity. "Really listen" as Thea commented. Interestingly, this skill was frequently described as a capacity for "tuning into the language", to different voices and different modulations. It also involved, as Simona observed, the capacity to "tune out" everything else that was irrelevant and extraneous. Allied to and flowing from this auditory capacity was an ability to remember and imitate and reproduce sounds and words, often after only hearing them a few times.

The learners' belief in the importance of memorisation as a learning strategy was complemented by an equally strong conviction about the need to be able to engage in learning strategies that were active, interactive and placed communicative demands on them as learners. The extent to which this latter belief was reflected in the actual learning strategies they used will be examined in the next chapter.

Self-confidence and motivation are affective aspects of learning. The significant role they play in language learning is sometimes underplayed. As learners returning once again to the language classroom, the participants of this study had to work at maintaining their own motivation. They had high expectations of themselves as students and sometimes struggled to maintain their confidence. As teachers taking on the role of learners, they often reflected on how the affective aspects of this experience made them look with fresh eyes on how they perceived and responded to their own learners. Both these sets of experiences seemed to strengthen the learners' convictions about the

importance self-confidence and motivation to successful language learning. Simona's observations on these matters sum up the feelings of many of her fellow learners:

I think you've got to believe you can do it even though it gets pretty hard at times and you think that nothing makes sense. You've got to believe you can go home and work it out. You've got to have enough self-confidence and optimism to start with, before all the other stuff [practise], because if that doesn't come through, you may as well give up. (Simona)

The interviews helped clarify some of the learners' responses to the BALLI item 9, which probed beliefs about the role of culture in language learning (*It is necessary to know about Italian/Japanese culture to speak Italian/Japanese well*). The majority of the Japanese learners had agreed with this item, while most of the learners of Italian had disagreed with it. In discussing their responses to this item in the interviews, both the Italian and Japanese learners affirmed that knowledge of the target language culture could contribute significantly to language learning. Learners from both groups seemed to baulk at the word 'necessary' in the BALLI statement, and its implication that knowledge of culture is essential to language learning. This suggested that learners perhaps conceptualised language and culture as separate entities, rather than aspects of the same entity. However, those learners who had had the experience of living in the country where the target language was spoken seemed to have a more vivid appreciation of the symbiotic relationship between linguistic and cultural knowledge. Perhaps learners who had not had this experience felt that insisting on too close a relationship between language proficiency and knowledge of the culture proscribed their possible level of achievement, and rejected the BALLI proposition for this reason.

Synthesis Of Beliefs

The preceding sections described the learners' beliefs as revealed by the three data sources: the BALLI, the self-reports and the interviews. Table 5.8 below summarises the key information provided by each of these data sources under the five areas of beliefs covered by the BALLI. For reasons of space, some of the statements in the BALLI column are abbreviated or reworded versions of the original items. For example 'languages other than English' has usually been substituted by 'another language' and

‘Italian/Japanese’ by ‘my TL’. In some instances, the syntax of the BALLI items has been changed to it to reflect the nature of the response by participants (eg item 27 has become ‘It is easier to understand than to speak my TL’). In a number of cases, two items covering a related concept have been covered by one item only (eg. items 21 and 23 are represented by ‘Australians don’t feel it is important to learn another language’). Where statements do not reflect the views of the majority learners from both language groups, the response is indicated by language group. Once again, for reasons of space, shorthand terms have been used. ‘All’ or ‘most’ refer to those who agreed, as do numbers or percentages. The term ‘neutral’ indicates neither agree nor disagreement.

Table 5.8: Summary of Beliefs: BALLI, Self-reports and Interviews

| BALLI | SELF-REPORTS | INTERVIEWS |
|--|---|--|
| Difficulty of language learning | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some languages are easier to learn than others. Italian is of medium difficulty/easy to learn. Japanese is difficult/very difficult to learn. I believe I will learn to speak my TL very well. (<i>It - all; Jp - half</i>) It is easier to understand than to speak my TL. (<i>It - most; Jp - two</i>) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning a second language that uses a script that is different from L1 is more difficult than learning a language that uses the same script. |
| Foreign language aptitude | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone can learn to speak a another language. It is easier for children than adults to learn another language. Some people have a special ability for learning languages. I have a special ability for learning languages. (<i>Jp - half; It - two</i>) It is easier for someone who already speaks a second language to learn another one. People who are good at maths and science can also be good at learning languages. Women are <i>not</i> better than men at learning languages. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone can learn a second language, but some seem to learn more readily than others. It is easier for children than for adults to learn another language. Language learning involves an ability to really listen to and to imitate. |
| Nature of second language learning | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neither grammar, nor vocabulary learning, nor translation are the most important parts of learning another language. Learning another language is different from learning other academic subjects. (<i>Jp - most; It - three</i>) It is best to learn a language in the TL country. (<i>It - most; Jp - half</i>) It is necessary to know about the TL culture to speak a language well. (<i>Jp - most; It - one</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is essential to understand/make sense of/make meaning from language learning activities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most important part of second language learning is being able to communicate in the target language. Language learning involves taking risks. Learning a second language involves frequent use of the TL to communicate with others. Knowledge of the TL culture helps one to learn to speak a language well. |

(It)= Italian learners (Jp)= Japanese learners

Table 5.8: Summary of Beliefs: BALLI, Self-reports and Interviews (cont'd)

| BALLI | SELF-REPORTS | INTERVIEWS |
|--|--|--|
| Learning and communication strategies | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's important to repeat and practise a lot. • It's important to practise with cassette tapes. (<i>Jp -half; It - five neutral</i>) • It's important to practise with other class members. • It's important to read as much as possible when learning another language. (<i>It -most; Jp - half</i>) • I enjoy practising my TL with TL speakers I meet. • I feel timid about speaking my TL to other people. (<i>It - most; Jp - two</i>) • It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in the TL. • Beginning students should try to speak the TL even though they will make mistakes. This will not make it difficult for them later to speak correctly. • It is important to speak with an excellent pronunciation. (<i>Jp - half; It - seven neutral</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant practice is essential. • It is important to have opportunities to practise in ways that are communicative and interactive. • Memorisation is an important part of language learning. • It is important to learn new language components correctly. • It is important to aim to be correct when using the language. • Choice of strategies is not always entirely conscious. • The need to get things done sometimes determines choice of learning strategies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language learning requires sustained effort and practice. • Language learning should be challenging and provide opportunities for interaction in more naturalistic contexts. • Language learning involves a lot of memory work. • Making mistakes is an important part of the second language learning process. • Accuracy and correctness are important in language learning, especially in certain contexts. |
| Motivation and Expectations | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I want to learn to speak , read and write my TL well. • I would like to improve my TL so I can get to know people from my TL country better. (<i>Jp - most; It - three</i>) • I would like to have friends from my TL country. • Australians don't feel it is important to learn an other language. (<i>It -most; Jp -four neutral</i>) • Learning my TL will increase my job opportunities. (<i>Jp - most; It - five neutral</i>) • Learning another language will improve young people's job prospects. (<i>Jp - most; It - five neutral</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to have confidence in myself as a learner and feel comfortable with what I do. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-confidence, is very important to successful second language learning. • Motivation and interest are crucial to second language learning. • Everyone learns in different ways. |

(It)= Italian learners (Jp)= Japanese learners

Each of the data collection sources in Table 5.8 has different characteristics and provides different perspectives on learner beliefs. The self-reports, for example, yielded most information about learning and communication strategies, some information about the nature of language learning and about motivation and expectations, and no information about the difficulty of language learning and language aptitude.

The interviews were used to validate information about beliefs derived from the two other sources of data by providing opportunities for learners to reflect on and respond to this data. Perhaps because of these processes, some of the beliefs yielded by the interviews tended to emphasise broad principles rather than focus on specific areas or issues.

Analysis of the interview data pointed to three superordinate or ‘organising’ beliefs, under which the more specific beliefs could be subsumed: communication; practice and accuracy; and self-efficacy. The superordinate beliefs suggested a way of synthesising the information from the three data sources to produce a framework of beliefs. This framework is presented in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9: Framework of Beliefs

| |
|---|
| <p>The most important part of language learning is being able to communicate in the target language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning a second language involves frequent use of the language to communicate with others.• Language learning involves a willingness to take risks.• Making mistakes is an important part of the second language learning process.• Language learning involves an ability to really listen (tune into the language) and to imitate. <p>Language learning requires sustained effort and practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language learning requires a lot of memory work.• Accuracy and correctness are important in second language learning.• Language learning activities should be challenging and provide opportunities for interaction and practice in more naturalistic contexts.• Learning a second language that uses a different script from L1 is more difficult than learning one that uses the same script.• Knowledge of the TL culture helps one to learn to speak the language well. <p>Everyone can learn a second language. However, some learners seem to learn more readily than others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyone learns in different ways.• Self-confidence is very important to successful second language learning.• Motivation and interest are key factors in second language learning. |
|---|

The three ‘organising beliefs’ in the above framework were taken from the list of beliefs in Table 5.8 derived from the interviews. The first, ‘The most important part of language learning is being able to communicate in the target language’, came from the section in Table 5.8 relating to the nature of second language learning. The second, ‘Language learning requires sustained effort and practice’, was taken from the learning and communication strategies section of Table 5.8. The third, ‘Everyone can learn a second language. However, some learners seem to learn more readily than others’, came from the foreign language aptitude section of Table 5.8.

The beliefs subsumed under the three areas in Table 5.9 are the remaining beliefs from the ‘interviews’ column in Table 5.8. They were selected because they encompassed the beliefs listed in the two other data sources detailed in Table 5.8.

A comparison of the beliefs outlined in Table 5.9 with those produced by Wenden (1988) (see Table 2.1 in Chapter 2) shows a considerable degree of similarity between the three superordinate beliefs listed and the three broad categories of beliefs Wenden deduced from her data. There are also similarities between the specific beliefs listed under each of the Wenden’s categories and those listed under the three superordinate beliefs in Table 5.9. These beliefs can also be linked to the categories of beliefs identified by Yang (1999), Sakui and Gaies (1999) - see Table 2.2 in Chapter 2 - (assuming the specific reference to English in several of them encompasses other languages) and Benson and Lor (1999), (see page 13, Chapter 2). Finally, the specific beliefs listed under the second and third superordinate beliefs listed above seem to fit with the qualitative and quantitative conceptions of language and language learning proposed by Benson and Lor (1999).

Summary

This chapter described, in detail, the beliefs about language learning held by the participants of this study, as revealed by the BALLI, the self-reports and the interviews. Despite the different emphases and orientations of each of these data collection processes, analysis demonstrated considerable consistency in the beliefs identified by each process.

Data from the three sources was synthesised and a framework of beliefs developed from this synthesis. Correspondences between elements of this framework of beliefs and categories of beliefs identified by other research were briefly discussed. The framework of beliefs represented in Table 5.9 will be used to explore the relationship between learners' beliefs and their strategy use in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER 6

BELIEFS AND STRATEGIES: CONNECTIONS AND TENSIONS

This chapter, which is in two parts, explores from a number of perspectives the possible relationship between the learners' beliefs and their choice of learning strategies. In the first part, it presents the pattern of association for strategies and beliefs that emerged from the analysis of the self-reports. Drawing on the interview data, it then discusses a key implication of these patterns for the way in which strategies and beliefs might interact. In the second part it examines the relationship between beliefs and learning strategies suggested by the interview data. It explores the nature of the connections identified using a framework of three themes.

Pattern Of Association

Language Groups

The pattern of association between the learners' strategies and their beliefs, as revealed by the self-report data, is presented in Table 6.1 below. The strategies listed in this table are those identified in Chapter 4 as being the most frequently used by learners (see Table 4.4). The areas of beliefs are those described in Chapter 5 (see Table 5.6). The figures in Table 6.1 indicate the number of learners in each language group who either reported an association between particular strategies and beliefs or who made statements from which such an association could be inferred.

Each figure in the Table represents the number of individuals who made that association (or for whom the association could be inferred), not the number of times this occurred for particular learners. Numbers in bold indicate that the association was reported or could be inferred for a least half of the language group involved.

Table 6.1: Patterns of Association Between Strategies and Beliefs, From the Self-reports

| BELIEFS | Under- standing/ Making meaning | | Memorisa- tion | | Correctness | | Practice | | Intuitive/ Pragmatic | | Self - encourage- ment | |
|--|--|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|
| | <i>It</i> | <i>Jp</i> | <i>It</i> | <i>Jp</i> | <i>It</i> | <i>Jp</i> | <i>It</i> | <i>Jp</i> | <i>It</i> | <i>Jp</i> | <i>It</i> | <i>Jp</i> |
| Paying attention | 8 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Taking notes | 4 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Getting help | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Structured reviewing | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Translat- ing | 3 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Using key words | 2 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Repetition | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Recombin- ing | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Organising | 1 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Using linguistic & other clues | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Seeking opportu- nities for practice | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

These data invite a number of observations. The first is that, for the group of learners as a whole, the greatest range of strategies was associated with beliefs related to ‘understanding/making meaning’. The association was stronger across a larger number of strategies for the Japanese learners than for the Italian learners. The second is that significantly fewer strategies were associated with the ‘intuitive/pragmatic’ and ‘self encouragement’ belief areas than with the other four areas. Lastly, the association between any one strategy and any one belief did not appear to be exclusive for either of the language groups. ‘Paying attention’, for example, was linked to the first three belief areas by at least half of the learners from both language groups and to the last three areas by a smaller number of these learners.

Also evident from this data are differences in the pattern of association for the two language groups. All the Italian learners, for example, connected ‘paying attention’ with

beliefs related to 'understanding/making meaning'. Half of these learners also linked this strategy with areas of belief related to 'memorisation' and 'correctness'. There were other connections for the learners of Italian. Seven of these learners associated 'taking notes' with 'memorisation'. A further five of them linked 'taking notes' to 'correctness'. The data also shows that half of the learners of Italian related 'getting help' to beliefs linked with 'correctness'.

The pattern of association for the Japanese learners was strongly related to 'understanding/making meaning'. For example, the strategy of 'using key words' was explained by all the Japanese learners in terms of this belief area. Half or more of the learners also linked the following six strategies to this area of belief: 'paying attention'; 'recombining'; 'repetition'; 'translating'; 'organising'; and, 'using linguistic and other clues'.

Strategies used by some of the learners of Japanese were also linked to the belief areas of 'Memorisation', 'Correctness', 'Practice' and 'Intuitive/pragmatic'. Most significantly, half of the learners linked the strategies of 'paying attention', 'repetition' and 'recombining' to the 'Memorisation' belief area. Half also linked 'paying attention' to the 'Correctness' belief area, and 'repetition' to the 'Intuitive/pragmatic' area of belief. Many of the other links between particular strategies and areas of belief were made by individual learners.

In summary, a number of points of connection between beliefs and strategies emerged for each of the two language groups. Three areas of beliefs appeared to influence use of particular strategies for the learners of Italian: 'understanding/making meaning'; 'memorisation'; and, 'correctness'. For learners of Japanese the first of these beliefs areas was by far the most significant, as it was associated with the choice of seven of the strategies listed.

Individual Learners

The aggregated data presented in Table 6.1 indicates particular patterns of association beliefs and strategies for each of the language groups. However, this data

provides no real insights about the nature of these patterns at the individual level. To illustrate this, profiles detailing the connections between strategies and beliefs as recorded by several learners from each language group are presented and discussed. The profiles of two learners of Italian, Thea and Marion are examined first, followed by those of two learners of Japanese, Harriet and Rebecca

The Italian learners' profiles are presented in Tables 6.2 below. The numbers indicate how often each learner explained a reported strategy in terms of a particular area of beliefs. The individual nature of the relationship between beliefs and strategies is evident in the data presented in Table 6.2. For example, Thea's strategy choice appears to have been most strongly associated with beliefs related to 'memorisation', followed by those related to 'understanding/making meaning' and 'practice'. On the other hand, beliefs about 'practice' appear to be the dominant influence on Marion's strategy choice. 'Understanding/making meaning', 'intuitive/pragmatic' and 'self-encouragement' also featured in Marion's profile, but to a lesser extent than 'practice'. In contrast to Marion, Thea recorded no strategies associated with beliefs related to 'self-encouragement'.

A comparison of the profiles of the two learners reveals only five instances where both learners connected choice of particular strategies to similar beliefs. Three strategies were linked to the 'practice' beliefs area by both Thea and Marion: 'structured reviewing', 'recombining'; and, 'paying attention'. Both learners also connected 'paying attention' with beliefs related to 'understanding/making meaning', and 'structured reviewing' to 'intuitive/pragmatic' beliefs.

Table 6.2 also shows that the two learners of Italian often linked use of particular strategies to more than one area of beliefs. Individual as well as common patterns emerged here. 'Structured reviewing' was associated with four areas of beliefs by Thea and three by Marion. 'Paying attention' was linked to five areas by Marion and two by Thea. Thea linked a brace of other strategies (recombining; taking notes; translating; using linguistic and other clues; getting help) to more than one area of beliefs while Marion linked only two other strategies (overviewing; seeking practice opportunities) to more than one area.

Table 6.2 Thea's (T) and Marion's (M) Strategy Use and Beliefs Profile, from the Self-reports

| BELIEFS | Under- standing/ Making meaning | | Memori- s-ation | | Correct- ness | | Practice | | Intuitive/ Pragmatic | | Self encourage- ment | |
|---|--|---|--------------------|---|------------------|---|----------|----|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|
| | T | M | T | M | T | M | T | M | T | M | T | M |
| STRATEGIES | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Associating/ elaborating | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Using key words | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Structured reviewing | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| Repeating | | | | | | | | 3 | | | | |
| Recognising formulas and patterns | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Recombining | | | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| Using resources for receiving messages | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Taking notes | 1 | | 4 | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | |
| Translating | | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Using linguistic and other clues | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | |
| Getting help | 1 | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | |
| Adjusting the message | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Overviewing | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Paying attention | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | |
| Identifying the purpose of the task | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Setting goals and objectives | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Seeking practice opportunities | | | | | | | | 3 | | 1 | | 1 |
| Listening to your body | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Asking for clarification | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Cooperating with peers | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Taking risks | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| TOTAL STRATEGIES | 6 | 4 | 13 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 13 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 4 |

The profiles of two learners of Japanese presented in Tables 6.3 below also offer individual contrasts and comparisons in choice, emphasis and deployment of strategies vis-a-vis beliefs. Both Harriet and Rebecca linked the greatest number of strategies to 'understanding/making meaning'. Four of the five instances where both learners connected choice of particular strategies to similar beliefs were related in this area. The

fifth was linked to the ‘practice’ area of beliefs, which accounted for the next most significant are for both Harriet and Rebecca. The areas of ‘correctness’ and ‘self-encouragement’ were associated with five strategies by Rebecca. Harriet, on the other hand, reported only one linked to ‘self-encouragement’ and no strategies linked to ‘correctness’. The latter result is intriguing given the fear of making mistakes reported by Harriet in the interviews (see Chapter 5, p. 104).

Table 6.3 Harriet’s (H) and Rebecca’s (R) Strategy Use and Beliefs Profile, from the Self-reports

| BELIEFS | Under- standing/ Making meaning | | Memori- s-ation | | Correct- ness | | Practice | | Intuitive/ Pragmatic | | Self encourage- ment | |
|---|--|---|--------------------|---|------------------|---|----------|---|-------------------------|---|----------------------------|---|
| | H | R | H | R | H | R | H | R | H | R | H | R |
| STRATEGIES | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Associating/ elaborating | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Using key words | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Using physical response | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Repeating | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Formally practising with sounds | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Recognising formulas and patterns | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Recombining | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Practising naturalistically | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Using resources for receiving messages | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Taking notes | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | |
| Analysing expressions | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Translating | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Using linguistic and other clues | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Switching to L1 | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| Getting help | 1 | | | 1 | | 2 | | 1 | | | | |
| Paying attention | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 |
| Delaying speech to focus on listening | | 1 | | | | | | 2 | | | | |
| Organising | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Setting goals and objectives | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Seeking practice opportunities | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Self-monitoring | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | |
| Using laughter | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Cooperating with peers | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| TOTAL STRATEGIES | 9 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 5 |

The contrasts and comparisons between the two pairs of learners, by language, are also worth noting. Only two thirds (fourteen) of the total number of strategies reported by each pair was common to both pairs. For both languages, most of the strategies unique to a particular language pair were reported by one of the two learners: Marion (Italian) and Rebecca (Japanese). The two learners of Italian were more likely than the Japanese learners to link a particular strategy to more than one area of beliefs. However, ‘paying’ attention’ featured significantly for both pairs in this respect.

Most significantly, the pattern emerging for both pairs of learners in Tables 6.2 and 6.3 is characterised by a clustering of strategies around one or several dominant areas of belief. This pattern is, to a greater or lesser degree, common to all the learners in the study except Simona, who recorded a similar number of strategies across all six areas. This clustering of strategies around particular beliefs is consistent with the findings of the study of the relationship between learner beliefs and strategy use carried out by Yang (1999) which found correlations between clusters of strategies and particular beliefs.

Insights From The Interviews

The clustering of strategies around dominant beliefs described above points away from a simple one-to-one correspondence between a particular strategy and a particular belief. It suggests a more complex kind of relationship, where key beliefs influence the choice of a range of strategies. It also highlights the role of dominant beliefs as organisers for the strategies learners choose and the way they deploy them.

The next section examines evidence of this relationship from interview data provided by two pairs of the learners studied. Their comments relate to lessons observed by the researcher and summarised in Table 3.3 of Chapter 3. The key elements of these lessons for each language group are presented again in Table 6.4 below.

Table 6.4: Summary of Key Elements of Lessons Discussed

| Italian lessons | Japanese lesson |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion on the theme of television including presentation and practise of relevant vocabulary and structures.• Oral reading of a passage comparing and contrasting television programs in Italy and Australia.• Preparation of written questions for a survey of fellow students' television viewing habits.• Students conduct the survey, record, summarise and write out the results. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practise of the past tense, focusing on verb ending and sentence structure for questions.• Students guess others' weekend activities, then check guesses by questioning them.• More advanced students asked to follow up: affirmative responses with "How was it?"• Students write a description of what class members did during the weekend. |

Before embarking on an examination of the four learners' insights, several differences between the Italian and Japanese lessons being referred to are worth noting. The Japanese learners' comments related to one lesson only (lesson four, Table 3.3, Chapter 3). The comments of the learners of Italian referred to two lessons (lessons four and five, Table 3.3, Chapter 3). The activities in the Japanese lesson were highly structured. The learners had to produce very little original text to complete them and could draw on the vocabulary and structures provided on the worksheet. The activities in the Italian lesson were more open-ended and required the learners to produce more spontaneous oral and written text.

In discussing the learners' insights, edited excerpts of the written transcripts of their interviews will be used. Harriet and Rebecca's perceptions will be considered first, followed by those of Marion and Thea.

Harriet and Rebecca

The Japanese lesson discussed by Harriet and Rebecca involved learners asking each other what they had done over the weekend in order to practise the past tense that had been taught earlier in the day. As part of the activity, each learner had to guess what his/her partner's response would be before actually asking the questions. Model

answers were provided on the pair work activity sheet for the less fluent, as well as an opportunity for the more fluent to construct their responses. This was done because the class was made up of a group of students who were relative beginners and a group who were somewhat more advanced.

Harriet was one of the more advanced students. Her goal in this lesson was to try to extend herself by seizing whatever opportunities were offered to practise particular structures in a more naturalistic way, while at the same using the language for communicative purposes. Harriet's comments illustrate this:

Int: You said that you tried to change the format of the question a bit. Could you tell me more about what you were doing there?

H: I guess I didn't play with the format because I couldn't really. Once I'd asked a question, when I got an answer I tended to ask another question, whether I got a yes or no answer. I only did that with the people that I knew would handle it. Not with people who were struggling. I didn't do this to the beginners.

Int: So basically you did this with the people who were at your level?

H: Yes.

Int: OK, how did this help your learning?

H: I could try out different things and make it like a more real situation, instead of just parroting what we'd been told. I tried to actually think, well what do I want to say, and then say it. I didn't read the questions or anything. I tried not to.

Harriet's principal concern was to "make it more like a real situation". Her willingness to revert to a simpler form of questioning if she felt her interlocutor was struggling is consistent with her conviction, expressed by her elsewhere in the interview, that the aim of language learning is to be able to communicate in the target language. She used a range of strategies to achieve her aim. Aware that memorisation was not her strong point, she actively sought to exercise her memory by not referring to the written text and deliberately practising a particular form. In the above extract, she set herself the task of "telling the truth" by trying to say what she really wanted to say rather than what she could say with ease. In another part of the activity, she decided to do the opposite - "not to tell the truth, just so that I'd get practice at using the negative past." Harriet's movement between strategies that helped her extend her communicative skills and those

that provided practice and focus on form show the influence of beliefs on the deployment of strategies.

Rebecca, a very strategic learner, offered some intriguing comments how and why she deployed the strategies she used. Despite being a beginner, she was able to observe and reflect on how fellow students coped with this activity, as well as work out the approach to use to maximise her own learning.

I find doing this course I'm interested not only in observing the way in which it's taught, but also the way in which we're learning and trying to learn. I thought it was quite an amusing lesson to see the different way in which other people reacted to the activity, because there were all sorts of different reactions. We were given a lot of freedom and some people went straight for it and did it totally seriously, others sort of backed off and did it a little bit seriously and then sort of had a chat on the side, and others made very little effort at all to do the activity. I myself was not a good student during that lesson, so it was quite interesting to observe that it was easy to cheat and hey, if you wanted to cheat you cheated. I understood what I was meant to do, but I decided to take a few short cuts.
(Rebecca)

Rebecca, like Harriet, moved between strategies that facilitated communicative use of the language and practising elements of it. In keeping with her strong beliefs about accuracy and the importance of decoding, she started with practice that focused on form and then moved to using the language interactively. In line with her beliefs about the importance of self-encouragement, she also quite consciously used strategies intended to provide support for herself and other learners. These strategies frequently took the form of 'short cuts' or adaptations of aspects of the activity.

The first 'short cut' that Rebecca (and others) took was to write out the text to be used in the dialogue in *romanji*. This was done to help deal with the 'overload of information' and the different concepts that had to be learnt. Rebecca acknowledged that her approach might not be universally approved. "This goes against a lot of modern theories on language, which say that it should be conversational", she commented. However, she justified this strategy on the grounds that learners "had so many different chunks to get in the right order, we needed to get it set in our mind before we could actually speak it."

As the exchange below illustrates, Rebecca's other reason for writing the questions out in *romanji* was to be able to adjust her delivery and, to some extent, her language to the level of her interlocutors.

Int: You rewrote them [the questions] out in romanji. Did you add anything to them?

R: Yes. I did make them slightly different. I decoded those the teacher had given to us into romanji. I'm still at the stage where I read a block of hiragana I need to separate it, to find out where a word ends and where a new word begins.

Int: OK, you said that made you more comfortable when you were speaking, and that was the reason?

R: Mainly, because I was interviewing people at totally different levels. I'm sort of in-between, I think.

Int: You're not at the bottom.

R: There's worse. I have to make sure that what I say is slow enough and clear enough for them to be able to answer. Also, I don't want to make a fool of myself when I go to the people who are much better than me, I want to make sure they don't think, this beginner hasn't done her homework. So it's a communication thing. It's a matter of keeping my end up and making myself clear.

One of Rebecca's learning strategies when she interacted with the more competent speakers was to listen to their language, "their speed, fluency and whether they added little frills". As her comments on page 75 indicated, she did this to learn from it and judge her own level of achievement against theirs. She noted, for example, that whereas the more advanced learners asked the Japanese equivalent of "Did you take your dog for a walk?", she used a simpler structure such as "Did he go to the park?" She also noted, with some satisfaction, that the more advanced learners did not add any frills and that she was the only beginner to complete the section which required the students to provide their own responses. Like Harriet, Rebecca was extending herself in a number of ways.

The other 'short cut' taken by Rebecca and her partners involved ignoring the instruction to respond to questions using a full sentence. As the following interview extract reveals, Rebecca's rationale for doing this was to promote interaction and at the same time get the task completed by making her interlocutors feel comfortable and confident:

R: In terms of following the format [provided by the instructor], I actually did use the full range. So I started using the full sentences [in responding to questions]. We then got to a stage where we just said 'video'.

Int: That's why you were all laughing so much. That's what you meant by cheating?

R: But we didn't use English. We were injecting some humour into it as well and I think that's an important part of learning. I did that mainly when I with the lower group, just to get the confidence thing and comfort zone.

Int: So you were actually using it to promote the flow of conversation? You were adjusting to your audience?

R: And to complete the task. Yes.

Marion and Thea

Marion's and Thea's comments both centred on the learning of vocabulary and structures needed to discuss the topic of 'television'. They also included the discussion of viewing habits and preferences by the whole group, in preparation for the survey activity that would be carried out in the subsequent lesson.

Marion's strategies in this lesson appeared to be guided by the principle of learning by making meaning through active involvement, an approach consistent with beliefs she expressed repeatedly in her interviews. The following exchange shows how paying attention in a very intense way was fundamental to this process:

Int: In the first part, where the instructor was introducing vocabulary, you said you paid attention to the words in English [provided on an accompanying worksheet]. Were you paying attention to particular things?

M: I was just making sure that I was paying attention and that I was listening. If I distract myself I lose it, so I really do have to work hard on concentrating because that is where I learn. I know that it's wasted time to do things like writing copious notes. I know it's just good for me to sort of contemplate it in that moment, in that moment just learn.

Int: I was going to ask you about what you said [in the self-report]. You said that you learn at the point of teacher/student interaction. Does that mean that you don't have to do much work afterwards?

M: Yes it actually does.

For Marion, active involvement began with making meaning. Therefore, she took whatever steps she felt were needed to maintain a meaningful connection with the material being presented, including checking the meaning of a word in the dictionary.

Int: Why did you look up your dictionary?

M: I can't remember exactly, but I think it was a word that she was using constantly, that I couldn't make sense of, so I thought, I've got to look it up and store it otherwise I'm lost in the whole thing. I was trying to orientate myself to her.

Int: In that case, it paid for you to lose your concentration momentarily.

M: Otherwise I was in a fog and then I would have drifted off.

Marion's active but 'meaningful' approach to practice is further illustrated by her description of what she was engaged in during the whole group discussion that preceded the learner's writing of the survey questions.

Int: In the part where the instructor was asking people particular questions, you were obviously giving answers. Did you try and memorise particular structures?

M: No. No, no, no. I don't do that. I don't do that. I concentrate on the whole thing, rather than thinking about specific words. I have decided that I'm useless speaking Italian when I've prepared it, when I have to read it out, because there's no learning for me. There's no learning whatsoever.

Int: So the spontaneous element is very important?

M: Very important for me. I think I do lots of passive learning, but I'm not really terribly aware of that. Like, I'll do some reading at home. I understand a lot more than I can speak.

The following final comment from Marion shows how her beliefs about the communicative purposes of language learning and her passion for practising actively may have worked together to influence how she chose and deployed her learning strategies.

I like to involve myself in more than just "How are you?", you know. I like to have a proper conversation and that's when I learn, and I also learn with people mirroring back the correct language to me. Like I love it when the teacher just jumps in and gives me the right word when I've got it wrong, or changes the ending of a word. (Marion)

Thea's experiences as a language learner also provide evidence of beliefs influencing the deployment of strategies. Thea's focus, in keeping with her dominant beliefs, seemed to be on strategies that promote meaning and that aid memorisation. Like Marion, Thea was prepared to consult the dictionary if a word she did not understand recurred in an ongoing exchange.

Int: I noticed that when something came up that you didn't quite understand you looked in the dictionary. How important is to be able to do that at certain points?

T: Yes, I do that often with those little words, if I hear the teacher saying something again and again and again. Like Miriam this morning kept on using 'confronto'. I kept hearing it and thought, what does that mean? I'll look it up if I just don't know what it means. (Thea)

In contrast to Marion's holistic approach to learning, Thea adopted an approach that was both pragmatic and strongly analytical. The extract below shows how Thea developed meaning by breaking down unknown words to their component parts and tapping into her knowledge of French, in particular, for similarities that would help her make an educated guess.

Int: When you were reading the article about television at the end of the lesson, one of the things you said you did was to use your knowledge of English and French to help you work out the meaning of the words. How do you do that in particular? Can you give me some examples.

T: Well I just look at it. A lot of times the Italian word is very similar to the French word or even the English word, so it's fairly obvious. Other times it's not. The other day I remember looking at word and thinking, what does this mean?. When I broke the word up there was just one part of it that was similar to the French and I knew what that meant. I checked in the dictionary and it was right, it had actually given me the meaning. So when I can't use a dictionary, I tend to break the word up into parts and see if there's a part that I recognise, whether it's a prefix or a suffix or a little bit or whatever.

Thea was committed to using the language for communicative purposes, even though it took her a long time "to get a sentence out." In line with her belief in practice and memorisation, she liked to use rehearsal techniques to facilitate more spontaneous use of the language, while at the same time endeavouring to work directly in the language.

T: I think it's [production] is hugely important because it kind of makes concrete everything that you learn. It just takes me a long time to get a sentence out.

Int: Do you sort of rehearse it in your head?

T: If there's a particular word that I need, and I know I've got no hope of getting it, I'll bumble around and hope the teacher takes pity on me, but I usually run it through my head.

Int: In the language, or are you translating?

T: No, I try and do it in the language.

The insights provided by these four learners illustrate how beliefs might influence choice and deployment of strategies. Key beliefs appear to become organisational foci for the learners' actions, thus perhaps helping learners ensure that they used the strategies available to them in the most effective manner possible.

The Nature Of The Relationship

The first half of this chapter drew on self-report data to demonstrate the pattern of association between learners' beliefs and their learning strategies. It also considered the implication of these patterns of association and presented evidence from the interview data that suggested that learners' beliefs could act as organisers for the deployment of their strategies.

This second half of the chapter will attempt to describe the nature of the relationship between the learners' beliefs and their strategies as suggested by the interview data. It will explore some of the inherent tensions between particular beliefs listed in Table 5.9, Chapter 5, and examine the implications of these tensions for individual learners' strategy choice. Three themes that emerged from the learners' discussion of their strategies and beliefs in the interviews provide the framework for the ensuing discussion. The themes are:

- focus on meaning and focus on form;
- past and present experiences of language learning; and,
- factors that enable or constrain learning.

As in the first part of the chapter, edited extracts from the interview transcripts will be used to illustrate particular issues raised and points discussed.

Focus On Meaning And Focus On Form

This theme encapsulates two areas that have, by turn, been key concerns of SLA research and pedagogy over the past twenty years: 'meaning' or the aspects of language learning that focus on communication; and, 'form' or the aspects of language learning that focus on understanding and accurate use of particular linguistic features of a language. The theme relates to the first two sets/categories of beliefs listed in Table 5.9 (*The most important part of language learning is learning to communicate in the target language;* and, *Language learning requires sustained effort and practice*) and reflects some of the tensions between particular elements of these beliefs. Before examining these tensions and discussing their implications for learners' strategy choice, the

conceptualisation of ‘focus on form’ in the current SLA literature is briefly discussed and the way this term will be used in this section defined.

Doughty and Williams (1998) remind us of the distinction between ‘focus on form’ and ‘focus on formS’ proposed in the late eighties by Long (as cited in Doughty and Williams, 1998) and reiterated more recently by Long and Robinson (1998: 23), who state:

“focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features - by the teacher and/or one or more students - triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production.”

Focus on form has “a prerequisite engagement in meaning before attention to linguistic features can be expected to be effective”, whereas focus on formS “entails isolation or extraction of linguistic features from context or from communicative activity” (Doughty and Williams 1998: 3).

While accepting the distinction made by Long between ‘focus on forms’ and ‘focus on formS’, Doughty and Williams (1998: 4) stress that these terms should not be regarded as polar opposites and usefully highlight their relationship to ‘focus on meaning’. They state that “focus on form *entails* a focus on formal elements of language, whereas focus on formS is *limited* to such a focus and that focus on meaning *excludes* it.” Thus, ‘focus on form’ as used below includes both ‘form’ and ‘formS’ as described by Doughty and Williams above. Learners involved in this study certainly reported focusing both on form and on formS. However, they, like their instructors, did not seem to distinguish consciously between the two, but tended to regard them as the same process.

Tensions Between Beliefs

The two sets of beliefs from Table 5.9, Chapter 5, under consideration here (*The most important part of language learning is learning to communicate in the target language; and, Language learning requires sustained effort and practice*) have considerable correspondence to categories of beliefs identified by Wenden (1988), Bensor and Lor (1999) and Sakui and Gaies (1999). Like the beliefs detected by these

researchers, the two sets listed above broadly relate to beliefs associated with a communicative orientation towards language learning (which focuses on meaning), in the first case, and beliefs related to a more structural and traditional approach (which focuses on form) in the other.

The tension inherent in the two sets of beliefs is due to the potentially conflicting demands of the need to use the language to communicate (which involves taking risks and being willing to make mistakes) and the need to be accurate and correct in using particular linguistic features. Beginning or not very advanced learners, for whom using the language and using linguistically correct forms can be quite difficult to achieve except with highly structured tasks, may feel significant tension between these two set of beliefs. This tension (or lack of it) and its influence on learners' choice of strategies is illustrated by an examining the experiences of two learners (Thea and Rebecca) in some detail, together with those of a number of other learners in less detail.

Thea, like all the other learners, believed that the most important part of language learning was learning to communicate in the target language. She said her long-term goal was "to be able to communicate with an Italian speaker in a real life type situation, to have a reasonable conversation, not just say hello, what time is it, it's nice weather." Thea was enthusiastic about the instructor's constant use of the target language in the classroom and detailed how she was actively attending to both meaning and form:

The fact that the teacher speaks Italian is fantastic. I find it has forced me to concentrate and to think. It's great for the listening skills. I was hearing the verbs being used and I was thinking, you use that ending for that person. (Thea)

However, Thea described her previous language learning experience at school and university as involving, "grammar, grammar, grammar, a bit more grammar and then if you got really lucky you were able to say one word in French." This experience appears to have trained her to expect high levels of accuracy and correctness from herself. She firmly believed in the importance of rote-learning and memorisation and consistently and successfully made use of strategies based on these techniques as reciting verb endings and vocabulary out aloud, writing out vocabulary lists, taking copious notes and using mnemonic devices.

Despite her own experiences as teacher versed in a communicatively based methodology, Thea did not find it easy to move from learning about the language to also include learning by using it. Her comments below, taken from the final interview conducted during the third block of face-to-face instruction, demonstrates how her desire to use the language could be thwarted by a fear of making mistakes:

What inhibits me is just the not being sure of what I should say and sometimes not saying it because I think, well that's going to be wrong, it's going to be ridiculous and sometimes it's not. Sometimes, what I would have said would have been close enough to correct, So that is why sometimes, I just have to think, well, I'll just say it and see what happens. I'm definitely making an effort to say more. (Thea)

What is interesting in Thea's comment is her recognition that, when attempting to use the language (focusing on meaning rather than form, output rather than intake), then concentrating too exclusively on accuracy might not be the most effective learning strategy.

The context in which Thea attempted to use the language appeared to influence the degree to which her concern for accuracy affected her. In her first interview, she commented on why she found practising with fellow class members a particularly useful and effective strategy:

Because it's a bit safe too. You know everybody is about at the same level, You know you can make a fool of yourself and its not too drastic. An also it's just a good way for me of making concrete what I've been doing, so it's just getting it out of my mouth in small quiet little doses and getting it right. (Thea)

Significantly, Thea valued the non-threatening climate of this context not only because it facilitated her attempts to use the language, but also because it enabled her to "get it right"!

For Thea, the tension between the beliefs discussed made her tentative about using strategies that involved using the language in more communicative ways, in the early stages of data collection. Although she still had inhibitions and concerns, by the end of the data collection period, Thea had begun to include these more communicative strategies into her strategy repertoire to a greater extent than at the beginning of this period. This change was no doubt facilitated by the improvement in Thea's language proficiency over that period of time.

Thea's comments on the changes she perceived in herself as a teacher (and by implication, as a learner, also) as a result of her experience in learning Italian are illuminating:

I've changed a lot as a language teacher. It's the doing that's important, rather than the talking about it. It's actually getting in there and having a go at it! Almost going in at the deep end, I suppose. (Thea)

These comments suggest that, in Thea's case, there existed an *established nexus* between some beliefs (importance of memorisation and rote learning) and some strategies (repeating, writing out vocab, reciting verb endings) and an *emerging nexus* between others. The emerging nexus was between beliefs about the communicative purposes of language learning and strategies that involved active use of the language in more communicative contexts. It is interesting to speculate whether this possible 'established' and 'emerging' nexus between beliefs and strategies reflects the declarative and procedural phases of acquisition of knowledge described in models of learning based on information processing theory.

Rebecca, who shared many of Thea's beliefs and adopted many similar strategies, appeared not to experience a great deal of tension between the two set of beliefs under discussion. She expressed a strong belief that communicating is the most important part of language learning. However, as an almost beginning learner of Japanese, much of her energy was devoted to memory work and decoding activities, often related to the acquisition of the new writing system. Rebecca believed, equally strongly, that language learning necessarily entailed quite a lot of memory work and used detailed note taking, highlighting, previewing and reviewing to promote her own learning.

Despite having studied the language for a short time, Rebecca appeared to have a capacity to move from strategies which focused on the structural elements of the language to those that involved active use of the language for more communicative purposes with a degree of ease. The strategies she used in the pair work activity described in the first part of this chapter (see Table 6.3, page 119) demonstrates this. When Rebecca worked with learners who were more advanced than herself (which she liked to do, because she

believed it promoted her language development), as well as participating in the activity, she also concentrated on attending to the structures and vocabulary they used. Rebecca did this to check whether they were using the more simple forms practised in class or more complicated forms and was thus able to monitor her own learning. When she worked with the less advanced learners, she simplified her questions (from “Did you watch a video?” to ‘video’ - the pair work related to what they’d done over the weekend) to ensure that they didn’t feel intimidated by her greater skill with the language and to inject some humour into the activity. This example also illustrates the level of sophistication of Rebecca’s strategy use which involved a skilful combination of socio/affective, cognitive and metacognitive strategies in response to the communicative demands of the situation.

Rebecca was convinced that language learning involved taking risks, and demonstrated considerable capacity in this regard. She was prepared to say “I’m absolutely zero in this and I’m going to start right from the beginning,” and did not dwell on feelings of inadequacy. While her attitude to accuracy and error were similar to Thea’s, she seemed to recognise the difference between errors in learning (intake) and errors in speaking (output), and the extent to which she could control them, with greater clarity. Like Thea, she regarded the former as inefficient. However, she viewed the latter as inevitable, but temporary, as the extract below shows:

You have to make mistakes to learn, but with repeated practice the mistakes should wear themselves out. I like to get it correct on the whole. I’m happy to make mistakes, but if I make a mistake I like to learn from it and not carry on making the same mistake. But I wouldn’t fret if I got something wrong. I’d just make an effort to correct it next time. (Rebecca)

Rebecca’s comments, in contrast to Thea’s, suggest an established nexus between beliefs and strategies associated with more meaning-oriented aspects of language learning, as well as with more form-oriented aspects of this learning.

Marion, on the other hand, offered a somewhat different picture again from both Rebecca and Thea. Marion believed that rote-learning and memorisation strategies were not effective for her and liked to work in an interactive way, as described below:

I like to involve myself in more than just “How are you?” you know. I like to have a proper conversation and that’s when I learn, and I also learn with people mirroring back the correct language to me. Like I love it when the teacher just

jumps in and gives me the right word when I've got it wrong, or changes the ending of a word. (Marion)

These comments suggest that Marion's way of focusing on form corresponded to the process described by Long and Robinson (1998) above. Accuracy and correctness were not her first concern. However, she readily shifted her attention to them when the communicative context demanded or provided opportunities to do so.

Marion liked to work rapidly and was not fazed by the errors that resulted from this approach:

I'm a very quick worker. But I make a huge amount of mistakes because I'm a quick worker, But that's not important to me, you know. (Marion)

Nevertheless, she was not without some self-doubt, especially about her disinclination to focus on formS, as can be seen from the comments below:

In terms of learning Italian, I think I have got the rhythm and I really enjoy that, so that helps me to learn. Also I take risks, but my downfall in learning languages is the grammar. I am really bad at dotting 'Is' and crossing 'Ts'. So I always think that is the thing that holds me back, the grammar. (Marion)

Thea, Rebecca and Marion provide three exemplifications of the way beliefs and strategies seem to relate. The other learners discussed in the remainder of this section displayed characteristics similar to those illustrated in the three learners above. Sofia, Virginia and Harriet, like Thea, were inclined to experience tensions between beliefs related to meaning-oriented aspects of language learning and form-oriented aspects and to demonstrate an 'emerging' rather than 'established' nexus between meaning-oriented beliefs and strategies. For example, Sofia's experience as a learner in the intensive course was basically one of adjusting to its more communicative orientation. Having learned languages at school in a very traditional way (lots of memorisation of grammar, little or no oral interaction), she initially experienced tension even when just focusing on comprehension in an oral context:

When it's like speaking straight away, first of all you're feeling threatened because you think what words am I not going to know because people speak so quickly... (Sofia)

As the course proceeded, and Sofia became more able to deal with the instructor's insistence that she endeavour to use the language and risk making mistakes:

The teacher doesn't let us wait until we can say it correctly. I say it all very incorrectly. How do I feel about it? A bit embarrassed sometimes. But that's life

too. You're not always correct and you're going to learn by your mistakes. Yes, you have to give it a go. (Sofia)

Virginia was also struggling with her desire to be correct and to use the language. She stated that for her, the focus of each lesson was “to improve, always to respond correctly. And extend myself a little bit.” Grammar wasn’t important to her at this stage as she felt her grammar ‘was all right’ . She was concentrating on her conversation. However, she was frustrated and embarrassed when she couldn’t perform at the level she aspired to:

I can understand everything the teacher says, but when I come to speak it now I'm terribly tongue-tied and feel very embarrassed and very frustrated that I can't say what I want so I'm trying all the time to remember things, to put the sentences together before I'm asked so that I don't make any mistakes. (Virginia)

Although Simona’s use of more communicatively oriented strategies was significantly more limited than Rebecca’s, she, like Rebecca, did not exhibit strong tensions between meaning-oriented and form-oriented beliefs.

Several other learners were similar to Marion in their approach. Martha, like Marion, expressed strong views favouring strategies that involved interaction and communication and used these strategies in preference to those that focused on memorisation and practice of particular linguistic features. Jessica was also basically communicative in her beliefs and strategy orientations, despite a lack of confidence in her mastery over grammatical forms that caused her to possibly exaggerate her own shortcomings in this area.

This section has illustrated how some learners experience tensions between beliefs related to the need to use the language communicatively as part of the learning process and beliefs about the importance of accuracy and correctness in language learning. It has shown how these tensions appear to be indicative of the nature of the connections between certain learner beliefs and associated strategies. The nexus between beliefs and strategies can be strong or ‘established’, or more tentative and therefore ‘emerging’. It has also shown how for some learners the nexus is positive and for some it is negative. The following section will explore the connection between learners’

beliefs and strategies in the context of learners' attempts to integrate their individual approach to learning with that encouraged by the pedagogy of the classroom.

Past And Present Experiences Of Learning

Previous language learning experiences have been shown to influence learners' beliefs about second language learning (Benson and Lor, 1999) and the strategies they use (Ehrman & Oxford, 1988; Oxford & Crookall, 1989). This influence can be seen in Thea's forthright (and humorous) comment about why she continued to make extensive use of rote memorisation strategies to aid her learning:

That's the way I learned languages back at school and I figured that if it can stay with me after all those bottles of wine, then it must be an OK way to do things. That's the way I've always done it and I guess I haven't found or haven't been exposed to a better way of doing it that works for me. (Thea)

Learners returning to second language learning after a brief or longer absence need to find a way of integrating their past learning experiences with the pedagogy of the classroom in which they find themselves. For some learners this involves considerable adjustment, for others less. The more communicative approach used in the Italian and Japanese Intensive Language Courses contrasted with the ways many of the learners had been taught a second language. Thea's past experience of language learning, described below, was shared by many of the learners in this study:

The teaching style is so different from when I learned. I learned grammar, grammar, grammar... That's changed a lot. I think it's the doing stuff that's important, rather than the talking about it. It's actually getting in there and having a go at it. Almost going in at the deep end. (Thea)

As we shall see, the process of integration posed a greater challenge for some learners involved in this study than for others. The nature of this challenge was also somewhat different for the learners of Japanese than for those of Italian. This section examines the relationship between learners' beliefs about a language learning and strategy choice in the context of their attempts to integrate these two aspects of their learning experiences.

One of the learners who experienced a significant disjunction between her past and current learning experiences, and for whom this was a significant source of tension, was Sofia. The gap between Sofia's 'emerging' beliefs about the nature of language

learning and the strategies she was effectively able to adopt in the classroom appeared to be an important source of this tension.

Sofia's school experience of learning second languages, like Thea's, consisted largely of studying grammar, put major emphasis on memorisation and demanded a great deal of rote learning. Sofia expressed very strong beliefs about the importance of correctness in language learning and used note taking extensively to ensure that her intake was accurate. Sofia also expressed the belief that the most important part of language learning was communication. However, a key aspect of Sofia's learning was adjusting to the communicative orientation of the course and the different demands this made of her as a learner. Her comments about the relative difficulty of Italian provide useful insights about her past and present perceptions of herself as a learner:

I'm not saying it's [learning the language] easy. It was at high school level. I didn't have a problem then. I'm having a slight problem now. But I enjoy it and I think that once you enjoy things you know you're half-way, more than half-way there and you know you've got the will to do it. (Sofia)

Sofia's 'slight problem' was with understanding and speaking the language. As the comment below shows, she realised that the strategies for language learning that had brought her success twenty years ago yielded limited results in a more challenging communicative learning context:

You've got more control over it [reading and writing] and particularly in the environment I studied Italian in at school. I'm sadly lacking in many areas, but particularly in this one [understanding and speaking]. It was more formal grammar all the time then so what we had to do at that level was far easier than now when we're speaking and understanding the language. (Sofia)

When dealing with written texts Sofia could draw on her broader linguistic knowledge to make meaning. She could also effectively use more specific strategies such as taking notes, paying attention, guessing to gain or feel in control of these events. In more fluid contexts, such as those where oral interaction was involved, the strategies Sofia had at her disposal could not provide the level of support she needed. The particular challenges spoken texts presented for Sofia are illustrated in the extract below:

[when engaging in reading and writing] You're given a time span to sit there and do it and work out your answers and work out what it is [the text], but when it's like speaking straight away, first of all you're feeling threatened because you think what words am I not going to know because people speak so quickly... (Sofia)

As Sofia's comments below demonstrate, the instructor's role in encouraging learners to use the language is crucial. Sofia's instructor helped her to overcome her timidity and see her own less than perfect language production in perspective:

I'm usually a mouse. But the instructor is very good. She doesn't belittle you at all. She's wonderful, in fact and she has a wonderful way of honing in. She's very perceptive. She knows exactly where everyone's at and she gives you a bit of leeway then lets you know [where you need to improve]. (Sofia)

Observations made by Sofia in the final interview, which was conducted at the end of the data collection process, show how both Sofia's attitude and approach had changed since the first interview three or four months before:

I had three people to ask these questions, so I became more familiar with the questions. That gave me more time to think of what they were actually saying. I wasn't panicking about what I had to ask them, so I could concentrate on the answers they were giving, really listen to what they had to say. I was trying to see the whole picture. They were actually expanding what they were saying. Jessica actually gave me four or five sentences instead of the just the main yes or no. (Sofia)

These comments impart a sense of purpose and control over the learning event that was not evident before. They also suggest that the gap that existed between what Sofia felt she should believe about the language learning process and what she was able to practise in the classroom had narrowed considerably.

The recency of second language learning experience and the context within this had occurred appeared to be factors influencing the interplay of learners' beliefs and strategies in the context of their attempts to integrate past and present experiences of learning. Those who had spent time in the TL country, especially more recently, or who had lately undertaken some formal learning tended to find their preferred approach more aligned with the approach they encountered in the classroom than fellow students who had not had these experiences. Marion, for example, whose school experience of second language learning was very similar to Sofia's, had subsequently studied Italian in a more conversational way and had spent time in Italy. Partly as a result of these experiences, she had developed a very clear concept of her own preferred approach to learning. Marion believed in being an active learner, in taking and creating opportunities for interaction that required her to use the language and in learning from what emerged from these exchanges. She recognised that memorisation and rote exercises did little to

promote her learning and concentrated on the strategies she knew were effective for her. Marion, unlike Sofia, did not have to struggle to reconcile conflicting beliefs or make a particular effort to use strategies that she found initially confronting.

Level of proficiency relative to the rest of the class emerged as an issue for two learners: Martha and Jessica. Martha had spent a year in Italy working as an *au pair*, had attended language classes for a while there and therefore had receptive and productive skills in the language to a higher level than her fellow students. As the comment below shows, she tended to expect patterns of interaction between herself and the instructor similar to those she enjoyed in exchanges in more naturalistic contexts in Italy:

Sometimes I want to ask a question, and I know the other ones aren't really interested, but it's almost a compulsion ...that you want to know, you've come across it three or four times in the past and you've never understood why they've used it. And the teacher has just used it in a sentence and I know it wasn't what she wanted to teach me because she thinks its not relevant to Level 1, but you need to know right then, so that's why you choose that moment of asking the question. (Martha)

Martha was prepared to ignore the social dynamics of the class to pursue her own communicative need. As the following extract shows, Martha felt that the instructor did not always respond sympathetically to her strategies for extending the communicative scope of the lesson in the way she wanted:

Int: Are there times when you might want to do something differently, but the way a lesson is constructed you've got to do a particular thing?

M: It happens all the time. I sort of think, do we have to do this?

Int: What kind of things does it happen in?

M: Conversational things, like I know they always sound like detours from the objectives of the lesson. We're not just answering questions or learning a list of vocabulary. We're trying to discuss things from our own perspective, using the words, the vocabulary.

Int: So do you find that when you move in that direction you can't always continue?

M: You get cut off straight away. You sort of think it's taking away too much time, unless it's something that's interesting to the teacher and then you'll get a couple of minutes out of it, yes.

The tensions Martha experienced in the classroom, and did not appear to resolve to her own satisfaction, were partly due to a mismatch between her belief in communicative

exchanges as key learning events, and the somewhat socially insensitive strategies she adopted to promote or prolong these exchanges.

Faced with a similar situation, Jessica responded differently. Jessica's first language was a Calabrian dialect. She learned Standard Italian at secondary school where the teaching approach was strongly grammatical. She had contact with the local Italian speaking community and had visited Italy. Her receptive capacities in the language were advanced in comparison to those of her fellow students and her productive abilities were also considerably higher than theirs. The following extract from her interviews shows that she did not always feel particularly challenged by the lessons. On the other hand, she did not believe it was appropriate for her to perform orally at the level of which she felt herself capable, as the following extract shows:

Int: One of the things you did to help your learning was engaging in discussion. Were you able to ask a lot of questions, or did you only get a couple in?

J: Today we had a debate and that was quite challenging as we had to write and discuss things. But I think if it had been like a real life debate, where our language would have had to be extended a lot more, then I think that would have challenged me a lot actually. I don't think we really got into it. When you're learning a language you take on the role of a student. Whereas, if I were talking to Miriam who is from Italy, I wouldn't take on the role of a student. It would be like an Italo-Australian learning Italian here. It's a different role.

The distinction Jessica made between taking on "the role of a student" and that of "an Italo-Australian learning Italian here" is fascinating. In the remainder of this extract, she explained what the "the role of a student" involved and elaborated on its implications for the strategies she adopted.

Int: What do you think would happen to your relationship with the people in the class if you operated at the highest level of Italian that you could?

J: If I babbled on?

Int: Yes. You're saying you can operate at a higher level than you're operating at.

J: I think I could.

Int: Let's say you did that.

J: If I really did that?

Int: If you did that. What's holding you back from doing that?

J: Because I'm not the sort of person who believes I am perfect in the language, because I still feel deep down inside that there are certain aspects of grammar,

little things that I forget and which I don't want to make out that I know, because I don't. But if I was just to babble on and take off, I don't think it's fair on the others. You don't want to create tension with anyone, and you want to encourage people and you don't want them to think you're overbearing and threatening.

It appears that, for Jessica, a crucial aspect of “the role of a student” involved paying close attention to the social dynamics of the classroom. This meant operating at a level of oral proficiency more or less comparable to that of her fellow students and curtailing her desire to use questions and discussion as a means of furthering her own learning.

Allwright (1989) and Breen (1996) have drawn attention to the ways in which classroom social dynamics could influence students’ approaches to learning. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that Jessica emphasised what she had in common with her fellow learners by pointing to gaps in her own knowledge of certain aspects of grammar and offered this as another reason for limiting the complexity of language she used in her oral interaction with them.

Adjusting to and/or learning to take advantage of the communicative orientation of the classroom was an important concern for most of the learners of Italian. While this was also important for the learners of Japanese, the need to acquire and use a new script was an equally pressing concern for the three learners interviewed, especially in the early part of the data collection process. Their prior classroom learning experiences influenced their response to this in different ways.

Simona’s motivation for language learning was the mental stimulation it offered her and the opportunities it provided for making meaningful exchanges with people who were quite different from herself. Simona’s first encounter with Japanese had been in a fifteen week conversational course in which only *romanji* was used. At the end of that course she could “sort of speak quite a bit”, but couldn’t read and write. As she reports below, she found having to quickly master and to begin to use the various scripts in the first week of the intensive course quite confronting:

I originally learnt Japanese without looking at the reading and writing of the Japanese alphabet. [In this course] we learned all the hiragana the first morning, all the katakana the next morning and some kanji the rest of the week, which was tremendous pressure for me. It's not too bad to read, it's not too bad to speak and understand, but to write is incredibly difficult. (Simona)

Having to master the script appears to have been a considerable adjustment for Simona, largely because of the amount of effort that had to be directed towards it. Memorisation and practice strategies therefore figured heavily in her strategy repertoire for dealing with this aspect of the course. However, Simona found these strategies by themselves had limitations. For example, she did not find the computer-based instruction for *kanji* offered as part of the course very helpful, preferring to recognise and learn the *kanji* in the context of a text, rather than in isolation. This preference for a more holistic approach (perhaps encouraged by the conversational orientation of the first Japanese course) is also evident in Simona's description, early in the data collection process, of how she processed the new language:

I don't think of the sentence in English first and translate into Japanese. I think the sentence in Japanese and even if it's not quite right, I put the Japanese words in and then think about whether I've structured it correctly. (Simona)

Both Rebecca and Harriet had lived in Japan and Harriet had also done some formal study of the language there. They had therefore been exposed to the spoken language in naturalistic contexts, but would have also been more aware than Simona of the importance of the written text and the demands involved in mastering it. However, as both of them had learned two or three European languages, the extra challenge posed by a different script was very evident to them. Both spoke of the additional effort needed to master this aspect of the language. Rebecca's elaborate system of note taking in triplicate (from *hiragana* to *romanji* to English) described in Chapter 4 points to this. A key issue for all three learners was the limitations the new script put on using the written language as a learning tool. As was noted in Chapter 4, the learning strategy of *taking notes* was much less available to the Japanese learners than to the Italian learners because they were still learning the script. The Japanese learners' limited knowledge of the script meant they were more likely to be restricted to using it for copying out in order to memorise material rather than to extract key points of meaning. Commenting on her effort to learn the *kanji*, Harriet found relying on rote learning of this script unsatisfactory and looked forward to knowing enough of the language to be able to pick up on the visual clues to meaning provided by some *kanji*. Limited knowledge of the

script also constrained the learners' capacity to make meaning in activities whose main objective point was primarily that. All three learners sought to overcome this constraint by translating the *hiragana* text into *romanji*. Interestingly, this strategy was often adopted in pair work activities which included written text in order to help ensure naturalness of delivery and a degree of fluency in oral production.

This section has examined the relationship between learners' beliefs and strategies in the context of their attempts to integrate their past and present experiences of language learning. It illustrated the tensions experienced by Sofia in integrating her past and current experiences. It suggested that this appeared to be linked to the gap between her 'emerging' beliefs about the nature of language learning and her capacity to use strategies to match these beliefs. It also explored the significance of the recency of prior language learning and the context in which this occurred, and showed the influence of learners' levels of proficiency on the interplay between beliefs and strategies. Finally, it examined the impact on the learners of Japanese of having to learn a different script and showed how responses to the exigencies of this task were influenced by learners' beliefs and prior experiences.

Factors Enabling And Constraining Learning

All learners encounter and, hopefully, are able to build on, factors that enable their learning. All have to deal with those that constrain it. The discussion in the sections above touched on some factors that were, at least temporarily, constraints to the learner: mismatches between individual learning orientation and classroom pedagogy; entrenched but ineffective learning strategies; and, the challenges in having to master a new script.

Recent research (White 1999; Yang 1999) has drawn attention to the importance of concepts of self-efficacy to effective second language learning. Yang (1999) found a strong correlation between beliefs about self-efficacy and use by learners of a wide range of language learning strategies. Use of functional practice strategies was particularly evident in these learners. Beliefs about self-efficacy also emerged as important to the

learners in this study, with most of them expressing the belief that self-confidence is very important to second language learning (see Chapter 5, Table 5.9). The role of these beliefs about self-efficacy in facilitating learning and their impact on strategy choice is discussed below.

Notions of self-efficacy were evident in the discussions of self-confidence by some learners. For example, Simona expressed the view that an optimistic belief in one's own capacity to learn, and to teach oneself, underpinned the effectiveness of all other strategies a language learner employed.

I think you've got to believe you can do it, even though sometimes it gets pretty hard and you think that nothing makes sense. You've got to believe you can go home and work it out. You've got to have enough self-confidence and optimism to start with, to think that you're going to be able to do it. This comes before all the other stuff, because if that doesn't come through, you may as well give up. (Simona)

Simona and a few other learners consciously used strategies of self-encouragement to maintain their motivation and enthusiasm when they were struggling or had little success with particular tasks. As in Simona's comment below, this often involved affirming their sense of self-worth as learners:

I just sort of say to myself I'm not stupid and this is just something that has been difficult. (Simona)

Harriet, who linked her fear of making mistakes and the mental blocks she experienced to lack of confidence, tried to use relaxation techniques to help herself:

This morning, I was actually having to tell myself, relax, relax, you don't need to get so uptight about the fact that oh god, I'm not going to remember. (Harriet)

Several of the learners in this study provided some evidence of a link between robust notions of self-efficacy and use of a wide range of strategies. A strong sense of self-efficacy seemed to characterise Rebecca and Marion, the most confident of the learners of Japanese and Italian, respectively. The total level of strategy use reported by these two learners was considerably higher than that of their fellow students. Rebecca's total was 50, thirteen more than Simona, the next highest among the learners of Japanese who recorded 37 strategies. Marion's was 48, nine more than Sofia, the next highest among the learners of Italian who recorded 39. Interestingly however, Simona

expressed strong views on the importance of self-confidence to language learning, as did Virginia, whose reported level of strategy use was just one less than Sofia's.

In line with the findings made by Yang (1999), both Rebecca and Marion also reported using a wider range of strategies than their fellow learners. Their profile contained strategies from all the categories in Oxford's (1990) classification system, including affective and social strategies, which were not reported as being used by most other learners. Rebecca and Marion, partly because of their self-confidence, were prepared to take risks in their learning, especially when it came to using the language orally. Therefore, like the learners studied by Yang (1999), they also made high use of strategies that involved interaction and use of the language (functional practice strategies).

Language learning can be enabled or constrained by a range of other factors. In the early stages, becoming accustomed to hearing the instructor use the language may be taxing for the learner. For Marion, it was this aspect of the learning experience that she found demanding initially, not the actual content. With extended exposure, "tuning in to" the instructor became progressively easier :

I didn't find it [the work] at a level that I couldn't participate, but I felt to a degree stretched. I was really concentrating on the text and listening to her [the instructor]. At that time, on the second day of the week, I was still tuning in to her and as the week goes on it gets easier and easier. (Marion)

Two factors that will be discussed briefly here are learners ideas about special abilities for language learning and about the importance of knowledge of the target language culture . Most of the learners thought that some people have a special capacity for second language learning, but few felt that they possessed this special ability themselves. This belief did not appear to be a significant constraint on their learning, in terms of motivation. All of the learners knew that diligent application and consistent practice were an essential component in second language learning. Most learners were pragmatic in recognising their limitations and strengths. They attempted to use strategies to compensate for the former and to capitalise on the latter. Harriet, for example, recognised that she did not have a good visual memory and therefore focused quite deliberately on this when learning the various Japanese scripts. Thea, Virginia and Sofia, whose school language learning had concentrated very heavily on grammar,

consciously endeavoured to make more active use of the language as part of their attempt to take a more communicative orientation to learning.

Some of the learners in this study, like those in other studies (Kern 1995; Mantle-Bromley 1995), did not consider knowledge of the target culture as being essential to their language learning. This is perhaps because of teaching that has presented culture as separate from language and has seen 'learning' as almost exclusively in the linguistic domain. Virginia's comment on a lesson which combined learning vocabulary for fruit and vegetables in Italian, with cultural aspects of use of these food items in cooking, illustrates this attitude:

Well, it was just a discussion. There was no learning, kind of like grammar points or learning points. It was just a matter of listening to a conversation. Yes, probably most of it I did know. (Virginia)

However, the link between knowledge of the target language and its culture was appreciated by most, and especially by those learners who had lived and/or learned the language in the target language country or who were bi-cultural. These students reported seeking out situations outside the classroom that offered opportunities for contact with the target language culture through some social interaction with individuals or groups from the culture. This ranged from patronising shops that sold items related to the target culture and had proprietors with whom they could speak the target language, to participating in conversation groups run by native speakers. The need to be exposed to such situations and the benefits that derived from them was also acknowledged by the other learners, even if they were not able to easily include them in their repertoire of learning strategies.

This section examined the connections between learners' beliefs and strategies in the context of factors that enable and constrain learning. It focused, in particular, on concepts of self-efficacy and drew attention to strategies used by learners to maintain their confidence in themselves as learners. It pointed to connections between a robust concept of self-efficacy and more extensive use of strategies, particularly those related to active use of language, in two learners. It showed how realistic beliefs on the part of learners about whether they possessed special abilities for language learning seemed to encourage them to adopt strategies which maximised their strengths. Finally, it showed

how beliefs about the importance of knowledge of the target language culture encouraged learners to seek out situations which exposed them to aspects of that culture through social interaction with target language speakers.

Summary

The first part of this chapter demonstrated a pattern of association between learners' beliefs about language learning and learning strategy choice at the language group and individual level. At the language group level, a clear pattern of association between a few beliefs and a limited number of strategies emerged from the analysis of the self-reports. For the learners of Italian, the strongest association was between beliefs related to understanding/making meaning and the strategy of 'paying attention', between beliefs related to memorisation and the strategy of 'taking notes', and between beliefs related to correctness and the strategy of 'getting help'. For the learners of Japanese, the strongest association was between beliefs related to understanding/making meaning and the strategies 'using key words', 'translating', 'recombining' and 'organising'. At the individual level, the self-report data showed a clustering of strategies around several apparently key or dominant beliefs for each of the learners. Evidence was provided from a detailed analysis of segments of four learners' interviews that this clustering of strategies around particular beliefs may indicate that beliefs are used as organisational foci for the deployment of strategies.

The second part of the chapter described the nature of the relationship between learners' beliefs and their use of strategies, as suggested by the interview data. It examined this relationship in the context of three themes which emerged from issues raised by learners in the interviews: focus on meaning and focus on form; past and present experiences of language learning; and, factors that enable or constrain learning. Exploration of the first theme, drew attention to the inherent tensions between beliefs related to the need to use the language communicatively as part of the learning process and the need to focus on accuracy and correctness. This analysis pointed to evidence which suggested that the nexus between beliefs and strategies may be either 'established'

or 'emerging'. It showed that, for most learners, the nexus between their beliefs and strategies about accuracy and correctness tended to be 'established' (ie. there was a fit between the belief, the strategy and the learners' capacity to execute the strategy). For a number of learners, however, the nexus between beliefs and strategies related to communicative use of language was an 'emerging' one (ie. learners were still in the process of integrating the belief and the strategy and developing their capacity to execute strategies). The analysis also drew attention to the fact that the connection between beliefs and strategies could be either positive or negative ie. a particular belief led to acceptance or rejection of particular strategies.

The second theme illustrated the tensions between beliefs and strategies experienced by one learner, in particular, when she attempted to integrate past approaches to language learning. These tensions were linked to the contrasting nature of the pedagogies involved and her attempts to take on strategies more in keeping with the new pedagogy. Discussion of this theme also pointed to the significance of the recency and context of prior language study, learners' proficiency levels and the need to learn a new script as factors related to past and present language learning affecting the interplay of beliefs and strategies.

The third theme examined the role of a number of beliefs in enabling or constraining learning. This examination pointed to positive links between robust concepts of self-efficacy and high levels of strategy use in several learners from both language groups. The influence of beliefs about special abilities for language learning and beliefs about the importance of knowledge of the target culture on strategy use was also considered. Acknowledgment that some people had a special ability for language learning seemed to lead learners who did not consider themselves gifted in this way to use strategies that built on their areas of strength and compensated for their areas of weakness. There were mixed views about whether knowledge of the target culture was important to learning to speak the target language well. Those learners who believed that this knowledge made an important contribution to the development of language skills used strategies which exposed them to it.

This chapter has documented the pattern of relationships between learners' beliefs about language learning and their strategy use and has illustrated the nature of this relationship. The implications of these findings will be explored in the next and final chapter.

CHAPTER 7

KEY FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study set out to describe the beliefs and language learning strategies of a group of language learners who were teachers undertaking an Intensive Language Course in either Italian or Japanese. A major objective of the study was also to discover the relationship between these two variables. This final chapter will review the key findings of the study and discuss the implications of these findings for the relational framework proposed at its inception. It will then discuss some of the issues that have emerged from the methodological design of the study. Finally it will consider possible areas for further research and implications for pedagogy.

Key Findings

The aim of the present study was to describe the beliefs about language learning and learning strategies of a group of teachers undertaking intensive courses in either Italian or Japanese and to investigate the relationship between these beliefs and strategies. The study found a similar pattern of strategy use across the two language groups, with direct strategies dominating over indirect strategies, and cognitive direct strategies being used most frequently. Both groups recorded a very low level of usage of indirect affective and social strategies, but a significant level of usage of metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used after cognitive strategies. Analysis to reduce individual bias in reported strategy use identified one strategy common to all learners across the two language groups. That strategy was 'paying attention'. It also identified one strategy common to all learners within each of the language groups - 'taking notes' for the learners of Italian and 'recombining' for the learners of Japanese.

A synthesis of learner beliefs as revealed by the BALLI, the self-reports and the interviews identified three significant categories of beliefs held by the learners

investigated. These related broadly to communication, practice and accuracy, and self-efficacy. They are summarised in Table 5.9, Chapter 5.

The study revealed patterns of association between beliefs and strategies at the individual and group level. Individual learners demonstrated clear patterns of association between particular beliefs and clusters of strategies, with one or two beliefs usually predominating. This clustering of strategies around a particular beliefs suggested that these beliefs could be acting as organisational foci for the strategies.

One strong pattern of association emerged for the group as a whole and several within language groups. The strongest pattern of association for the group of learners as a whole was between beliefs related to understanding/making meaning and the strategies listed in Table 6.1, page 116. However, different strategies were emphasised by each language group. For the learners of Italian, the association was strong for two strategies - 'paying attention' and 'taking notes'. Six strategies emerged as important for the learners of Japanese: 'using key words'; 'paying attention'; 'translating'; 'recombining'; 'organising'; 'repetition'; and 'using linguistic and other clues'. Strong points of association between strategies and several other beliefs areas were also apparent for the learners of Italian. For example, 'taking notes' and 'paying attention' showed a notable level of association to beliefs about memorisation and 'getting help', 'paying attention' and taking notes' to beliefs about correctness.

This study has shown that the nature of the relationship between beliefs and strategies is a dynamic and complex one and that there is diversity in this relationship among individuals and groups. Its findings underscored the evolving and interdependent nature of beliefs and strategies. For example, it demonstrated that learners believe quite strongly in the importance of focusing on both 'meaning' and 'form' in their learning and illustrated how all learners attempt to use strategies that promote their learning in both areas. The study has also suggested that the tensions that some learners experienced between beliefs associated with communicative and more traditional orientations to language learning may be linked to the strength of the connections between these particular beliefs and related strategies. It proposed an 'established' and an

‘emerging’ nexus between beliefs and strategies. In the former, beliefs and strategies aligned automatically, often because of past language learning experience. For example, learners whose previous language learning had been in programs that had a ‘traditional’ orientation that focused on form experienced few tensions in using strategies which they associated with beliefs about correctness and accuracy. These learners also espoused beliefs related to more ‘communicative’ or meaning focused approaches to language learning, such as a willingness to take risks and to accept that making mistakes in using the language was part of the learning process. In this situation, the nexus between beliefs and strategies was ‘emerging’ because learners were still forging or consolidating the connection by repeated and more deliberate use of strategies that aligned with these beliefs.

That the relationship between beliefs and strategies was shaped by past experiences of language learning and the learner’s capacity to integrate them with approaches they encountered in the language classroom was also demonstrated in this study. Learners’ comments also pointed to the important role played by concepts of self-efficacy in the ability of learners to recognise and utilise strategies that maximised their capacity to learn.

Implications For The Theoretical Framework

A conceptualisation of the relationship between learners’ beliefs about language learning and their learning strategies was presented in the theoretical framework outlined in Figure 2.2 (see Chapter 2, p. 43). The implications of the findings of this study for this framework are discussed below, together with suggested modifications which flow from them.

The study’s findings have pointed to the fact that both beliefs and strategies are dynamic and evolving, and that the relationship between them also tends to be of that nature. The demarcation between beliefs and strategies is not always distinct. For example, a number of learners in this study expressed the belief that ‘taking risks is important in language learning’. These learners also talked about using ‘taking risks’,

as a strategy. Some beliefs, however, do not translate directly into strategies. The beliefs listed under 'Everyone can learn a second language' (see Table 5.9, p. 112) are of this kind. Finally, this study has proposed the notion of 'established' and 'emerging' beliefs and has implied that tensions between beliefs and strategies may be a consequence of the still developing links between them.

These issues suggest that the original framework (Figure 2.2, p. 43) did not adequately represent the possible relationship between the variables involved. A reconceptualisation of the framework is therefore offered in Figure 7.1. A comparison of the two frameworks highlights the changes made. In Figure 7.1, 'established' and 'emerging' have been added to *learners' beliefs or theories*. This reflects the findings discussed in the previous paragraph. *Instructor's beliefs/theories* have been included in the *learning context*, to more adequately reflect the influence of this factor. *Learner decisions* have been moved from the *learning context* to the area where the two spheres intersect, as they are a product of the interaction between the learner and the learning context, not just of the latter. Finally, *learner reflection* has been added to the *instructor/peer feedback*, as this also appears to be an aspect of the process described by learners.

The three elements in each sphere in Figure 7.1 relate to each other. For example, the learner's *background/previous learning experience* relates to *pedagogy, beliefs or theories* to the *instructor's beliefs/ theories* and the *repertoire of learning strategies* to the *learning activities/tasks* provided by the instructor. The zone of intersection between these two spheres also contains three elements: the learner's *decisions* (conscious or unconscious), which lead to the *actual learning strategy*, and the *instructor/peer feedback* and *learner reflection*. The *learner reflection* completes the learning process, but also reactivates it by feeding back into the learning loop.

The unidirectional relationship between beliefs and strategies contained in Figure 2.2 is not consistent with the picture of dynamic relationships suggested by this study. Two-way arrows have therefore replaced the unidirectional arrows, to better represent the relationship between each of these elements. In addition to this, broken arrows have also

been added parallel to some of the solid arrows to reflect the developing nature of the relationship between these particular elements.

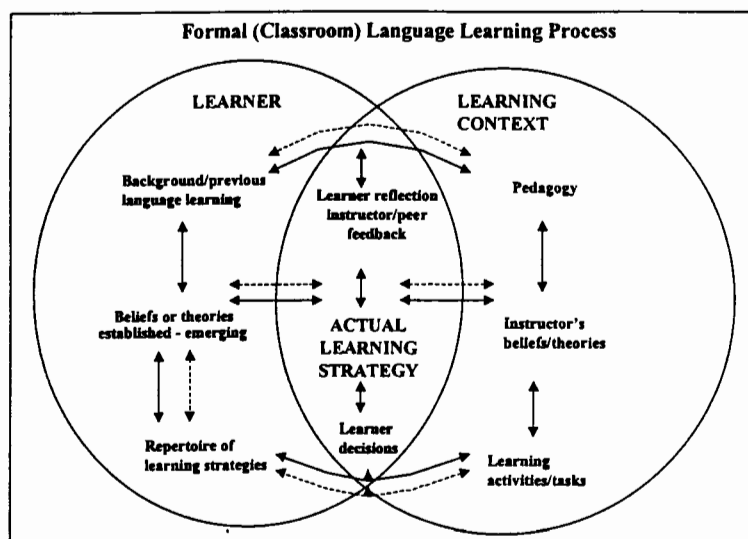


Figure 7.1: Conceptualisation of the Relationship Between Learners' Beliefs and Strategy Choices (Revised)

Methodological Issues

The main advantages and limitations of the methodology adopted by this study were outlined in Chapter 3, page 64. The longitudinal nature of the study, the multiple approaches to data collection used and the large amount of rich data provided by the qualitative aspect of the study were given as key advantages. The size and nature of the sample were presented as its principal limitations. This section will discuss some of the methodological issues that emerged from the data collection and analysis. Discussion will focus on multiple approaches to data collection and two of the research instruments used: the BALLI and the self-reports.

Multiple Approaches to Data Collection

Recent studies of learner beliefs (Benson and Lor, 1999; Sakui and Gaies, 1999; White, 1999) have highlighted the importance of multiple approaches to data collection. Sakui and Gaies (1999) demonstrated the particular value of interviews in validating information collected from survey data and in gaining a more accurate picture of individual learners. This study has confirmed the advantages of multiple approaches to data collection and the usefulness of interviews in validating survey data of the kind provided by the BALLI. The interviews also proved to be very useful in enabling learners to review, comment on and clarify their self-report data. The interview data provided important insights into the individual nature of beliefs and strategies and the complex and dynamic way in which these two variables connect.

The BALLI

As was noted in Chapter 2, the BALLI has been used extensively in studies of learner beliefs about language learning, many of which have been published. This widespread use of the instrument is one of its strengths. Some of its limitations were also discussed in Chapter 2. A limitation revealed by this study was the BALLI's conceptualisation of the nature of second language learning. The items related to this area seem to reflect a structural/functional view of language learning rather than one that has more of a communicative orientation. Of particular interest in this discussion are the following items:

- 18. 'The most important part of learning a language other than English is learning vocabulary words';
- 25 'The most important part of learning a language other than English is learning the grammar'; and
- 32 'The most important part of learning Italian/Japanese is learning how to translate from English into Italian/Japanese').

Most of the learners in this study disagreed with these items. Learners' interview comments revealed that what they disagreed with most strongly was reductionist nature of the statements. Rebecca's observations about item 18 point to the need for a more global picture of language learning:

It [item 18] is really important. But just that isn't learning a language. I'd learned these sort of French words at school which didn't mean anything until you put them into context. I would say practising conversation is the most important part of language learning. Practising usage, active usage. (Rebecca)

Harriet makes similar points about both items 18 and 25:

You need to know some grammar and you need to know your vocab, otherwise you're not going to be able to speak the language at all. But to me, it's more important that you learn to try and communicate in that language. To try and get across what you want to get across and if it's not perfect grammar and you haven't used quite the right word, then maybe that's not such an important issue. (Harriet)

The views expressed by Rebecca and Harriet were reflected in the interview responses to these two items made by the other learners.

Even if learning vocabulary and grammar didn't represent the whole picture about language learning, the learners in this study nevertheless viewed them as essential elements of that process. Translation, on the other hand, was seen by the majority of them as being of a different order. It was regarded as a tool or a strategy to be used if and when convenient, rather than a necessary component of their learning.

Sakui and Gaies (1999) and Bensor and Lor (1999) found that the learners they studied expressed beliefs that reflected either a communicative or traditional orientation. The finding of these studies and the issues emerging from the present study suggest that the BALLI items relating to the nature of language learning may need revision to ensure that they capture beliefs about language learning that derive from a more communicative view of that process.

The Self-Reports

This discussion on the self-report process will concentrate on two things: participants' observations about their experience of providing written self-reports using the pro-forma devised for this purpose and the researcher's observations on the possible effect of the interviews on the self-reports. Participants were invited to reflect and comment on the self-report process during the final interview. The decision to do this was taken because the researcher observed that this process seemed to cause the participants a degree of angst, which some expressed, unsolicited, in the first two

interviews. Participants' dilemmas about self-reports centred on two areas: the difficulty of having to retrospectively reflect on strategy use in order to be able to report on it; and, concerns about the appropriateness of the information they were providing the researcher. Each of these issues will be discussed in turn.

The self-report process was perceived as difficult by all but two of the learners. The need to explain the reasons for choice of particular strategies appeared to be the most taxing element of the process. Most learners found the necessarily retrospective nature of the process difficult because, at the end of the lesson, they had to try to remember why they used certain strategies during the lesson. Simona commented that she sometimes had problems separating the strategies she used from the reasons why she used them. Several learners drew attention to the intuitive nature of this process when they asserted that use of a particular strategy was not a matter of choice. In Martha's words, "I don't even say I choose that way of learning. It's not an option. It's an instinctive thing for me."

It was evident from the interview comments that learners worried that they might not be providing the researcher the right information, enough information and or that the information they provided was repetitive. Marion, one of the learners who did not find writing the self-reports difficult, commented to the researcher, "I think sometimes I felt pressure for it to be of value to you." The briefing provided for learners prior to their participation in the self-report process had stressed that responses would necessarily be individual and that all responses were equally valuable regardless of length. This did not appear to deal with everyone's doubts. Sofia even wondered "if you're expecting us to change our strategies". Virginia's somewhat exasperated reaction to the self-report process therefore sums up how most of the learners felt from time to time:

I found the self-reports very hard to do. The second time you came out, I thought, no, not now. I thought, what does she want? What am I meant to say? I thought, what I'm writing is silly, she'll think it's silly. Then I thought, you're obviously here because you want information and that was all right. But I did find it quite hard to think back to why I did things. (Virginia)

While the self-reports were obviously a source of anxiety for some of the learners, all of them commented on what they perceived to be positive aspects of the

process. They indicated that writing the self-reports gave them insights about themselves as learners that they had never had before. These insights helped them better understand their own learning. It also gave them useful insights into their students' learning processes and made them more aware of the demands they were making on their learners and the extent to which they, as teachers, often underestimated the difficulty of particular tasks. In short, it made them more insightful of and empathetic towards their students as language learners.

Analysis of the self-report data revealed some qualitative and quantitative differences in the responses provided by those learners who participated in the interviews, as well as completing the self-reports, and those who completed only the self-reports. The data provided by the three learners of Japanese and two learners of Italian who were *not* interviewed was noticeably shorter in length and less detailed than the data provided by those who were interviewed in addition to completing the self-reports. There are a number of possible explanations for this. Perhaps the rapport established between the researcher and learners over the three interviews somehow facilitated the learners' capacity to produce the self-reports. The way the self-report pro-forma was structured may have been offputting to some learners. The five learners who were not interviewed may have had less natural flair for the kind of self-reporting required by the pro-forma. It may be that those learners who were able to express their anxieties about the self-reporting process during the interviews gained some kind of reassurance which made them more confident about their response to it. Certainly, over time, the learners who were interviewed developed confidence in themselves as self-reporters. This seemed to grow out of an emerging understanding that they should not try to force themselves or the process too much. Whereas, at the beginning, individuals tended to agonise over whether they had produced enough, or whether the quality and content was right, by the end of the data collection process, they tended to be brisk and matter-of-fact about the process and data they generated through it. Rebecca, who along with Marion did not find writing the self-reports hard, sums up the attitude of most of the learners by the third round of data collection:

Sometimes it's good. Sometimes you think, do I have to write two pages? If I don't feel like writing a whole heap, I won't. If I feel that I can say it in one page, I will. At other times I'll think, no, I want to write more. It doesn't bug me at all. I think sometimes it just clarifies what you've actually done and what you think the objective of the lesson was. (Rebecca)

Implications For Research And Pedagogy

Research studies typically generate as many questions as they answer. This is part of the fascination of enterprises of this kind. The present study shares this characteristic with other studies. This work has raised questions and highlighted areas that need further investigation. The questions and gaps will be discussed below under the broad heading of research and pedagogy.

Research

To begin with the gaps, it is interesting to note how few studies have focused on teachers' rather than students' beliefs about language learning. Kern (1995) included a small number instructors in his study and the study by Fox (1993) of graduate language assistants examined the contribution of beliefs to their communicative competence. Only a small number of teachers were involved in these two studies, both of which were located in university contexts. The beliefs about language learning of teachers working in primary and secondary schools hardly seem to feature in studies carried out in this area, either in Australia or overseas. The fact that teachers' beliefs are known to influence classroom practice is one reason for investigating them. The current interest in the relationship between language and culture in language learning is another.

There is now a considerable body of research about teachers' beliefs about language teaching (Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, Thwaite, 1998; Freeman and Richards, 1996; Woods, 1996). The relationship between teachers' beliefs about language learning and their beliefs about pedagogy is an area that warrants investigation. A possible starting point is an exploration of whether these two areas remain distinct for the language teacher. Two other related topics suggest themselves: the impact of the initial experience of teaching on an individual's beliefs about language learning; and the extent to and way in which beliefs about language learning shape classroom practice.

Existing research into language learning strategies, like research into learner beliefs, has more frequently involved adults and older adolescents than younger children. The widespread introduction of second language programs at primary level across Australia (often in the early years) suggests that language learning strategy studies involving younger learners would be extremely useful for informing pedagogy.

The languages being learned by participants involved in studies of beliefs and strategies may also be an issue. Existing studies have been predominantly of learners of ESL/EFL and of European languages. There is a need for studies which include and /or focus on learners of other languages. The study of learners of Asian language is of particular relevance in the Australian context.

The key focus of this study, the relationship between beliefs about language learning and strategies, needs further investigation. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigating this relationship have strength and limitations. There is a need to explore new approaches and develop new instruments which will further the investigation and documentation of this relationship.

Pedagogy

The participants of the present study were teachers already involved in teaching a language or hoping to take on that role in the future. This study concentrated on them as language learners. However, as their purpose in undertaking the course was related to their role as teachers, the issue of pedagogy always remained a consideration. The influence of the pedagogy of the course on participants' language learning strategies was discussed in the interview. Comments made by participants during the interviews indicated that they gained much as teachers by renewing their experience of being language learners. This experience seems to have given all participants useful insight into the demands made on students by a more communicative approach to language teaching and underscored the importance of active use of the target language in the classroom.

What are the implications of this study for the pedagogical approach taken in the Intensive Language Courses? First, all of the learners appreciated the fact that the target language was used constantly in the classroom and felt this approach contributed significantly to their learning. Second, the study highlighted the individual nature of the preferred strategies and learning styles of each of the learners. It also emphasised the need for instructors to be aware of and understanding of these preferences, in order to more effectively facilitate learning. The findings of this study suggested that it would be useful for instructors to be aware of students' past language learning experiences, as they were likely to influence current approaches to learning. The more learners' past experiences differed from the approach used by the instructor, the more crucial the instructor's awareness and understanding of this issue it was likely to be. Finally, the study pointed to the potential value of providing some form of explicit strategy training for learners, especially if they were using a small range of strategies and/or experiencing limited success.

Conclusion

This investigation of the relationship between learners' beliefs and their learning strategies has highlighted the complex and dynamic nature of each of these areas. It has documented some of the interactions between learners' developing capacities in their target language, their learning strategies and their beliefs. Because these are dynamic processes, the relationship between beliefs and strategies seemed to be characterised by connections and tensions. The study has suggested that tension may accompany attempts to forge or consolidate links between particular beliefs and strategies.

It was noted in the literature review that the study both of beliefs and of learning strategies is the study of mental processes. The nature of the phenomena therefore offers significant methodological challenges. This study has provided some evidence that learners' beliefs about language learning and their learning strategies connect in important ways, at least for some of the time. The learners in this study who used the largest range of strategies to the greatest effect were those with clear, strong beliefs about language

learning. However, the small and varied nature of the sample and the predominantly qualitative orientation of the methodology which relied strongly on the researchers' perceptions of relationships means that it would be unwise to generalise findings beyond the particular group of learners studied. The study nevertheless offers valuable insights on both the topic of investigation and methodological issues, which may be of use to future researchers in these areas.

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APPENDIX 1

Background Questionnaire Learners of Italian

1. Name: _____
2. Sex: _____ 3. Age: _____ 4. Intensive Language Course: _____

Language Learning

5. Is English your first language?
(If yes, please go to question 8)
6. If no, please indicate your first language.
7. Do you use this language on a regular basis?
8. When did you first begin to learn Italian?
9. Please describe the context in which this initial learning took place (eg. formal course of study/ informal learning situation; Australia/ Italy etc.).
10. Please list all the courses in Italian that you attended before starting this Intensive Language Course. Include school courses in the language.

| Course | Institution | Duration (weeks/months/years) |
|--------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| | | |

11. Have you spent time in Italy?
(If no, please go on to 14)
12. If yes, how long were you there for?
13. What was your main reason for your stay in the country?
14. Please list any other language(s) you have studied?

Professional Experience

15. How many years teaching experience do you have in total?

16. Please briefly detail your main area(s) of experience as a teacher (eg. primary art specialist, secondary English teachers etc.).

17. Please list the year level(s) and subject area(s) you are teaching this year.

18. Please give your reasons for attending this Intensive Language Course in Italian.

19. Please add any comments about your experience as a language learner or your experience as a teacher that you feel to be relevant.

| |
|--|
| I would like to be interviewed as part of this research. |
|--|

| | |
|-----|----|
| YES | NO |
|-----|----|

Thank you for your cooperation in completing this questionnaire.

Rita Tognini.

APPENDIX 2

Background Questionnaire
Learners of Japanese

1. Name: _____
2. Sex: _____ 3. Age: _____ 4. Intensive Language Course: _____

Language Learning

5. Is English your first language?
(If yes, please go to question 8)
6. If no, please indicate your first language.
7. Do you use this language on a regular basis?
8. When did you first begin to learn Japanese?
9. Please describe the context in which this initial learning took place (eg. formal course of study/ informal learning situation; Australia/ Japan etc.).
10. Please list all the courses in Japanese that you attended before starting this Intensive Language Course. Include school courses in the language.

| Course | Institution | Duration (weeks/months/years) |
|--------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| | | |

11. Have you spent time in Japan?
(If no, please go on to 14)
12. If yes, how long were you there for?
13. What was your main reason for your stay in the country?
14. Please list any other language(s) you have studied?

Professional Experience

15. How many years teaching experience do you have in total?
16. Please briefly detail your main area(s) of experience as a teacher (eg. primary art specialist, secondary English teachers etc.).
17. Please list the year level(s) and subject area(s) you are teaching this year.
18. Please give your reasons for attending this Intensive Language Course in Japanese.
19. Please add any comments about your experience as a language learner or your experience as a teacher that you feel to be relevant.

| | |
|--|----|
| I would like to be interviewed as part of this research. | |
| YES | NO |

Thank you for your cooperation in completing this questionnaire.

Rita Tognini.

APPENDIX 3

Beliefs Questionnaire Learners of Italian

Below are beliefs that some people have about learning languages other than English. Read each statement and decide if you:

- (1) **strongly agree** (2) **agree** (3) **neither agree nor disagree**
(4) **disagree** (5) **strongly disagree**

There are no right answers. I am simply interested in your opinion.

Circle a number next to each statement. Questions 4 and 16 are slightly different and you should respond to them as indicated.

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a language other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Some people have a special ability for learning languages other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Some languages are easier to learn than others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Italian is: (a) a very difficult language (b) a difficult language (c) a language of medium difficulty (d) an easy language (e) a very easy language | a | b | c | d | e |
| 5. I believe that I will learn to speak Italian very well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Australians are good at learning languages other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. It is easier for teachers than others to learn a language other than English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. It is important to speak Italian with an excellent pronunciation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. It is necessary to know about Italian culture in order to speak Italian well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. You shouldn't say anything in Italian until you can say it correctly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. It is easier for someone who already speaks a language other than English to learn another one. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning languages other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. It is best to learn Italian in Italy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I enjoy practising Italian with the Italians I meet. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in Italian. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language very well? (a) less than a year (b) 1-2 years (c) 3-5 years (d) 5-10 years (e) You can't learn a language in one hour a day. | a | b | c | d | e |
| 17. I have a special ability for learning languages other than English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. The most important part of learning a language other than English is learning vocabulary words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. It is important to repeat and practice a lot. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Women are better than men at learning languages other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Australians feel it is important to be able to speak a language other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I feel timid speaking Italian with other people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Australians feel it is important to be able to speak Italian. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. If beginning students are permitted to make error in Italian, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. The most important part of learning a language other than English is learning the grammar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. I would like to improve my Italian so that I can get to know Italian people better. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. It is easier to speak than to understand a language other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. It is important to practise with tapes and cassettes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. Learning a language other than English is different from learning other academic subjects. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30. It is important to read as much as possible when learning a language other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. It is important to practise speaking with other class members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. The most important part of learning Italian is learning how to translate from English into Italian. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. Learning Italian will improve my career opportunities as a teacher. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. People who speak more than one language other than English are very intelligent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. I want to learn to speak Italian well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. I would like to have Italian friends. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. Learning a language other than English at school improves young people's job prospects when they leave school, | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. I want to read and write Italian well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. Everyone can learn to speak a language other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. It is easier to read and write Italian than to speak and understand it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Thank you for your cooperation

Rita Tognini

APPENDIX 4

Beliefs Questionnaire Learners of Japanese

Below are beliefs that some people have about learning languages other than English. Read each statement and decide if you:

- (1) **strongly agree** (2) **agree** (3) **neither agree nor disagree**
(4) **disagree** (5) **strongly disagree**

There are no right answers. I am simply interested in your opinion.

Circle a number next to each statement. Questions 4 and 16 are slightly different and you should respond to them as indicated.

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a language other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Some people have a special ability for learning languages other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Some languages are easier to learn than others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Japanese is: (a) a very difficult language (b) a difficult language (c) a language of medium difficulty (d) an easy language (e) a very easy language | a | b | c | d | e |
| 5. I believe that I will learn to speak Japanese very well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Australians are good at learning languages other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. It is easier for teachers than others to learn a language other than English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. It is important to speak Japanese with an excellent pronunciation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. It is necessary to know about Japanese culture in order to speak Japanese well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. You shouldn't say anything in Japanese until you can say it correctly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. It is easier for someone who already speaks a language other than English to learn another one. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning languages other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. It is best to learn Japanese in Japan. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I enjoy practising Japanese with the Japanese I meet. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in Japanese. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language very well? (a) less than a year (b) 1-2 years (c) 3-5 years (d) 5-10 years (e) You can't learn a language in one hour a day. | a | b | c | d | e |
| 17. I have a special ability for learning languages other than English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. The most important part of learning a language other than English is learning vocabulary words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. It is important to repeat and practice a lot. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Women are better than men at learning languages other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Australians feel it is important to be able to speak a language other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I feel timid speaking Japanese with other people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Australians feel it is important to be able to speak Japanese. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. If beginning students are permitted to make error in Japanese, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. The most important part of learning a language other than English is learning the grammar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. I would like to improve my Japanese so that I can get to know Japanese people better. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. It is easier to speak than to understand a language other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. It is important to practise with tapes and cassettes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. Learning a language other than English is different from learning other academic subjects. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30. It is important to read as much as possible when learning a language other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. It is important to practise speaking with other class members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. The most important part of learning Japanese is learning how to translate from English into Japanese. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. Learning Japanese will improve my career opportunities as a teacher. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. People who speak more than one language other than English are very intelligent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. I want to learn to speak Japanese well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. I would like to have Japanese friends. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. Learning a language other than English at school improves young people's job prospects when they leave school, | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. I want to read and write Japanese well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. Everyone can learn to speak a language other than English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. It is easier to read and write Japanese than to speak and understand it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Thank you for your cooperation

Rita Tognini

APPENDIX 5: SELF-REPORT PRO-FORMA

Name: _____ Language: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

The purpose of this form is to enable you to record the learning strategies you used for each of the main activities undertaken during the lesson (or part of the lesson) in which you just participated. Please do the following:

- A. List each of the main activities undertaken during the lesson (or part of the lesson).
- B. Describe what you did during each activity to help yourself learn.
- C. Explain **why** you chose that way of learning.

Please list the first main activity of the lesson, then complete B and C **before** going on to list the second activity. When you have listed the second activity, complete B and C **before** going on to list the third activity and so on.

| A | B | C |
|--|---|--|
| Main activities of the lesson (in order) | What did you do to help yourself learn? | Why did you choose that way of learning? |
| | | |

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