

# Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition

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Learning strategies refer to a set of tactics that people use in order to gain control over their own learning process. Nowadays, enhancing strategies in second or foreign language classrooms is one of the teachers' roles, since their mission is to facilitate the learning among their students and make their thinking process visible. In order to teach a second language (L2) effectively, educators must take into consideration the needs and biographies of each learner, as a result, they are able to employ methodologies that guide students in using strategies which enhance their L2 learning process. This paper helps readers understand the concept of such strategies and its importance in terms of accelerating and facilitating English learning by putting forth a number of the definitions of the concept as posited by different authors. Then, it discusses three differing approaches to L2 instruction such as Grammatical, Communicative, and Cognitive in order to identify which of these approaches promote useful learning strategies in the classroom. And finally, based on the Biography Driven Instruction (BDI) model, this paper analyzes on how four learning strategies were put into practice in settings of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

*Keywords:* learning strategies, approaches to L2 instruction, BDI model, BDI strategies

## Introduction

Nowadays, it is widely acknowledged that learning strategies have become one of the main factors that help students to learn a second or foreign language successfully (Oxford, 2003). This educational issue has been mainly tackled by researchers such as: Kumaravadivelu (2001); Oxford (2003); Herrera and Murry (2011); Herrera, Kavimandan, and Holmes (2011), among others, individuals whose findings continually remind educators of the power of designing, adapting, or applying effective teaching methods in order to promote the use or creation of learning strategies that pave the way for learners to take charge of their own development in language learning and consequently increase their autonomous learning.

In light of these researchers, this paper is aimed at defining learning strategies in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and at analyzing L2 approaches—Grammatical, Communicative, and Cognitive—to identify which of these approaches guide teachers in applying appropriate methods that promote the use of learning strategies in the process of SLA. It also discusses the effectiveness of the Biography Driven Instruction (BDI) model proposed by Herrera (2010), which was mostly used in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms in the USA. Finally, a more practical part follows with an explanation on how four strategies were used successfully in the classroom. This part draws on classroom experience from working as an English language teacher with fifth year secondary school students (16 years old) in a co-ed public school in Ecuador. In general, this school had

a class size of about 42 students who received EFL instruction five hours per week. Most of the studies cited here were conducted in settings of English as a second or foreign language (ESL or EFL); therefore, the term “L2” will be considered in this paper to refer to either EFL or ESL classrooms.

In regard to research, BDI has been shown to be one of the most effective models for fostering the use of learning strategies in the classroom (e.g., Herrera et al., 2011). It motivates teachers to consider students’ biographies—family, community, academic experiences—as main aspects of their pedagogy. In this way, they are able to build upon students’ backgrounds the new learning. This model also pushes educators to reflect upon their practices regularly and motivates them to believe learning is an attainable goal for every learner. To do so, this model provides educators, at all levels, with the means to nurture the use of cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective strategies of their students, so that they engage with the learning process effectively. The importance of using strategies for learning languages is also discussed by Chamot and O’Malley (in Herrera & Murry, 2011). They stated: “Academic language learning is more effective when it is supported by learning strategies” (p. 46). The effective application of BDI model and strategies in several L2 classrooms is the reason why this paper addresses the use of learning strategies in SLA.

### **Learning Strategies: Definition**

According to Selinker (1972), learning strategies can be considered as belonging to the five psycholinguistic processes that shape interlanguage system. These five psycholinguistic processes are as follows: native language transfer, overgeneralization of target language rules, transfer of training, strategies of communication, and strategies of learning. Learning strategies are used by L2 learners as tactics to make the new cognitive demanding linguistic system simpler.

One of the most recognized researches on learning strategies was conducted by O’ Malley and Chamot in 1990. Their writing documented a model called Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) that was conducted in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) settings. CALLA has become one of the most effective models for promoting learning strategies in the classroom (O’ Malley & Chamot, in Herrera, 2010). Among learning strategies highlighted are cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective strategies, which will be detailed later. Other scholars have also focused on specific strategies employed by students when learning L2 skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation as a component of speaking (e.g., Cohen & Macaro, 2007; Griffiths, 2008; Herrera & Murry, 2011; Oxford, 2011; Szyszka, 2017).

In a similar vein, Ortega (2009) defined learning strategies as “conscious mental and behavioral procedures that individuals engage in with the aim to gain control over their learning process” (p. 208). According to Brown (2006), strategies are “attacks” used by humans in a particular situation, those differ within each person. In addition, Chamot (2005) defined strategies quite broadly as “procedures that facilitate a learning task, they are most often conscious and goal driven” (p. 112).

Although the definitions of learning strategies are related to actions, behaviors, attacks, tactics, and procedures, it is still unclear as to whether strategies are used consciously or unconsciously. That is, there is lack of information regarding whether L2 learners apply the strategies deliberately (Szyszka, 2017). Nonetheless, Oxford (2011) claimed that self-regulated L2 learning strategies are “deliberate goal-directed attempts to manage and control efforts to learn the L2. These strategies are broad, teachable actions that

learners choose from among alternatives and employ for L2 learning purposes” (p. 12). Similarly, Griffiths (2008) viewed learning strategies as “activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning” (p. 87).

Research has revealed the power of consciously using L2 learning strategies in ESL classrooms and how language teaching methods frequently may affect the use of such strategies (e.g., Oxford, 2003). However, Brown (2006) posed that some individuals learn their L2 effectively despite the methodology applied by teachers. It means that some learners have developed their own strategies and used them for learning a second language successfully, but others need more help. For this reason, educators are recommended to choose appropriate L2 approaches and models that better stimulate the use of learning strategies among their students. To do so, teachers “must understand the philosophies and research that support and challenge the usefulness and educational value of each approach” (Herrera & Murry, 2011, p. 195).

On the other hand, Kumaravadivelu (2001) pointed out that language teachers must not be just consumers of theories proposed by others, rather than they must go beyond the limitations of these concepts with a call to “construct their own context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge that will make their practice of everyday teaching a worthwhile endeavor” (p. 541). Educators are motivated to become postmethod teachers or autonomous teachers capable of embarking on the continuous process of self-exploration and self-improvement. To do so, they are called to conduct teacher research which mainly involves observing, hearing, and reflecting on their daily teaching practices in order to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the pedagogy employed in the classroom. Consequently, suitable approaches are designed or adapted to fit educational context and students’ needs.

### **Approaches and Models to L2 Instruction**

Among the main approaches to second language instruction emphasized are the grammatical approach, communicative approach, or cognitive approach. These L2 approaches will be discussed in detail below to identify which of these approaches allow educators to employ effective methods that promote strategies and tools in the classroom.

#### **Grammatical Approach**

Earlier research has shown that this historical approach emerged two centuries ago with the purpose of teaching Greek and Latin, whose instruction viewed language learning as a mental discipline. This teacher-centered approach is mainly focused on teaching L2 grammar structures (e.g., Kelly, 1976). The main methods used in this approach are as follows: Grammar Translation (e.g., focus on reading, writing, grammar, and translation into the First Language (L1)); Direct Method (e.g., focus on grammar and pronunciation, total immersion in L2); and Audiolingual (e.g., focus on error-correction, minimal use of L1) (Terrell, Egasse, & Voge, in Herrera & Murry, 2011; Patel & Jain, 2008).

Research reveals several strategies that learners can choose when they are learning a second language. In general, drills, rote memorization, dialogue memorization, repetition, and kinetics are learning strategies associated with the grammatical approach (e.g., Kelly, 1976). Selinker (1972) added that strategies, such as mnemonics, rote memory, and flash cards, enable students to learn vocabulary and grammar. However, such strategies are not always feasible to promote L2 proficiency in advance stages; these can be used in early stages of language learning process (Oxford, 2003). Finally, an educational study revealed that L2 learners who were

taught through grammar-based instruction showed low scores in standardized tests that measure reading skills than L2 students who received content-based instruction (Thomas & Collier, in Herrera & Murry, 2011).

### **Communicative Approach**

This contemporary approach, which had its origins in the 1960s and 1970s, viewed as its principles the communication, constructivism, and social interaction (Kelly, 1976). As this is a learner-centered approach, students should develop assorted competences (e.g., communicative, grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic) which are nurtured through authentic materials, activities, and strategies in order to enable students to have a meaningful acquisition of L2 language (Patel & Jain, 2008; Herrera & Murry, 2011).

The main methods used in this approach are as follows: Silent way (e.g., focus on reinforcement through repetition and signals); Natural way (e.g., focus on comprehensible input, acceptance of L1); Suggestopedia (e.g., emphasis on relaxed physical setting, minimal error-correction, application of L1 for explanations); Integrated Content-Based (e.g., focus on content and language, and L2 development), and Sheltered Instruction (e.g., focus on scaffolded instruction, use of visuals, cooperative learning, and guarded vocabulary) (Herrera & Murry, 2011).

According to Oxford (2003), L2 educators could select the communicative approach because it comprises several useful methods that fit all learners' needs in the classroom. Furthermore, learning strategies play a central role in determining "a particular learner's ability and willingness to work within the framework of various instructional methodologies" (Oxford, 2003, p. 16). Oxford documented 62 strategies which were classified into six categories: cognitive (e.g., reasoning, analysis, summarizing); metacognitive (e.g., self-planning, arranging, evaluating); memory-related (e.g., grouping, associating, and using imagery); compensatory (e.g., guessing, switching to L1); affective (e.g., using music, laughter, meditation); and social (e.g., becoming aware of other points of view) (Oxford, in Herrera & Murry, 2011).

### **Cognitive Approach**

The cognitive approach emerged from new understanding of cognitive psychological view of learning process. This new learner-centered paradigm had its "origins in the 1980s and 1990s research on learning functions, memory, and cognition" (Wittrock & Mayer, in Herrera & Murry, 2011, p. 194). The crucial component of this approach is to promote the use of learning strategies in the classroom. The main method used in this approach is known as Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) which is focused on cognitive development in L1 and L2, prior knowledge, and explicit instruction in learning strategies.

CALLA method was developed from the research on learning strategies use among Culturally Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students that was conducted by O' Malley and Chamot (in Herrera, 2010). Their research and writing documented several types of learning strategies and their correlation with specific academic tasks. Such strategies were divided into cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective strategies.

Cognitive strategies include manipulation mental and physical of the material to be learned. Such strategies are known as resources in the hands, which can be applied for learning a second language through resourcing, repetition, grouping, deduction, imagery, auditory representation, elaboration, transfer, keyword method, inferencing, note taking, and summarizing. Metacognitive strategies involve tactics that enable L2 students to have the control of their own learning. Such strategies are known as resources in the head, which consist of planning (e.g., advance organizers, direct attention, functional planning, selective attention, and

self-management), monitoring (e.g., self-monitoring), and evaluation (e.g., self-evaluation). Social/affective strategies refer to the learning of a second language through interaction with peers. In these strategies, people are resources with their own attitudes and beliefs towards L2 learning. Cooperation and self-talk are examples of these strategies (Chamot & O' Malley, in Herrera & Murry, 2011).

Research has shown how deliberate and critical reflection on the three dominant approaches to L2 instruction helps educators to determine the best methods that trigger strategies for learning a second language effectively (e.g., Herrera & Murry, 2011). So that skilled L2 educators make learners aware of their own strategies and teach them how to manage those tools in the classroom, as Oxford (2003) suggested. Similarly, Szyszka (2017) asserted that educators must explicitly teach how to use learning strategies in order to make students capable of choosing the best tools during the learning process. Finally, Oxford (2003) suggested that teachers should use a range of methods and strategies in the classroom because it is irresponsible to believe that a single L2 methodology or learning strategy could possibly meet all students' needs.

In addition to approaches to L2 instruction discussed above, effective teachers have integrated some current instructional models into their ESL or EFL curriculum. By doing so, they have helped learners to apply more appropriate and pertinent learning strategies in order to increase their L2 proficiency. One of the most effective models used for cultural and linguistic diverse classrooms in the USA was developed by Herrera (2010), who proposed a model called Biography Driven Instruction (BDI), which is discussed in detail below.

### **Incorporating BDI Model in L2 Classrooms**

According to Herrera (2010), BDI is a model that has emerged from the study of Thomas, Collier, Krashen, and Vygostky, among others (e.g., Thomas, Collier, Krashen, & Vygostky, in Herrera, 2010), researchers who always remind educators to value the assets that learners bring to the class. This model can be incorporated into any curriculum by giving L2 teachers some guidelines they need to adapt their pedagogy as a way to enhance the academic achievement among their students. It also motivates teachers to place students at the center of their educational practices taking into consideration their biographies as a main aspect. Consequently, these tools make teaching and learning experience more successful. The model is primarily based on Krashen's Input Hypothesis (IH) and Vygostky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

IH claims that people develop a second language "by understanding input containing  $i+1$ ". That is, the " $i$ " indicates where the learners currently stand and the " $+1$ " means that the new language structures are a little beyond where they are now (Krashen, in Herrera, 2010, p. 33). In other words, learners acquire a new language only when they understand that the language structures are one step beyond from their current level. However, the input provided by L2 teachers needs to be comprehensible to help learners progress from their current skills toward the desired goals.

Vygotsky's ZPD, on the other hand, is the difference between what students are able to perform with help and what they are able to perform by their own. There are some communalities in the Krashen's and Vygostky's contributions which are discussed by Guerra (in Herrera, 2010). Krashen's " $i$ " "is what Vygostky called the actual development of the child and the ' $i+1$ ' stage is the equivalent to Vygostky's ZPD. It refers to the kind of input that is at the level of difficulty which immediately follows the ' $i$ ' stage" (Guerra, in Herrera, 2010, p. 12).

Vygostky also added that a particular context, situation, and social interaction are key factors that play an important role when people are learning. “As learning starts to move forward, the students and the teacher continually connect the past to the present, and the present to the future, through social interaction” (Vygostky, in Herrera, 2010, p. 14). According to Herrera (2010), the reason why BDI model is developed around Krashen’s and Vygostky’s constructs is that these perspectives “necessarily involve planning, teaching, and assessing with the biographies of the learners in mind” (p. 14). Therefore, in order to apply this model in L2 classrooms, teachers are required to know the following aspects of their students: first language (L1), L1 proficiency, cultural history, stages of L2 development, and preferred learning styles and strategies. By doing so, educators are able to provide the necessary scaffolds that support students’ L2 development.

BDI model enriches every student’s L2 proficiency by promoting the creation of a community of learners in which everybody feels accepted, respected, and loved. Brophy (2004) suggested that in order to form a community of learners, educators need to take into consideration the following three agendas:

Make yourself and your classroom attractive to students; focus their attention on individual and collaborative learning goals and help them to achieve these goals; and teach things that are worth learning, in ways that help students to appreciate their value. (Brophy, 2004, p. 50)

Another important point regarding BDI model is that it promotes the use of effective strategies that allow students to connect their previous knowledge to the new learning. To do so, L2 teachers are recommended to make students use BDI strategies which support and document their learning process. Such strategies can be understood as creative tools that allow L2 learners at the beginning of the lesson to access their prior knowledge even learning gained in L1 to transfer to the second language (Herrera, 2010). The use of the L1 is an important resource in learning L2 or L3, especially in the case of learning grammar (Wach, 2016).

Herrera et al. (2011) asserted that BDI strategies are cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective tools which are grounded in a constructivist perspective because these motivate students to scaffold their own knowledge step by step; thus, they will become successful independent learners. Such strategies are designed to help L2 students develop academic vocabulary through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In addition, these strategies allow students to develop their interpersonal and social skills through pair and group work activities. By working in this way, teachers promote a low-anxiety environment in which students feel free to share their ideas with peers.

Before incorporating BDI strategies in the classroom, L2 teachers must be aware of their students’ needs and classroom realities and, as a result, they can adapt such strategies to promote better learning outcomes. As Herrera et al. (2011) stated, “We encourage teachers to make these strategies their own reflecting upon their classroom every step of the way and using student biography as the lens through which they view lesson planning, implementation, and assessment” (p. 10). Besides, it is necessary to keep in mind that these BDI strategies are the starting point for developing autonomy in learners, but if teachers want to really nurture this autonomy, they must motivate students to create their own learning tactics. As discussed by Harmer (2008), who pointed out “students need to be encouraged to develop their own learning strategies so that as far as possible, they become autonomous learners” (p. 394). The importance of applying strategies for promoting learning autonomy is also discussed by Allwright and Little (in Oxford, 2003). They posited: “Learning strategies can also enable students to become more independent, autonomous, lifelong learners” (p. 9).

BDI strategies documented by Herrera et al. (2011) are as follows, e.g., Linking Language, Foldables, It's All in Clip Board, Topic in Pictures and Words, Academic Literacy Mind Map, Tri-Fold, Listen Sketch Label, DOTS Chart, Pic-Tac-Tell, Vocabulary Quilt, Thumb Challenge, Magic Book, IDEA, U-C-ME, Extension Wheel, Relevance Scale, Heart activity, It's All in the Box, Active Bookmarks, three Facts, and an Opinion, which are discussed in greater in their groundbreaking book *Crossing the Vocabulary Bridge: Differentiated Strategies for Diverse Secondary Classrooms*.

Such BDI strategies are developed by following three phases of the class: Activation, Connection, and Affirmation. Activation is the phase where L2 teachers introduce the topic of the lesson, objectives, and learning strategies that they will use during the class. L2 teachers activate students' prior knowledge by asking them to write the ideas of the lesson topics on the BDI strategy (e.g., Foldables). The students with low level of English can write the ideas using their L1, L2, or any language and they can also draw pictures or write the phrase "I don't know" if they do not have any idea on the topics. Here, students use their own previous experiences and knowledge in order to identify links to the lesson. Connection is the phase where educators explain the lesson topics through different resources (e.g., videos, flashcards, power point presentations, etc.). Then, educators ask students to connect their new ideas with their prior knowledge. Affirmation is the phase where students must show what they have learned from the lesson. For example, L2 teachers ask students to write sentences or paragraphs on BDI strategies by using the new knowledge (Herrera et al., 2011).

### **Learning Strategies Put Into Practice**

For the purposes of this paper, I will give more attention only to four BDI learning strategies, which were adapted in order to make them work for my students and my curriculum which was purposefully aligned with the communicative approach. In fact, my instruction was based on BDI model and I employed differing methods, such as Natural Way, Suggestopedia, Integrated Content-Based, etc., which were chosen according to my students' needs. In addition, I was motivated to design new strategies (e.g., Tourist Passport, Handmade Power Point, and Newspaper). In this practical part, I will be dealing with the four selected learning strategies and how they were applied by my EFL students. Each strategy made the students' learning process visible throughout the before, during, and after phases of the class.

#### **Foldables**

This learning strategy asks students to scaffold the language topics step by step.

#### **Aim**

Students develop any vocabulary or grammar topic through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It can be used as a study tool.

#### **Materials**

At least four pieces of paper of different colors per student (depending on the number of words/concepts to be practiced)—stapler—markers/colored pencils—pens/pencils.

#### **Procedure**

Activation or brainstorming time. Ask students to create the Foldables by following some instructions. First, take the four colored papers and form eight layers with an inch of space between each color. Then, fold

the paper stack in half pressing until create a crease with several flaps. Finally, staple at the crease. Once the students have created the Foldable and ask them to divide it into three equal columns on each flap. Write on the top of the Foldable “My ideas, what I learned, and my examples”, as shown in Figure 1. Then, the preselected vocabulary words are written on the top side of each flap. Have students individually write or draw whatever comes to their minds regarding the words in the column “My ideas”. After that, place the students in small groups and motivate them to share their ideas with peers.

My ideas	What I learned	My examples

Figure 1. First flap of the Foldable.

Connection or teaching/learning time. Explain students about the lesson vocabulary words by using videos, flashcards, readings, power point presentations, etc. Then, ask students to write down their new ideas about words in the column “What I learned”.

Affirmation or creation time. Ask students to create sentences, definitions, or examples using the words learned from the lesson. They write down their examples in the third column “My examples” and share their examples with the class. Here, they have the chance to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

### Classroom Experience

One of the lessons I promoted this learning strategy was on the theme of “Frequency Adverbs”. Before that class, I told and asked students the necessary material for the elaboration of the strategy.

In the activation phase, I asked students to elaborate the Foldable by following briefly the instructions, explained above. Then, I placed students in groups of four and I introduced the English frequency adverbs. I asked my students to copy the frequency adverbs (e.g., always, sometimes, usually, rarely, never) in each flap. I had students write or draw whatever came to their minds regarding the adverbs in the column “My ideas”. Here, some students with low level of English were allowed to use the L1 to express their ideas or the phrase “I do not know” if they did not have any idea about the words. After that, I had students discuss the ideas in their groups as well as share them with the whole class. By doing so, students had an opportunity to practice skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

In the connection phase, I taught the frequency adverbs by using a power point presentation with images and examples that illustrated each adverb successfully. After that, I asked students to take their Foldables and write down their new ideas about frequency adverbs in the column titled “What I learned”. Then, they discussed the new understandings in their groups. Here, students connected their previous knowledge with the new one. They reflected on the questions “What did I know” and “What do I know now”. In addition, feedback was provided when it was needed.

In the affirmation phase, I asked my students to use the back of the Foldable to individually write a paragraph using all frequency adverbs. Here, students had an opportunity to summarize their new understandings of the adverbs to apply them in future tasks. They shared their paragraphs with the class.

### Tourist Passport

This learning strategy asks students to visualize interesting places to visit.



**Aim**

It helps students to activate their imagination for traveling to favorite places through authentic videos.

**Materials**

One piece of paper of brown color per student (depending on the color of the real passport), at least two pieces of bond paper (depending on the number of places to be visited)—stapler—markers/colored pencils—pens/pencils—scissors—printed picture of a passport—videos of places.

**Procedure**

Activation or brainstorming time. Ask students to create their own Tourist Passport by following some instructions. First, take the two bond papers and cut them in half. Fold the papers until form a small notebook (e.g., 5 inches) and cover it with the brown paper. Then, draw or print a real passport image for the cover. Finally, staple at the passport. Once the students have created their own Passports, they are ready to travel. Have students add page numbers to their Passports. Then, they write the name of the places or countries that they would like to visit on odd-numbered pages. In each odd-numbered page, students also write the title “Things that I have done there”. In each even-numbered page, students write the title “Picture of the place”, as shown in Figure 2. After elaborating the Passport, ask students to close their eyes for 20 seconds to imagine interesting things that they would like to do in these places. After that, place the students in small groups and have them share with peers their ideas about such interesting things.

<b>Picture of the place:</b>	<b>Name of the place:</b> <b>Things that I have done there:</b> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
2	3

Figure 2. Tourist Passport page.

Connection or teaching/learning time. Explain about the places by using authentic videos, pictures, readings, etc. Then, students individually write down their sentences describing things that they might do in these places.

Affirmation or creation time. Ask students to create a short dialogue using the places that they imagined to visit. They write their dialogue on even-numbered pages and stick a picture that represents each place. Once they have finished their dialogues, have them share the dialogues with the class. By doing so, they have an opportunity to practice their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

**Classroom Experience**

One of the lessons I promoted this learning strategy was on the theme of “Traveling the World”. Before that class, I told students the material needed for next class. I also asked them the question: “What famous place would you like to visit in future?”. They shared with me their answers and I asked them to choose only four places. After that, I downloaded videos of these places from YouTube.

In the activation phase, I asked students to elaborate the Tourist Passport by following briefly the instructions, explained above. Then, I placed students in groups of four and I introduced the lesson by saying the following statements: “Imagine that you are going to travel to your favorite places”, “you need your Passport, luggage, money”, etc. Thus, I asked them to open their Passports and write the name of the first place

that they decided to visit (e.g., Miami) on the odd-numbered page. After that, I had students close their eyes for 30 seconds and imagine that they were walking around this famous place; therefore, they shared their ideas in their groups. Here, some students with low level of English were allowed to use the L1 to express their ideas or the phrase “I have no idea” if they did not have any idea about this place.

In the connection phase, I introduced the lesson topic “Travelling the World” and I also explained about the grammar topic (e.g., Present Perfect Tense) its structures and application by using the whiteboard. Then, I asked my students to take their Tourist Passport and I told them that they were ready to travel to their favorite places. Once again students closed their eyes for 10 seconds, and when they opened their eyes, I showed the first video of Miami city. It illustrated more than 10 interesting things to do there. After watching the video, I told my students, “You have been in Miami for three minutes”. So that I encouraged them to write down five sentences using the present perfect tense. I also said to the students, “Think of the imaginary things that you have done there”. After that, they took their Passports and wrote their sentences under the title “Things that I have done there”. Then, they shared their writing in their groups. Here, students made connections between their prior knowledge of Miami city and the new things that they had already learned. I explained the rest of the places (e.g., Dubai, Chile, and Las Vegas) in a similar way as I did with Miami city. Feedback was provided when students needed it.

In the affirmation phase, my students were asked to individually write sentences using the present perfect tense about other favorite places. They wrote down their examples on an extra piece of paper. Here, students had an opportunity to reinforce the present perfect tense and kept it in mind for future tasks. They shared their examples with the whole class. As an extra activity, students were asked to paste a picture related to each country on even-numbered pages.

### **Handmade Power Point**

This learning strategy asks students to create a Handmade Power Point without using the Microsoft *Power Point* software.

#### **Aim**

It stimulates students to develop their capacity to design Handmade Power Point by using their creativity.

#### **Materials**

At least 10 pieces of bond paper per student (depending on the number of topics to be studied)—a plastic folder—markers/colored pencils—pens/pencils—a printed power point slide.

#### **Procedure**

Activation or brainstorming time. Ask students to elaborate their own Handmade Power Point by following some instructions. First, take the 10 bond papers and place them in a plastic folder. Then, draw or print a real power point slide for the cover (The rest of the slides can be decorated as students decide). Finally, add page numbers to each slide. Once the students have created their own material, they have to write the preselected topics on odd-numbered pages. Each odd-numbered page is divided into three parts. Thus, students write down the titles (Headline/ideas, Picture, and Examples), as shown in Figure 3. Have students individually write or draw whatever comes to their minds regarding the topics under the title “Headline/ideas.” After that, place the students in small groups and ask them to share their ideas in their groups.

Headline/Ideas:	
Picture	<b>Examples</b> 1. 2. 3. 4.

Figure 3. Handmade Power Point slide.

Connection or teaching/learning time. Explain students about the topics of the lesson by using a power point presentation, images, videos, etc. Then, ask students to draw a picture that represents their new understanding about each topic under the title “Picture”. Here, students have an opportunity to practice their reading and writing skills.

Affirmation or creation time. Ask students to create a paragraph using the topics studied in the lesson. They write down their paragraphs under the title “Examples”. They can also present their own Handmade Power Point to the class. Here, students practice their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

### Classroom Experience

One of the lessons I promoted this learning strategy was on the theme of “Healthy life and Healthy World”. Before that class, I asked students to bring the material needed for next class.

In the activation phase, I asked students to elaborate the Handmade Power Point by following the instructions, explained above. Then, I placed students in groups of four and I introduced the lesson by showing pictures that represented the lesson topic. After that, I asked them the question: “What do these pictures represent?” “Can you describe some pictures?” I accepted all answers and I wrote them on the whiteboard. After that, I asked students to add page numbers to each slide and to write the preselected topics (e.g., Past habits, healthy habits, natural resources, and environmental problems) on odd-numbered pages. I had students write what they knew about these topics under the title “Headline/ideas”. Here, some students with low level of English were allowed to use the L1 to express their ideas or the phrase “I do not know” if they did not have any idea about the topics. Finally, I asked students to share their ideas in their groups.

In the connection phase, I introduced the lesson topic “Healthy life and Healthy World” and I explained about the grammar topic (e.g., Past Modals—must, could, might) its structures and use by displaying a power point presentation. Then, I asked my students to take their Handmade Power Point and I said to them, “you are ready to become great presenters”. I showed some videos to introduce each topic of the lesson. For example, I played a video about an old dancer woman that illustrated the first topic of the lesson “past habits”. After watching this video, I asked my students to speculate why she was still a good dancer. Then, I asked students to take their Handmade Power Point and I encouraged them to draw a picture related to this topic under the title “Picture”. They shared their ideas about the picture in their groups. Here, students made connections between their prior knowledge about “past habits” and the new things that they learned. I continued teaching the rest of the topics in a similar way as I did in the first topic. I provided feedback when my students needed it.

In the affirmation phase, my students were asked to individually write sentences using Past Modals, such as *must*, *could*, *might*. They wrote down their sentences under the title “Examples”. Here, students had an opportunity to reinforce past modals and kept it in mind for future tasks. They shared their examples with the whole class.

### Newspaper

This learning strategy asks students to imagine that they are one of the main people (e.g., reporter) involved in a newspaper production.

### Aim

It stimulates students to develop their writing abilities through a creation of a newspaper.

### Materials

At least one piece of paper of an authentic newspaper per student, five bond papers (depending on the vocabulary words to be studied)—stapler—markers/colored pencils—pens/pencils.

### Procedure

Activation or brainstorming time. Ask students to create their own Newspaper by following some instructions. First, take the five bond papers and fold them in half until form a notebook (10 inches) and cover it with the piece of paper of an authentic newspaper. Finally, staple at the newspaper. Once the students have created their own Newspaper, they are ready to write on it. Have students add page numbers to their newspapers. They also write the vocabulary words that they will study in the class on odd-numbered pages. In each odd-numbered page, students write the titles “Name of the Newspaper Section/Picture and Sentence”, as shown in Figure 4. After that, place the students in small groups and have them give ideas about the vocabulary words to be studied. Finally, encourage them to share such ideas in their groups.

<p><b>Name of the Newspaper Section:</b></p> <p><b>Picture</b></p> <p><b>Sentences</b></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3</p>
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Figure 4. Newspaper page.

Connection or teaching/learning time. Show students the lesson topic by using flash cards, videos, stories, power point presentation, etc. Then, ask students to discuss the new ideas about the topics with their classmates. Here, students have an opportunity to practice their listening and speaking skills.

Affirmation or creation time. Ask students to write sentences using the grammar topic studied in the lesson. They write down their examples under the title “Sentences”. Here, students have an opportunity to practice their reading and writing skills.

### Classroom Experience

One of the lessons I promoted this learning strategy was on the theme of “Breaking News”. Before that class, I told students the material needed for next class.

In the activation phase, I asked students to elaborate the Newspaper by following the instructions, explained above. Then, I asked students to add page numbers on the Newspapers. Then, I placed students in groups of four and I introduced the lesson topic by displaying a part of the movie (e.g., *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*). I asked the students the question: “Can you describe that scene?” This scene exemplified what a reporter was.

After that, I asked students to write the preselected newspaper sections (e.g., local news, social, business, sports, and health) on odd-numbered pages. I had students discuss about these words with peers. Here, some students with low level of English were allowed to use the L1 to express their ideas or the phrase “I do not know” if they did not have any idea about the newspaper sections. Finally, students were asked to share their ideas in the whole class.

In the connection phase, I introduced the lesson topic “Breaking News” and I explained about the grammar topic (e.g., Passive voice) its structures and use by employing a power point presentation. I showed some pictures about how a newspaper was created. Such pictures illustrated more than 10 things interesting about this process. After looking at these pictures, I asked my students to imagine that they were working in a Newspaper corporation. So that, I encouraged my students to report local news by imagining that they were journalists. They took their Newspapers and wrote their reports using passive voice under the title “Sentences”. Then, they shared their reports in their groups. Here, students connect their prior knowledge with the new one. I did the same with the rest of the vocabulary words. Students were provided with feedback when they needed it.

In the affirmation phase, my students were asked to report a piece of recent news from the school. They wrote their reports using the passive voice in an extra piece of paper. Here, students had an opportunity to make their understanding visible and kept it into the long term-memory. Their reports were shared with the class.

### **Conclusion**

As it was seen through the theory presented in this paper, learning strategies “are among the main factors that help determine how – and how well – our students learn a second language” (Oxford, 2003, p. 1). Research on approaches to second language instruction revealed that one of them neither to promote the use of effective strategies nor to provide successful learning in the classroom. For instance, the grammatical approach and its methods do not always provide the best available language instruction for L2 students. This approach emphasizes on learning the language instead of focusing on using the language in real communication. In addition, the learning strategies (e.g., mnemonics, rote memory, flash cards) are not always feasible to promote L2 proficiency in advance students; these can be used by students with low level of English (Oxford, 2003). Nevertheless, the communicative and cognitive approaches have emerged to help L2 teachers provide their students with a more meaningful learning experience through the application of useful language strategies.

This paper documented the effectiveness of incorporating BDI in L2 classrooms. The main advantages of BDI model are as follows: It takes into consideration students’ biographies as well as it promotes the use of strategies for fostering students’ language learning development. However, to make this model effective, teachers need adapt it by taking into account their curriculum, educational context, and the needs of all students. In this way, educators provide students with a differentiated instruction and assessment that ensures that all of them reach the learning goals in more dynamic and tailored ways (Herrera, 2010).

Through my own experience of incorporating BDI model into the curriculum, it is possible to mention that it is a useful resource for large classes that allowed me to make a change in my traditional pedagogy. It is foolhardy to believe that a single L2 approach or method may fit all learning needs of all students (Oxford, 2003). That is why I applied the communicative approach with a range of methods where I embedded BDI strategies (e.g., Foldables) into my curriculum since the students “need meaningful educational experiences to succeed”, as

Herrera (2010, p. 148) suggested. Learning strategies helped my students document their knowledge and enhance their learning, motivation, and autonomy (Allwright & Little, in Oxford, 2003; Harmer, 2008).

In addition, this teaching experience has shown me that the only powerful approach to matching the needs of my students is to value their background and use it as a foundation for integrating new knowledge, without forgetting the importance of using strategies that support their learning process. In addition, Kumaravadivelu (2001) suggested that language teachers are called to design an effective instruction taking into consideration their own educational context and students' needs. So that, I am encouraged to become an autonomous teacher capable of controlling my own teaching process and making self-exploration and self-improvement part of my teaching journey. To do so, I must conduct teacher research to determine how and how well the applied instruction fit L2 classrooms. In this way, I can increase the ability to take appropriate actions that promote success among my students.

To sum up, one of the main goals of language education, especially in this century, is to create people far more motivated, engaged, and independent that take the responsibility for their own development in language learning; as a result, they are able to become autonomous learners. To do so, L2 educators are motivated to explicitly weave learning strategies into their curriculum.

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