

A Research on the Use of Language Learning Strategies by Good Readers of English in L2

Hiroshi TANABE

Abstract

In this paper, the use of Language Learning Strategies by good readers of English in L2 are examined. Some traits of the use of language learning strategies by effective readers were found as the development of learners' interlanguage.

Objectives

In pedagogical views about language learner strategies, identifying strategies and evaluating the effects of the strategies used by effective readers of English as L2 could be bases for having a teaching philosophy and constructing a skill-centered language curriculum. Even though the lists of strategies were suggested by practitioners or researchers (e.g. Naiman et al., 1978, Oxford, 1990,), identifying the characteristics of strategy use by L2 learners will still be of necessity. Taking the issue of the levels of the learners and strategy use, for example, O'Malley et al., 1990 reported that the higher the learners were in their level of speaking, the more number of strategies they used in the interview test, but there also was a counter evidence to the result by the same researchers in another study. In this study, the ways strategies were used by good readers of English in L2 in two different types of reading were examined and a pedagogical consideration on the results was attempted.

Subjects

210 first year students at Tokyo Institute of polytechnics which consists of 70 electronic engineering major students, 70 photo-optical engineering major students and 70 industrial chemistry major students were the subjects of the study. The subjects were of various levels.

Method

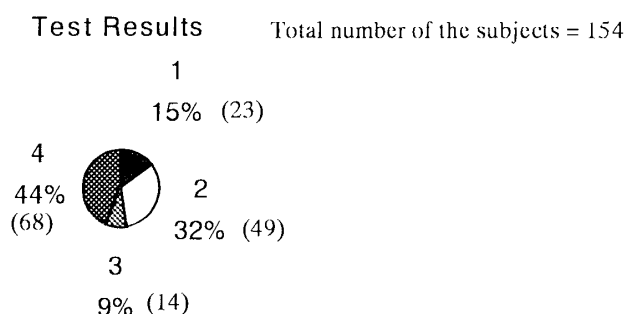
A questionnaire with a test which contains six problems and thirty-six questionnaire items concerning the use of language learning strategies were used. Test problems were taken from two resources. Problem No.1 to No.5 were taken from "Ways of science" (Sumerville, 1953), and No.6 was taken from "Study Skills in English" (Wallace, 1980).

The general information for each problem was written in their first language, Japanese. The subjects were allowed to consult dictionaries and their friends. The time for completing the test was sixty minutes and after the sixty minutes they were requested to fill in the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, there were thirty five strategies that were chosen from Oxford,1990 and original ones made for the study and students filled in the blanks with the number of each problem. (See Appendix)

Results

70 electronic engineering major students, 70 photo-optical engineering major students and 70 industrial chemistry major students answered the questionnaire. 60, 59, 35 respectively were effective. The subjects were categorized into four groups according to the test results.

Table 1. Test results



The test problems were put into two parts. The first part contained from No.1 to No.5 and the other part No.6. The first part was assumed to require bottom up processing of reading. The subjects were to be required to analyze language in order to comprehend the passages. The other part could require top down processing. The subjects were assumed to infer the meaning from linguistic knowledge, discourse knowledge, figures, etc.

In categorizing the subjects, the first group of the subjects were those who gained more than 75% out of 100% in both of the sections (Group 1). The second group gained more than 75% in the problem number 6 (Group 2). The third group gained 75% in the first part, the problem number from No.1 to 5 (Group 3). The last group gained less than 75% in both of the parts (Group 4).

The numbers of subjects belonging to each group were, 23 for Group 1, which was 15% of the whole subjects, 49 for Group 2, which was 32%, 14 for Group 3, which was 9%, and 68 for Group 4 which was 44%. (See Table 1.)

The number of the use of the strategies in each group of the strategies were shown in Table 2. (See the asterisk in Table 2.)

Table 2. The ratio of the user of the strategies (%)

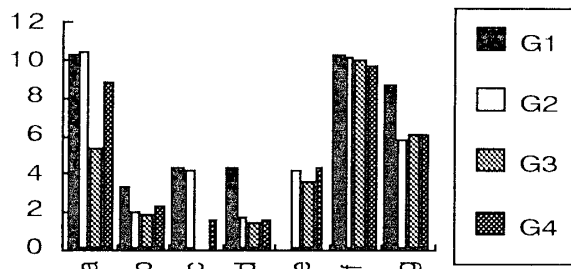
	1				2				3			
	G1	G2	G3	G4	G1	G2	G3	G4	G1	G2	G3	G4
a	10.3	10.5	5.4	8.8	8.7	8.7	2.7	6.3	6.5	5.4	0	4.4
b	3.3	2	1.8	2.2	4.3	1.5	1.8	2.2	3.3	1	0	0.7
c	4.3	4.1	0	1.5	1.1	1	0	0.4	1.1	1.5	0	0.7
d	4.3	1.6	1.4	1.5	3.5	0	0	0.6	2.6	0.8	0	0.3
e	0	4.1	3.6	4.4	0	2	0	2.9	2.2	3.1	0	2.9
f	10.4	10.2	10	9.7	4.3	4.5	5.7	4.7	9.6	6.1	2.9	5.3
g	8.7	5.8	6.1	6.1	5.6	3.5	5.1	4	6.8	5.2	5.1	4.4
h	2.5	1.8	1.6	1.9	1.7	1.3	0.9	1.2	1.8	1.3	0.5	1.1
4				5				6				
G1	G2	G3	G4	G1	G2	G3	G4	G1	G2	G3	G4	
3.8	5.9	0.9	4.7	7.6	5.9	5.4	6.1	9.8	22.7	11.6	10.8	
4.3	1	1.8	1.1	3.3	0.5	1.8	0.7	5.4	4.1	1.8	2.9	
1.1	2.6	0	0	0	0	1.8	0	5.4	9.7	7.1	4	
2.6	0.4	0	0.9	0	0	0	0	4.3	3.3	4.3	2.1	
0	3.1	0	2.9	0	1	0	1.5	2.2	5.1	0	3.7	
3.5	2.9	2.9	4.4	6.1	7.8	4.3	7.9	13.9	13.1	10	6.2	
5.6	4.4	5.1	4	6.8	5	6.1	5.5	11.8	10.5	7.1	6.1	
1.2	1.1	0.6	0.9	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.3	3	4	2.5	2.1	

Discussion

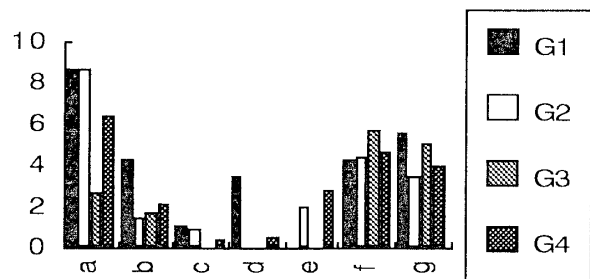
Following are the contents of the questionnaire items categorized by their function:

Category of the strategies	Questionnaire No.
a. inferring from contexts, world knowledge etc.	1,2,3,4,5,6,20,21
b. inferring from discourse knowledge	7,8,13,14
c. using markers	9,10,11,12
d. summarizing points	15,16,17,18,19
e. memorizing for contents	22,23
f. constructing meaning by bottom up processing	24,25,26,27,35
g. motivating for reading	28,29,30,31,32,33
	34

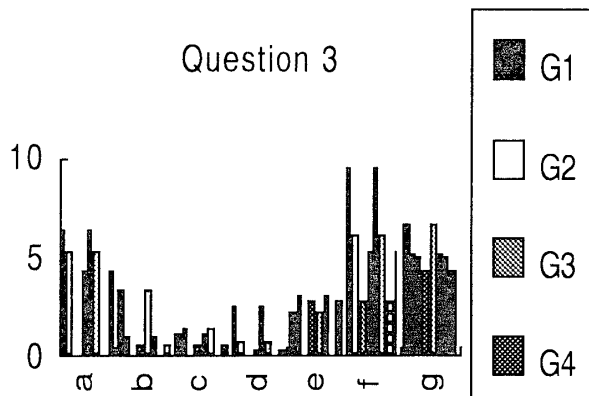
Question 1



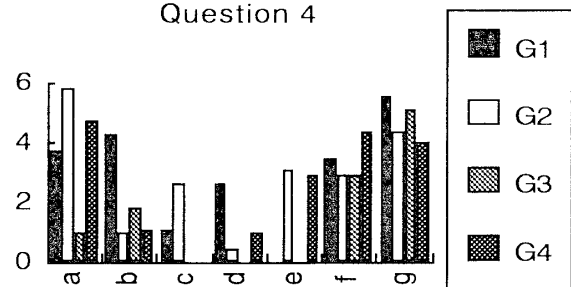
Question 2

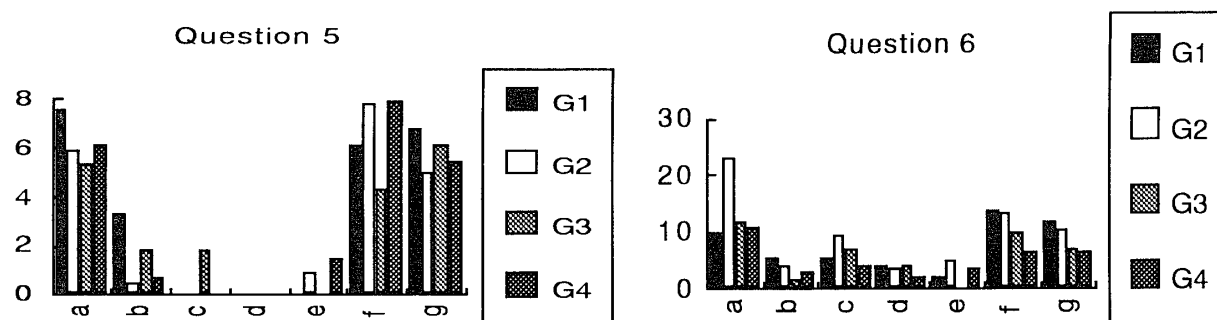


Question 3



Question 4





Number of strategies used and test scores

As to the number of strategies used in each question, Group 1 used the most number of strategies except for Question 6. Group 2 exceeded in the number of the use of the strategies for Question 6 who gained the highest score in Question 6. By scrutinizing the use of the strategies by Group 2 for Question 6, the fact that the strategies categorized in a, c, and e were used by more subjects was known. The more number of subjects in Group 2 used the inference strategies than other groups. This tendency affected their choice of strategies in that they always applied the inference strategy to all the types of problems they meet. This is an overgeneralization of the use of the strategy in inappropriate places. This tendency might have affected the lower score in from Question No.1 to No.5, which might require the bottom up processing of the language.

Contrary to this, Group 1 that gained the highest score in both of the section outweighed in the number of users of the other strategies. That is to say, the subjects in Group 1 could use more variety of strategies as compared with those of Group 1. Those of Group 2 seemed depending too much on the use of inference strategies or did not know the other strategies, which successfully worked for Question 6, but not in the other questions. Group 1 in this sense was balanced in using strategies, which allowed them the appropriate use of strategies according to the characteristics of the questions.

Looking at Group 3, this argument could be supported. The subjects in Group 3 used inference strategies less often than other groups except for Question 6. They tended to read any types of readings in a bottom up manner. In Question 6, they tried to use inference strategies, but their score were still low, which might mean they did not have enough skill to use the strategies.

Group 4 showed lack of knowledge or awkwardness of applying strategies in a given reading. From the results in table 2, it was known that they used strategies more often than Group 3 in some cases but their scores were lower than those of Group 3.

The subjects in this study generally did not use b, c, d, and e. In dealing with Question No.6, activating discourse knowledge by using semantic markers and identifying the type of the reading would clarify the points of the passage. Strategies categorized under d, and e would help understanding Question No.1 to No.4. Identifying points in each paragraph and summarize them in one sentence would help understanding the author's intention. A little more number of the subjects used these strategies categorized under b,c,d for Question No.1 will support this.

Conclusion

Following are the five findings about the development of language learning strategies in this study:

1. The good readers of English had a wide variety of the knowledge and the uses of language learning strategies, which allowed them the appropriate uses of the language learning strategies according to the characteristics of the problems they encountered.
2. Persisting to a strategy, or overgeneralizing the application of a strategy to an inappropriate reading could have hindered readers from reading effectively. Both top-down processing and bottom-up processing seemed to have hindered the effective reading when they were not used in appropriate places.
3. The experience and the skills to use language learning strategies seemed to be necessary to be a good reader of English. It is inferred from this that without enough experience, strategies can not be used effectively.
4. Less skillful readers tended to use more number of strategies but their use often were random and inappropriate.
5. Activating discourse knowledge by using semantic markers and identifying the type of the reading were hard to be used by the subjects. Assuming from the lower rates of the use of those strategies, the necessity of experience of using them will be inferred.

Pedagogical view about the findings

In teaching language learning strategies for reading, presenting strategies and provide opportunities to apply them to given styles of readings seem to be important. Mere presentations of strategies or lack of experience in real uses of ones are not enough to teach the appropriate uses of strategies. In teaching top-down processing and bottom up processing in reading, both approach should be taught in a balanced manner as students can use one in an appropriate place.

References

- Michael J. O'Malley and Anna Uhl Chamot, 1990. *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition.*, Cambridge University Press
- Michael J. Wallace, 1980. *Study Skills in English.*, Cambridge University Press
- Naiman, N., Frohlich, M., Stern, H., and Todesco, A. 1978. *The Good Language Learner.* Tronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
- Rebecca L. Oxford, 1990. *Language Learning strategies: What every teacher should know.*, Newbury House Publishers
- John Sumerville, 1953. *Ways of Science.*

APPENDIX

開始： 時 分 ～ 終了： 時 分 完成時間 分
読解方法診断アンケート

学科 番号 氏名

Read the following paragraphs and answer the questions:

得点 点

*すべて解答用紙に記入してください

①Many Greek thinkers kept two (1)basic principles in mind and applied them:

②1. A thing, whatever it may be—a strange animal, a rainbow, the sun, a thought, a feeling—does not come from nothing. You cannot get something from nothing. The “something” always comes from something else. (This principle later became known as the Law of Conservation of Energy or Matter: Energy or matter cannot be made out of or into nothing.) For example, when we burn a piece of paper we do not destroy the basic content of which it is made—its atoms and energies. This content simply takes a new form—mainly the form of gases.

③2. The same cause, (2)under the same conditions, always produces the same effect. That is, if water freezes or fire burns or poison kills under such and such conditions today, it will do the same tomorrow, if the conditions are the same. (This principle is sometimes called the Law of Causation, or the Uniformity of Nature.)

④When you think about it, you can see that both these principles were quite necessary to the growth of science. Unless they were accepted, they would hardly be any place for logic, reason, or science at all.

⑤In one sense, what these principle mean is that the things and events of the world are understandable. For it is easy to see that if plants, persons, rainbows, diseases, and the other things we meet with really happened out of nothing, everything would be a mystery. We could (3)never account for anything. We could never understand anything.

⑥Likewise, if the same cause under the very same conditions had one effect this time and an (4)opposite effect next time, everything would be a jumble. We would never know what to expect, even of the simplest things. If we never know whether two and two were going to make four or ten, or whether fire was going to warm or freeze us, the ability to think (5)logically would be of little use. If the world were really like that, we could hardly expect reasoning power to develop, any more than we could expect musical ability to develop in a world where no one could count on being able to sound the same note twice in the same way.

1. 段落⑤の要点を20文字程度の日本語で説明してください。

2. この文章のタイトルは次のうちのどれだと思いますか。記号で答えてください。

(a) The Place of Social Science (b) To Understand the World Better (c) To Enjoy the World More
(d) The Contribution of Ancient Greece (e) Beginning in the East

答え

3. 科学の発展に必要な原理とはどのようなものであると著者は説明していますか。

4. 3. の間について説明している段落はどれか段落の冒頭の記号で答えてください。

答え

5. 以下の単語、句の意味を答えてください。

(1) basic principles (2) under the same conditions (3) never account for anything
(4) opposite effect (5) logically

6. 以下の文章を読んで "Simple box camera" の構造と働きについて順序良く説明してください。

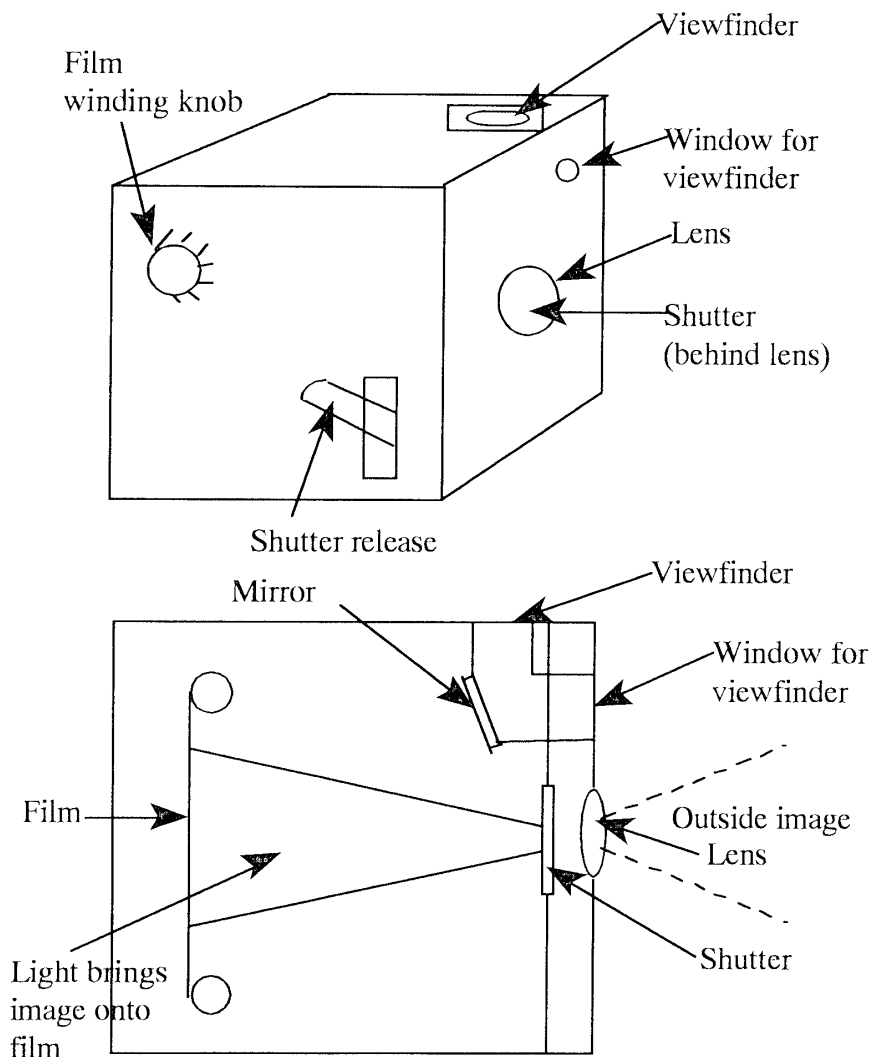
How a simple box camera works

The purpose of a camera is to take a photograph, to have a permanent record on film of a scene, a friend's face or what ever. When a light sensitive film is exposed to light for a certain period of time, an image can be recorded on the film. A box camera is simply a box which will let in the correct amount of light for the image to be recorded.

At the front of the camera is a glass lens which projects or throws image onto a film which is stretched out at the other (back) end of the camera. Just behind the lens is a metal shutter. This can be opened for a very short period of time by pushing a lever called the 'shutter release'. The shutter will let in only the correct amount of light. The box camera is made so that no other light from any other source can come onto the film.

At the top of the camera, there is a piece of glass called the 'viewfinder' which is linked to a sort of small glass 'window' at the front of the camera, on the same side as the lens. This means that by looking through the viewfinder, the photographer can see what picture is going to be taken through the lens.

After a photograph has been taken, the film is wound on by turning the film winder knob at the side. When this has been done, a fresh piece of film is ready to be exposed.



6. の解答欄

	質問 (5とても良くてはまる、4良くてはまる、3ややあてはまる、2あまりあてはまらない、1全くあてはまらない)	回答	そのようにした問の番号全部 (必ず記入してください)
	リーディングの方法について		
1	知っている単語、文法の知識で類推した		
2	文脈から類推した		
3	状況から類推した		
4	全体のテーマから類推した		
5	一般常識で類推した		
6	ストーリーについて知っていることから類推した		
7	全体をざっと読んでからもう一度詳しく読んだ		
8	段落の働きを考えて読んだ		
9	図、表から類推した		
10	キーワード (セマンティックマーカー) によって必要な箇所を見つけそこを読んだ		
11	必要なところだけを読んだ		
12	数字だけを拾い読みした		
13	各段落の最初と最後の文から読んだ		
14	最初の段落と最後の段落を先に読んでから全体を読んだ		
15	要点をメモしながら読んだ		
16	段落ごとに要点をまとめながら読んだ		
17	ポイントに下線を引くなど印をつけて読んだ		
18	番号をふって内容を整理した		
19	図式化して内容を整理した		
20	知らない単語を気にしないで読んだ		
21	なるべく早く読み終わるよう努力した		
22	読んだ"英文"を記憶しようと、ころかけた		
23	読んだ"内容"を記憶しようと、ころかけた		
24	わからないときには同じところを何度も読み返してみた		
25	わからないところは辞書を引いた		
26	わからないときには文法、構文の知識を総動員して良く考えてみた		
27	なるべく正確に読み取るよう努力した		
28	著者がなぜそう考えるのかなど内容を吟味しながら読んだ		
29	論理に矛盾がないか? など批判的に読んだ		
30	英文を楽しんで読んだ		
31	英文をリラックスして読んだ		
32	この英文を一生懸命読もうとした		
33	分からないことを友人に尋ねた		
34	読んだことについて友人と話した		
35	日本語に訳してから考えた		