VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES

ABROAD AND AT HOME

by

Emilia Illana Mahiques

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the impact of context on students' selection and use of vocabulary strategies in a group of 40 participants taking intermediate level Spanish courses. By comparing a group of 20 Spanish learners studying At Home (USA) with another group of 20 Spanish learners Studying Abroad (Spain) the study intends to explore students' choice and use of strategies for both the processes of finding as well as remembering new words. In addition to the factor of context of study, the study also explores whether the difference in levels of proficiency influences students' choice and use of language learning strategies (LLS). By further dividing both of the emergent groups (abroad vs. at home students) by their level of proficiency (intermediate-low –IL – and intermediate-high – IH), the relationship between language proficiency and vocabulary strategy selection/use is analyzed. While students with higher proficiency were shown to resort to more complex strategies than their lower proficiency level counterparts, the different contexts – by themselves – did not prove to have a determining effect on students' choice and use of vocabulary strategies. There were significant differences, however, in the way high proficiency students abroad addressed vocabulary strategies. Only the abroad students having a high proficiency level showed a tendency to use social strategies to both learn and remember new words. The rest of the groups, on the contrary, did not show evidence of social strategy use. Ultimately, the study attempts

to identify possible associations between the choice and use of different types of strategies and their consequences for vocabulary learning. Results showed that the use of different types of strategies did not have a significant impact on students' final scores. More specifically, the use of social strategies to process and remember new words did not lead to higher levels of vocabulary acquisition. Results from the investigation have produced some pedagogical implications, which are also incorporated into the study. Finally, the investigation includes some recommendations for future research.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The experience of studying abroad is increasingly seen as a crucial component of college degrees and critical to prepare future professionals (Institute of International Education, 2014). Between 2000 and 2011, the number of international students has more than doubled, and international opportunities to enroll in higher levels of education have now become more accessible than in the past, all of which reflects an increasing internationalization of academic research (OECD 2013). Although the largest groups of foreign students came from Asia (53%) and Europe (23%), other countries have also shown interest in entering the international education market in the past decades (for example, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Russian Federation and Korea) (OECD 2013). Additionally, countries such as the US have recently shown great commitment to increasing their international rates in higher education (currently representing less than 10 percent of their total college students). Specifically, recent initiatives such as "Generation Study Abroad" bring together educators, businesses and governments with the goal of doubling the number of US students studying abroad by the end of this decade. This initiative intends to dramatically increase the abroad experiences among high school and college students over the next five years, expecting that at least 500 schools will engage in the commitment. The 'Generation Study Abroad' coalition aims to

encourage innovative efforts to make study abroad more accessible to students and create an ongoing dialogue about the need for students to gain experience in abroad contexts, which reflects the previously mentioned progressive expansion and popularization of student abroad programs also in the US (Institute of International Education, 2014). As Allan Goodman, President of the IIE affirmed, "Globalization has changed the way the world works, and employers are increasingly looking for workers who have international skills and expertise" (Institute of International Education, 2014).

According to the Institute of International Education, there are over 4.1 million international students worldwide, which reflects a 10.8 % increase over the previous year and a 95.2% increase over the previous decade. In the US, a total of 273,996 students opted for a study abroad during the year 2010-11. Although it indicates a slight increase of 1.3% over the previous year, it is remarkable its overall rise of 77.7% over the previous decade. Among the group of US students going abroad, a significant number of 46,005 US students are pursuing a full degree overseas, which involves a 3.9% increase over the previous year (Institute of International Education, 2012). Moreover, the number of students choosing non-English speaking countries has risen. Increases were reported in the number of Americans studying in several non-traditional destinations outside Europe (Brazil, China, Costa Rica, India and South Korea), as well as a 9% increase of students choosing Italy as main their destination (Institute of International Education, 2012).

In response to learners' interest, schools and educational organizations around the world have begun to offer new study abroad opportunities to satisfy the increasing demands. In the US alone, the Institute of International Education administered 5,364

grants to US students abroad and managed 1,000 teacher programs around the world. Moreover, support from universities and organizations to IIE's project in 2012 meant a total contribution of 1.5 million dollars for the institution. Also the Department of Educational and Cultural Affairs administers 8,000 grants annually for participants to study, teach, or conduct research in any of the 155 countries in which the program operates. It is remarkable that during the year 2012, the Fulbright offered by the US Department of State (2012) received a total of 10,000 student applications, which demonstrates an increasing demand compared to previous years.

The internationalization of colleges and universities in the US has led to an increase in overseas educational opportunities for undergraduates. According to the Institute of International Education, while two of the traditional host countries had a large decline (Mexico 42% and Japan 33%), many other host countries have reported continuous increases in the number of received international students (16% in Costa Rica, 16% in South Korea, 13% in Brazil, 12% in India and 11% in Denmark). Also other emerging host countries, from regions such as Asia, Oceania, Middle East, and North Africa, have recently entered in the market of competitive higher education, expanding the existing diversity of student destinations. The great implication for the United States is also significant for the reception of students. As reported by the IIE, 66% of all the international students in 2011-12 were hosted in one of 200 participant US institutions. From a more general point of view, and according to UNESCO, global demand for higher education is expected to continue increasing. Specifically, a rise from less than 100

million students in 2000 to over 250 million students in 2025 is the average number predicted by UNESCO (OECD, 2011).

The rapid increase in overseas programs requires an analysis of their effectiveness in order to justify the financial investment from schools, institutions and organizations. Also, supporting students' interest in abroad programs involves studying the benefits derived from these experiences. In response to these needs, the present study intends to be a contribution to the analysis of foreign language programs' impact on students' learning.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The growing interest and promotion of study abroad programs has attracted many researchers interested in exploring the impact of foreign contexts on language learning. Among the major areas of study, SLA researchers have analyzed oral skills and grammatical accuracy in the study abroad context. (Hernández, 2010; Llanes, 2012; Llanes, Tragant, and Serrano, 2012). Students in study abroad settings have been found to develop higher fluency than their stay-at-home counterparts (Hernandez, 2010, p.659), to make substantial vocabulary gains (Llanes, 2012, p. 182), and to improve their oral fluency as well as their lexical complexity and accuracy (Llanes, Tragant, and Serrano, 2012, p.323). While speaking skills are commonly believed to receive the most benefits from the L1 learning context (Llanes, 2012), some controversies still arise when addressing the context's impact on grammar learning issues. For instance, some researchers question whether the AH context favours grammatical learning associated with the traditional Spanish curriculum (Colletine, 2004). Additionally, other important areas under research have been learners' narration fluency (Duperron and Overstreet, 2009), density and complexity of the narrative discourse (Segalowitz *et al.* 2004; Colletine, 2004), and growth in vocabulary (Dewey, 2008; DeKeyser, 2007; Ife, 2000; Milton and Meara, 1995). Students in the abroad context have demonstrated higher use of

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discourse markers and transitional expressions to connect sentences (Duperron and Overstreet, 2009, p.172), produced more dense sentences containing a higher lexical richness (Segalowitz *et al.*, 2004, p.8), and reported higher developments of vocabulary knowledge as a result of engaging in new friendships and social networking (Dewey, 2008, p. 143).

Study abroad is acknowledged by a majority of studies to have a beneficial impact on students' target language proficiency (Stroch, 2009). Living and studying in a second language context provides learners with the opportunity to be exposed to rich and authentic input (Stroch, 2009; Segalowitz *et al.,* 2004). The greater access to native speakers also encourages learners to produce extensive and meaningful output (Segalowitz and Freed, 2004). As N. Stroch (2009) remarks, exposure to such input (Krashen, 1885) and practice in producing language (Swain, 1985) are considered essential conditions in the second language acquisition process. The context of the language thus becomes "one of the most important variables that affect the nature and the extent to which learners acquire an L2" (Colletine, 2009, p.218).

Despite the positive opinion of many researchers about the benefits of study abroad, some question its effectiveness and practicality (Dewey, 2008; Freed, Segalowitz, and Dewey, 2004; Paige, Cohen, and Shively, 2004; DeKeyser, 2007). Students who study abroad often do not take full advantage of the language or culture learning experiences afforded (Paige, Cohen, and Shively 2004). Wilkinson (1997), for instance, considers as "language myth" the tendency of assuming that the mere exposure to L1 speakers and the target culture automatically results in language intake. However,

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exposure to the L1 context leads instead to a casual learning of the target language (Paige, Cohen, and Shively, 2004; Dewey, 2008) as well as to further disappointment about their language progress (DeKeyser, 2007). As Freed and colleagues (2004) remarked "it is not the context per se that promotes various types of learning but rather […] the nature of the interactions, the quality of the experiences, and the efforts made to use the L2 that render one context superior to another with respect to language gain" (p.298). Supporting this idea, some studies have analyzed how the study abroad context, in combination with student's interest, motivation, attitude and interaction, has an impact on language learning (Hernández, 2010; Llanes, Tragant, and Serrano, 2011). Outside the classroom, both SA and AH students with higher integrative motivation interacted more in the target language than students with lower integrative motivation (Hernández, 2010, p.660). Moreover, students with positive attitudes and higher expectations accomplished higher gains in oral lexical complexity, while learners pursuing a degree in humanities developed higher writing skills (Llanes, Tragant, and Serrano, 2011, p.328). The influence of participants' individual differences on the development of L2 suggests that although higher gains - especially in oral skills - are evident during the SA experience, improvements should not only be attributable to the abroad context but also depend on the learner's personal characteristics (Llanes, Tragant, and Serrano, 2011, p.329).

Results supporting the benefit of SA contexts should be taken with caution, since there are multiple factors that affect language learning abroad. Among those variables, age has been found to play a key role. While children tend to interact more in L2 with members of their host families, facilitating higher-quality input to take place, adults tend

to select their interlocutors, often choosing members of their L1 (Llanes, 2010, p.187). Students with higher proficiency also were found to acquire higher levels of fluency, assessed in terms of appropriateness and grammaticality of speech acts (Taguchi, 2011, p. 282). Moreover, learners who started out with higher levels of language readiness - suggested by learner's ability in word recognition - also achieved higher gains in oral fluency (Segalowitz *et al.*, 2004, p.14). Feedback, however, was important for the student to develop communication skills in the L2 and ultimately lead to further learning (Segalowitz *et al.*, 2004, p.14). Similarly, and with regards to strategy-awareness, students with higher metacognitive ability of what is needed to learn effectively were also found to achieve higher levels of listening comprehension (Vogely, 1995, p.46).

Psychological factors such as student's motivation as well as their attitudes towards both the target language and the host culture have also been found to impact significantly on learner's language development (Allen, 2010, p.45). On the other hand, external factors - not associated with individuals but with external conditions – were also demonstrated to have an important role on the student's learning of L2. Participants staying abroad for longer a period achieved higher gains in vocabulary as well as in lexical organization (Ife *at al.*, 2000, p.16). Dewey had similar findings when comparing differences between Study Abroad (SA), Intensive domestic Immersion (IM), and Academic Year formal classroom (AY). Since IM participants reported more hours of dedication to language learning, IM group achieved higher vocabulary gains than their SA and AY counterparts.

Length of stay has also been found to have an impact on the writing skills of study abroad participants (Dewey, 2008, p.141). Along similar lines, other researchers suggested that for writing development to take place in the L2 country, a substantial amount of time needs to be spent in the country of destination (Llanes, 2012, p.155). Living arrangements have also been a factor of influence in L2 learning. Students living in an apartment/house, rather than in a residence hall, were found to make significant vocabulary gains (Llanes, 2012, p.154). More importantly, students spending time with someone from a different culture (different to their L1) improved their lexical richness in written production, as well as their accuracy in oral production (Llanes, 2012, p.152).

Analyses of different types of instruction have also been demonstrated to affect students' learning. Approaches that created an imagined international community through content-based teaching (Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide, 2008, p.581), as well as those integrating foreign students into their classes (Llanes, 2010, p.187) were found to result in higher opportunities for communication and interaction. All these factors, in turn, have an impact on student's choice of learning strategies (Rao, 2006; Alireza and Abdullah, 2010), a major factor that affects both effective independent learning and general learning of a language (Oxford, 1989; Shawer, 2012).

The validity and reliability of the instruments used to assess learners' progress is another reason to take with caution current SA research results. Some authors, indeed, have expressed concern about the instruments used to measure students' progress. Colletine (2004), in particular, states that that many instruments test learners' knowledge only partially, according to the criterion of FL curriculum. In these cases, only the

phenomena that have been the focus of traditional linguistic inquiry and classroom practice are considered. Little attention, however, is paid to phenomena that do not receive attention in FL curriculum. Aspects such as pronoun omission, dependent-clause subject-verb inversion, and elements related to "narrative behaviors" are not emphasized in FL curriculum, but are learned in SA context (Colletine, 2004). This perspective would explain Colletine's results of learners abroad improving their language fluency, narrative abilities, and semantic density, but not the acquisition of grammatical features-phenomena that the Spanish curriculum is widely known to emphasize (Segalowitz *et al.,* 2004).

In support of the need to reconsider measuring instruments, other studies have found that different contexts favor different types of learning and therefore require different assessments (Colletine and Freed, 2004). The authors found in their study that learners in an AH classroom context experience greater gains in the acquisition of morphosyntactic control. In contrast, students in the SA context manifest advantages in the acquisition of lexical breadth, narrative ability and oral fluency. These findings lead the authors to note "the need to balance empirical findings with long-held assumptions […] about the benefits of SA context when compared to other contexts of learning" (Colletine and Freed, 2004, p.164). Also, supporting previous concerns about accuracy of instruments, they confirm "the need to further refine testing instruments and better define the linguistic features to be mastered as well as the social conditions surrounding" (165).

The assumption that different contexts lead to different kinds of learning has further implications, such as those that Colletine and Freed (2004) emphasize regarding the reexamination of instruments. Another implication that should be considered from this relation (context-results) is the learning processes leading to the different kinds of learning. The relationship between learning processes and results has been confirmed by Qui Ma within the area of vocabulary. Findings of the research showed that certain participants' actions affected or predicted different outcomes regarding vocabulary learning (receptive vs. productive vocabulary). In this regard, "evaluating the learning outcome is as important as evaluating the learning process because the two can often reflect each other" (Ma, 2008, p.119).

Chapter 3

FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

The relation between contexts and learning suggests the need to analyze the processes, also called strategies, which make language learning possible. Based on Oxford's definition (1993), language learning strategies (LLS) are 'specific actions behaviors, steps or techniques that students use to improve their second language development' (p.18). Strategies have been classified by researchers using different taxonomies (Stern, 1978; Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 1990). A more in-depth analysis of each of these taxonomies should be considered, especially because the use of different classifications entails different theories about L2 learning strategies and L2 learning in general (Hsiao and Oxford, 2002, p.368).

Earlier researchers proposed classifications systems relying on their own observation of language learning. Stern (1975) identified a total 14 learning strategies employed in language learning and teaching, and organized them in a continuum of seven dichotomous categories (crosslingual vs. intralingual, cross-cultural vs. intra-cultural, formal vs. functional, explicit vs. implicit, productive vs. receptive, concentrated vs. distributed, individualized vs. whole class). Among them, the formal-functional category was considered to play an important role in Foreign/Second Language learning and teaching (Stern, 1975, p.46). While formal strategies referred to the controlled language

exposure that emphasizes the rules and regularities of the L2 code, functional strategies referred to the uncontrolled language input dictated by communicative needs in a immersion or an abroad setting (Stern, 1975, p.47). Additionally, Rubin (1975), through learners' reports, proposed a classification system that divided L2 learning strategies into direct and indirect categories. While direct L2 learning strategies applied to processes that directly affect learning tasks (e.g. memorization strategies), indirect strategies supposed a more indirect contribution to the learning (e.g. create opportunities for practice).

Dichotomic taxonomies, such as the proposed by Rubin's study (1975) (direct/indirect), were later divided by various SLA researchers (Cohen, 1998; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1981; Wenden, 1991). Cohen (1998) classified LLS in processes of storage, retention, recall and application of information. These strategies, in turn, were divided into language learning and language use strategies (Cohen, 1998, p.264). Rubin (1981) also suggested a list of eight categories to classify learners' cognitive processes in language learning. Processes contributing to direct learning were clarifying, monitoring, memorizing, guessing, deductive reasoning and practicing, while processes associated with indirect learning were creating opportunities for practice and encouraging production tricks (Rubin, 1981, p.125). Wenden's study (1991) created another classification to help teachers incorporate learners' autonomy strategies. The author suggested three broad categories, namely cognitive strategies (comprehending, storing, and retrieving information), self-management strategies

(planning, monitoring, and evaluation), and metacognitive strategies (personal-knowledge, strategic knowledge and task knowledge) (Wenden, 1991, p.23).

A more comprehensible classification model for LLS was proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), who based their classification on research conducted in the L1 context. Their taxonomy included psychological-based issues, and viewed LLS as skills acquired as declarative knowledge (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990, p.55). In their study on cognitive psychology, the authors interviewed students about reading comprehension, and problem solving tasks (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990, p.45). From the resulting empirical analyses, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) created a taxonomy that distinguished three types of learning strategies, namely cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective (O'Malley and Chamarot, 1990, p.46). Metacognitive strategies referred to higher order executive abilities implying planning, monitoring or self-learning evaluation. Cognitive strategies entailed a direct manipulation of the information received in order to enhance learning (e.g. organizing, inferencing, summarizing, etc.). Thirdly, social-affective strategies involved interaction with others (e.g. cooperating) or mental redirection of thinking over affect (e.g. self-talk) (O'Malley and Chamarot, 1990, p.44-46).

Based on a wide variety of sources, Oxford (1990) compiled a comprehensive list of LLS. The author created a more detailed and expanded taxonomy based on Rubin's classification (1981) of direct/indirect strategies (Hsiao and Oxford, 2002, p.370). Oxford's classification (1990), however, included major differences, which attempted to make the concept of LLS more specific. For instance, her definition for direct/indirect strategies focused specifically on whether the L2 was (or not) involved in the language

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learning process. Oxford (1990) described direct strategies as those learning processes directly involving the target language, and indirect strategies as those processes not involving the target language in the L2 learning. The author also intended to be more precise, and conceived direct/indirect categories as dimensions requiring greater specifications. Oxford (1990), consequently, subdivided the two types of strategies (direct/indirect) into a total of six groups: Memory, cognitive, and comprehension under direct strategies; and metacognitive, affective, and social under indirect strategies (Oxford, 1990, p.14). This classification differs from previous proposals in that it considers learning strategies not simply as knowledge, but a as a conscious mental activity.

Given the multiplicity of perspectives on LLS, Hsiao and Oxford conducted a comparative study aimed at identifying a classification model capable of accounting for a wider diversity of performances more accurately (Hsiao and Oxford, 2002). In their study, Hsia and Oxford (2002) intended to help researchers and teachers, who are often unsure of which system to choose or if models can be combined (Oxford, 2002, p.369). The authors conducted a comparative study to determine the most practical classification model of LLS in the field (Rubin, 1981; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990), and found Oxford's system (1990) of six L2 learning strategies (memory, cognitive, comprehension, metacognitive, affective, and social) to be superior in explaining the variability of strategies reported by students (Hsiao and Oxford, 2002, p.378). Chamot (2004), rather than considering only one model to be dominant, adopted a broader perspective. The author argued that L2 taxonomies had been developed with a focus on

research interests, rather than on learners' or teachers' goals. The nature of individual objectives, as stated by Chamot (2004) is expected to vary depending on a variety of factors (e.g. survival need, academic need, traveling, etc). More specifically is the context of learning, which conditioned by the socio-educative values of the culture in combination with students' goals, determines the nature of the language tasks and thus the types of strategies students use (Chamot, 2004, p.4).

The concept of learning strategies as responses to particular contexts should be expanded to include new socio-cultural perspectives. To Oxford's early description of L2 learning strategies as "specific actions behaviors, steps or techniques that students use to improve their second language development" (Oxford, 1993, p.18), it is necessary to add the view of language as "a social act related to learners' identity formation in addition to the cognitive process taking place in learners' mind" (Gao and Zhang, 2011, p.25). Researchers analyzing the impact of context on learners' use of strategies have found the socio-cultural factor to be of great significance (Gao, 2006; Rao, 2008; Howard 2005). Rao (2006), considers context as an aspect not only connected with individual difference variables, but also in determining students' choice of LLS.

Researchers have shown that effective use of language strategies enhances successful language learning (Oxford, 1990; O'Malley *et al.,* 1985; Cohen, Weaver, and Tao-Yuan Li, 1996). Specifically, efficient students have been found to use learning strategies more often, more accurately and with a greater variety (Chamot and Kupper, 1989, p.17). Identifying strategies used by successful L2 learners has led some SLA researchers to analyze the effects of teaching those strategies to less successful students.

For the most part, results have shown that strategy training can facilitate language learning. After a strategy-based instruction, students demonstrated higher ability to perform integrative language tasks (O'Malley *et al.,* 1985, p.577), acquired a higher level of self-confidence, and made substantial gains in grammar, vocabulary and narrative organization (Cohen, Weaver, and Tao-Yuan Li, 1996, p.26). In terms of implications for teaching, results have caused, within the SLA field, a 'shift in focus from the teacher to the learner – from exclusive focus on the improvement of teaching to an increased concern for how learners go about their learning tasks in a second or foreign language' (Oxford, 1990, p.vii).

Despite the commonly accepted benefits of strategies, some argue that using more strategies does not lead to higher proficiency levels. While a majority of research shows that higher language proficiency corresponds with the use of more learning strategies (Cohen and Aphek, 1978; Paige, Cohen, and Shively 2004; Cohen, Weaver, and Tao-Yuan Li, 1996), other studies have obtained different findings. For instance, Segalowitz, Freed, and colleagues (2004) examined the gains of students in two different settings: at home and in the context of the target language. Since students abroad showed a higher level of proficiency in the target language, their ability to produce narrative discourse allowed them to converse with native speakers with less frequent need to resort to communication strategies to compensate for linguistic gaps.

Following a quantitative perspective, many studies have shown the extent to which the number of strategies used contributes to gains in vocabulary, grammar, and listening and speaking skills (Cohen, Weaver, and Tao-Yuan Li, 1996; Paige, Cohen, and

Shively, 2004). Researchers interested in the SA context have mainly focused on the possible relation between an increase in the quantity of strategies used and higher language gains. Students trained to use more strategies reported improvements in their ability of interpreting their interactions with native speakers (Cohen, Paige, Shively, Emert, and Hoff, 2005, p.202). Regarding the area of vocabulary, it has been shown that both the variety and frequency of strategy have a positive impact on students' word recognition ability and meaning recall outcomes (Subekti and Lawson, 2007, p.494). The abroad context has also been found to encourage the use of culture strategies, leading students to an improvement in speaking and listening skills (Paige, Cohen, and Shively, 2004, p.271). Also, in another study, students using more reparatory and monitoring strategies were found to make substantial gains in grammar and vocabulary (Cohen, Weaver, and Tao-Yuan Li, 1996, p.25).

While most studies have sought to quantify the number of strategies used by learners, few have investigated the type of strategies used under different learning conditions. Among the few that compare SA and AH settings qualitatively are Charrell's study (1987) of reading, and Cubillos, Chieffo, and Fan's study (2008) of listening skills. Charrell (1987) studied the metacognitive processes involved in the reading strategies of FL readers and L2 readers. The author found that L2 readers appeared to be more 'global' or top-down in their perceptions of the strategies used, while FL readers tended to be more 'local' or bottom-up. Cubillos, Chieffo and Fan (2008) found a similar result when studying the possible gains learners abroad acquired in listening skills in comparison to

on-campus students. While the SA group applied top-down and social listening strategies, the AH group tended to use bottom-up strategies.

Another aspect that has received limited attention by SLA researchers is the socio-cultural dimension of learning strategy selection and use. Of great interest to this subject is John Gao's longitudinal research (2006, p.57), with a group of Chinese learners of English. Findings indicate that, regardless of the differences between learners themselves, the group of students experienced a shift in their use of strategies upon their arrival to English-speaking institutions. This result confirms the author's expectations that socio-cultural factors have a positive effect on the selection of strategies. As stated by the author, 'learner's strategy use is not only the result of their individual cognitive choices but also the product of the interplay between proficiency and contextual social realities' (Gao, 2006)

Continuing with Cubillos, Chieffo and Fan's work (2008), this study intends to individually track students' use of learning strategies and ultimately analyze the effects of using different types of strategies to learn vocabulary. Similarly, and continuing with Gao's work (2006), this study aims to analyze whether the setting of study (SA and AH) affects learners' use of different types of vocabulary strategies. The positive impact of socio-cultural factors on students' strategy choice has only been confirmed with a group of learners whose culture differs significantly from the abroad context (China and England). Also, Gao (2006) carried out a longitudinal study, whose subjects were participants in a long-term study abroad. However, results are yet to be confirmed in short term studies, and comparing two cultures with more similarities.

Considering the scarce amount of studies that relate sociocultural factors and learners' qualitative choice of strategies, this study narrows its analyses to the area of vocabulary. This investigation seeks to analyze the impact of context on students' selection and use of certain vocabulary learning strategies both abroad and at home. Ultimately, this investigation intends to determine if there is a correlation between the type of strategies used by learners under different learning conditions (abroad and at home), and if there are any vocabulary gains associated with those choices.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study utilized a socio-cultural perspective to analyze students' choice and use of different types of vocabulary strategies, as well as their consequences for vocabulary acquisition. The research questions guiding the investigation were:

1. What is the impact of learning context (abroad or at-home) on vocabulary learning strategy selection and use?

2. What is the impact of L2 proficiency on vocabulary learning strategy selection and use?

3. How does strategy choice impact vocabulary acquisition?

Chapter 5

METHODOLOGY

5.1 Subjects

The subjects for this investigation were 40 undergraduate students enrolled in at least third semester Spanish courses at the University of Delaware. Half of the total students (20) took their Spanish courses in the At Home context, while the other half (20) took their courses in the Study Abroad setting. In turn, each of these two broad groups (AH and SA) were differentiated into two further subgroups, depending on the proficiency level of the student. More specifically, 10 of the students in each setting (AH and SA) had an intermediate-low level of proficiency and were taking Spanish 107, while the other 10 students remaining (also in each of the settings) had an intermediate-high level of proficiency level and were taking Spanish 300 or 400 level courses.

The age range of participants was between 18 and 31. The study was conducted in two different settings where Spanish was being used as the main language. Specifically, students participating in the study were classified according to two criteria: 1) by the context of study, namely Study Abroad (SA) and At Home (AH); 2) and by their target language proficiency level, namely Intermediate Low (IL) and Intermediate High (IH) students.

The SA context research was conducted in Spain during the Summer Session of 2013 within the 'Study Abroad' programs offered by the University of Delaware. One of the programs took place at the University of Granada for IL students, and the other at the University of Salamanca for IH students. The At Home study context was conducted during the summer and fall sessions of 2013 at the University of Delaware's Newark Campus. Students participating in the summer had an IL level of Spanish, while students interviewed in the fall had an IH level of Spanish.

Members were grouped under four different categories, with each category having the same amount of participants.

- 10 Abroad Students with an Intermediate Low level of Spanish proficiency

- 10 Abroad Students with an Intermediate High level of Spanish proficiency

- 10 At Home students with an Intermediate Low level of Spanish proficiency

- 10 At Home students with an Intermediate High level of Spanish proficiency

5.2 Data Collection Procedures

The first part of the study was conducted with 20 learners of Spanish who opted for a Study Abroad program in Spain during Summer Session 2013. Students were given information about the purpose of research, and then an explanation of the specific task to be developed throughout the study. After developing the tasks, the process of data collection ended with a final self-assessment interview, asking students first about their use of vocabulary strategies in the assigned task, and second about their general ability to

learn and develop vocabulary in their context abroad. The second part of the study addressed students of Spanish in the AH setting. The study followed the same processes previously carried out, but in a different context. Thus, students were given an initial explanation of the purpose of the study, then the tasks were explained and developed and finally participants were asked to self-assess their own performance– according to the vocabulary strategies used for the tasks– as well as self-asses their general ability to learn and develop vocabulary in AH context.

Data collection for this investigation was conducted in three steps as follows:

1.   Task Administration: Students were assigned a picture-based task as a support for creating vocabulary lists.

2.   Pre and Post-assessment of the task: Students' immediate recall of vocabulary was pre-tested. Results from the pre-test reflected the words to be excluded on the task development. After the completion of the task, students were assessed on their ability to recall the recently learned vocabulary.

3.   Interview: Students were asked to self-assess their own performance of the vocabulary learning task. Afterwards, students were also asked to consider the opportunities available in their context (SA vs. AH), and self-assess their ability to take advantage of them for the development of vocabulary and for language learning in general.

For the Task Administration part, students were given a picture and asked to list all the objects they could name from the picture. This activity served as a pre-assessment

to gather information about students' previous knowledge regarding the task. Once students had completed their list (list 1), they were given a minimum of 3 days to find 10 new additional words from the picture (list 2). Students were also asked to learn these 10 new words by the day of the interview, since they were going to be assessed on their ability to remember and recall them.

The post-assessment of the task took place a minimum of three days after the task was given. For this part, students were asked to write down their new list (list 2) having no other support but the picture. There was no time limit to complete the assessment, and only appropriately spelled words were accepted as correct.

For the interview, participants had to provide a detailed explanation of the processes carried out to learn and recall the words from list 2. Students were asked to respond to a total of seven questions, which served as a guide for students to provide specific information about the processes used to complete the task. The second part of the interview continued with more general questions grouped under five broader categories *(appendix E)*. In this part of the interview, students were asked about the resources they used to improve their language learning in general (professors, friends, technology, etc.). Through these questions, students were asked to give information about their frequently used strategies for language learning in general, considering the immediate context in which they were studying.

At the end of the interview, students were given a chart that included the taxonomy used in this study , and were asked to account for possible strategies they had

not reported but had used during the picture-based task *(appendix D)*. Based on the taxonomy, students had to confirm and reconsider the strategies used by checking the options that corresponded to the actions they had previously carried out to learn and recall the new vocabulary for the picture-based task (words from list 2)

Overall, throughout the interview, students were asked to provide explanations of the actions previously carried out to complete the task. Participants were also asked to provide a bigger picture of those opportunities available in their context that enabled them to apply different vocabulary strategies. Learner's verbalizations were recorded for further analyses.

Data was collected based on the information students provided in the interviews. Results obtained in each of the settings were classified and students' responses were recorded and transcribed in order to facilitate their analyses. Once all the data was collected and organized, results from the different groups were compared to find possible similarities and differences regarding the use of vocabulary strategies. Data analysis focused particularly in the differences regarding the use of vocabulary strategies shown across the settings and across the different levels of proficiency.

5.3 Instrumentation

Open-ended interviews were used for assessment of the students' selection and development of vocabulary strategies. This approach was selected since discovering the kind of strategies learners use in the different settings requires learners' self-assessment of their own learning. The main aim of the interview was to directly ask the students to

remember, describe and evaluate the range of strategies used in language learning in general, and in vocabulary learning in particular. The interview consisted of two parts: the first part asked students to self-assess their performance in a given task, according to the strategies used to learn new vocabulary; while the second part asked participants about the strategies they frequently used for language learning in general.

For the vocabulary-learning task, students were given a picture of a setting familiar to them. The picture included a wide diversity of objects in order to facilitate the task of creating vocabulary lists. The pre-assessment task asked students to write all the objects they could name from the given picture. Once they listed all the known vocabulary, students were asked to find and learn 10 additional words unknown to them. The post-assessment task asked students to list the 10 new words they had learned, having no other support but the picture.

To assess the use of strategies during the vocabulary learning task, the taxonomy of Subekti and Lawson's study (2007) was used *(appendix A)*. This instrument was selected because it allowed for a classification of the different strategies reported by students into different levels of complexity. In their study, the authors analyzed the procedures FL students used when they encountered unknown English words whose meaning they had to understand and remember. Based on the results, the authors classified respondents' outcomes into two main categories, namely, non-elaboration strategies and elaboration strategies. These strategies, in turn, were grouped into more specific sub-categories: passive, active non-elaboration, simple elaboration, and complex elaboration. Each of these sub-categories was defined by the authors as follows:

- Passive: the strategies used did not involve any active elaboration

- Active non-elaboration: The strategies were active but did not involve any elaboration, any extension of the meaning of the word through any form of association

- Simple elaboration: The respondents used elaboration in several simple ways

- Complex elaboration: the respondents used elaboration in more complex ways.

Taking as a reference the study of Subekti and Lawson (2007), the same taxonomy was used, but three additional categories were added, namely a) asking for the meaning, b) practicing the word with someone, and c) using the word in real conversations *(appendix B)*. These three categories were included in order to consider the possible use of social strategies among learners to select and develop new vocabulary.

To account for possible strategies students may have used but did not directly report during the interview, the students were given the taxonomy at the end of the interview. They were asked to re-consider their strategies by checking those categories corresponding to the processes followed during the vocabulary-learning task. Students were asked to confirm the strategies they had mentioned in the interview, and also check those that had used but weren't directly reported.

Chapter 6

DATA ANALYSIS

For the data analysis, results were classified and compared. The classification was based on two different criteria: 1) the context of study (SA or AH); and 2) the proficiency level of the student (IL or IH).

6.1 Descriptive Analysis

Students' responses for the interviews were transcribed entirely, and information was initially categorized into emerging themes. Codification was later carried out to facilitate identification of the key issues within the collected data. As a final check, transcripts were reread and all information reflecting students' self-assessment in the development of specific vocabulary strategies was highlighted. The information emphasized was then used for further analysis.

For each group of subjects, respondents' verbalizations regarding vocabulary strategies development were in turn divided into two different groups. In the first group, results were categorized according to the strategies used to find the words; while in the second group, results were classified based on the strategies used to remember and recall the new words. For each dimension, verbalizations were classified using a taxonomy adapted from Subekti and Lawson (2007).

6.2 Statistical Analysis

The recall test data was analyzed using the statistical program SPSS. Main conclusions obtained in the previous descriptive analysis (interviews) were confirmed statistically. Similarly, data from the final checklist given to students *(appendix C)* was entered into SPSS for both analytical and descriptive analyses.

SPSS was also used for analysis of students' post-assessments, which reflected students' ultimate learning regarding acquisition of the new vocabulary. In this assessment, students were asked to write the 10 new words they had chosen (list 2), having no other support but the picture. The evaluations could receive a maximum score of 10, if all the new written words were correct, and a minimum of 0 if there were no correct words. Misspelled words as well as words belonging to list 1 (previously known words) did not receive any credit in the assessment.

Chapter 7

RESULTS

The following are the results of data analyses of the three questions examined:

Question 1: What is the impact of learning context (abroad or at-home) on vocabulary learning strategy selection and use?

To examine this question, interviews were conducted to elicit detailed information about the processes students followed for a given task (retrospective verbalizations). During the interviews, students were asked to clarify the specific steps and techniques they used to both find and remember new words (Appendix E. Interview 1). Students' verbalizations were then classified and analyzed using Subekti and Lawson's adapted taxonomy (Appendix B).

Descriptive analyses reflect the differences among individuals in the type of strategy selected for each of the tasks: a) finding new words, b) and remembering the words. Results for the process of finding new words (Table 1) show that a majority of students resorted to passive strategies for finding out the new words, thus no difference was found between IL and IH students in this task. However for the task of remembering the words (Table 2), students from different levels used different types of strategies. More specifically, results indicate a significant tendency for IH students to use

Elaborated and Social strategies in the process of remembering the words; while IL students more often resorted to Non-Elaboration strategies.

Table 1 Students' selection of types of strategies when finding new words

Table 2 Students' selection of types of strategies when remembering the words

		Types of strategies	
		Passive Non-Elaboration	Social
IL AH	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4	x	
	5	x	
	6	x	
	7	x	
	8	x	
	9	x	x
	10	x	
IL SA	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4	x	
	5	x	
	6	x	
	7	x	x
	8	x	
	9		x
	10	x	x
IH SA	1	x	x
	2	x	
	3	x	x
	4	x	
	5	x	x
	6	x	
	7	x	
	8	x	x
	9	x	
	10	x	x
IH AH	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4	x	
	5	x	
	6	x	
	7	x	x
	8	x	
	9	x	
	10	x	

		Types of strategies			
		Passive Non-Elaboration	Simple Elaboration	Complex Elaboration	Social
IL AH	1	x			
	2	x			
	3	x			
	4	x			
	5		x		
	6		x		
	7	x	x		
	8			x	
	9	x			
	10	x			
IL SA	1		x		
	2	x			
	3	x			
	4	x			
	5		x		
	6	x			
	7	x			
	8	x			
	9	x		x	
	10	x			
IH SA	1		x		
	2	x			
	3				x
	4	x			
	5				x
	6			x	
	7		x		
	8	x			
	9	x			
	10	x			
IH AH	1	x			
	2		x	x	
	3		x		
	4		x		
	5			x	
	6	x			
	7			x	
	8			x	
	9		x		
	10		x	x	

Thus it can be concluded from the descriptive analyses, that IH students demonstrated a tendency to choose different types of strategies for remembering words than those used by IL students. For the task of finding the new words, however, there was no significant difference between levels of proficiency.

Descriptive data was also summarized in terms of frequency and percentages. Statistical analyses for the process of remembering new words (Table 4), clarifies that Non-Elaboration Strategies were more frequently used among IL students (17) than IH students (6). Yet other types of strategies – Elaboration Strategies or Social Strategies – were more common among IH students (16) than among IL students (7). On the other hand, and regarding the process of finding the new words (Table 3), the analyses showed no significant difference between the IL group (19 – 4) and the IH group (21-6).

Table 3   Frequency and percentage of strategy selection for the process of finding new words

FINDING		Non-Elaboration Strategies		Others different to non-elaboration	
Student's level N = 40	Intermediate Low	19	47.5%	4	40%
	Intermediate High	21	52.5%	6	60%
TOTAL		40	100%	10	100%

Table 4   Frequency and percentage of strategy selection for the process of
               remembering new words

REMEMBERING		Non-Elaboration Strategies		Others different to non-elaboration	
Student's level N = 40	Intermediate Low	17	73,91 %	7	30.43%
	Intermediate High	6	26,09%	16	69.57%
TOTAL		23	100%	23	100%

The first research question is partially confirmed. For the task of remembering new lexicon, analyses of the results showed that IH students selected specific types of (more complex) strategies that were not used among IL students. Different results were obtained for the task of finding the words, where no difference was found between IH and IL students.

Question 2: What is the impact of L2 proficiency on vocabulary learning strategy selection and use?

To examine this question, students' verbalizations during the interviews were further analyzed. Students' responses regarding the specific processes followed to find and remember new words were classified according to Subekti and Lawson's adapted taxonomy (Appendix B). Furthermore, responses were also categorized by their membership to one of the four assigned groups. (IL-AH, IL-SA, IH-AH, IH-SA).

Statistical analyses of the obtained results (Table 5) explore the frequency at which the different groups resorted to social strategies in the processes of finding and learning new vocabulary. The total frequency of IH students using Social Strategies (7) is significantly higher than the rest of the groups – the IL group in the Abroad Context (3) and the IL and IH groups in the At Home context (1). Results therefore indicate that IH participants studying in an abroad setting demonstrated a tendency of using social strategies to both learn and remember new words.

Table 5   Frequency of use of social strategies

		Social strategies for Finding words	Social strategies for Remembering words	TOTAL use of Social Strategies	
Group	Spain IL	3	0	3	25%
	Spain IH	5	2	7	58,33%
	USA IL	1	0	1	8,33%
	USA IH	1	0	1	8,33%
TOTAL				12	

Attempting to account for possible strategies students' may have not mentioned in the interviews, and in turn also verify the findings obtained, self-assessments (Appendix C) were conducted to explore more in-depth the second research question. Participants were asked to reconsider their strategies used for acquisition of the vocabulary; and students' answers were analyzed statistically according to their group membership and in terms of frequency of strategy use (Table 6).

Table 6   Students' self-assessment on the frequency of use of each of the
         different strategies

	IL AH	IL SA	IH SA	IH AH
PASSIVE				
1. Dictionary	9	4	10	8
2. Repeated pronunciaton	8	6	6	10
3. Writing of word and definition	6	4	6	7
4. Creating a word list	4	6	8	5
5. Highlighting the learned words	1	0	2	0
TOTAL	**28**	**20**	**32**	**30**
ACTIVE NON ELABORATION				
1. Words formation analysis	0	1	0	2
2. Parts of speech	1	3	1	4
3. Guessing	5	5	5	1
4. Sentence analysis	3	2	3	0
5. Reviewing the learned words	4	7	6	9
TOTAL	**13**	**18**	**15**	**16**
SIMPLE ELABORATION				
1. Sound similarity	6	3	4	4
2. Context	4	3	4	1
3. Simple meaning type analysis	0	1	2	0
4. Word link analysis	2	2	2	2
5. Simple linking of the unknown words to L1 or L2	4	4	8	6
TOTAL	**16**	**13**	**20**	**13**
COMPLEX ELABORATION				
1. Paraphrase	0	3	2	1
2. Linking of sound and definition	3	4	6	5
3. Generating an image	2	6	2	7
4. Complex linking of the unknown word to L1 or L2	2	1	3	0
5. Complex meaning type analysis	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	**7**	**14**	**14**	**14**
SOCIAL				
1. Asking for the meaning	4	4	9	1
2. Practicing the word	2	4	8	2
3. Using the word	2	4	5	2
TOTAL	**8**	**12**	**22**	**5**

Analyses of the results show that social strategies were mostly used among the group of IH students in SA programs. The total quantity indicating the frequency of use of social strategy is substantially superior in the IA-SA group (22) in comparison with the other groups, namely IL-SA (12), IL-AH (8) and IH-AH (5)

Based on Tables 5 and 6, it can be concluded that social strategies only gain relevance among the IH students within the SA program. Such a statement contradicts our second hypothesis, which thought that an abroad context would stimulate students' use of social strategies. While context is important, it cannot guarantee by itself students' use of social strategies. Other factors, such as the condition of an IH proficiency level, stood out as essential for ensuring the use of social strategies among students abroad. The results of this study are similar to those found in the research conducted by Cubillos *et. al* (2008). The authors reported that among the SA students, only the high-performing group applied social listening strategies with significant gains. Thus, while the context is important, students' level of proficiency emerges as an even more significant factor in the determination of the type of vocabulary strategy selected by L2 learners.

Questions 3: How does strategy choice impact vocabulary acquisition?

To explore this question, students' performance in their post-assessment task was tracked individually, allowing a comparison between the results obtained and the type of strategy each participant had used for the achievement of the task. During the post-assessment task, students were asked to list the 10 new words they had learned, having no

other support but the picture. Their results were graded in order to analyze their ultimate learning regarding the acquisition of vocabulary. For each student, results could range from 0 to 10, taking 0 as the lowest score and 10 as the highest. After the data from the post-assessment was collected, output of the tests was compared to the type of strategies students had used to complete the task (which included choosing and remembering the new words). Then possible relations between strategies and results were examined.

Data was from the post-assessments analyzed in terms of mean scores for each of the processes of finding and remembering new words. Furthermore, each score was associated with the type of strategy the participant had reported to use in the task. For the process of choosing the new word (Table 7) results show that students using passive strategies for the process of finding the new words (6.7), obtained comparable vocabulary gains to those using social strategies (7.57). Thus the type of strategy used to find new words has no significant impact on the student's gain of vocabulary

Table 7   Impact of the type of strategy used on students' vocabulary acquisition for the process of finding the new words

	Right words	
Finding the words	N	Mean
Non-Elaborated St.	30	6.7
Social Strategies	10	7.57
Total	40	7.13

On the other hand, the use of different types of strategies for the process of remembering new words may have an impact on students' final gains. Analyses of the results (Table 8) indicate that students using elaboration strategies (simple or complex) performed slightly better than students using non-elaboration strategies. In this case, the use of different types of strategies did not show a significant improvement in students' scores. Secondly, the data (Table 8) also demonstrates that students using social strategies performed substantially poorer in their assessment (4), thus showing lower gains than students using non-elaboration (7.26) or elaboration strategies (8.27 / 8.13). Statistical analyses are visually summarized in Figure 1. The chart bar represents possible associations between the strategies students use to remember the words and their ability to recall those words during the post-assessment task (correct words).

Table 8   Impact of the type of strategy used on students' vocabulary acquisition for the process of remembering the words

	Right words	
Remembering the words	N	Mean
Non-Elaborated St.	19	7.26
Simple Elaboration St.	11	8.27
Complex Elaboration St.	8	8.13
Social Strategies	2	4.00
Total	40	7.55

Figure 1   Chart bar representation
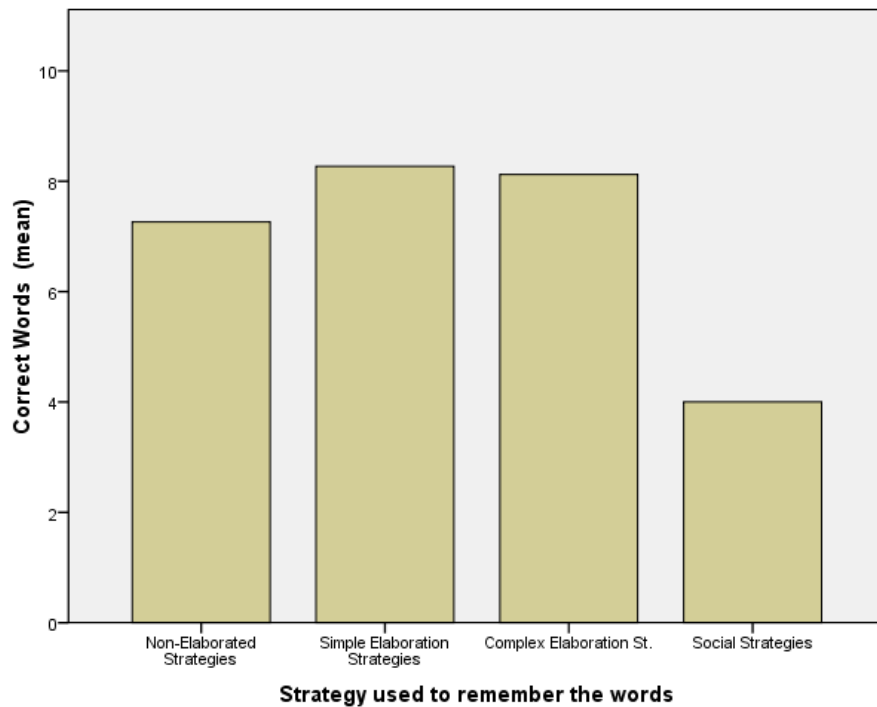
Contrary to our research question, using different types of strategies does not guarantee better gains of vocabulary among students. Strategies used for finding new words do not seem to impact students' gain of new lexicon. Regarding the process of remembering new words, there are no significant differences in terms of vocabulary gains associated to the use of non-elaboration or elaboration strategies. However, students using any of these two strategies – non-elaboration and elaboration – performed better than students using social strategies. For students in this study, the use of social strategies did not lead students to higher amounts of vocabulary acquisition and/or recall.

Overall, results showed that while context is important, it cannot by itself guarantee students' use of social strategies. Other factors, such as an advanced proficiency level, stood out as essential for ensuring the use of social strategies among students abroad. At the same time, the use of social strategies to process and remember new words, did not lead to higher levels of vocabulary acquisition, at least in terms of the amount of words students were able to recall after the task.

Chapter 8

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This investigation sought to analyze the impact of context (abroad and at home) on students' selection and use of certain vocabulary learning strategies, and to identify the vocabulary gains associated with strategy choice. While no difference was found across the groups for the process of finding new vocabulary words; results differed between groups of participants for the processes of remembering and recalling the words. Both on-campus and abroad IH students demonstrated a tendency to choose different types of strategies for remembering and recalling words than those used by IL students. IH students, specifically, resorted to more complex strategies such as Elaborated and Social strategies, while IL students often resorted to Non-Elaboration strategies. Thus students with higher proficiency (IH) demonstrated using more complex strategies than those used by students with lower proficiency level (IL).

While both on-campus and abroad IH groups resorted to more complex strategies than those of non-elaboration, there were significant differences between the groups of SA and AH context regarding the use of social strategies. Only the group of IH participants studying in an abroad setting showed a tendency to use social strategies to both learn and remember new words. The rest of the groups – students with an IL

proficiency as well as AH participants – did not demonstrate using social strategies. Context therefore is important, but it cannot guarantee *per se* the use of social strategies among students. Additional factors such as having a higher proficiency level (IH) stand as essential for facilitating the use of social strategies among the students abroad, and their communication with the rest of society.

Analyses of vocabulary gains in relation to the students' strategy choice showed that there were no differences in vocabulary acquisition between students using non-elaboration strategies and those using elaboration strategies. In this study, the use of strategies of different complexity – non-elaboration and elaboration – did not demonstrate to have a significant impact on students' vocabulary gains. The data also suggested that participants using social strategies did not obtain higher amounts of vocabulary acquisition and/or recall. In fact students using non-elaboration and elaboration strategies performed better than students using social strategies. Resorting to social strategies, therefore, demonstrated having no difference in vocabulary gain.

This study has showed that students with different levels of proficiency use different types of strategies when dealing with an L2 language. Specifically, and for this investigation, students with higher levels of proficiency were more likely to use complex elaboration strategies than those with lower proficiency levels. Such findings would give support for a certain diversification of the teaching of vocabulary strategies. Therefore, instructors should encourage more advanced learners to use strategies appropriate for their level, while learners with lower proficiency may need other types of strategies more suitable for their level. Nevertheless, teachers should also persuade students with lower

levels to progressively integrate more complex strategies when learning vocabulary. Overall, the higher of frequency use of complex and social strategies among learners with higher proficiency levels shows a need in L2 learning to increase students' use of such strategies.

Additionally, since the level of proficiency has an impact on how students do in the abroad context (showing a tendency to use more social strategies), it is important to further investigate the possibilities that such contexts offer and include them into the abroad teaching practices. Also within the AH context, and specifically for those courses intending to prepare students for the target culture, the integration of social strategies should be considered within the teaching.

Finally, although the use of social strategies did not lead to a greater acquisition of vocabulary, this does not indicate that social strategies should be eliminated, especially because they may have other benefits in L2 learning that have not been explored in this investigation. For instance, social strategies may have an impact on other aspects of language competence such as textual competence (coherence and cohesion in writings) or pragmatic competence. Furthermore, and narrowing to the main topic of this study, social strategies may also impact other aspects of vocabulary, but their benefits might have not been quantified by the instrument used in this investigation. In fact, and as Colletine (2004) suggested, traditional instruments should be questioned or taken with caution because they may measure only those aspects that have been the focus of traditional curricula, excluding other aspects less emphasized in traditional classroom settings.

Although SA students in this study acquired a smaller quantity of vocabulary items, other factors related to vocabulary learning may have been affected by the use of social strategies that were not explored in this investigation. For instance, they could have impacted students' life-long learning of the words, the total time required to learn the new words, the usefulness of the type of words chosen/learned for a specific context of use, the ability to integrate the vocabulary learned in real communicative situations, or the ability to establish stronger connections between the words acquired and other semantically similar words. Although these are only some examples of aspects not addressed in this investigation, it is possible to conclude that still there are many other factors of vocabulary learning that need to be analyzed. In conclusion, it cannot be affirmed from the results obtained in this investigation that social strategies for vocabulary learning should be eliminated from teaching practices.

Chapter 9

LIMITATIONS

There are various limitations that must be considered in this study and its findings. Students were grouped according to their level of proficiency and their location. While IL students were taking the same course in the At Home and the Abroad context, IH learners in the different contexts differed in the course they were taking and the type of instruction they were receiving. Courses for IH learners taught abroad during the summer session were not later offered during the fall semester. Thus factors such as the course taken or the type of instruction received could not be totally controlled.

The modest sample of students participating in the study is another limitation to consider. Only 40 subjects were involved in the interviews, that is, 10 students for each of the four target groups (IL-SA, IL-AH, IH-SA, IH-AH). The small sample size could possibly account for the fact of obtaining both confusing results as well as no significant results that only showed an emerging performance rather than a clear tendency among specific groups.

Another limitation of the study is the nature of the instrument used to analyze students' performance. For the interviews, students were asked to self-assess their vocabulary learning processes from a task that had been given at least three days in advance. Providing a minimum timeframe of three days was necessary for students to

have enough time to complete their task. However, it was also a limiting factor, since students had to remember a task that may had concluded three or more days earlier. Results therefore were not directly observed, but depended on what students could remember about their performance during the picture-based task.

After the interview, a checklist of strategies was given to students to account for other possible strategies they may have forgotten to mention during the interview. This checklist intended to balance the problem previously addressed of interviewing students three days or more after the task was given. Providing the checklist to students, however, also showed some limitations. Participants were not trained to understand the implications of the different strategies included in the checklist. Thus, students may have marked some strategies that did not correspond with the ones they had actually used, but rather with the ones they think they had used. Moreover, the checklist, as an instrument, only reported students' opinions about their use of strategies. It did not include any follow-up proposal that could verify the information provided by students.

Another limitation is the focus on the type of strategy used, rather than on a successful use of different kinds of strategies. For instance, the use of social strategies among students could mean an interest of the learner to actually practice and better remember the words, or on the contrary, the wish to finish the task as fast as possible, thus giving minimal attention to the words. Our study did not directly measure how successfully the different types of strategies were used in each case. On the contrary, indirect measures were carried out to analyze the possible correlation between the

complexity of the strategies used and the students' improvement in the performance of the task given.

   An additional limitation is the nature of the results obtained.. Statistical findings were indicated in terms of frequency and correlation across data. The study intended to propose a possible relation between a) the proficiency level or the location of the learner and b) the type of strategies used and students' ultimate results in the post-assessment. Final results suggested a possible tendency between variables, but in any case they implied causality between data. As suggested earlier, the small sample size does not foster clear results nor strong causal relationships across variables.

Chapter 10

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research may consider running a similar study with a larger group of participants and under more similar conditions. The limited sample, together with the factors affecting the different groups (courses and type of instruction) prevented the study from making certain conclusions. Further research could therefore not only confirm or disprove the conclusions of this research, but also clarify the grey results obtained in the data analyses.

On the other hand, more investigations are needed that explore more in-depth the scope of social-cultural factors. For instance, this investigation explored possible associations between students' use of social strategies and the number of words that they were able to recall. While the type of strategy used showed to have no impact on students' amount of vocabulary acquisition, further research is needed to analyze the possible impact on other more qualitative aspects of vocabulary gain. In this case, a different approach such as one based on communicative ability (qualitative) could be used to further analyze the impact of socio-cultural factors on vocabulary learning and acquisition.

Another aspect to consider is students' previous training on socio-cultural strategies. Based on the results obtained in the investigation, learners of IL proficiency

did not appear to use social strategies, while learners from IH levels in the SA context demonstrated a certain tendency to use social strategies. It can be inferred from this situation that IH students in SA context have probably had little contact with socio-cultural strategies before. Therefore, further investigations are needed that explore the impact of social strategies when students are actually aware of such strategies and know how to make the best of them. In this case, differences in instruction of the strategy may in turn have an effect on vocabulary acquisition.

Attention also needs to be given to the instrument used for interpreting the data. An adaptation of Subekti and Lawson (2007) taxonomy was proposed in to account for the use of social strategies among students. This adaptation, however, needs to be studied in further detail, and ultimately a new instrument needs to be created in order to properly measure social strategies, with total independence of specific skills or areas of study.

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Appendix A

SUBEKTI AND LAWSON' TAXONOMY (2007)

No	STRATEGIES	DESCRIPTION
1	**PASSIVE** Dictionary Repeated pronunciation Writing of word and definition Creating a word list Highlighting the learned words	 The student uses the dictionary to find the meaning The student pronounces the word more than once without meaning The student writes the word and its meanings. The student creates his own list of the learned words and the meaning. The student highlights the learned words in the text.
2	**ACTIVE** **NON ELABORATION** Word formation analysis Parts of speech. Guessing Sentence analysis. Reviewing the learned words.	 The student analyses the word by breaking up the word according to its formation. The student identifies the parts of speech of the word The student gets the meaning of the word without using any identifiable procedure The student analyses the sentence according to the grammar or sentence structure. The student reviews all the words and the meanings that have been learned in simple ways.
3	**SIMPLE ELABORATION** Sound similarity. Context. Simple Meaning type analysis Word link analysis.	 The student identifies the sound of the word, including noting sounds of similar words like implausible and impossible. The student identifies the meaning of the word by focusing on the context of paragraph or the whole article. The student identifies the type of meaning, such as connotative meaning, denotative meaning, contextual meaning, and technical meaning without further elaboration. The student makes links between the learned word and the familiar words coming after or before the learned word

	Simple Linking of the unknown word to L1.	The student uses his L1 to find the meaning and help him memorize it without further elaboration.
4	**COMPLEX ELABORATION** Paraphrase	The student identifies synonyms for the new word, or comments on some related words (Indonesian or English)
	Linking of sound and definition	The student identifies a basis for linking the sound of the word to an English word, or to another known Indonesian word.
	Generating an image	The student tries to create a meaningful image for the learned word.
	Complex Linking of the unknown word to L1.	The student uses L1 to find the meanings and help him memorize it with further elaboration.
	Complex Meaning type	The student justifies the type of meaning stated by the learned word, such as connotative meaning, denotative meaning, contextual meaning, and technical meaning with further elaboration.
5	**SOCIAL STRATEGIES**	

Appendix B

ADAPTATION OF SUBEKTI AND LAWSON'S TAXONOMY (2007)

No	STRATEGIES	DESCRIPTION
1	**PASSIVE** Dictionary Repeated pronunciation Writing of word and definition Creating a word list Highlighting the learned words	The student uses the dictionary to find the meaning The student pronounces the word more than once without meaning The student writes the word and its meanings. The student creates his own list of the learned words and the meaning. The student highlights the learned words in the text.
2	**ACTIVE** **NON ELABORATION** Word formation analysis Parts of speech. Guessing Sentence analysis. Reviewing the learned words.	The student analyses the word by breaking up the word according to its formation. The student identifies the parts of speech of the word (verb, adjective…) The student gets the meaning of the word without using any identifiable procedure The student analyses the sentence according to the grammar or sentence structure. The student reviews all the words and the meanings that have been learned in simple ways.
3	**SIMPLE ELABORATION** Sound similarity. Context. Simple Meaning type analysis Word link analysis.	The student identifies the sound of the word, including noting sounds of similar words like implausible and impossible. The student identifies the meaning of the word by focusing on the context of paragraph or the whole article. The student identifies the type of meaning, such as connotative meaning, denotative meaning, contextual meaning, and technical meaning without further elaboration. The student makes links between the learned word and the familiar words coming after or before the learned word

	Simple Linking of the unknown word to L1.	The student uses his L1 to find the meaning and help him memorize it without further elaboration.
4	**COMPLEX ELABORATION** Paraphrase	The student identifies synonyms for the new word, or comments on some related words (Indonesian or English)
	Linking of sound and definition	The student identifies a basis for linking the sound of the word to an English word, or to another known Indonesian word.
	Generating an image	The student tries to create a meaningful image for the learned word.
	Complex Linking of the unknown word to L1.	The student uses L1 to find the meanings and help him memorize it with further elaboration.
	Complex Meaning type	The student justifies the type of meaning stated by the learned word, such as connotative meaning, denotative meaning, contextual meaning, and technical meaning with further elaboration.
5	**SOCIAL STRATEGIES** Asking for the meaning	Asking other people to verify or clarify the meaning of a word
	Practicing the word	Working with other language learners to practice the words recently learned
	Using the word	Using the words learned within their conversations

Appendix C

STUDENTS'CHECKLIST BASED ON SUBEKTI AND LAWSON'S ADAPTED

TAXONOMY

		STRATEGIES	DESCRIPTION
	a	Dictionary	Using the dictionary to find the meaning
	b	Repeated pronunciation	Pronouncing the word more than once without meaning
	c	Writing of word and definition	Writing the word and its meanings.
	d	Creating a word list	Creating you own list of the learned words and the meaning.
	e	Highlighting the learned words	Highlighting the learned words in the text.
	f	Word formation analysis	Analyzing the word by breaking it up according to its formation.
	g	Parts of speech.	Identifying the parts of speech of the word (verb, adjective, adverb, and noun).
	h	Guessing	Getting the meaning without using any identifiable procedure
	i	Sentence analysis.	Analyzing the sentence according to the grammar or sentence structure
	j	Reviewing the learned words	Reviewing all the learned words and its meanings in simple ways
	k	Sound similarity.	Identifying the sound of the word and its similarity to other words.
	l	Context.	Finding the meaning by focusing on the context of paragraph or the whole article
	m	Simple Meaning type analysis	Identifying the type of meaning (connotative, denotative, contextual, and technical) without further elaboration
	n	Word link analysis.	Linking the learned word and the familiar words coming after or before the learned word
	o	Simple Linking of the unknown word to English	Using your native language to find the meaning and memorize it without further elaboration

Appendix C continued

	p	Paraphrase	Identifying synonyms for the new word, or comments on some related words
	q	Linking of sound and definition	Linking the sound of the word to an English word, or to another known Spanish word.
	r	Generating an image	Creating a meaningful image for the learned word.
	s	Complex Linking of the unknown word to English.	Using your native language to find the meaning and memorize it with further elaboration
	t	Complex Meaning type	Identifying the type of meaning (connotative, denotative, contextual, and technical) with further elaboration
	u	Asking for the meaning	Asking other people to verify or clarify the meaning of a word
	v	Practicing the word	Working with other language learners to practice the words recently learned
	w	Using the word	Using the words learned within their conversations

Appendix D

PICTURE-BASED TASK

QUESTIONNARE

PART 1: List below all the words you are able to remember that appear on the

picture

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List 1




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Task: Once you have completed the list, you will be given a minimum of 3 days to

find 10 more words from the picture that are not in the list 1.

Question:

How do you think you are going to find new words?

_____

_____

_____

What are your plans to remember them?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Follow-up:

An interview will be carried out within a minimum of 3 days. You will be expected to

write down these 10 words in the interview without any kind of support but the

picture.

(3   days later)

PART 2:   List below a minimum of 10 more words, different than the ones written

previously on List 1

List 2

Appendix E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PART 3: Answer to the questions in the interview providing as much information as possible.

INTERVIEW 1

Answer to the following questions:

1. How did you figure out the names of the different items in the picture?

2. Is that what you had initially planned to do? If not, explain why you changed your plan.

3. What resources did you use (did you consult a dictionary, the web, a friend…)?

4. Did you do anything to confirm that you had the correct words?

5. What did you do to remember the new words for the interview?

6. Is that what you usually do to memorize vocabulary? If not, what do you usually do?

7. How is the program helping you expand and improve your vocabulary? Explain your answer

INTERVIEW 2 (a)

QUESTIONS FOR *STUDENTS IN THE US*

1. (OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM)

   - Do you keep practicing Spanish outside the classroom?

   - If yes, what do you do? How often? How much time you dedicate to these practices?

   - Do you invest more time on learning Spanish than what is required to pass the class? Explain your answer

   - Do you have a Spanish-speaker friend?

   - If yes, how often do you see them? What do you do together? Do you communicate in English, Spanish or combination of both?

2. (HOME)

   - Do you have group-work activities in your Spanish class?

   - If yes, how often? How many people are in your group? How many of them get involved in the activity? Does the group communicate in Spanish, English or combination of both? Explain

   - Do you prefer to sit alone or with a classmate? How does that help to improve your Spanish? Explain your answers

3. (TECHNOLOGY)

   - Do you draw on any kind of technology to improve your Spanish knowledge (TV, radio, cinema, internet)?

- If yes, what do you do? How often? Is the main language Spanish, English or a combination of both?

4. (PROFESSORS)
   - Do you often talk with any of the professors or TA of your Spanish class?
   - If yes, how often? Why do you talk to them? Do you communicate in Spanish, English or combination of both?

5. (AT HOME PROGRAM)
   - Do you thing this course is different to others you had before? Do you think that your way of studying Spanish has changed since last time you studied the language? If so, what kinds of things do you do differently? Explain your answer.

6. (RECONSIDER YOUR STRATEGIES)
   - Using the following taxonomy, think again about your experience and add any other strategy you have used and have forgotten to mention earlier.

INTERVIEW 2 (b)

QUESTIONS FOR *STUDENTS ABROAD*

1. (SPARE TIME)

   - What do you usually do after class?

   - What do you do on the weekends?

   - Have you made local friends?

   - If yes, how often do you see them? What do you do together? Do you communicate in English, Spanish or combination of both?

2. (HOME)

   - What do you usually do when you get home?

   - Do you live with other people at home?

   - If yes, do you spend time together? What do you do? How often? Do you communicate in Spanish, English or combination of both?

3. (TECHNOLOGY)

   - Do you draw on any kind of technology (TV, radio, cinema, internet)?

   - If yes, what do you do? How often? Is the main language Spanish, English or a combination of both?

4. (PROFESSORS)

   - Do you often talk with any of the professors or TA?

- If yes, how often? Why do you talk to them? Do you communicate in Spanish, English or combination of both?

5. (ABORAD PRORAM)

  - Do you think that your way of studying Spanish has changed since you arrived in Spain? If so, what kinds of things do you do differently?

6. (RECONSIDER YOUR STRATEGIES)

  - Using the following taxonomy, think again about your experience and add any other strategy you have used and have forgotten to mention earlier.

Appendix F

IRB ACCEPTATION LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

RESEARCH OFFICE

210 Hullihen Hall
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware 19716-1551
Ph: 302/831-2136
Fax: 302/831-2828

DATE: June 5, 2013

TO: Emilia Illana Mahiques, MA's
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [470530-1] The use of Vocabulary Strategies in a group of Study
                Abroad Students vs. At Home Students

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION   APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: June 5, 2013
EXPIRATION DATE: June 4, 2014
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that <u>informed consent </u>is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must

continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.
Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.
Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact Jody-Lynn Berg at (302) 831-1119 or jlberg@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.