

# LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION AND LEARNER AUTONOMY: BRIDGING THE GAP

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## ABSTRACT

The complexity of the role of motivation in second language acquisition processes, along with the different motivational types that have been identified, have long been the object of much learner-centred research which has led to a wealth of practical implications for foreign language teaching contexts and the development of learner autonomy. This article will present results from a longitudinal study addressing the nature of motivation in first year university EFL learners and the effect of integrated strategy training as a means to foster greater autonomy, and, in consequence, raise intrinsic motivational levels.

KEY WORDS: Learner autonomy, learner strategies, language learning motivation.

## RESUMEN

La complejidad del papel que desempeña la motivación en el proceso de adquisición de segundas lenguas ha sido objeto de estudio de diversas investigaciones centradas en el alumno, que han derivado en un amplio abanico de implicaciones prácticas para contextos de enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras y para el desarrollo de la autonomía del aprendizaje. Este artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio longitudinal cuyo objetivo ha sido explorar la naturaleza de la motivación en estudiantes universitarios de inglés como lengua extranjera de primer curso, y la influencia que la formación integrada de estrategias de aprendizaje puede tener en el desarrollo de la autonomía y, consecuentemente, en los niveles de motivación intrínseca.

PALABRAS CLAVE: autonomía del aprendizaje, estrategias de aprendizaje, motivación en el aprendizaje.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is a widely accepted tenet that “motivation” is the basic ingredient of self-directed behaviour and achievement. Similarly, most foreign language teachers and second language acquisition researchers would unreservedly agree that motivation is an essential element of successful language learning. The relationship between motivational levels and improved language proficiency has been thoroughly docu-



mented in a large number of research publications (Ushioda, “Motivation,” *Learner*; Gardner, “Motivation,” *Social*; Dörnyei, *Teaching*; Dörnyei and Schmidt) for almost forty years since Gardner and Lambert’s pioneering work addressing learner attitudes, or Rubin’s seminal study investigating the learning techniques deployed by the so-called “good language learner” (“What”).<sup>1</sup> Hence, motivation, a much-used and all-embracing term, has long been a buzzword in foreign language teaching and second language acquisition research contexts, but what exactly does it consist of and is it similar in all types of learning contexts? What is its relationship with learner autonomy? How much can teachers really influence it? More importantly, how can we help to sustain it?

In our teaching and learning context at the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC) in the Canary Islands (Spain), the obligatory subject Lengua Inglesa I (English Language I), which is offered in the first year of the degree in Filología Inglesa (English Language and Literature),<sup>2</sup> ironically seems to receive less attention from students than all the other academic subjects they are required to pass which, by nature, lend themselves more to the accumulation of facts and concepts than to the development of language skills. Recently, we have been investigating ways to enhance our learners’ intrinsic motivation<sup>3</sup> for language learning, and hopefully help to improve their language proficiency at the same time, rather than just watch them aiming to pass their final examination with a minimal degree of effort in order to further their academic career. It appears that many of them are, in fact, unprepared for the independent learning opportunities that embarking on a university degree offers, so a parallel concern is the gradual fostering of greater learner autonomy and metacognitive awareness<sup>4</sup> as a means to motivate them further. As corroborated in a recent qualitative study, which found learner independence to be the change most frequently reported by beginning university students “[The] transition from school to university brings with it a change of circumstances, demands and experiences which is likely to change the motivational profile of the student” (Bavendiek). This change in learning context requires adaptation on cognitive, metacognitive and social/affective levels as the move towards greater autonomy is not achieved magically without guidance or support.

The ability to generate “internally” driven, or intrinsic, motivation for learning, rather than approaching learning tasks in response to “external” rewards such as passing grades or greater employment opportunities, is essential for developing

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<sup>1</sup> A recent publication revisiting Rubin’s original “good language learner” research (Griffiths, *Lessons*) provides current insights on the characteristics and behaviours of effective learners such as motivation, metacognition, strategies and learner autonomy.

<sup>2</sup> This degree scheme has now been extinguished and replaced by the new degree in Modern Languages in line with the European Higher Education Area directives.

<sup>3</sup> This term will be further defined and clarified in section 2.1 of this article.

<sup>4</sup> Metacognition is defined as “critical but healthy reflection and evaluation of thinking that may result in making specific changes in how learning is managed, and in the strategies chosen for this purpose” (Anderson 99).

greater learner autonomy (Dörnyei, *Motivational* 28). Ushioda (“Socialising,” “Motivation,” “Language”) has also more recently highlighted the interactions between motivation and autonomy theory, practice and research traditions based on her previous 1996 publication linking the two, claiming that motivation needs to come from within and be self-determined as well as internally regulated for effective and autonomous language learning to take place. The longitudinal action research project reported here is an attempt to explore and identify motivational types and levels in two groups of first-year university students, and link them to our classroom practice with a view to raising metacognitive knowledge and language learner strategy repertoire as a means to helping these learners become gradually more self-directed and intrinsically motivated. Our principal objective is to reach a more precise understanding of what motivation involves for our own tertiary level learners, as well as address its complex role in foreign language learning, particularly highlighting the relationship between motivation and integrated training in language learner strategies as a means to foster language autonomy.

## 2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### 2.1. THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

On closer examination of the relevant literature, it becomes clear that motivation is, in effect, a highly complex concept which regularly features in discussions of effective language learning or teaching as much recent research has testified (Dörnyei and Ushioda; Ushioda, “Motivation”; Gardner, “Motivation”; Dörnyei, *Psychology, Teaching*; Huitt), and which can also be viewed from a variety of perspectives. The term motivation may even seem, at times, to have lost its full power simply by merit of overuse in a variety of everyday contexts such as work, education or sport. However, despite its apparent familiarity, defining it accurately has proved to be extremely tricky since we can find a plethora of competing definitions and theories in contemporary motivational psychology, and, in the words of Dörnyei, motivation “[...] is one of the most elusive concepts in the whole domain of the human sciences” (*Teaching* 2).

Yet, although it appears difficult to reach a working definition of motivation, seminal examples include that proposed by Gardner, promoting the stimulation of “[...] effort, plus desire to achieve the goal of learning, plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language” (*Social* 10-11), echoed more than ten years later by Ellis, who suggested that motivation corresponds to “[The] effort learners put into learning an L2 as a result of their desire or need to learn it [...] motivation involves the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn an L2” (75). Common elements which recur when reviewing definitions of motivation include the “desire” to achieve something and the “effort” required to do that, as well as “affective” factors as also featured in Williams and Burden’s view, who see motivation as “[...] a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sus-



tained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals)” (120). As Dörnyei later concludes in more general terms, motivation is responsible for “*why* people decide to do something, *how hard* they are going to pursue it and *how long* they are willing to sustain the activity” (Motivational 7).

A general consensus seems to be that motivation is an unobservable, internal state or condition (a need, desire or want) that serves to activate or energize goal-oriented behaviour and give it direction, and which is therefore difficult to identify accurately or indeed measure. We can conclude that some of the factors involved in language learning motivation are “cognitive” (interest, curiosity or engagement), some are “affective” (confidence or lack of anxiety), and others are “behavioural” (persistence, attention, or interaction). However, motivation can also be viewed as a dynamic concept which is open to pedagogical intervention (Dörnyei, *Psychology*; Dörnyei and Ottó) and which may be affected or influenced by a wide range of variables such as social context, teaching practice or strategy repertoire depending on the learning context or the demands of the task at hand. Currently, research interest has also begun to focus more on the role of learners, rather than teachers, as agents who regulate and shape their own motivation (Ushioda, “Motivation” 30).

With reference to motivational types, language learning motivation was originally viewed in terms of two primary orientations, “instrumental” and “integrative” (Gardner and Lambert). Instrumental motivation refers to that which is aroused by external learner goals or pragmatic, functional motives such as passing exams, financial rewards or furthering a career. In many educational contexts, this type of motivation often appears to be the major driving force behind language learning. In contrast, integrative motivation corresponds to the desire to identify with the culture of speakers of the target language, with learners showing interest in and a positive disposition towards the people and culture of the target language group. However, it is true to say that many foreign language learners’ general reasons for learning may not be crucial in determining or shaping their motivation; for example, maybe they do not hold distinct attitudes towards the target language group. Yet they may find learning tasks intrinsically motivating and may feel personally involved or interested, so the maintenance of curiosity and motivation might be the cause of learning, but may also result from it. Alternatively, a language learner might have strong integrative motivation but may derive little pleasure from the learning process (Schmidt and Savage qtd. Ushioda, “Motivation” 22).

With more recent cognitive theories of motivation, the integrative/instrumental dichotomy has been gradually replaced by “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” motivational types (Ushioda, “Motivation” 21). Intrinsic motivation refers to that motivation which comes from within and is generated by the learner, meaning that the learner’s reasons for learning might correspond to enjoyment, interest, challenge, or skill development. Extrinsic motivation, in contrast, links learning to external goals such as gaining a qualification. As Ushioda points out, there has been “a tendency to conflate the intrinsic/extrinsic motivation with the integrative/instrumental motivation to some extent since intrinsic motivation, like integrative motivation, is founded in deep-rooted personal interests and positive attitudes and feelings” (“Motivation” 22). Gardner’s instrumental and integrative motivation types



might also constitute forms of extrinsic motivation as they both define reasons for learning a language as a means to an end.

Gardner has also made a recent distinction between “language learning motivation” and “classroom learning motivation,” which could reflect the intrinsic/extrinsic dichotomy (“Motivation”). Language learning motivation refers to the motivation to learn (and acquire) a second language, and is a “[...] a general characteristic of the individual that applies to any opportunity to learn the language. It is relatively stable [...] but it is amenable to change under certain conditions” (Gardner, “Motivation” 11). Classroom learning motivation corresponds to the motivation in the classroom situation, and “[the] focus is on the individual’s perception of the task at hand, and is largely state oriented” (Gardner, “Motivation” 11). It can be influenced by a variety of factors (teacher, class atmosphere, course content, materials and facilities, personal characteristics) as well as the general language learning motivation already described.

Distinguishing between different types of motivation may not be so useful, as Gardner points out (“Motivation” 19), since more is needed to achieve language learning success, and it seems that it is the intensity of motivation, in all its cognitive, affective and behavioural components that is the crucial factor. Extrinsic motivation may promote language acquisition on a short-term basis, and is often classroom-bound, activity-based and proficiency-linked, but a more intrinsic type of motivation, with the learner experiencing genuine interest in communicating in the target language and a favourable attitude towards the target culture, seems to bring about greater language learning success. We should thus focus on the need to not only “identify” or “generate” but also help learners to “sustain” their motivation beyond that experienced in the short-term classroom context, which might be more extrinsically or instrumentally oriented in nature, and help it become more internally generated. This is what we wished to address in the study reported here exploring the role of language learner strategies and the development of learner autonomy as essential ingredients of language learning motivation, especially since classroom-based research addressing motivational processes are still somewhat scarce as opposed to the growing body of more theoretical studies (Ushioda, “Motivation” 29).

## 2.2. LANGUAGE LEARNER STRATEGIES AND LEARNER AUTONOMY

Along with individual learner differences such as motivational types and levels, what learners consciously choose to do and the learning strategies they employ have been found to affect their learning process and the level of mastery achieved (Griffiths, “Strategies”; Cohen and Macaro; Oxford). Language learner strategy<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Language learner strategies were originally called “learning strategies,” “learner strategies” or “language learning strategies,” but the term “language learner strategies” was coined in June 2004 at a meeting at the University of Oxford of international scholars involved in strategy research in language learning. See Cohen and Macaro for more information (2).



research has focused on the role of learner agency and decision-making behaviour since Rubin's ("What") seminal article and Stern's initial research study,<sup>6</sup> but is still characterised by a lack of consensus as to what actually constitutes a language learner strategy and how it might be defined.<sup>7</sup> As well as these issues of construct validity, this investigative field has also been beset by other problems such as a lack of rigorous research methodology and a variety of theoretical models (Grenfell and Macaro).

Griffiths has offered a succinct recent definition combining key elements from the last thirty years of debate in strategy research which we consider appropriate for the purposes of our research focus in the current study: for her, language learner strategies are "[Activities] consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning" ("Strategies" 87). This description encapsulates the key elements of strategies as "activities" (not just actions or mental processes) which are (partially or fully) "conscious" and which learners "choose" to deploy from their existing repertoire for the goal-oriented "purpose" of controlling or facilitating their language learning processes. A further research problem is posed by the fact that several classification schemes listing strategies and grouping them according to different types have been offered in the literature, the best known being those offered by O'Malley and Chamot and Oxford.<sup>8</sup> In the current study we have used Oxford's classification scheme which divides language learner strategies into two main groups, (i) direct strategies which involve the manipulation of the *target language* (memory, cognitive and compensation strategies) and (ii) indirect strategies which are those which support and manage the "language learning process" (metacognitive, affective and social strategies) (*Language*).

One of the major findings in the learner-centred research addressing language learner strategies is that the strategies learners choose relate both to their short-term and long-term learning goals, as well as variables such as the learning context or individual learner differences. It seems that appropriate strategy use might not be a question of acquiring a comprehensive set of tried and tested techniques used by the "good language learner" which need to be used all the time and in all learning contexts, but more a question of learners learning to select, combine, and deploy those strategies which are suitable for the task in hand depending on factors such as level of competence, cognitive style or motivation; more effective learners are those who intentionally and systematically select and combine relevant strategies (Griffiths, "Strategies"; Cohen and Macaro; Cohen). Strategies certainly seem to be more than study skills or effective learning techniques as they can also refer to sophisticated cognitive skills such as inferencing or deducing grammar patterns.

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<sup>6</sup> These two studies contributed to the subsequent publication of the influential volume *The Good Language Learner* (Naiman et al.).

<sup>7</sup> See Cohen and Macaro for a comprehensive recent review of the last thirty years of strategy research and re-examination of key issues such as strategy instruction and research methods.

<sup>8</sup> Oxford's revision of learner strategy research, *Teaching and Researching: Language Learning Strategies*, is due to be published at the end of 2010.

Additionally, they seem to include the social and affective aspects of learning, as well as depend on the metacognitive awareness of the learner, with Macaro suggesting that “although it is the range and combinations of all strategies that ineffective learners lack, it is the metacognitive [...] strategies which seem to be the strategy types most lacking in the arsenal of less successful learners” (269). However, more importantly for teacher-researchers, and thus the current project, is the fact that strategy use might be open to intervention, and strategy-based instruction has been found to positively affect learning (Rubin et al.; Oxbrow). The link between strategy use and motivation has also been addressed, especially since successful and highly motivated learners have been found to use a wider range of strategies, therefore it seems that motivation is an important aspect of self-regulation (Grenfell and Macaro 15). The question thus raised is whether motivation spurs strategy use, with motivation essential for successful strategy instruction, or whether appropriate strategy use leads to better language performance which in turn arouses and sustains motivation.<sup>9</sup>

Defining learner autonomy from methodological and psychological perspectives has taken up much of the research literature in this area since Holec’s seminal report for the Council of Europe which described autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s learning” (3), with the autonomous learner potentially responsible for taking decisions concerning learning objectives and contents, and selecting appropriate learning techniques and methods as well as monitoring and evaluating their progress. While Holec’s definition centres on the technical aspects of learning, Little has approached the concept of autonomy from a more psychological perspective, claiming autonomy to be “[...] a capacity—for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action” (*Learner 4*).<sup>10</sup> It is the second dimension of learner autonomy which we have aimed to develop in our own research project, as we wished to develop our learners’ ability to reflect on their learning, select appropriate strategies, and develop their metacognitive awareness as they learn to learn more effectively without the constant guidance and monitoring of their instructors, a fundamental concern in the case of our beginning university students as they make the transition from teacher dependence to more self-directed learning. Effective learners have been found to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and therefore capable of developing autonomous control over their learning, but the challenge for practising teachers and researchers is to provide support in response to the heterogeneity of their learners who display a range of “motivations, cultures, beliefs, learning strategies, styles and goals” (Cotterall 119). The idea of support as an important element in developing learner autonomy is emphasised by Little (“Developing”) who promotes the interdependence of the cognitive and so-

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<sup>9</sup> See Oxford and Schramm for more detail concerning psychological views of strategies, motivation, and volition (55-57).

<sup>10</sup> A third political dimension also exists, with Benson suggesting that “the content of learning should be freely determined by learners” (49).



cial-interactive dimensions of the learning process. Ushioda has also highlighted the socially mediated nature of motivation as a means to promote autonomy, involving learners in taking greater responsibility for their learning and regulating their motivation in line with their educational context (“Socialising,” “Person”). It is this relationship between the fostering of greater learner autonomy and motivation that we will focus on here.

### 3. RESEARCH PROJECT

#### 3.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to devise the current research project, whose main objective was to integrate explicit training in selected language learner strategies within our instructional context as a means to foster greater learner autonomy and increase motivational levels, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What types and levels of motivation do our first-year university students bring with them on initiating their degree studies?
2. Which strategies do our subjects already use in their language learning? Which types need further training?
3. What is the effect of integrated strategy training on their learning process and on motivational types and levels?
4. What are the implications that the relationship between motivation and strategy-based instruction might have for encouraging greater learner autonomy?

#### 3.2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

Our longitudinal study addressing the relationship between motivation, language learner strategy training and learner autonomy was conducted at the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC), Spain, with first-year EFL students beginning the degree *Filología Inglesa* (English Language and Literature) during the academic year 2008-2009. Our students are divided into three groups for their English Language classes according to the initials of their surnames (two morning groups and an afternoon group), but for the purposes of this research project and practical reasons the sample population was only constituted by the subjects in the two morning groups.<sup>11</sup> Our final sample consisted of 23 Spanish-speaking learners (2 males and 21 females) enrolled in the subject *Lengua Inglesa I*

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<sup>11</sup> The project was restricted to the two morning groups because these were the groups which received instruction from the authors, with the other group being taught by another colleague who did not participate in this project.



(English Language I) who met 5 hours a week for language instruction.<sup>12</sup> The entry level of English of our first-year learners was obtained by using the Oxford *Quick Placement Test*<sup>13</sup> and showed a mean value of 1.782 out of a total 5. Thus with respect to their foreign language proficiency, the overwhelming majority were found to be of late elementary (CEFR level A2)<sup>14</sup> or lower intermediate (CEFR level B1) levels, which might seem disappointingly low but which in reality is the norm for beginning university students in our educational context.

### 3.3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our study was divided into two main blocks, one chronologically preceding the other, and the latter being subsidiary to the first one in the sense that it was designed as a result of the findings obtained from the first part of the research project. The first part consisted of the gathering of relevant data for a sample of 23 first-year English language students on beginning their academic studies in an unfamiliar and challenging learning context with respect to their “motivational profile” and their “language learner strategy repertoire.” We administered a questionnaire focusing on motivation types which included 10 items corresponding to intrinsic motivation and 10 to extrinsic motivation (see section 2.1 on motivation types). In the following session, our learners’ strategy repertoire was diagnosed by means of Oxford’s 50-item *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL)<sup>15</sup> which measures the frequency of strategy use across Oxford’s six sub-groups. It was distributed in both English and in Spanish so as to make sure that even lower level students could respond appropriately to all the different items and that their results were not influenced by any language deficiencies.

The second part of the research study was conducted towards the end of the academic year after strategy training had been gradually integrated into regular classroom activities in order to heighten our subjects’ awareness of the range of strategies available to them to improve their learning, increase their intrinsic motiv-

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<sup>12</sup> The global sample was constituted by 50 students at the beginning of the academic year, but was reduced to a definitive sample of 23 subjects after two months, the other 27 individuals having changed their degree (realising they had not chosen an appropriate degree), given up university studies or abandoned the subject for various reasons (their low level, lack of interest, preference towards other subjects in the case of students taking this subject for a second or even third time, etc.).

<sup>13</sup> *Quick Placement Test* (50 user CD ROM Pack) in collaboration with the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (formerly UCLES) (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (Oxford 1990). Although this questionnaire has met with criticism (for example, Grenfell and Macaro 19), especially for not being transferable to all sociocultural contexts, it has been used in a wide number of research projects and due to a lack of a viable alternative it is the instrument we have chosen to use here.



ation and further develop their autonomy. A second questionnaire was distributed to elicit information regarding two fundamental aspects. In the first place, 24 closed-response items addressed motivational issues, with a final item asking our subjects to evaluate whether they thought that their motivation had increased, decreased or stayed the same at the end of the year. Simultaneously, these same items addressing motivation corresponded directly to 24 selected strategies from Oxford's classification scheme, with four items addressing each of the six strategy sub-groups (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social). The strategies we had selected for inclusion in this questionnaire reflected the types of materials and activities which had been prepared and integrated in our training programme and regular class sessions in order to provide opportunities for learners to develop their strategies in those areas we felt needed greater attention.

In order to further develop our learners' awareness and use of "compensation strategies," we focused on reading and listening techniques (such as guessing unfamiliar vocabulary from context and getting the gist of texts) and introduced pre-task activities such as generating relevant vocabulary or ideas in order to overcome limitations both in speaking and writing tasks. We also encouraged learners to develop paraphrasing skills or use synonyms when they encountered limitations in speaking or writing as well as training them to use target language definitions for recording new vocabulary as a means to further develop their linguistic flexibility.

The areas we wanted to work on in relation with "affective strategies" were mainly centred on techniques for raising self-esteem and lowering their anxiety, for example by using a low-correction policy in speaking tasks, especially as our learners come from a very accuracy-based background with very little fluency-based development, and by introducing a self-correction code and drafting as important tools for a process approach to writing tasks.<sup>16</sup> In addition, learners were encouraged to take risks and view mistakes positively as a fundamental part of their learning process in order to promote a more supportive and comfortable learning environment.

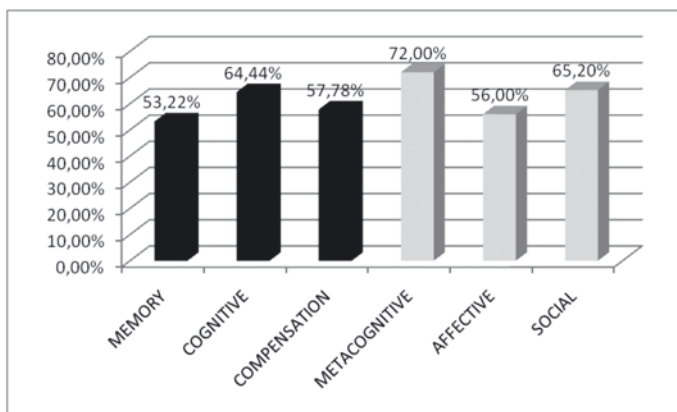
#### 4. RESULTS

In the following section we shall briefly present the pertinent results relating to strategy repertoire as well as motivational types and levels in response to the research questions we have set out in section 3.1.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> This project was based on similar research which addressed the positive effect of integrated strategy training on writing skills carried out in the same university context (Oxbrow).

<sup>17</sup> For the sake of brevity, we have reduced the considerable volume of data we have gathered for this research project, which was compiled with the help of a research student and funded by a grant from the Departamento de Filología Moderna, ULPGC. This project also forms part of the investigative work initiated by the research group "La adquisición de lenguas/culturas extranjeras: procesos cognitivos y competencia estratégica" (ULPGC), of which the authors are current members.



Graph 1. Strategy profiles organized in a hierarchical fashion.

With respect to the types and levels of motivation our first-year learners bring with them on initiating their university studies, the results from the first questionnaire indicated that our subjects' motivation was predominantly externally driven rather than internally generated with a mean group value of 3.935 out of 5 for those items addressing extrinsic motivation as opposed to the mean value of 3.413 corresponding to intrinsic motivation. Further analysis in terms of dominant motivation types on an individual level revealed that 73.89% of our learners exhibited a predominantly extrinsic motivation profile and 26.07% had similar values for both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational types.

As for their initial strategy repertoire, the initial results obtained from the SILL questionnaire administered at the very beginning of the academic year (see Graph 1) showed a hierarchy of strategy sub-groups with compensation and memory strategy types from the direct strategy sub-group (memory, cognitive and compensation strategies) receiving lower mean values, and affective strategies appearing as the most deficient type in the indirect group (metacognitive, affective and social strategies), whereas metacognitive strategies from the indirect group dominated.

Individual student profiles showed that each student had one (or more) dominant strategy sub-group as can be seen in the last column in table 1, which illustrates the percentage of students who reported that particular strategy sub-group as dominant in their SILL analysis, with metacognitive strategies scoring highest.<sup>18</sup> The fact that metacognitive strategies were the most frequently deployed in the initial analysis may be surprising at first sight, but this might be due to the fact that published materials at secondary level have recently been incorporating an

<sup>18</sup> The computer programme for statistical analysis SPSS 17.0 for Windows (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used in order to analyse the data.



increasing number of learner training activities. We must also remember that we are dealing with learners who have opted to study languages at university level having successfully completed their secondary school education and are therefore successful language learners to a certain extent. On the other hand, although memory strategies were the lowest valued, we did not select them for this analysis because we feel there has been a lot of research conducted in this area already (Nyikos and Fan; Gu; Oxford and Ehrman).

TABLE 1. DOMINANT STRATEGY TYPE PER STUDENT (INITIAL ANALYSIS)

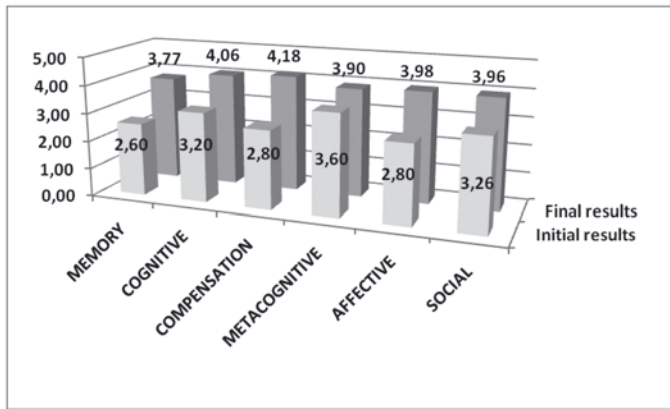
	STRATEGIES	PERCENTAGE
Direct	Memory	0.00%
	Cognitive	16.00%
	Compensation	24.00%
Indirect	Metacognitive	36.00%
	Affective	8.00%
	Social	16.00%

For the purpose of this particular training study and for further empirical analysis we decided to focus mainly on two deficient strategy types, one from the subgroup of direct learning strategies and the other from the subgroup of indirect ones. Thus, affective (indirect) and compensation (direct) strategy types, areas which had been previously diagnosed as deficient (see Graph 1), were selected with a view to investigating the link between integrated training and the generating of greater intrinsic motivation, as these types of strategies might equip learners better for communicative situations and enable them to feel more confident in learning situations beyond the classroom context. However, we included selected strategies from all six strategy sub-groups for training so that learners were provided with opportunities to develop their strategies in all areas.

In the latter part of this study we administered a second questionnaire on strategy use at the end of the academic year, the results of which indicated that the initial levels of strategy use had increased in all subgroups, which is a positive result reflecting the effects of our strategy training programme. Graph 2 shows the comparison between the mean group values for both initial and final strategy repertoire. The data indicates that there was an evident rise in strategy use in all subgroups with encouraging results for both compensation (4.18 out of 5) and affective (3.98 out of 5) strategies, the two sub-groups focused on in this study, whose values have increased by 1.38 and 1.18 respectively.

As for the motivation levels of our learners by the end of the year, we asked them directly whether they thought that their intrinsic motivation had increased,





Graph 2. Mean values for initial and final strategy use.

decreased or remained the same, with 82.6% of students reporting that it had increased and 17.4% stating that it had remained the same. The analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire which was specifically designed to ask learners about aspects of intrinsic motivation revealed that the group mean value for this type of motivation was now of 3.980 as opposed to the initial group mean value of 3.413. It is interesting to point out here that none of the subjects showed an individual mean value lower than 3.415 and all subjects but two showed a notable increase in intrinsic motivational levels.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Our main aim in this research project was to explore the relationship between language learning motivation and learner autonomy, with integrated strategy training a possible means towards bridging the gap between the two. Our results clearly show that an increase in intrinsic motivational levels, linked with a wider range of both direct and indirect strategies, in particular compensation and affective strategies after explicit training, seems to show that motivation can be positively influenced by strategy training. Similarly strategy repertoire seems to have expanded with the consequent rise in intrinsic motivational levels.<sup>19</sup> This ability to generate intrinsic motivation for learning, rather than instrumentally driven extrinsic motivation, is crucial for developing greater learner autonomy.

<sup>19</sup> We are currently involved in closer examination of our data by means of selected case studies which has revealed that successful students with good final grades showed notable rises in both compensation and affective sub-groups as well as intrinsic motivation.



The question thus raised is whether motivation spurs strategy use and by default enhances learner autonomy, or whether appropriate strategy use leads to better language performance and greater autonomy, which in turn arouses motivation. In our opinion, this relationship between both motivation and learner autonomy is symmetric, with effective learning consisting of helping our learners become more autonomous by enabling them to select appropriate strategies according to the demands of the task in hand rather than providing them with a list of tried and tested techniques. As a result, intrinsic motivation will not only be generated on a short-term basis, but will also be sustained, a fundamental concern in the case of beginning university students as they make the transition from teacher dependence to more self-directed learning.

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