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The Role of Strategies When Learning a Language Other Than English

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role that Language Learning Strategies play when learning a language other than English (LOTE) in secondary schools in Victoria, Australia. It examines the concept of Language Learning Strategies and investigates how these strategies are perceived and used by a small group of secondary school LOTE teachers.

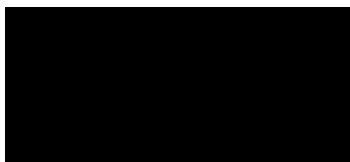
In recent years both state and federal governments have shown a strong commitment to the promotion of languages programs in both primary and secondary government schools across the state. Despite this support, the study of Languages other than English (LOTE) has not been a popular subject choice for students in the post-compulsory years in Victorian government secondary schools. LOTE is often a subject that is under-valued and unsupported by parents and students alike. In an increasingly multilingual world, the ability to speak another language has many benefits, not just for individual students but also for the wider community.

This study is presented as a case study of six secondary school LOTE teachers. The study explored how strategies are taught by a small group of teachers and it examined the teachers' perceptions of Language Learning Strategies. The study revealed that the ability to correctly use strategies can help students to become more autonomous, but it also demonstrated that learning a second language is a complex process and influenced by a range of inter-connected factors. Students must firstly be motivated to want to use strategies; they need to understand the benefits of strategy use before they will devote time to learning these skills. The study showed that students feel more motivated if they are engaged in the subject; the use of popular culture and technology can help to make learning more relevant and meaningful. Finally, the study highlighted the crucial role that the LOTE teacher plays in engaging and motivating students. Effective LOTE teachers possess empathy, humour and have a strong rapport with their students. While strategy use is important, it is largely ineffective without a supportive and caring teacher. The findings of this study might provide LOTE teachers and trainee teachers with an insight into how to promote autonomous learning in their classrooms; it might also provide them with a deeper understanding into how to engage and motivate secondary school LOTE students.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent educational institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed:



Date: 1/10/2015

The research for this thesis received approval of the Monash University Standing Committee for Ethical Research on Humans on 7 July 2009.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Marlene Smith.

ABBREVIATIONS

AL	Additional Languages
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria)
DET	Department of Education and Training (Victoria)
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ENTER	Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank
LLS	Language Learning Strategies
LOTE	Languages other than English *
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VCAA	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
VTAC	Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

***Author's Note**

In Australian primary and secondary schools the acronym LOTE is consistently used by both teachers and students when referring to the study of languages other than English. Over the years, the study of languages has been given various names, including, but not limited to 'foreign languages' 'second languages' and more recently, 'additional languages.' The Victorian Department of Education, Early Childhood and Development consistently refer to the study of languages by its acronym LOTE and during the course of this study continued to use this acronym; furthermore, the teachers who participated in this study used the term LOTE when discussing their teaching practices. Therefore, throughout this thesis, the term 'languages other than English' and its acronym LOTE will be used in reference to the teaching and learning of additional languages.

Chapter One

The Background to the Study

1.1 Introduction

In recent years the study of Languages Other Than English (LOTE) has not been a popular subject choice for students in the post-compulsory years in Victorian government secondary schools in Australia (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013a; Fullerton & Ainley, 2000). It is often a subject that is under-valued and unsupported by parents and students alike. Indeed, it is not just in Australia where this attitude prevails; recent studies show that this trend is common in other English speaking nations such as Great Britain and the United States of America (Fernandez & Gearon, 2011, p.2). There seems to be a prevailing notion that, “English is enough” (Fernandez, 2008, p.4) not just among secondary school students but also in the wider community. English is considered the norm and this monolingual attitude is reinforced by the fact that in non-English speaking countries around the world, English is often the second language (Fernandez & Gearon, 2011). This reinforces the idea of English as the predominant global language, causing many secondary students to see little relevance in continuing their LOTE studies.

In an increasingly multilingual world, this monolingual attitude can cause many challenges for secondary school students as they make the transition to tertiary education and the work force. Certainly, learning an additional language (AL) has many benefits, not just for individual students but also for the wider community:

- Second language learning often aids literacy skills, as students learn specific strategies in AL that can be transferred to English, such as reading strategies.
- Second language learning aids cognitive development because students develop awareness of the unique and complex way in which language functions.
- Learning a language gives students the opportunity to engage with other cultures and people, helping them to develop and understanding of, and appreciation for the diverse world in which they live.
- Students gain increased employment opportunities; in an increasingly global economy, English alone will be insufficient in a competitive workforce (Fernandez & Gearon, 2011, p.8).

In their *Vision for Languages Education* report the Victorian government demonstrate their support for the teaching of languages, stating:

Languages education offers significant benefits for Victorian students, their families and communities. At school, it helps our children and young people to develop their first language literacy, problem-solving, intercultural and communication skills, and it equips them for a wide range of careers. More broadly, it contributes to a social cohesion, underpins Victoria's increasingly globalized and export-oriented economy and enables speakers of the languages to maintain or reclaim their languages. (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013b, p.4)

The Victorian government has recognised both the importance and benefits of learning a LOTE; they have consistently indicated their commitment to ensuring that languages are a valued part of the core school curriculum, in much the same way as Mathematics and English. Despite this advocacy for languages, the situation in our education system tells a different story. LoBianco (2009) notes:

Second language education is a subject of continual public debate in Australia, reflecting a widespread perception that the cultivation of bilingual skills among young Australians served economic, cultural and intellectual needs. However, this positive appreciation of the importance of language learning translates to low school completion rates in second languages, high rates of attrition from university language programs and a decline in the number of languages taught, their duration, spread and level of seriousness. (LoBianco & Slaughter, 2009, p. 1)

The Victorian government states that Victorian secondary schools have "the highest participation rate in languages education of any state or territory in Australia with a diverse range of languages...taught in our schools" (p.4), yet they also acknowledge the shortcomings in both the policies and delivery of languages education stating:

The number of schools...offering a languages program has declined over the last decade, as has the percentage of students learning a language. (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013 b, p.7)

Indeed, in recent years LOTE enrolments have fluctuated. Between 2006 and 2012 there has been a reduction in LOTE enrolments across Victorian Government Secondary Schools (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development,

2013b) demonstrating that while LOTE has not been a popular subject choice in the post-compulsory years, recent government initiatives designed to help stem this decline have had little impact. The Victorian government recently outlined their goals to address the situation, stating that schools need:

...to ensure that at every year level students are actually learning a language, not merely having the option to do so... (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013b, p.5)

Recent statistics highlight the state of languages education. In 2006, 94.6% of Year 7 students were learning a LOTE while only 8.8% of Year 12 students were still continuing their LOTE studies. In 2012 this trend is even more pronounced with 90% of Year 7 students enrolled in LOTE classes and only 6.6% of Year 12 students still learning a LOTE.

As the table below shows, student enrolments decline most markedly from Year 8 into Year 9 and then again from Year 9 into Year 10. By the time students reach Years 11 and 12, enrolment numbers are in single figures, well below the Victorian government's goal of having 25% of all senior students enrolled in a LOTE by the year 2025 (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013b).

Table 1.1 Secondary level languages enrolments in Victoria, by year level and as a percentage of total population, 2006 and 2012 (based on statistics provided by DEECD, 2013a)

Year Level	2006	2012
Year 7	37 093 (94.5%)	32 672 (90%)
Year 8	34 536 (86.8%)	30 397 (83.2%)
Year 9	19 813 (50.7%)	17 434 (45.6%)
Year 10	8 480 (22.9%)	6 175 (16%)
Year 11	3 329 (9.7%)	2 637 (7%)
Year 12	2552 (8.8%)	2 138 (6.6%)
Total	105 803 (48.2% of total student population)	91 453 (41.7% of total student population)

This decline in participation rates is mainly due to the fact that in most government secondary schools, LOTE becomes an elective subject after Years 8 or 9. It seems that once LOTE is no longer compulsory, students quickly choose to withdraw from the subject. This can have significant impact in later years; by prematurely discontinuing their language studies, students run the risk of narrowing their educational experiences and limiting their choices and career paths post-VCE.

These statistics also suggest that if change is to occur and this high attrition rate from post-compulsory LOTE classes is to be addressed, then educators need to focus on students in Years 8 and 9. Perhaps if learners' needs can be met in these crucial years, it may help stem the flow of students from upper secondary LOTE courses. These statistics suggest that if students can be encouraged to continue learning a LOTE once it becomes an elective subject in Years 9 and 10, they may be more likely to remain in the subject through to VCE (Years 11 and 12).

The high attrition rate of students from LOTE in the post-compulsory years is a complex issue and one that has become the subject of substantial research (Carr, 2003; Crawford, 2002a; Field, 2000; Jones & Jones, 2001). A large body of research suggests that students become disengaged from their LOTE classes because they feel that the content and delivery of their LOTE lessons does little to prepare them for life beyond secondary school (Carr, 2002; Coyle, 2000; Fielding, 2015; Graham, 2004; Lawes, 2002). Further research suggests that LOTE classes are more heavily teacher-centred and teacher-directed than other subjects in the secondary school curriculum (Dornyei, 2001; Ellis, 1997). This heavy reliance on the LOTE teachers places them in a precarious position as students seem to link positive or negative language learning experiences directly to their teacher.

LoBianco and Slaughter (2009) highlight this, stating:

It is a frequently heard lament of the language teacher that they are not just a teacher but also subject advocate, called upon continually to defend the integrity and presence of Indonesian or German in this or that school against complaints about the crowded curriculum, lack of student interest and a host of other pressures (LoBianco & Slaughter, 2009, p. 28)

Just as negative language learning experiences can affect students' attitudes and enjoyment of LOTE, so too can positive experiences in the LOTE classroom generate enthusiasm for the subject (Warrington, Younger & Williams, 2000). Certainly, many studies demonstrate that positive LOTE learning experiences can lead to greater enjoyment and motivation in the subject (Aoki, 2012; Dornyei, 2001; Sen & Sen, 2012; Slade, 2002).

Government policies and initiatives over the past decade have investigated ways in which to promote LOTE and retain students during the post-compulsory years, with varying degrees of success (Department of Early Childhood Education and Development, 2007; Department of Early Childhood Education and Development, 2011; Department of Education and Training, 2002). These initiatives will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. What is becoming increasingly clear, however, is the role that the teacher can play in the classroom, in terms of positive attitudes and successful academic outcomes. Perhaps the path for real change to occur is through the LOTE teachers themselves. If we are able to identify what LOTE teachers do in a successful classroom, it may be a step towards improving the educational outcomes of their students.

This study will focus on secondary school students and the way in which Language Learning Strategies may affect their experiences in the LOTE classroom. Equipping students with suitable strategies may enhance their learning and achievement in the LOTE classroom. It is hoped that the findings of this study may help to enhance the learning experiences of secondary school students, particularly in those crucial years of Middle Secondary School (Years 8 and 9) where enrolment numbers tend to drop so dramatically.

By examining the classroom experiences of a small group of LOTE teachers, greater insights may be gained into the way in which secondary school students engage in the subject.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how Language Learning Strategies are perceived and implemented by a group of secondary school LOTE teachers. My interest in this issue came about from my experiences as a secondary school LOTE teacher and later, through my own research. When completing research into boys' attitudes and perceptions towards learning a LOTE (Church, 2006), I noticed a common theme amongst those boys who expressed positive attitudes towards their LOTE studies and who had experienced success when learning a LOTE. These boys had chosen to continue their LOTE studies beyond the compulsory years and all seemed to possess a wide range of Language Learning Strategies. Some of these strategies were quite simple, such as pooling knowledge with fellow classmates in order to complete a task; other strategies included memorising grammatical rules, using mnemonics and even the ability to correctly use a LOTE dictionary. All of these strategies, despite their apparent simplicity, enabled the boys to complete tasks independently of their teacher and gave them a greater sense of confidence in their own ability. This led me to question whether there is a connection between Language Learning Strategies and success when learning a LOTE, and, if so, what language teachers may be able to do to help equip students with a greater range of Language Learning Strategies. The aims of this study are:

- To investigate the types of strategies LOTE teachers are implementing in their classrooms.
- To examine the methods used to teach these strategies.
- To explore the impact that strategy teaching has on students.

While my previous study focussed on obtaining a greater understanding of boys' attitudes towards learning an LOTE in the hope of being able to better address their needs, the present study examines the LOTE teachers themselves and the way that they engage students in the classroom. It is my belief that real educational change begins with the classroom teacher and it is hoped that, by gaining a greater understanding of how Language Learning Strategies are perceived and used by LOTE teachers, we may gain greater insights in how to successfully meet the needs of LOTE students.

This study explores the role that Language Learning Strategies may play when learning a language other than English (LOTE) in Victorian secondary schools. It examines the concept of Language Learning Strategies and investigates how these strategies are perceived and used by a small group of secondary school LOTE teachers.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because the ability to communicate in a language other than English is an attribute in today's increasingly globalised world. The ability to use a LOTE can enhance students' career paths as well as provide a greater awareness and understanding of other cultures and people.

While many countries in the European Union are moving towards "mother-tongue plus two foreign languages" and introducing languages from the earliest years of primary education, languages continue to struggle to gain legitimacy as a key learning area in many primary and secondary schools across Australia (Crawford, 2002a; Fernandez, 2007). In fact, according to some experts, promoting competence in other languages and cultures as a part of basic education is a matter of economic survival (Genesee & Cloud, 1998).

There are important economic, social and community benefits to be gained from learning a LOTE. Contemporary developments such as mass movements of people across the globe, increasingly diverse, multicultural communities, rapid technological change and increasing economic globalisation have highlighted and reinforced the need for knowledge and understanding of other languages and cultures (Fernandez, 2008). Genesee and Cloud (1998) say:

If we are to live comfortably in multilingual, multicultural neighbourhoods, compete successfully in the global marketplace, and take full advantage of communication technologies, basic education...must include competence in second or even third languages. Further, intercultural understanding and cross-cultural competency are necessary to be effective in diverse local, national and international social contexts (p. 62).

LOTE is undervalued in the Victorian secondary school curriculum; the under-representation of students enrolled in a LOTE during the post-compulsory years is worthy of further exploration (Department of Education and Training, 2002; Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2007). By gaining a greater understanding of how LOTE is delivered in the classroom and the way in which students engage with the subject, educators may be better equipped to provide a LOTE course that adequately meets the students' needs and enables them to achieve success in the subject. In turn, competence in a LOTE could help students to gain access to a range of tertiary and career paths that would otherwise be closed to them. It is hoped that this study will make a contribution towards achieving this.

My study will examine how Language Learning Strategies are implemented by a small group of secondary school LOTE teachers. It is hoped that by gaining a greater understanding of how LOTE teachers help their students to use Language Learning Strategies, that greater insights into the function of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom will be achieved.

The statistics consistently demonstrate the low participation rates in secondary school LOTE programs across Victoria. Certainly, LOTE is not a popular subject choice for students in the post-compulsory years, which can impact on them as they progress through their formal years of education and become citizens of the world. This study attempts to better understand how Language Learning Strategies are used in the LOTE classroom. The insights gained from this study may help educators to address the issue of the under-representation of students in post-compulsory LOTE programs. While there is a plethora of information advocating the importance of learning a LOTE and a range of government policies aimed at reducing the trend to opt out of languages at the first available opportunity, the statistics consistently show that there is a large gap between government policy and the reality of the secondary school LOTE classroom. This study may make a small contribution towards closing this gap.

1.4 Setting the Context

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background to the issue of the under-representation of students in Victorian secondary school LOTE programs. It will present an overview of the secondary school system in Victoria and how LOTE is placed in the curriculum. It will outline the various government policies aimed at promoting the study of languages in secondary schools and the varying degrees of success that these policies have had. I will then present a framework for my study.

My study is guided by the notion that the classroom teacher plays a vital role in fostering positive attitudes towards learning a LOTE (LoBianco & Slaughter, 2009; Department of Education and Training, 2002) and furthermore, students will feel more confident in the LOTE classroom if they have had successful experiences (Coyle, 2000; Gardner, 2001; Macaro, 2003). This, in turn, leads to the idea that students are more likely to achieve success if they are equipped with the right tools. These tools, amongst other things, may include Language Learning Strategies. The next section provides an overview of languages other than English in Victoria.

1.5 An Overview of Languages other than English in Victorian Secondary Schools

The Victorian state government has acknowledged the importance of learning a language other than English and has shown a commitment to ensuring that all students enrolled in government schools have access to a LOTE. They say:

The effective teaching of languages is important for Victoria's future and will allow us to engage economically and culturally with the world, while improving literacy and understanding of diverse cultures (Department of Education and Training, 2002, p. 7)

Languages other than English have long held a place in the Victorian secondary school curriculum. Until the mid-1960s, French and German were the most widely taught languages; however, by the early 1970s a wider range of language programs was introduced into secondary schools in response to the changing cultural, social and economic climate of Australia (Clyne, Fernandez & Grey, 2004). There also emerged increasing debate over the benefits of multilingualism through various reports

advocating the need for second language acquisition in an increasingly multi-cultural Australia (see Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission, 1984; Lo Bianco, 1987, 1989). As a result, languages such as Italian, Indonesian, Chinese and Japanese began to be introduced into the Victorian secondary school curriculum. It was also during the 1980s that language programs were first introduced into Victorian primary schools (Fernandez, 2008).

Beginning in the mid-1980s and continuing into the 1990s there was a consistent and robust effort by both federal and state governments to promote language learning in primary and secondary schools throughout Australia's states and territories. The 1984 inquiry into the role of language learning in Victorian secondary schools (see Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission, 1984) identified a number of key issues which were contributing to the "overall decline" in the study of LOTE in secondary schools. Amongst other things, the issues raised included problems with timetabling, the content and delivery of the language programs, negative parental attitudes and a lack of understanding of the value of being able to use a LOTE. As a result, the 1985 policy document (see Victorian Education Department, *The Place of Languages Other Than English in Victorian School*) recognised the growing importance of the ability to speak a second language and proposed to make LOTE a core subject beginning in primary school and continuing through to secondary school. They state:

It is desirable that in the long term, all students will have had an opportunity to become proficient and fluent in both English and another language...it is suggested that a concerted effort be made over the next fifteen years to expand the teaching of languages other than English from P-12 so that by the year 2000 a continued study in one or more languages becomes part of the normal educational experience of all children (p. 12)

However, as Clyne (2005) notes, this ambitious target is yet to be met. Moreover, it seems that the issues and concerns raised during the mid-1980s regarding the way in which LOTE fits into the curriculum are still relevant today. These concerns were highlighted in a state government report which said:

...there are important economic, social and community benefits to be gained from learning languages, but these are not widely understood in schools and the community. Hence, there is a need to reaffirm the importance of language learning as an essential skill in the curriculum for all students.

Attitudes to language learning in schools and the community remain divided, with great supporters and advocates, but equally strident critics. Therefore, there is a challenge before us in convincing critics and promoting the widespread benefits of languages learning (Department of Education and Training, 2002, p.7)

Fernandez (2008) further demonstrates this issue by noting:

The learning of languages other than English has experienced fluctuating fortunes in the curricula of various states and territories; its struggle for acceptance as a legitimate area in its own right is ongoing (p. 4)

In 2013, similar observations were made, with a Victorian government report acknowledging that, “the potential of languages education in Victoria is not being met” (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013b, p. 4).

Since 2006 there has been a decrease in the percentage of government secondary schools offering Languages programs, decreasing from 92.9% in 2006 to 86.5% in 2012. In the six most studied languages: Chinese (Mandarin) French, Indonesian, Italian, German and Japanese, there has been a decline in the number of schools offering these languages. Furthermore, with the exception of Mandarin, all of these languages have experienced a decrease in enrolments (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2012b).

These statistics are puzzling given the heavy promotion and support that the Victorian government has consistently provided over the past two decades. Djite (1994) noted:

Given the policy emphasis on LOTE provision, the consistency with which students in schools and higher education have chosen not to study a LOTE is remarkable (p.5).

A report into the future of language teaching (see Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2005) highlighted several challenges facing the nation’s language programs, including: the need for appropriately qualified and trained teachers; continuity in languages learning within schools, and from primary to secondary levels and beyond; adequate time allocations; supportive timetabling practices; resourcing and whole school commitment.

1.5.1 Languages Other Than English in Primary Schools

A similar situation exists in Victorian government primary schools. In 2012 twenty-two languages were taught in Victorian government primary schools. Of these languages, Chinese (Mandarin) French, German, Greek Indonesian, Italian and Japanese were the most widely taught (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013b).

Between 2006 and 2012 there has been a decline in the number of government primary schools providing languages programs along with a decline in student enrolments across the state. The number of government primary schools providing a languages program declined from 82.9% in 2006 to 60.1% in 2012. As a result, the percentage of students enrolled in a languages program at the primary level declined from 79.5% in 2006 to 55.5% in 2012 (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013b). These numbers show that despite the depth and breadth of the languages programs offered in government primary school across Victoria, enrolments continue to decrease.

Table 1.2 Primary level languages enrolments in Victoria, by year level and as a percentage of total population, 2006 and 2012 (based on statistics provided by DEECD, 2013)

Year Level	2006	2012
Year 1	31 825 (73%)	23 743 (50.8%)
Year 2	32 275 (73.8%)	22 963 (51.3%)
Year 3	36 707 (83.3%)	26 084 (58.6%)
Year 4	37 168 (84.2%)	26 578 (60.9%)
Year 5	37 969 (85.1%)	26 295 (61.8%)
Year 6	38 398 (88%)	25 605 (59.4%)
Total	244 504 (79.5% of total student population)	174 693 (55.5% of total student population)

1.5.2 Languages Other Than English in Independent Secondary Schools

While LOTE enrolments have been steadily declining in government secondary schools, independent schools across Victoria have fared very differently. Today, approximately 30% of secondary students attend an independent school (ABS Catalogue 1301, 2012; ABS Catalogue 4120, 2010; ABS Catalogue 4221, 2013; Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2014).

Retention rates in LOTE classes are generally higher in independent schools (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010; Erebus Consulting Partners, 2002) and in 2014, independent schools were consistently among the highest performing schools in VCE LOTE (see Better Education, 2014, *Top Schools by VCE Courses*).

The possible reasons for the strong performance of LOTE in independent schools are varied. Independent schools are often more willing to run small LOTE classes, particularly at senior levels; there may be greater flexibility with timetabling, ensuring that languages are not timetabled against more popular subjects; independent schools might have greater access to IT and other learning materials, which may influence students' motivation and interest in the subject. Another reason might be that independent schools have greater flexibility regarding when languages become an elective subject (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010; Erebus Consulting Partners, 2002).

All of the participants in my study taught at independent schools (see Chapter 3, p.80). This was not my intention when embarking on the study; quite simply, the teachers who volunteered to participate in my study all happened to teach at independent schools. Nevertheless, it is significant that all of the participants worked in schools where LOTE was a valued and thriving subject. For this reason, it is worth examining the teaching practices of LOTE teachers in some of Victoria's independent schools.

1.6 The Scaling Process in VCE

In the last decade a number of initiatives have been undertaken by the Victorian government in order to enhance the quality of LOTE programs and to encourage retention rates. For example, contact time for language programs has increased across all year levels (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2007). Another initiative intended to improve the retention rate of LOTE in the post-compulsory years is the ‘scaling’ of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) LOTE study score. In the VCE (Years 11 and 12 of secondary school) students are awarded a study score between 0 and 50 for each study that they undertake at the levels of Units 3 and 4. A ‘study’ is broken up into four units. Each VCE study unit is numbered 1, 2, 3 or 4. Usually students complete Units 1 and 2 in their first year of VCE and Units 3 and 4 in their second year of VCE.

In order to gain tertiary entrance, The Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) awards each student an overall ranking which assists them in being considered for tertiary election. This is called the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR). The ATAR score was previously known as the ENTER score (Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank). The ATAR score is calculated by adding the student’s subject score in English, the next best three subject scores, plus ten percent of any fifth or sixth subject score. The ATAR is an overall percentage ranking, with the highest rank possible being 99.95 (VTAC, 2008). To ensure that there is equality amongst subjects, the process of scaling occurs, where study scores are adjusted up or down so that subject scores across different studies can be compared. VTAC (2004) state that this process ensures that students are not unfairly advantaged, or disadvantaged, as a result of their subject choices. They say:

Study scores are adjusted by VTAC to allow for any variation in the strength of competition between the cohorts of students taking various studies that year. Thus students taking various combinations of studies can be compared, and students can choose their studies in a sound way without fear that they will be disadvantaged by their choice (p. 4)

There has, in fact, always been a scaling process across Victoria and other Australian states; however, since the introduction of the VCE, it has become a transparent process. Additional Languages are scaled up, in an effort to encourage the study of a LOTE at VCE level.

VTAC (2004) states:

Languages other than English (LOTEs) have an adjustment of 5 points upwards to their means after the initial but prior to the final scaling. This LOTE adjustment was introduced at the request of the Victorian State Government to encourage the study of LOTES...The LOTE adjustment is an incentive for the students to keep studying a LOTE, provided that the student has a reasonable background of performance level in that LOTE. (p. 3-4)

Unfortunately, this incentive scheme has done little to improve retention rates in secondary school LOTE classes across Victoria. The statistics clearly demonstrate that this initiative has not succeeded in encouraging students to continue learning a LOTE any longer than they are required (ABS Cat. 4102, 2010; ABS Cat. 1301.0, 2012; DET, 2007).

1.7 The State of Languages Programs in Other English Speaking Countries

As mentioned earlier, many other English-speaking countries are also experiencing challenges with their school LOTE programs. In New Zealand, the teaching of a second language is optional. The principal and school board decide whether a LOTE subject will be offered. Currently, the five main languages studied at the primary (Years 1-8) and secondary (Years 9-13) levels in schools across New Zealand are: French, Spanish, Japanese, German and Chinese. In 2010, around 35% of all primary and secondary schools were learning a second language. Moreover, since 2004, the number of students learning a second language has increased by 19%. Of particular interest, in the past decade the number of those students choosing to study French has increased by 14.5%. The reasons for these trends are beyond the scope of this study, however, it should be noted that while primary school enrolments have increased in the past decade, there has been a decline in the number of secondary students choosing to learn a LOTE (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014). These statistics mirror the situation in many Australian secondary schools; despite the promising trend of increased enrolments during the primary school years, LOTE is not a popular subject choice for New Zealand secondary school students.

Table 1.3 Languages enrolments in New Zealand schools, by year level, 2006 and 2012 (based on statistics provided by New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014)

Year Level	2006	2012	Percentage variation
Year 1-8 (Primary School)	79 198	98 613	25% increase
Year 9-13 (Secondary School)	62 167	53 736	14% decrease
Total	141 815	152 349	7% increase

In Canada, French as a second language (FSL) has experienced a similar fate. Despite various government initiatives to improve retention rates, since 2003 enrolments in French language programs in government elementary and secondary schools have declined in every province across Canada (Kissau, 2005). Kissau (2005) attributes this decline, in part to the “depreciated status of FSL instruction across Canada” (p. 8). He points out the “loose and inconsistent” (p.10) language requirements in Canadian schools, such as complex timetabling and course requirements and shifting policies regarding whether or not the subject is mandatory. According to Kissau, the reduction in government spending and problems in recruiting and retaining French language teachers, contribute to sending the message that “French is a subject of lesser importance in Canada” (p. 1).

Despite these issues, between 2003 and 2013, there was a 37% increase in the number of students learning French as a second language, which is a positive outcome but nonetheless, still short of the federal government’s goal to double the percentage of bilingual students graduating from high school by 2013 (Office of the French Languages Services Commissioner, 2014; Government of Canada, 2003).

In the United States of America there is a similar story. In 2013 only 9% of senior high school students had studied a LOTE for more than 4 years during their secondary school education; only 1% of first year university students intended to continue learning a LOTE as a major subject (see College Board, 2013, *College-Bound Seniors: Total Group Profile Report*). Similarly, the United Kingdom has one of the highest rates of attrition amongst secondary school LOTE students in Europe, with 57% of students electing to opt out of studying a language once it becomes an elective subject at around the age of 14 (Eurostat, 2012).

These brief overviews of overseas LOTE programs demonstrate the unpredictable nature of second language teaching and learning. While some successes can be seen, there are often simultaneously many setbacks, showing that while some progress can be seen, it is often inconsistent and haphazard. Moreover, it is a problem that is not exclusive to Australian secondary school LOTE programs.

1.8 Aims of the Study

This study aims to look closely at what the LOTE teacher can do to improve retention rates in the classroom and to enhance the learning outcomes of secondary school LOTE students. If positive LOTE experiences can lead to greater enjoyment and motivation in the classroom, what exactly would we define as a “positive” learning experience? It seems that positive experiences in the LOTE classroom begin with the students’ perceived success in the subject. It also seems that motivation and success are closely linked – that those students who possess high levels of motivation towards learning a second language will be more inclined to devote time to trying to attain competence in the LOTE and will consequently be more likely to achieve success in their LOTE studies (Graham, 2002; Wingat, 2004; Wright & Brown, 2006). This study will explore the link between strategy use and success in the LOTE classroom. It will also look at the role of motivation in the LOTE classroom and the role the teacher plays in fostering competence and confidence in the second language.

1.9 The Research Questions, the Participants and the Research Site

The over-arching research question that frames the study is:

**What role does the teacher play in students' perceived ability to use
Language Learning Strategies in the language classroom?**

The way in which I will be able to answer this question is by exploring the following supporting questions:

- How do teachers implement Language Learning Strategies in the classroom?
- How do students use Language Learning Strategies?
- How can students benefit from the use of Language Learning Strategies?

My study centred upon a group of six secondary school LOTE teachers. The research took place in six independent secondary schools across Victoria. Each school offered a strong languages program and provided an insight into a diverse range of secondary schools. The research participants themselves brought with them an array of ideas and experiences relating to strategy use. This will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Three.

The research methods included two main forms of data collection. Firstly, I administered a questionnaire which was intended to gain a broad understanding of the participants' background and experiences as a LOTE teacher, as well as their understanding of Language Learning Strategies. I then invited each participant to take part in an in-depth interview where their ideas and attitudes towards Language Learning Strategies could be discussed in greater detail. I was interested in the types of Language Learning Strategies they saw their students use in their LOTE lessons and the way in which the participants incorporated Language Learning Strategies into their own classroom. It was hoped that by comparing and contrasting the experiences of each of the participants, a clearer picture might emerge of how Language Learning Strategies are used by secondary school LOTE teachers and their students. The study

attempted to gain greater insights into successful teaching and learning practices with the aim to discover how these practices may be used to help less motivated and successful students.

The outline of the thesis is as follows: Chapter Two presents a review of the current literature relating to Language Learning Strategies and the impact that this may have on the way in which students engage with LOTE. Chapter Three discusses the methodological framework of the study. In Chapters Four, Five and Six I will present the results of the questionnaires and interviews. Chapters Seven will discuss these findings. Chapter Eight will present and discuss the classroom observations. Chapter Nine will provide an in-depth analysis of one of the research participants. Chapter Ten will answer the research questions and Chapter Eleven will present my conclusions and implications of the study.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

In the past decade there has been much focus and various government initiatives in Victorian Secondary Schools aimed at improving the retention rates and academic outcomes of students learning a LOTE beyond the compulsory years (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2007, 2009; Department of Education and Training, 2002, 2006). Statistics consistently demonstrate that LOTE is not an attractive subject choice for Victorian secondary school students, many of whom often discontinue learning a language as soon as it becomes a non-compulsory subject in around Year Nine (Department of Education and Training, 2002; Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013b). Moreover, this is a recurring pattern in many other English speaking countries throughout the world (Fernandez & Gearon, 2011).

The underlying reasons for this trend are complex. Recent research has examined the content and delivery of secondary school LOTE programs and other broader, external issues, such as societal and parental influences, as well as local incentive schemes such as the ‘scaling’ process in VCE (see Chapter 1, p. 14). What is clear, however, are the facts regarding retention rates in Victorian secondary schools. This thesis aims to explore what might be done in order to help stem the flow of secondary school students prematurely discontinuing their LOTE studies. The framework of this thesis rests on the premise that by equipping students with skills and strategies in order to help them with their LOTE studies, students may increase their motivation and success in the subject, which in turn may improve their willingness to continue learning a LOTE, even when it is no longer compulsory to do so.

Certainly, it is over-simplistic to assume that the possession of a range of strategies would lead to success when learning a LOTE; the ability to identify Language Learning Strategies does not guarantee that they will be employed by students. However, given the high attrition rate of students from secondary school LOTE classes

across Victoria, indeed Australia, it is worth exploring the idea that if students were aware of Language Learning Strategies and knew specifically when and how to use them, it could help them to approach a range of tasks with greater ease and confidence.

This chapter will explore Language Learning Strategies (LLS) and the role they play in LOTE classrooms. It will examine how Learning Strategies are defined and classified and look at the current literature and theories regarding strategies and whether they are regarded as effective and relevant, and if so, how they can be used, by both teachers and students, in present day LOTE classrooms. It will explore the role of LOTE teachers and the part that they play in contributing towards the students' enthusiasm and success in the subject. Lastly, it will look at the students themselves and the way that they engage with strategy use in the LOTE classroom.

This thesis aims to shed some light on the problem of students' high attrition rate from LOTE in the post-compulsory years. Currently, there is substantial literature regarding Language Learning Strategies; however, there is still much conflicting literature regarding which Language Learning Strategies are beneficial for students and how exactly they should be applied to LOTE. This will be referred to later in the Discussion chapter. This chapter begins by showing the theoretical support for the use of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom.

2.2 Theoretical Support for the Role of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom

A large body of research supports the connection between the ability to use Language Learning Strategies and greater confidence and autonomy amongst students in the LOTE classroom (Benson, 2001; Griffiths, 2013; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990, 2011; Rubin, 1975); it is this theory that forms the foundation of the present study. This idea will be explored and investigated in an effort to find its significance in relation to the complex issue of the way in which secondary school students engage with LOTE.

Theoretical support for the role of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom can be found in Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978, 1986). Although Vygotsky did

not apply his ideas specifically to LOTE learning, Vygotsky's work stressed the importance of the social contexts of learning. He believed that all learning is social in the sense that ideas and concepts are often mediated by more experienced learners. According to Vygotsky, it is the social experiences that shapes individuals' ways of thinking and interpreting the world. He regarded language as a critical bridge between the sociocultural world and individual mental functioning and focussed on the idea of collaboration as a source of cognitive development.

Vygotsky believed that more experienced partners – both adults and peers – can offer guidance to children mastering culturally meaningful activities and that the communication with these partners becomes part of the children's thinking. Once children internalise the essential features of these dialogues, they can use the strategies embedded in them to guide their own activities and accomplish skills on their own (Berk & Winsler, 1995). These new capacities in the child are first developed during collaboration with adults or more competent peers and then internalised to become part of the child's cognitive world. The region in which this transfer of ability from the shared environment to the individual occurs, according to Vygotsky, is called the zone of proximal development (ZPD), (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986).

Vygotsky believed that through collaboration and interaction with teachers, parents and other children, the child actively develops new cognitive abilities. Therefore, he identified the ZPD as the distance between a child's "actual development level as determined by independent problem solving" and their higher level of "potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1986, p.86). In essence, the ZPD represents the space within which children learn and develop.

One of the key concepts of Vygotsky is that of 'internalisation' which emphasises how children's development is essentially characterised by the internalisation of the social relations that they are engaged in. In line with this theory, internalisation can be facilitated and the learner can work within the ZPD and achieve more through the use of scaffolding. This scaffolding or assistance can be withdrawn as the learner becomes more accomplished and no longer needs it, applying Vygotsky's ideas. An example of this process of internalisation can be seen through a teacher helping the LOTE student

to read a piece of text by showing them how to look for visual clues, such as reading the title and looking at the illustrations to aid the reading process. The teacher uses their knowledge to assist the learner. The learner will then internalise this knowledge and draw upon it again to use at a later date. These pre-reading strategies provide support and initially the learner needs to be reminded and shown how to employ these tactics but eventually, after practising them, they will become second nature.

According to Vygotsky, as my example of pre-reading strategies demonstrates, it is the social experience that occurs within the zone of proximal development that underlies children's learning and development. Moreover, Vygotsky believed that there are no universal stages to children's learning and nothing is pre-determined in relation to their learning.

Thus, through relationships with others, children are able to engage in more complex forms of activity and behaviour. As the child becomes accomplished, they are able to master their own cognitive activity. The child is able to internalise the ability or knowledge and will eventually be able to perform the task independently. Referring back to the example of the pre-reading strategies, the child will remember or internalise this process and be able to repeat it when faced with a similar task in the future.

Vygotsky's work demonstrated the direct and proactive role adults can play in children's learning. It is possible for adults to use a range of activities to assist children in reaching their goals. This may include modelling a particular action, suggesting a strategy for solving a problem or breaking it down into manageable parts. In relation to LOTE, this idea is significant as it demonstrates the potential benefits of teaching children specific strategies to aid their LOTE learning (Benson, 2001; Grenfell & Harris, 1999; Griffiths, 2013; Lantolf, 2011b; Oxford, 2011).

The notion of scaffolding has often been linked to Vygotsky's ideas regarding the ZPD. Scaffolding is the idea that the type of support and assistance provided to a child during a teaching session is changed and adjusted to fit the child's current level of performance. That is, more support is offered when the task is new; less is provided as the child's competence increases, thereby fostering the child's autonomy and independence in the classroom. According to Maybin, Mercer & Stierer (1992)

scaffolding is not just any assistance which helps a learner accomplish a task. It is help which will enable a learner to accomplish a task which they would not have been quite able to manage on their own and it is help which is intended to bring the learner closer to a state of competence which will enable them eventually to complete such a task on their own. Scaffolding refers to the way the adult manages the learning sequence for children. It is a critical strategy for when children are working above their presumed developmental level.

It is this theory that guides the present study. Vygotsky's theories regarding the ZPD as the distance between what a child can accomplish during independent problem solving and what s/he can accomplish with the help of an adult or more competent peer, forms the foundation of this study. According to Vygotsky, learners can reach their full potential through collaboration with others and the use of scaffolding. This concept can be applied to the field of second language acquisition as it highlights the significance of Language Learning Strategies and the role that the teacher plays in helping students to be able to use them and apply them to different learning situations.

The use of learning strategies follows Vygotsky's theory because if students are provided with appropriate tools, such as language learning strategies, they might then be equipped with the necessary scaffolding in order to be able to successfully complete tasks which may otherwise have been too difficult. It is the role of the teacher to provide appropriate scaffolding to enable students to work effectively in the LOTE classroom. Based on Vygotsky's ideas of internalisation, if Language Learning Strategies are modelled for students, students will learn to interpret these strategies for their own use and be able to apply them to different situations.

Using Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as a foundation, this study will explore the role that Language Learning Strategies might play in students' journey towards achieving competence in a LOTE.

2.3 Defining and Explaining Language Learning Strategies

Since the early 1970s there has been a change in the approach towards second language research (Wenden & Rubin, 1987). Research in the field of second language acquisition began to move away from examining methods of teaching a second language to exploring the characteristics of the language learners themselves and the possible influences that these characteristics may have on the learner's ability to acquire a second language. Factors such as motivation and attitude as well as external influences, such as the home and learning environment were seen as important aspects in the progress that language learners made in their journey towards second language acquisition (Gardner, 1979; Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

The past thirty years or so have seen a large body of second language research targeting Language Learning Strategies (LLS). This research is based on exploring ways to empower language learners to become more autonomous and therefore, more effective in their learning. In general, advocates of LLS believe that learners with strategic knowledge of language learning, compared to those without, are more efficient, resourceful and flexible, which in turn, enables learners to acquire a language more easily (Okada, Oxford & Abo, 1996; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford & Cohen, 1992; Tseng et al., 2006).

A common observation amongst LOTE educators and researchers is that some language learners are more successful than others and that these successful learners tend to do different things when compared to the poorer learners. It is believed that the ability to identify and use LLS is the underlying difference between good and poor learners (Griffiths, 2013; Macaro, 2001; Oxford, 2011).

'Language Learning Strategies' have been defined as "...steps or actions taken by learners to improve the development of their language skills..." (Oxford and Cohen, 1992, p. 1). They are considered to be conscious techniques used by the learner in order to improve their success when studying a second language (Oxford, 1993). Moreover, these strategies or techniques are believed to be able to be stored by the learner and retrieved when needed (Okada et al., 1996).

In order to fully understand the significance of language learner strategies and the role that they play in second language acquisition, it is worth noting a range of definitions of learner strategies, summarised in the table below:

Table 2.1 Definitions of Language Learning Strategies

Author	Language Learning Strategies Definition
Rubin (1975)	the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge (p. 43).
O'Malley et al. (1987)	any set of storage, retrieval or use of information (p. 23).
Chamot (1987)	techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information (p. 71).
Oxford (1990)	Specific actions taken by learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferrable to a new situation (p. 81).
Cohen (1998)	Those processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance learning or use of a second or foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about that language (p. 4)
Oxford (2011)	A deliberate, conscious attempt to manage and control efforts towards a goal (p. 298)
Griffiths (2013)	An activity consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own learning (p.197)

These definitions share the common idea that through selecting and using particular strategies, learners are able to take greater responsibility for their learning and with appropriate support and guidance of a teacher, strategy use will enable their learning to be more autonomous and ultimately, more successful.

The term ‘Language Learning Strategy’ is relatively new. Until the 1970s, language learning was seen as a psychological phenomenon, that is, the language laboratories of the 1960s approached learning a language through manipulating the psychology of the individual; hence, the practice of phrasal drilling and learning through repetitions and stimulus-response. Grammar was learnt as a separate unit, and was not placed in a social context (Cohen & Macaro, 2007; Swain, Kinnear & Steinman, 2011).

The development of language learner strategy research began in the 1970s where studies outlined the techniques and approaches used by successful language learners (Naiman, Frohlich, Stern & Todesco, 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). The 1970s saw an increased interest in the behaviour of language learners and in the language they produced. Studies throughout this period focused on how learners acquired language and the roughly predictable stages they passed through to reach communicative competence. Second language researchers began to ask whether second language learners shared this characteristic and also passed through these stages in much the same way as first language learners.

Around this time, Selinker (1972) coined the term ‘interlanguage’ in reference to the transitional stage that second language learners pass through, where they use approximations in the target language before reaching communicative competence. ‘Interlanguage’ was thought of as a temporary tool used in second language acquisition. Learners were seen as moving from their understanding of their first language through a gradual restructuring of their grammatical system towards that of the target language, making a series of steadily changing systematic errors on the way (Ellis, 1997; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990). The scaffolding that this ‘interlanguage’ provided learners as they moved towards communicative competence is significant as it relates to Vygotsky’s (1978) notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ability to draw on approximations provided students with a useful tool as they developed their LOTE skills; it demonstrated how strategies were used, even unwittingly, by students in the early stages of their language learning.

Much of this early research was abstract and not directly relevant to the day to day practice of second language teachers. It was not until the second half of the 1970s that empirical research began to emerge that was directly based on the experiences of good language learners. This early research identified strategies and characteristics used by effective language learners, claiming that there was a correlation between strategy use and language learning success (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975).

A common early theory was that certain strategy use marked “good” language learners. These early studies of LLS determined the types of strategies used and which ones were used by effective language learners (Naiman et al., 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). This research differed from previous studies as it provided teachers with advice on what to offer in their classroom in order to maximise learner outcomes. Research at this time began to encourage teachers to help learners to take charge of their learning and encouraged teachers to use techniques which approached learners as individuals (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989; Willing, 1989). In the years that followed, various taxonomies were developed and used to help identify the types of strategies used by language learners. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) described Language Learning Strategies as identifiable and quantifiable, and developed a classification system to reflect this. Their classification system involved dividing learning strategies into three distinct categories – cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies and social/affective strategies. This will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

However, this research into LLS highlighted several problems. Firstly, the nature of a ‘strategy’ is difficult to define. A common theory throughout the 1990s was that there were a fixed number of strategies and different students used them in different ways and circumstances. However, this theory was questioned as it was claimed that ‘strategies’ are too broad to define and classify. Furthermore, it is difficult to fully understand what learners actually do when they are completing a task. It is also unclear whether or not learner strategies are used by all learners with varying degrees of effectiveness (Rees-Miller, 1993).

More current research suggests that strategy training can be an effective tool for language learners as it can help them to improve their skills in the target language, as well as increase confidence in the language learner. These strategies can be simple, such as correct dictionary training and build up to more complex strategies, such as

planning and drafting prior to completing a writing task (Cohen, 1998; Graham & Macaro, 2007; Harris, 1997). However, researchers have also pointed out that in order to be effective, strategy training must be introduced to students early in their language learning classes, and furthermore, it must be incorporated into lessons on a long term basis (Grenfell & Macaro, 2007; Salashour, Sharifi & Salashour, 2013).

Nunan (1995) states:

It is a mistake to assume that learners come into the language classroom with a natural ability to make choices about what and how to learn (p.133).

This idea that students will learn more effectively if provided with the specific tools or strategies with which to learn forms the basis of this thesis and will be further investigated and discussed in detail later in the chapter.

2.4 Classification Schemes for Language Learning Strategies

As earlier mentioned, the notion that students learn more effectively if provided with the tools or strategies to learn began to take on greater momentum in the second half of the 1970s. This led to a number of studies which attempted to define and classify the strategies used by successful language learners. At this time, the idea that “good language learners” might do something different from other students was a new concept (Rubin, 1975). Certainly, it was in sharp contrast to earlier ideas that successful language learners simply had an ‘ear’ for language. For the first time, it appeared that strategies were not the domain of highly capable individuals but could possibly be learnt by students who had not discovered them on their own (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Early research focused on identifying the strategies used by successful language learners that appeared to contribute to learning (Naiman et al., 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). This research asserted that students do apply strategies when learning a second language, and it attempted to define and classify the strategies that students either reported using or were observed using.

Rubin (1975) proposed a classification scheme that placed strategies into two main groups. The first category was strategies which directly affected learning and included clarification, monitoring, memorisation, guessing, deductive reasoning and practice. The second category was strategies that indirectly contributed to learning, such as

creating practice opportunities and communication strategies. Stern (1975) devised a list of ten strategies common to good language learners. These strategies are outlined below:

Table 2.2 Based on Stern's (1975) compilation of strategies used by good language learners

Type of Strategy	Description of Strategy
Planning Strategy	A personal learning style or positive learning strategy.
Active Strategy	An active approach to the learning task.
Empathic Strategy	A tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and its speakers.
Formal Strategy	Technical know-how of how to tackle a language.
Experimental Strategy	A methodical but flexible approach, developing the new language into an ordered system and constantly revising it.
Semantic strategy	Constant searching for meaning.
Practice Strategy	Willingness to practise.
Communication Strategy	Willingness to use the language in real communication.
Monitoring strategy	Self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use.
Internalisation strategy	Developing L2 more and more as a separate reference system and learning to think in it.

It is of interest that Stern went on to describe this list as “highly speculative” and in need of confirmation, modification or rebuttal, thus demonstrating the difficulties associated with attempts to label and classify learning strategies. Based on Stern's scheme, Naiman et al. (1978) created a classification system that included five broad categories of learning strategies and a number of secondary categories. Naiman et al. identified primary categories which they claimed to be common to all good language learners and secondary strategies which they asserted to be present in only some of the good learners.

The primary classification system included categories that demonstrated that the learner possessed:

- an active task approach,
- a realisation of language as a system,
- a realisation of language as a means of communication and interaction,
- management of affective demands,
- ability to monitor second language performance.

The secondary classification system included categories that demonstrated that the learner possessed:

- The ability to respond positively to learning opportunities (for example, immerses oneself in the target language)
- The ability to add related language learning activities to regular classroom practice (for example, reads additional material, listens to CDs)
- The ability to analyse individual problems (for example, uses cognates);
- The ability to emphasise fluency over accuracy (for example, uses circumlocutions);
- The ability to seek communicative situations with L2 speakers (for example, communicates wherever possible);
- The ability to find socio-cultural meanings (for example, memorises courtesies and phrases)
- The ability to cope with affective demands in learning (for example, overcomes inhibitions to speak)
- The ability to constantly revise L2 system (for example, looks for ways to improve in order to avoid repeating past mistakes).

Further to this scheme, Naiman et al. (1978) also identified a number of techniques for second language learning. These techniques were different from other strategies in their scheme as they focused on specific aspects of language learning. Some of these techniques included: role playing, inferring grammar rules from texts, using a dictionary, listening to the radio, television and films, asking for corrections, reading and writing frequently. Naiman et al. also began to question the role of the learning environment and the language teacher, acknowledging that other factors besides strategies and mental processes were important in second language acquisition. They

drew attention to the idea that different students, depending on their individual skills and abilities, react differently to classroom activities and instructions. They state:

A classroom shared by good and poor learners alike does not constitute the same learning environment for both. The observer must ask what kind of interaction occurs between teacher and a good student, and teacher and poor student.
(p.3)

Oxford (1985) attempted to build on these early classification schemes by devising a classification system which consisted of two broad categories, similar to the primary and secondary categories suggested by earlier researchers (Dansereau, 1985; Rubin, 1981). Oxford's classification scheme described primary strategies with nine subcategories, such as: inferencing, mnemonics, summarising and practice. The secondary categories included eight sub-categories, such as: attention enhancers, self-management, affective strategies, planning and co-operation. Within each of these sub-categories, additional examples of strategies were provided, resulting in sixty-four strategies in total. This classification system was certainly comprehensive; however, it failed to identify the strategies most important to learning, but instead regarded them all as equal. Also, the sub-categories appeared to overlap (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Oxford's classification system led to the development of her questionnaire, designed to assess uses of learning strategies in second language acquisition (Oxford, 1986). The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was based on the primary and secondary strategies in her classification system and contained items related to the sixty-four strategies identified. It was the most comprehensive and detailed classification system of its time. It had enormous impact on second language researchers and teachers; its most significant claim was that strategies were identifiable and quantifiable (Grenfell & Macaro, 2007) Over time, the SILL underwent several revisions and was widely used to analyse strategy use among different learners.

Around this time, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) drew up a classification system that divided Language Learning Strategies into three distinct groups. These are: cognitive strategies; metacognitive strategies; and socio-affective strategies.

Today, these early classification systems are often noted for their shortcomings, the most obvious problem being their broad, all-embracing definition of learner strategies. Despite the limitations of these early classification taxonomies, they provided the foundation for the way in which Language Learner Strategies are perceived today. Two schemes in particular are most frequently referred to and appear to form the foundation of more recent taxonomies and the subsequent research. These are the schemes developed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford's (1990) taxonomy. Below is a description of these two taxonomies:

O'Malley and Chamot's taxonomy of learning strategies

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) categorised learning strategies into three distinct groups. These are:

- cognitive strategies;
- metacognitive strategies;
- socio-affective strategies.

Cognitive strategies:

Cognitive strategies refer to strategies used for specific language tasks involving direct manipulation of the language, such as memorization skills or applying grammar rules. These strategies are the techniques that assist communication and include techniques such as repetition, use of resources, translation and inferencing.

Metacognitive strategies:

Metacognitive strategies allude to the way in which people think about their learning and include strategies such as advanced organising and self-management, selective and directed attention, self-monitoring and evaluation. Metacognitive strategies are the global strategies involved in planning, monitoring and then evaluating learning, such as, deciding how to tackle a particular task and then evaluating how successfully it has been done.

Socio-affective strategies

Socio-affective strategies refer to the way in which learners mediate their language learning experience with others. These interpersonal strategies include co-operation, peer checking and asking questions for clarification. Socio-affective strategies are identified as those through which the learner may seek help from others or control emotional responses, such as levels of anxiety. The table below provides examples of these strategies:

Table 2.3 Examples of O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) classification scheme

Type of Strategy	Example of Strategy
Cognitive Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• memorizing and practising phrases;• mentally rehearsing before speaking;• using flashcards to remember vocabulary;• reading aloud.
Metacognitive Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• setting goals, such as deciding to memorise vocabulary or learn grammatical rules;• preparing to write an essay by drafting a plan;• self- evaluation such as audio taping one's speech and listening to it.
Socio-affective Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• positive self-talk to reduce anxiety;• rehearsing an oral presentation with a partner;• working collaboratively;• asking the teacher for help.

Oxford's taxonomy of learning strategies

Oxford's (1990) scheme classified Language Learning Strategies into two broad classes: direct and indirect strategies and then further divided these classes to form six sub-categories. Like other schemes of that time, Oxford recognized the relationship of learning to teaching; however, Oxford's classification system was different from its predecessors as it recognized that although good learners used strategies, not all strategies are created equal. Oxford's classification scheme noted and clarified the critical difference between cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Oxford acknowledged that in order for a strategy to be useful, it must relate well to the task at hand, it must fit the students' learning style preferences and it must be employed effectively and linked with other relevant strategies (Rubin, 2008). Oxford began to realize the importance of a variety of factors that affect learners, such as the ability to self-manage. Below is a description of Oxford's scheme:

Direct strategies include:

- memory strategies;
- cognitive strategies;
- compensation strategies.

Indirect strategies include:

- metacognitive strategies;
- affective strategies;
- social strategies.

Direct Strategies:

- **Memory strategies:** are those used for storage of information, those which assist in entering information into long term memory and for retrieving information when needed for communication.
- **Cognitive strategies:** are the mental strategies learners use to make sense of their learning. They are used for forming and revising internal mental models and receiving and producing messages in the target language.
- **Compensation strategies:** help learners to overcome knowledge gaps to continue the communication.

Indirect Strategies:

- **Metacognitive strategies:** help learners regulate and exercise executive control through planning, arranging, focusing and evaluating their own learning.
- **Affective strategies:** are concerned with the learner's emotional requirements such as confidence, and they enable learners to control feelings, motivations and attitudes related to language learning.
- **Social strategies:** lead to increased interactions with the target language and facilitate interactions with others, often in a discourse form. Social strategies include asking questions for clarification, empathizing with others by developing cultural understanding. The table below provides examples of direct and indirect strategies and their sub-categories:

Table 2.4 Examples of Oxford's (1990) classification scheme

Direct Strategies	Indirect strategies
Memory strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• making up songs or rhymes to remember how to pronounce words.	Metacognitive strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reading reference material about grammatical and phonetic rules.
Cognitive strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• trying to recall the pronunciation of a word;• speaking slowly to ensure accurate pronunciation.	Affective Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• having a sense of humour about mispronunciations.
Compensation strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• guessing intelligently	Social Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-operating with peers;• Asking someone to correct one's pronunciation.

The present study will be based on Oxford's (1990) classification taxonomy, which today, is still considered seminal in the influence it had on the way Language Learning Strategies are defined and classified. This classification scheme is comprehensive,

detailed and demonstrates the complex nature of Language Learning Strategies; that is, that Language Learning Strategies are interconnected; both direct and indirect strategies play a role in helping students achieve LOTE competence and these strategies support each other, rather than being used in isolation.

2.5 Why are Language Learning Strategies Important?

The idea of how much learners can contribute to their language learning success by following particular actions or steps is important and forms the framework for the present study.

It seems that strategic learning involves a larger goal, that is, to become proficient in a second language; a plan to achieve that goal, such as learning ten new words a day; and the steps needed to achieve that goal, such as colour coding groups of words and using flashcards (Gass & Selinker, 2008). It also seems that strategies are environment dependent and task dependent (Cohen & Macaro, 2007).

Second language acquisition is complex, and while successful learners may do certain things, it might be because they have the prerequisite abilities to do so. Less competent learners could try to do the same things but may not be able to; they might first have to improve their second language skills before they can use the Language Learning Strategies. If this is the case, it might be that language learning success leads learners to employing Language Learning Strategies. It might be that successful learning allows for the use of the strategy (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Even after thirty years of research into strategy use, this question has still not been definitively answered; McDonough (1999, p.17) suggests that the teaching of strategies “is not universally successful.”

Despite this, there have been many reports of success and it seems that a greater understanding of the strategies used and the tasks and contexts in which the individual learner is successful might be helpful for educators. It appears that a key factor in successful language learning is to create self-efficacy in learners; equipping them with LLS might be a step towards this. (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Numerous studies have been carried out on the effectiveness of learners using a variety of strategies in their quest for language competence (Anderson, 1991; Bacon, 1992; O'Malley, Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Vann & Abraham, 1990.)

Baker Smemoe and Haslam (2013) conducted a study of 62 adult second language learners and found that in order for strategy use to be successful, students must first be motivated to use them. They found that students might be more likely to use strategies if they understood their potential value and participated in specific strategy training. The authors also point out the significance of the language teacher; their study, along with a body of research, shows that it is important that the teacher understands their students' strategy preferences in order to help them use strategies to their full potential. The students need to understand which strategies to use and why, in order for them to be employed effectively (Sabet, Tahriri & Pasand, 2013; Salahshour, Sharifi & Salahshour, 2013; Sen & Sen, 2012; Tragant, Thompson & Victori., 2013; Ungureneanu & Georgescu, 2012).

If teachers gain a greater understanding of their students' strategy use and the role of LLS in the language classroom, it may help them to create "a learner centred class" (Salahshour et al., 2013, p. 640). Many researchers have found the conscious use of appropriate learning strategies typifies good language learners and that the deployment of strategies can help develop students' self-efficacy (Chamot & O'Malley, 1996; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Purpura, 1997). Graham (1997) states,

If pupils are helped to notice a link between the strategies they have employed and the resulting outcomes, their sense of control over their own learning could be enhanced and a powerful source of motivation harnessed. At the same time, levels of anxiety are likely to be lowered (p. 123)

However, it is also crucial that the teacher has a sound understanding of students' individual needs and preferred learning styles as strategies that may work in one educational setting may not work in another (P. Gu, 2003).

According to Graham (1997) "...The development of effective learning strategies lies at the heart of promoting more successful language learning..." (p. 91). For this reason, the issue of LLS and the impact they may have on positive outcomes when learning a LOTE is worthy of further exploration.

The identification of specific traits that good language learners seem to possess, and the way in which they can be taught and used in the LOTE classroom, could be an important factor in helping to stem the decline in students who prematurely discontinue

their LOTE studies (Griffiths, 2008). This is of particular importance when placed in the context of Australia where numbers are declining in secondary school LOTE programs across the country.

2.6 Motivation in the LOTE Classroom

The idea that Language Learning Strategies could be linked to motivation and in turn, success when learning a LOTE is important. This connection has long been acknowledged by researchers (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins, 1996; Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Ushioda & Dornyei, 2012; Yajun, 2003). There is the belief that students who possess high levels of motivation towards learning a second language are more willing to devote time to trying to attain competence in the LOTE and will therefore be more likely to achieve success in their LOTE studies (Aoki, 2012; Baker Smemoe & Haslam, 2013; Bandura, 1986; Bialystok, 1990; Gass, Behney & Plonsky, 2013).

Early researchers of strategy-based learning acknowledged the role of motivation in second language acquisition and also pointed out its ambiguous nature. Motivation might be influenced by the success experienced by the learner; those students who do well often experience rewards and are therefore motivated to try harder. As Skehan (1989) notes, “Motivation would be a consequence rather than a cause of success” (p. 49). Macaro (2001) points out that the connection between the use of strategies and motivation is not surprising, given the amount of effort undertaken by the learner to select and correctly use strategies appropriate to the task. He says it would seem likely that, “more motivated learners are likely to put in the time and effort required of consistent strategy application” (p. 28). Furthermore, if students use strategies with an understanding of their potential benefits, they will be more motivated to use them and find them effective (Sen & Sen, 2012).

The ability to employ particular strategies is seen as creditable as it allows students greater autonomy in the language classroom (Benson, 2001; Cohen, 1990; Nunan, 1997; Oxford, 1990; Tragant et al., 2013). The more motivated students appear to possess a wider range of Language Learning Strategies and are more willing to choose their strategy use depending on the set task (Brown & Palinscar, 1982; Graham, 1997; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990). While there does seem to be a connection between strategy

use and LOTE proficiency levels, it does not appear to be a clearly defined causal relationship; rather, motivation to use strategies also seems to be one part of an important ingredient in the recipe for LOTE proficiency. In order for LLS to be beneficial, students must first be motivated to employ them (Serri, Boroujeni & Hesabi, 2012). Students who have achieved success in their LOTE studies are more likely to enjoy the subject and subsequently devote more time and effort to their studies (Ludwig, 1983; Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001; Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002).

One of the interesting features of motivation is its dynamic nature. Students' motivation can fluctuate for various, surprisingly simple reasons, such as the task the students are required to complete, the classroom dynamics or the classroom teacher (Dornyei, 2001). As previously mentioned, in the state of Victoria it is now commonplace for students to begin their study of a LOTE in primary school (see Chapter 1, p. 12) and as the statistics have clearly demonstrated, this has not translated into higher retention rates once LOTE becomes an elective subject (LoBianco & Slaughter, 2009). In fact, the primary school LOTE experience may even be deleterious, as students' negative primary school LOTE experiences may transfer to the secondary school setting (Bolster, Balandier-Brown & Rea-Dickens, 2004; Farhady, 1982; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Lightbown, 2001). This point is particularly important as students' motivation to learn a LOTE does appear to decrease with time (Chambers, 1994). Williams et al. (2002) state:

Perceived success and perceived proficiency both appear to decrease significantly over the first three years at secondary school, as also does the amount of effort expended in language learning (p. 522).

Macaro (2001) not only makes the connection between motivation and correct strategy use, but goes on to suggest that unsuccessful strategy use is a contributing factor in demotivation. He says, "learners become demotivated when their strategy use (or limited misuse of strategies) blocks their progress" (p. 29).

While it would be too simplistic to suggest that strategy training could solve the high attrition rate of students from secondary school LOTE programs, it does seem worthwhile to further investigate the role that Language Learning Strategies may be able to play in LOTE programs, particularly in light of the connection we have already seen between motivation and successful LOTE experiences. If students can be equipped with a greater range of tools and strategies in the LOTE classroom, they may

have more opportunities to experience success, which may then lead to greater motivation to continue their LOTE studies (Baker Smemoe & Haslam, 2013; Macaro, 2001; Sen & Sen, 2012).

If students possess a bank of Language Learning Strategies that they are able to draw upon and use, this could lead to greater feelings of motivation and enjoyment for the subject (Dornyei, 2001; Macaro, 2003; Ushioda, 2008). The adage “success breeds success” may be particularly significant for secondary school students learning a LOTE. (For a detailed exploration of the inter-relating intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence motivation, including socio-cultural factors, see Church, 2006).

2.7 How Can We Motivate Students?

If motivation and success in learning a LOTE are inextricably linked, it would make sense to explore ways that educators could help to motivate their students. When investigating this issue, the literature consistently referred to three major factors that seemed to influence students’ motivation. These are:

- Learner autonomy in the classroom
- The role of the teacher and the students’ perceived rapport with them
- The use of technology in the classroom.

Learner success seems to stem from the students’ learning environment (Ohta, 2000) and it seems that the student’s environment is shaped by these three factors.

2.7.1 Autonomous learning

Since the late 1970s there has been a growing interest in the idea of learner autonomy in language learning and its connection to motivation (Aoki, 2012; Legenhausen, 2009). Ushioda (1996) claims that, “it is the engagement of the learner’s own intrinsic motivation that must provide the foundation for autonomous learning” (p. 40). This link between motivation and learner autonomy is significant and a large body of research attests to its importance in the LOTE classroom (Aoki, 2012; Benson, 2001; Blin, 2004; Dam, 2003; Hiltz, Turoff & Harasim, 2007; Legenhausen, 2009; Ushioda, 1996). Learning a second language in a classroom setting requires an enormous reliance on the

teacher (Dornyei, 2001; Field, 2000; Finkbeiner, 2008; Jones & Jones, 2001; Macaro, 2003). Students often experience a sense of helplessness as they find themselves hindered in their ability to work independently due to their limited skills and knowledge. This, in turn, can lead to a sense of powerlessness. If students were more autonomous, it could perhaps help them to feel in greater control of their learning. This increased confidence in their ability might influence their enjoyment and possibly even their success in the subject (Al-Alwan, 2012; Aoki, 2012; Benson, 2001; Nguyen & Gu, 2013; Serri et al., 2012; Tutwisoot, 2012). Ushioda (1996) points out that in order for students to be intrinsically motivated, they must feel free to make their own choices.

According to Benson (2001) “Autonomy can be broadly defined as the capacity to take control over one’s learning” (p. 2). Little (1991) further explains:

Autonomy is a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action...The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts (p.4).

In many ways language learning can only be done independently; the learning cannot be done for the student. However, it is also true that the teacher can play a role in supporting this independence (Benson, 2001; Cotteral, 2008; Macaro, 2001).

Cook (1991) asserts that it is the teacher’s role to help students achieve independence in the classroom, stating, “Poor students are those who depend most on the teacher and are least able to fend for themselves” (p. 81). Legenhausen (2009) believes that it is the teacher’s role to create a learning environment in which learners are given the opportunity to try out a range of strategies. It is only through discussion and reflection that learners, with the support of the teacher, can work towards achieving greater autonomy in the classroom. This in turn will help to promote, “the learner’s self-esteem, their ability for life-long learning and their willingness as well as readiness to act as responsible members of the community” (Legenhausen, 2009, p. 393). Grenfell (2002) asserts that, “it is not possible to be a successful language learner and not, to some degree, be an autonomous learner (p.184). He refers to autonomy as the “final ingredient” (p. 183) needed to achieve LOTE competence. By understanding students’ learning styles, teachers can help their students find strategies that best suit them, guiding them towards greater autonomy. In our rapidly changing world, learning no longer only takes place in a traditional classroom environment; it has become

increasingly important that students are able to self-regulate (Bjork, Dunlosky & Kornell, 2013).

Benson (2001) points out that helping students to become autonomous in the classroom is not leaving them to “sink or swim” instead, he says that teachers should provide students with appropriate scaffolding to help them take greater control of their learning. Teaching students when and how to use Language Learning Strategies could be a step towards achieving this.

Miller (2007) acknowledges the challenges teachers face when trying to motivate students to learn a second language. He says:

One way to motivate learners is to allow them more responsibility for their learning...Without motivation learners cannot begin to move towards autonomy (p.2).

Deci (1996) also supports the idea that motivation leads to autonomy and that the desire to be an autonomous learner must come “from within.” As Ushioda (2003) says, “The learner must want to learn” (p. 9). Motivation and autonomy seem to be interdependent; it is often difficult to distinguish which is the cause and which is the effect; students need to be motivated to become more autonomous but in turn, autonomy can lead to greater enjoyment of the subject which can then further increase students’ motivation (Aoki, 2012).

It seems that motivation can be enhanced by the social interactions that come through learning (Baker Smemoe & Haslan, 2013; Brophy, 1998; Bruner, 1983; Donato, 1994; Dornyei, 2001; Ismail & Yusof, 2012; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Lantolf and Poehner, 2008). This links back to Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development where students are provided with scaffolding and are able to work in a socially-mediated environment; they are encouraged to work with their peers, instead of relying solely on the teacher, until gradually, they gain greater independence and can work individually with less support. Vygotsky’s emphasis on social interaction, interpersonal interaction and collaboration are important in order to help students achieve independence. Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) refer to this as “mediated participation” (p. 148) while Van Lier (1996) says that students’ motivation is influenced by both internal and external factors. He states that these internal and socio-cultural factors are equally important and go hand in hand in helping students to achieve

independence in the classroom. Ohta (2000) says, that development cannot occur if too much assistance is provided or if a task is too easy. According to Nguyen and Gu (2013), this is where strategy training can be beneficial; the ability to self-regulate and work with greater autonomy can enhance students' positive feelings towards the subject and help them to feel greater motivation to devote more time to their learning. Ismail and Yusof (2012) support this idea that student motivation and positive learning experiences are linked with autonomy. They say, "it is still learners' positive experiences that remain the key to the success of any endeavor seeking to promote learner autonomy" (p. 482). While specific strategy training in language skills such as listening and reading comprehension might help students to approach tasks with greater confidence and expertise, learners must first feel motivated to employ the strategies they have been taught (Al-Alwan, 2012; Serri et al., 2012), once again highlighting the complex and intangible nature of motivation.

Ushioda (2003) points out that de-motivation is a common factor in the LOTE classroom, influenced by the social environment, including factors such as boredom, disaffection and the negative impact of peers. Ushioda believes that a way of combatting this de-motivation is to help learners to become autonomous; she warns that a failure to do so can have detrimental consequences. While the self-directed and self-disciplined students are likely to succeed in most learning environments, it is the less motivated students that teachers need to know more about and who need more support (Hiltz, Turoff & Harasim, 2007).

In order to develop autonomy in students, teachers need to move away from traditional teacher-fronted and teacher-centred classrooms and allow the students to show initiative (Wolff, 2009). This means that we need to re-define how we measure success when learning a LOTE. Wolff suggests that rather than looking at how much students learn, we should instead examine the way in which students learn and their positive feelings about their learning rather than by how much they learned. He poses the question:

Do we define a successful learner as one who has successfully learned a lot of language or one who has successfully learned how to learn, how to continue learning? (Wolff, 2009, p. 104)

It seems that motivation and autonomous learning are intertwined. Learners can become autonomous through the scaffolding provided by teachers in the form of LLS. However, it must be noted that the ability to work autonomously does not mean

working in isolation; rather, autonomous learning involves interaction and collaboration as it is shown in Vygotsky's (1978; 1986) socio-cultural approach to learning. The ability to work autonomously also means that students are able to take responsibility for their learning, set goals and check their progress (Benson, 2001; Miller, 2007; Ohta, 2000). The ability to select and use appropriate Language Learning Strategies could help students achieve this. If students are able to successfully work more independently in the LOTE classroom, this could help them to feel more motivated and positive towards their LOTE learning.

Motivation is crucial for autonomous learning to take place and the classroom culture can enhance or hinder a student's motivation (Legenhausen, 2003; O'Rourke & Schwienhurst, 2003). The LOTE teacher plays an important role in fostering positive feelings, creating a constructive classroom culture and providing students with the skills to allow them to work more independently. The next section will explore the role for the teacher in helping to promote students' motivation.

2.7.2 The Significance of the LOTE Teacher

Learning a Language other than English is unique in both the content and delivery of the material. Unlike many other secondary school subjects, LOTE tends to be a very teacher-centred and teacher-directed subject. Consequently, students find themselves with a greater reliance than usual on their classroom teacher.

Educators are becoming increasingly aware of the crucial role that the LOTE teacher plays in fostering positive attitudes towards learning a LOTE (Baker Smemoe & Haslam, 2013; Dornyei, 2001; Ellis, 1997; Jones & Jones, 2001; Lazar 2013; Sen & Sen, 2012; Tragant et al., 2013; Ungureanu & Georgescu, 2012;). Indeed, in any subject area, the teacher may be the focus of the classroom, but the LOTE teacher in particular, seems to be central to students' success in the classroom. Ellis (1997) states: "The teacher is a major – probably the major – factor in the classroom life" (p. 251). Dornyei (2001) says, "almost everything the teacher does in the classroom has a motivational influence on students." (p. 32). It seems that the way that the classroom teacher plans and delivers the lesson, the content of the course material and the way in which feedback is given all have a significant impact on students' motivation.

It is the teacher who can foster positive attitudes towards learning a LOTE by helping students to feel confident when tackling set tasks and capable of experiencing success. Research shows us that students tend to experience success in the classroom when there is a positive culture for learning to take place (Dornyei, 2001; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Rowe, 2003). The literature also consistently shows that one way to motivate students is to create a warm classroom environment where an atmosphere of acceptance and care is pervasive (Carr, 2003; Clark and Trafford, 1995; Dornyei, 2001; Jones & Jones, 2001; Rowe, 2003).

While a strong teacher-student relationship is important for LOTE success (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Clark & Trafford, 1995; Rowe, 2003) the motivation to succeed must firstly originate from the learner. Ushioda (2008) asserts:

Two key principles seem crucial to the maintenance of motivation: first, motivation must emanate from the learner, rather than be externally regulated by the teacher; second, learners must see themselves as agents of the processes that shape their motivation...as long as motivation is externally regulated and controlled by the teacher, learners cannot be expected to develop skills in regulating their own motivation on which good language learning depends. (p. 30)

It seems that while the teacher can foster and strengthen positive attitudes and help fan students' motivation, they cannot create it; motivation must come from the learner, it is the LOTE teacher's job to then take this spark of interest and help fan the flames.

Ushioda (2008) acknowledges the challenges LOTE teachers face. While it is clear that motivation can lead to positive attitudes towards the subject and greater success, how teachers can help students feel motivated is much more difficult. She says

For teachers, the distilled research finding that positive attitudes and motivation contribute to successful learning yields little useful insight into their day-to-day problems of how to motivate little Samantha in Class 2B and keep her motivated. (p. 30)

We can see that motivation and the students' perceived rapport with the teacher are linked, as is the students' ability to work autonomously in the classroom. It seems that motivation is a complex issue - students need a teacher who is warm and engaging and supportive, but one who is also able to provide students with the confidence and necessary skills to work autonomously. It is a precarious balancing act; student achievement can occur with the right amount of support and care and also by providing

enough scaffolding to allow their confidence to grow without impeding their independence. We will now examine how the use of technology in the LOTE classroom can help to tie these three factors – autonomy, motivation and the LOTE teacher - together.

2.7.3 The Role of Technology in the LOTE Classroom

Technology can play a major part in engaging students in their LOTE lessons and enhancing their motivation. As previously mentioned, LOTE is vastly different from other subject areas as it is skill-based as well as knowledge based (Brutt-Griffler, 2007). For this reason, it requires a great deal of time and extensive repetition. This is where a technology-driven classroom may help.

Technology has supported and enriched second language pedagogy for decades. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s language laboratories provided drill-based practice to support the Audio-Lingual method that was prevalent at the time. Many tertiary institutions began using computer programs to provide additional LOTE activities and exercises. These early programs were seen as a type of ‘add on’ used to support and supplement regular LOTE classes. The focus was on drills, quizzes and short question and answer activities. These programs usually only occurred in a scheduled weekly language laboratory lesson; the traditional use of the language laboratory was quite restrictive and meant that the technology of the time played only a supporting role in the LOTE lesson and was not incorporated into every lesson (Kohn, 2009).

In the 1980s videotapes became increasingly common as support material for listening comprehension tasks; with the advent of the personal computer, the use of technology in the classroom became more prevalent and diverse and educators began to see the potential of using technology in different ways. This had particular impact on secondary schools, as language courseware was no longer the domain of tertiary institutions but could be readily used in secondary school LOTE classes. The move away from the audio-lingual model of language teaching to the communicative approach made it easier to incorporate computers into the classroom through more interactive and collaborative tasks (Kohn, 2009). However, it was not until the 1990s, with the explosion of the internet and the emergence of the World Wide Web, that technology became pervasive and allowed even wider teaching and learning

opportunities (Beatty, 2003; Nunan, 2010; Warschauer, 1999). Schwienhorst (1991) points out that for second language learners, “The internet in particular and computers in general broaden our opportunities and broaden our learning environments” (p.112)

Nunan (2010, p.207) says that technology has three main roles in the LOTE classroom:

1. As a provider of content and instruction. Technology provides opportunities to listen, speak, practise written drills, complete comprehension questions and grammar exercises.
2. As a learning management tool; teachers can post assignments, provide feedback, store results.
3. As a communication device; one of the greatest difficulties in teaching a LOTE is the lack of opportunities for face-to face contact with other speakers of the language. Technology can help to bridge this gap.

Nunan goes on to point out further benefits of technology: it allows students to work at their own pace, it provides them with personalized study plans, and immediate feedback and it provides them with a private place to make mistakes. (p. 207) Kohn (2009) refers to this greater focus on the learner through the use of interactive technology as “intelligent tutoring” (p. 579).

Technology can be used to enhance students’ motivation and promote learner autonomy (Lim, Campbell & Smala, 2011; Miller, 2007; Song & Cadman, 2012; Stockwell, 2012; Schwienhorst, 2008; Tutwisoot, 2012; Warschauer & Healy, 1998). Schwienhorst (2008) points out that computer-assisted language learning helps to develop a learning environment that is interactive and collaborative, allowing students to take greater control of their own learning. This supports Vygotsky’s (1978, 1986) emphasis on the importance of peer collaboration, where a combination of independence and interdependence allows students to work within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Ranalli (2013) explores the feasibility of using technology in the second language classroom to aid strategy instruction. In his study of 64 ESL university students, Ranalli concludes that while technology cannot be used in isolation when teaching strategy use, it is an effective tool in strategy instruction, and that language teachers should try to, “harness the power of technology in enhancing learners’ ability to learn” (p. 92).

However, computer assisted language learning also brings other problems. An “IT gulf” (Bateson & Daniels, 2012, p.144) can often be found between teachers who are technically inclined and those who are less so; furthermore, students often possess a greater understanding and knowledge of computers than their teachers. Miller (2007) says:

While learners may be happy to use computers in their learning, their teachers may not be. This is because many teachers belong to the first or second generation of computer users whereas their learners belong to the third generation (p.2).

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) identified teacher preparation as the greatest obstacle for the field of strategy training. It appears that if teachers are to effectively use technology in order to support motivation and learner autonomy they need help to understand how computers can be used in the classroom to enhance learning (Bateson and Daniels, 2012; Blin, 2004; Hubbard and Romeo, 2012; Miller, 2007; Nunan, 2010; Stockwell, 2012). It seems clear that teacher education is vital if computer-assisted language learning is to be used to its full effect (Little, 1995; Schwienhorst, 2008; Yang, Chuang & Tseng, 2013). Kohn (2009) believes that technology provides few benefits to the learner if used in isolation; however, when used in conjunction with other tasks, technology can enrich learning and provide a diverse and dynamic classroom. Kohn points out the need for technology to “blend seamlessly” (p. 583) into the classroom as required by the learner. According to Kohn, this “blended language learning” (p. 584) incorporates new technologies into the classroom, such as multimedia, the internet and intelligent tutoring systems, where the learners are able to use interactive computer programs that provide support and practice and enables each learner to work at their own pace. Kohn (2009) adds, “The key to success lies in integrating old and new ways of learning with a comprehensive approach of blended learning” (p. 585).

This idea of technology playing an ancillary role in the classroom to help facilitate autonomous learning is important (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Stockwell, 2012; Tutwisoort, 2012); technology does not necessarily constitute an integral part of the LOTE course but is instead readily accessible and useful as it “supplements, complements, and enhances face-to-face elements” (Stockwell & Tanaka-Ellis, 2012, p. 75).

Increasingly, research is showing us that technology can be used in the LOTE classroom to promote interest, enthusiasm and independence in the classroom (Alias, Mana, Yusuf & Pandian, 2012; Chang & Lin, 2014; Yang et al., 2013). Alias et al., (2012) state that, “The use of language learning strategies (LLS) by language learners is one of the contributing factors to the success of second language learning” (p. 36). They go on to say that technology can be used as an effective training tool to help promote strategy use. In their study of 40 second language university students, Facebook was used as a training tool to encourage the use of indirect strategies, such as social/affective strategies, and to help cultivate motivation and positive attitudes towards the subject. They found that although incorporating Facebook into language lessons did not improve students’ writing skills, nevertheless, students were more enthusiastic and willing to write, using a forum that was familiar and interesting to them. Alias et al. (2012) say that in this era of, “internet savvy students” (p. 46) it is important to incorporate tools that appeal to them.

Chang and Lin (2014) undertook a study of 104 university second language learners, using e-journals as a tool to help promote reading and writing skills. They found that e-journals were a valuable language learning tool and students willingly embraced this use of technology in the language classroom. Rosell-Anguilar (2013) investigated the value of iTunesU, a provider of educational pod casts, as a teaching and learning tool in the LOTE classroom. He found that while pod casts are valuable as they encourage life-long use and are easily accessible and mobile, technology must also be interactive, if the LOTE learner is to reap its full benefits.

Yang et al. (2013) point out that the inclusion of technology in the LOTE classroom, can enhance and improve teaching and learning. In their study of 83 tertiary second language learners, they found that the incorporation of technology can potentially help students to improve their critical thinking skills and become less “passive” (p. 287) in the classroom. Their study found that teaching listening skills in particular, have the potential to improve through the incorporation of IT as it provides students with authentic interactions and helps to promote a more learner-centred, autonomous classroom. The literature shows that while technology can potentially be used to enhance teaching and learning experiences in the LOTE classroom, it must be used judiciously.

Yang et al. (2013) point out the pressure on LOTE teachers to promote “21st century skills” (p. 285) and stress that in order for students to reap the full benefits of technology, students need “direct and explicit instruction” (p. 304).

It must be kept in mind the enormous amount of time and effort that creating a blended classroom can entail, particularly for teachers who lack strong technology skills and know-how (Yang et al., 2013; Lazar, 2013). Stockwell (2012) suggests that LOTE teachers need to continually update their technology skills and to be aware of how they can use technology to facilitate language learning. Moreover, it should also be noted that while learner autonomy is often cited as an advantage of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), learner autonomy is more than simply being able to complete activities without a teacher (Benson, 2001; Blin, 2004; Dam, 2003; Little, 2001; Stockwell, 2012).

Stockwell (2012) reminds us:

Technology can provide opportunities for learners to work autonomously but having access to this technology is no guarantee that they will actually do so (p. 9).

While there is a strong link between autonomy and motivation, motivation itself is only related to learners’ willingness to take responsibility for their learning, not the practical skills of how to actually go about undertaking the learning itself (Dornyei, 2001; Ushioda, 1996). Most learners will need training in how to take responsibility for their learning. Schwienhorst (2003) points out that learner autonomy is constantly changing, meaning that even if learners are autonomous in some aspects, it does not guarantee that they will be able to apply this autonomy to all areas of their learning. Hubbard and Romeo (2012) suggest that students need specific training – both technical and strategic – in order to help them understand how computers can be used to support tasks and learning objectives, why certain techniques or strategies are useful and how to link sequences of strategies into coherent procedures.

As we can see, motivation is complex and dependent on a range of factors; furthermore, it can fluctuate, depending on an array of issues. It seems that in order for students to become more autonomous, they must first be motivated to do so; in order to be motivated they need a strong connection with their LOTE teacher and it appears increasingly clear that technology in the LOTE classroom can help improve motivation

towards the subject and help students gain greater autonomy (Lim et al., 2012; Song & Cadman, 2012).

One possible way of trying to stabilize students' motivation could be to provide them with a set of Language Learning Strategies that remain constant, regardless of the task the students are faced with, the classroom teacher or the learning environment.

If there is a correlation between LLS and motivation and success when learning a LOTE (Aoki, 2012; Nguyen & Gu, 2013; Serri et al., 2012; Tutwisoot, 2012), the next logical step is to explore what exactly strategy training is and how it can be applied to a typical secondary school LOTE classroom.

2.8 The Effectiveness of Strategies-Based Instruction

Strategies-Based Instruction is where learner strategy training occurs; learners are taught how to learn and this form of instruction has been identified as useful in the second language acquisition process (Al-Alwan, 2012; Cohen, 1998; Griffiths, 2013; Hill, 1994; Macaro, 2003; McDonough, 1999; Oxford, 2011; Serri et al., 2012; Wenden, 1992). Chamot and O'Malley (1994) state:

The goal of strategies instruction is to develop self-regulated learners who can approach new learning tasks with confidence and select the most appropriate strategies for completing the task... Through repeated application of the strategy with various learning materials, students can gradually proceduralize or learn to use the strategy automatically so that it functions rapidly and without errors with specific tasks (p. 379).

Strategy training, while beneficial, does require long term commitment. It has been suggested that a combination of cognitive and metacognitive strategy training may be the most effective way to enhance learning (Brown & Palinscar, 1982; O'Malley, 1987; Wenden, 1987). Metacognitive strategies are thought to improve writing skills and affective and metacognitive strategies are valuable in order to improve listening skills (Macaro, 2003; Purpura, 1997).

Dornyei's (1995) research highlights the importance of LLS when learning a LOTE. Dornyei investigated speaking strategies where students were taught particular strategies to employ during conversation; these included strategies to 'buy time', such as using fillers and hesitation devices, as well as topic avoidance and replacement

strategies. He found that strategy instruction helped students to improve their speaking ability as well as improving their confidence and attitude towards speaking tasks. Dornyei asserted that strategy training can be helpful if it is linked to specific tasks, for example, advanced preparation for speaking tasks, self-monitoring while speaking and self-reflection strategies after speaking are all valuable speaking strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) suggest that even though strategy teaching is a time consuming and complex task for the classroom teacher to undertake, the benefits the students gain from the ability to employ correct strategies are far-reaching.

In order for students to develop their independence both inside and outside the classroom, they must be equipped with the tools to be able to take responsibility for their own learning. Strategy training does not mean that students are trained in any specific strategy; rather, strategy training can help students to be aware of different possibilities when tackling tasks. Strategy training can open up the learner's options (Bialystok, 1990; Cook, 1991). This is a significant concept which can provide the learner with choices when faced with a challenging task. It is not the strategy itself that is beneficial but rather, the ability to choose which steps to take when completing a difficult task.

Nunan (1999) believes that the ability to identify which strategies can be applied to tasks and when to do so, greatly enhances students' success when learning a LOTE. This in turn, can enrich students' motivation and enjoyment of the subject:

Knowledge of strategies is important, because the greater the awareness you have of what you are doing, if you are conscious of the process underlying the learning that you are involved in, then learning will be more effective (1999, p. 171).

However, not all learners automatically know which strategies work best for them. Gu, P. (2003, p.18) points out, "Strategies that work in one educational, cultural and linguistic context might not work in another."

As most teachers are aware, students bring a range of experiences, skills and abilities with them each time they walk through the classroom door. Therefore, the strategies employed by individuals in order to tackle particular problems will vary depending on the context. As a result, learning strategies should be taught in the classroom alongside language content ensuring that strategies are made available to learners in a systematic way (Grenfell, 2007; Jones et al., 1987; Nunan, 1999).

The basis for strategy training is the assumption that poor language learners lack specific strategies, so therefore, if they were equipped with particular strategies, they would achieve more success (Aoki, 2012; Griffiths, 2013; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 2011). Okada, Oxford and Abo (1996) reinforce this notion when they state: "These strategies help learners take in aspects of the language, store them in long term memory, and use them when needed" (p. 107).

However, some researchers consider this theory to be flawed because descriptions of 'good' language learners have usually been based on teacher/researcher observations; furthermore, self-reports completed by students tend to be retrospective which can provide an incomplete picture of what the learner is actually doing (Chamot, 1987; Cook, 1994; Dornyei, 2003; O'Malley et al., 1985). Renandya and Farrell (2011) suggest that simply possessing a knowledge and awareness of strategies does not equate with success, as learners need to know how to apply these strategies to specific learning situations. Other researchers suggest that the substantial amount of time required to effectively train students in strategy use is not always an effective use of class time and that language skills can be adequately developed through ample practice in the classroom, rather than embarking on specific strategy training (McDonough, 2006; Littlejohn, 2008; Ridgway, 2000).

Murray (2010) argues that strategy training can be beneficial as it helps students to approach their learning with a more positive and confident attitude; however, he also notes that strategies are not always effective, since an awareness of strategies does not guarantee successful completion of a task, particularly if learners do not select the appropriate strategy to match the set activity. He notes:

The relationship between the use of strategies and the development of proficiency cannot be clearly defined (p. 631).

The concept of 'strategy' has also caused some unease with researchers for several reasons. Some researchers believed that Language Learning Strategies were difficult to define and the taxonomies of strategies were all-encompassing and over simplified (Cook, 1994; Rees-Miller, 1993). Also, students often used a combination of strategies to complete a task rather than just one at a time. Another common criticism was that the classification system of strategies did not clarify whether strategies were specific to a task or generalisable to various kinds of learning situations (Cook, 1994; Grenfell &

Macaro, 2007; Macaro, 2006). Oxford and Lee (2008) acknowledge that while the ability to use particular strategies may be useful in certain situations, classification schemes are often flawed as “no single ideal set of characteristics” (p.306) actually exists.

O’Malley and Chamot (1990) define learning strategies as “The special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information” (p.1). Cook (1994) points out the ambiguity of this statement and says that researchers need to go beyond lists and categories to discover the strategies L2 learners actually use. According to Cook, it is difficult to tell what strategies learners are using and to find evidence of this. Cook points out that O’Malley and Chamot’s (1990) definition of strategies is not particular and exclusive to second language learning. For example, a metacognitive strategy such as ‘review class notes before the lesson’ could apply to any subject, not just a LOTE. Cook asserts that “cognitive strategies could be applied to anything one wanted to learn” (p. 135). Cook goes on to say, “...Language learning...depends upon mental effort by the learner and on conscious attention to the learning process” (p. 135).

It has also been claimed that the link between cognitive behavior (action in the mind) and overt motor behavior (actions of the body) was too tenuous and theoretical to be simply assumed. It is also difficult to know for certain whether strategies are used by all learners, but only some learners use them effectively (Cook, 1994; Vann and Abraham,1990). Lo Castro (1994) suggested that strategy use might be influenced by the learning environment. For example, strategies used by learners using the Grammar-Translation method are different from the strategies used by learners using the Communicative Method.

A common theory in the field of strategy research in the 1990s was that there was a fixed number of strategies and different students used them in different ways and circumstances. It seems that the strategies themselves are neither good nor bad but rather, it is the way that they are used that determines their effectiveness (Griffith, 2008; Rubin, 2008). Any strategy could lead to failure if used inappropriately. As a result of the research that occurred throughout the 1990s, there began to be a shift away from the rigid labels of a ‘good’ or ‘poor’ learner. Today, the complex relationship between strategy use and achievement remains unresolved. It is unclear whether strategies are

extra things that learners do or if they are part of the learning process itself. Furthermore, it is unclear why some learners can combine strategies more effectively than others (Macaro, 2006).

While it does appear that good language learners sometimes do things differently from poorer language learners, it is not conclusive how effective Language Learning Strategies are. Good language learners may do things because they have the prerequisite ability to do so. This could mean that there is no guarantee that equipping poor language learners with certain strategies will necessarily lead to improved outcomes (Gass & Selinker, 1994).

Further research into LLS led Oxford (2007, 2011) to refine her earlier (1990) definition of what constitutes a 'learning strategy'. According to Oxford (2007), a L2 learner strategy is defined as:

a specific plan, action, behavior, step or technique that individual learners use, with some degree of consciousness, to improve their progress in developing skills in a second or foreign language. Such strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language and are tools for greater learner autonomy (p. 48).

Despite the claims that the link between strategy use and success when learning a LOTE is tenuous (Abraham & Vann, 1987; 1990; Chamot, 1987; Macaro, 2006; Oxford, 2007), there seems enough supporting evidence to warrant further investigation. Brown (2002) states:

We have much to learn in the creation of practical techniques for teaching learners how to use strategies effectively, but this remains a very exciting and promising area of pedagogical research at the present time (p. 134).

Strategies are dependent on both the learning environment and the task itself. In order to improve the outcomes of language students, it is essential that educators know more about what learners do and why they do it. Vann and Abraham (1990) conducted a number of studies into strategy use and found that good language learners were more adept at matching strategies to task demands, but some of the unsuccessful language learners used as many strategies of the same type as the more successful learners. It seems that learners need more than simply to be able to retrieve strategies they have

been taught; they need to know how to effectively apply the strategies, depending on the given task.

Chamot and O'Malley (1994) state:

Research on second and foreign language learner and learning strategies indicates that more effective language learners use more task appropriate strategies than less effective learners and that the range in variety of strategies is often greater (p. 386).

Chamot and O'Malley also conclude that language teachers can, with appropriate support, integrate learning strategies instruction into their classroom. They also state that students who report higher levels of learning strategy use also indicate a higher level of confidence in their ability to successfully complete a language learning task:

Teachers are explicit in strategies instruction when they describe, model and elicit discussions about strategies appropriate to specific language activities or when they ask students to practice a particular strategy or combination of strategies (p. 387).

Willing (1993) also notes the importance of Language Learning Strategies. He defines a learning strategy as:

a specific mental procedure for gathering, processing, associating, categorizing, rehearsing and retrieving information or patterned skills. It is, in short, an act of learning viewed at the micro level. It is the basic unit of learning (p. 7).

This definition reinforces the idea that strategies can be taught and learned; according to Willing, it is this ability to use strategies that forms the foundation upon which second language acquisition is built. Willing says that strategy training is necessary in order to develop learner autonomy. He also suggests identifying existing learning strategies of the learner so that the teacher can capitalize on those strategies which the learner already uses.

Despite the assertion by many researchers that strategy use and achievement are inextricably linked (Macaro, 2001; McDonough, 1995) there are others who believe that teaching students specific strategies yields limited results (O'Malley et al., 1985). In the 1990s researchers began to look beyond the types of strategies used by students; they started to examine other factors that might influence the way that students used strategies, such as the learning environment, the student's individual learning style and the type of task the student was completing (Grenfell & Harris, 1999). The belief

emerged that the strategies were value-neutral, not in themselves good or bad, but that they were used either effectively or ineffectively by students (Grenfell & Macaro, 2007).

A number of other studies, however, show the effectiveness of strategy use on language development and proficiency (Griffiths, 2013; Griffiths & Oxford, 2014; Horwitz, 1987; Nunan, 2002; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 2011; Wenden, 1987). Boakye (2007) suggests that helping students to consciously use LLS, can help them to become more successful language learners. Tragant et al. (2013) conducted an extensive study of 1975 Spanish secondary school students, ranging in age from 12 to 17 years old, who were learning English as an additional language. Their study found that an understanding of students' preferred strategies can assist teachers when teaching strategy use and can potentially enhance students' learning. The use of LLS in the classroom can be beneficial, particularly if the teachers have an understanding of their students' learning styles and can direct them towards strategies that suit their learning styles (Oxford, 1994; Ungureanu & Georgescu, 2012).

All learners, at all levels of proficiency, use LLS, but some learners are relatively unaware of the strategies they use. More proficient learners often use a wider range of strategies and consciously employ these in a more organised and efficient way. Successful language learners use a variety of strategies to become more self-directed and improve their performance (Cohen, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wenden & Rubin, 1987).

Ellis (2008) notes that successful language learners call on different strategies at different stages of their development. He questions whether strategy use improves learning or whether learning itself increases the learner's ability to employ more strategies. It appears that the strategies employed by learners seems to be dependent on the personality and individual learning style of the learner (Naiman et al., 1978).

Oxford (2003) states that, "Low reported strategy use is not always a sign of ineffective learning" (p. 384). This idea is reinforced by Dornyei (2003) who questions the validity of learning strategies and how learners equipped with strategy training are different from 'ordinary' learners. He says there is insufficient understanding of what 'learning strategies' actually are. According to Dornyei, it is difficult to define and categorise 'learning strategies' as they are difficult to observe and are 'behavioural

traits'. Dornyei asserts that the most important aspect of strategic learning is not the exact nature of the specific techniques that students employ, but rather, the fact that they choose to exert creative effort in trying to improve their own learning. Chamot and Rubin (1994) support this when they state:

the good language learner cannot be described in terms of a single set of strategies but rather through the ability to understand and develop a personal set of effective strategies (p. 372).

They assert that students need to be able to apply the self-regulatory process rather than learn a set of strategies. "Learning to learn" is necessary but will only be effective if students are motivated and capable of self-regulatory behaviour.

Other researchers also question the relationship between strategy training and language proficiency (Murray, 2010; Renandya & Farrell, 2011). The latter suggest that strategy teaching is a complex process and merely equipping students with a range of strategies will not guarantee success, particularly as a bank of strategies will not prepare students for real-life interactions. They point out that students may, for example, know how to listen for key words when completing a listening task using a CD; however, if the pace of the CD is too fast for them, it is difficult for the learners to employ the listening strategies they have been taught. Moreover, they are not learning how to interact with a real speaker and pick up on non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions and hand gestures. Renandya and Farrell (2011) recommend that, alternatively, rather than spending time on listening strategy training, "our classroom time should be used to provide our students with lots of listening practice, the kind of practice in which they actually listen to a lot of meaningful, enjoyable, and comprehensible spoken text" (p.58).

The most important thing seems not to be the type of strategy used, rather, that learners who are successful at languages seem prepared to take proactive steps to further their understanding of the target language; in this way they can be considered to be self-regulated or strategic learners (Dornyei, 2005; Tseng, Dornyei & Schmitt, 2006).

It appears that taxonomies of strategy use only partially capture a dynamic and complex process. Many researchers have emphasized that it is not so much what the learners do, rather, that they have the ability to transform their needs into action.

Dornyei (2005) notes:

strategic learning is a far more complex issue than thought before and therefore simply focusing on the 'surface manifestations' – i.e. the tactics and techniques strategic learners actually employ – does not do the topic justice (pp. 196-197).

McDonough (1995) points out that not all strategies are good in themselves, as any strategy can lead to failure if used inappropriately. He highlights the “hit and miss” nature of strategy use and notes that strategies for completing tasks don't necessarily lead to students becoming better language learners. For example, a learner may employ the strategy of using a dictionary to identify an unknown word in a reading passage but that does not ensure that he or she will remember the word. McDonough asserts that strategies can help students complete a task, but it is unclear what a student actually learns by using such a device.

The idea of training learners to learn has merit. It can be beneficial if teachers are able to identify strategies that good learners use and teach these to poor language learners in order to help them improve their skills. Although there is much evidence to support that this concept is successful, there are also a number of problems. For example, it is not clear if what differentiates good and poor learners is the choice of strategy; it may simply be the range and amount of use of strategies (McDonough, 1995).

Another problem is that the success of strategy training can vary, depending on the individual and the type of problem, as well as the learner's background and proficiency level. Strategy training can be very time consuming for LOTE teachers and this needs to be considered, particularly if the outcome of strategy training cannot be guaranteed (McDonough, 1995).

Gillette (1987) found that learners do not possess a range or set list of 'strategies'. Instead, they should be aware of their own behaviour in the LOTE classroom. This, according to Gillette, is an important step in becoming a successful learner.

It appears that it is the LOTE task itself which determines the type of strategy used (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Vann, 1987). Ellis (1985) says that the type of strategy chosen by the learners depends on the individual's preference, the learner's stage of development and the learning context. Many strategies, such as retrieval strategies, are difficult to identify. The personality of the learner can influence the strategy

preference and the learning situation also affects the strategy choice, such as in a classroom as opposed to a natural environment.

Grenfell and Macaro (2007) point out that teaching a strategy is just as problematic as teaching grammar and vocabulary, since what has been taught still has to be learnt and used. Strategies are just as prone as any other aspect of language to the influence of such factors as level of competence, cognitive style, gender and motivation.

Plonsky's (2011) meta-analysis of strategy instruction in second language learning noted the flaws of previous research, including the uncertainty of the long-term effects of strategy instruction and the lack of valid and reliable instruments. Plonsky's review of 61 studies is important as it demonstrated the positive impact strategy use can have on second language learning. Significantly, his study showed the variables that can influence the effectiveness of strategy instruction, such as the different learning contexts and the number and types of strategies used. While Plonsky's study reiterated the problems noted by previous scholars and emphasised the need for further research in the field of strategy use, it highlighted the significant benefits of strategy instruction.

2.9 The Role of the LOTE Teacher in Strategy-Based Instruction

Rubin (2008) points out, "it is not the *presence* or *absence* of a strategy that leads to effective learning; rather it is *how* that strategy is used (or not used) to accomplish tasks and learner goals." (p.8) Learners are diverse and it seems futile trying to develop a teaching approach that will suit all learners or fit the profile of a "good language learner". However, if teachers are able to recognise the individuality of learners and their unique motivations, backgrounds and experiences, then Language Learning Strategies can be used as a tool to enhance their learning experiences, particularly as a means to foster autonomy and increase motivation (Sabet et al., 2013; Tragant et al., 2013). Whether or not LLS are introduced and implemented in the LOTE classroom ultimately rests with the teacher. The effectiveness of strategy training will also depend on the effectiveness of the teacher and the role that they see for themselves in the LOTE classroom. As Lo Bianco (2009) notes, "Good teaching is the single most important and controllable variable in successful language learning" (LoBianco & Slaughter, 2009, p.28).

Teacher preparation is a crucial factor in the success of strategy instruction (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Renalli, 2013). Rubin (2008) points out that often teachers do not know how to engage students in strategy instruction. She believes that researchers need to investigate how to develop teachers' abilities to promote learner autonomy:

Many teachers want to help their students to learn to regulate their own learning, but they simply do not know how to go about doing this...They need training and support if they are to be willing and able to effectively develop their students' abilities to manage their own learning. (p. 13)

According to Wenden (1991), teacher education is essential if things are to change in the LOTE classroom as it is the teacher who is the major agent of change. Although LOTE teachers generally agree on the usefulness of learner autonomy in the LOTE classroom, students are not usually taught how to learn. Wenden believes that teaching students how to learn a language is just as important as teaching them how to use the language itself.

If students are able to employ effective strategies in the LOTE classroom and thus achieve less reliance on the teacher, this may, in some part, help to diminish the high attrition rate that is currently occurring in Victorian secondary school LOTE classes. Willing (1993) highlights this idea when he says,

As most teachers know, a frequent cause of student attrition is dissatisfaction resulting from a strong though ill-defined sense that all is not happening as it ought (p. 22).

However, others argue that there is no clear evidence to suggest a causal relationship between strategy training and success in the L2 (Littlejohn, 2008; McDonough, 2006; O'Malley, 1990; Rees-Miller, 1993; Renandya & Farrell, 2011). In fact, Rees-Miller (1993) says that it is questionable whether valuable class time should be spent teaching students how to use strategies, as strategy training can only produce "qualified success" (p. 697). Others also highlight the 'cost' of strategy training, pointing out that while strategy-based instruction may reap potential benefits, this is not to say that the same results cannot be achieved through regular classroom teaching and interactions where students are given plenty of opportunities to practise and develop their language skills (Littlejohn, 2008; McDonough, 2006; Renalli, 2013; Renandya & Farrell, 2011).

It seems increasingly clear that the role of the LOTE teacher in strategy training is crucial to the language learners' success (Graham, 1997; Macaro & Ernesto, 2007; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Graham (1997) states, "...The development of effective learning strategies lies at the heart of promoting more successful language learning..." (p. 91). However, the limited range of strategies that students possess can be detrimental to their LOTE learning success. She points out that LOTE students are often inflexible when it comes to strategy use, and if their first choice of strategy use, such as looking up a word in the dictionary proves ineffective, they may give up entirely as they do not have any alternative strategy. Jones et al. (1987) suggest that some strategies are more sophisticated than others, while some strategies are easier to use, which may affect the infrequent use of some strategies.

Graham (1997) argues that some classroom time should be devoted specifically to the teaching of strategies, in much the same way that class time is spent teaching other skills such as grammar and writing. According to Graham, language learning strategies are "teachable" and teachers should be encouraged to incorporate this into their LOTE classrooms. However, Graham also points out that different techniques and strategies suit different learners – that is, a strategy that is effective for one student to learn new vocabulary, such as mnemonics, is not effective for all language learners. Therefore, students must be taught a variety of strategies so that they can find a strategy that suits their individual learning style.

Salashour et al. (2013) conducted a study of 65 second-language secondary school students and found that high proficiency learners not only used a greater array of strategies, but also used these strategies more frequently than low proficiency learners; this perhaps suggests the potential benefits of strategy use, demonstrating that success with strategy use may encourage students to feel more motivated to deploy more strategies, more frequently. Their study also found that the language teacher plays a significant role in introducing students to an array of strategies and demonstrating their value; according to this study, it is the teacher's role to guide their students towards the strategies that might best suit their learning styles and needs. According to the authors, the appropriate use of LLS can help students become more confident and autonomous in their language learning, helping teachers to create a "learner centred classroom" (p. 640).

According to Ungureanu and Georgescu (2012), knowledge of students' preferred learning strategies is crucial as it provides teachers with a deeper understanding of their students and how to best address their needs. In their study of the preferred LLS used by 50 Romanian E.A.L university students, the authors found that teachers are better equipped to help their students reach their full potential if they understand their students' strategy use. According to the authors, this knowledge could influence the content and delivery of second language lessons and help teachers to provide their students with the tools needed to achieve language competence.

In order for learning strategies to be effective, learner training needs to be a well planned process, where there is the opportunity for students to practise different strategies through a range of tasks (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991; Wright, 2005). It seems that LOTE students do not automatically use the best or widest range of strategies appropriate to their learning situation. Students need to be taught how to apply appropriate strategies to meet the demands of the task (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989).

Graham (1997) points out that a good language learner is able to employ a range of effective learning strategies. She says that LOTE teachers need to learn how to become "strategic" teachers, where the role of the LOTE teacher is more than the exclusive teaching of the target language, but rather, a teacher of learning, as well. Graham notes:

it has often been observed that the greatest obstacle to developing effective learning strategies in students lies with their teacher (p. 45).

Graham adds that through the teaching of specific learning strategies, students become more autonomous in the LOTE classroom, which in turn can have great implications for the traditional role of the LOTE teacher. She says that how students learn is just as important as what students learn. Coleman and Klapper (2005) state that an awareness of language learner strategies and how students learn can, in fact, help LOTE teachers to understand the learning process and perhaps even enhance their own teaching practice. Not only is it important that teachers know how to implement a strategy training program, they also need to develop an understanding of their students and the way in which they learn. If teachers understand their students' learning styles and the types of strategies they prefer to use, strategy use may be enhanced, which may in turn, help

students to reach their full potential when learning a LOTE (Lazar, 2013; Salashour et al., 2012; Sen & Sen, 2012; Tragant et al., 2013; Ungureanu & Georgescu, 2012).

Cohen and Macaro (2007) believe that teachers and learners need to be placed at the centre of LLS research. It is the teachers who will make the decision to dedicate valuable time to strategy instruction. It is teachers who are best placed to convince students of the value of Language Learning Strategies.

Chamot, Kupper and Impink-Hernandes (1988) conducted a study in the U.S.A. of 55 high school students enrolled in Spanish as an additional language and 25 college students enrolled in Russian. In this study, teachers added strategy instruction to their regular LOTE class, focusing on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The study showed that teachers were able to incorporate the learning strategy training into their classes, but did so in a variety of ways with varied acceptance from students. They found that successful strategy use can depend on a range of factors, including the students' preferred learning styles and their motivation to implement strategies. Furthermore, students must choose strategies that are appropriate to the task at hand in order to be successful. The authors concluded that strategy training can be beneficial but warned:

Using strategies does not necessarily guarantee successful task completion or successful language learning. Strategies do not, by definition, always contribute to learning" (p. 195)

This study demonstrated the difficulty of taking ideas from research and getting teachers to implement them. O'Malley et al. (1985) states that change needs to take place with real classes and regular teachers not 'experts' from outside. Gerami and Noordin (2013) examined the types of strategies taught by a small group of Iranian secondary school language teachers, teaching E.A.L.; their study found that teachers need greater training in order to improve and strengthen the types of strategies they teach their students.

Carrell, Pharis and Liberto (1989) state that teaching strategies, such as metacognitive techniques, may work with some students but are not universal. Given the broad range of abilities and learning styles that exists amongst a typical secondary school LOTE class, it is to be expected that not all students would be able to successfully embrace and use strategies in their LOTE studies. However, this does not automatically mean

that they cannot be an effective tool for students to be aware of. McDonough (1990) concludes that strategy training is an important element of the LOTE classroom. McDonough asserts that in order for strategies to work, they need to be introduced by teachers, rather than researchers. Gu (2003) makes the observation that strategies that may work for students in a particular educational setting may not work in another, highlighting the elusive nature of strategy use. Bialystok (1990) points out the loose classification for strategies. Strategies tend to be thought of as deliberate, conscious, cognitive and reportable, and, as Bialystok notes, this is not always the case, particularly with communicative strategies.

2.9.1 Remaining Issues Regarding the Place of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE Classroom

The literature highlights that while strategy training is creditable, it is certainly not flawless. Thirty years ago, LOTE researchers optimistically predicted that if educators could only find out what good language learners did, this knowledge could be used to help all students to learn successfully. Over the years, this belief has given way to the realization that the task is much larger and far more complex than originally thought (Rubin, 2008). The assumption that a set of characteristics that a successful language learner possessed could be summarised and taught began to lose momentum as researchers realized that no such skill set existed. Instead, researchers showed that a wide range of language learners possess a variety of skills that work for them and that these strategies and skills can change, depending on the task and the setting (Oxford & Lee, 2008).

Griffiths (2008) highlights the difficulties in trying to make cause and effect generalisations about learners and Language Learning Strategies, given the infinite variables amongst learners. She says:

In addition to strategies, many other variables (such as aptitude, learning style, motivation, age, beliefs, culture, gender, personality, metacognition, or autonomy), and learning variables (for instance vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, function, skills, teaching/learning method, strategy instruction, error correction, or task) have the potential to affect the outcome of language learning efforts. (p.94)

Despite the difficulties discussed above, progress has been made and today's teachers are far more aware of individual learners' abilities and what makes a "good language learner." (Griffiths, 2008; Griffiths, 2013; Griffiths & Oxford, 2014; Oxford, 2011).

This leads to the question of strategy training. Can strategy use be so clearly defined and classified that it can be consequently "taught" in much the same way as we would teach grammar or vocabulary?

Baker Smemoe and Haslam (2012) suggest strategy teaching can potentially benefit students, and while an understanding and awareness of strategies may not necessarily improve individual learner aptitude across all four language skills, they claim that strategies can potentially play a part in developing language competence, particularly in the area of pronunciation.

Others (Al-Alwen, 2012; Sen & Sen, 2012; Yu, 2013) suggest that an awareness of socio-affective strategies can potentially help students to feel more motivated and help them to tackle language tasks with greater confidence; this seems particularly important when approaching listening and speaking tasks. Gerami and Noordin (2013) propose that strategies can help to enhance the learner's experiences, particularly as the set classroom textbooks are often insufficient.

Some research into the effectiveness of teaching a strategic approach and specific strategies for the various skills have met with only mixed success (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wenden, 1987). Ellis (1990) states that we need better understanding of how learners learn and how teachers ought to teach in order to understand how second language learning takes place in the classroom.

Cohen (1998) says that the use of strategies or sets of strategies seems tied in a complex way to levels of motivation. Background knowledge and prior experiences can affect students' success in LOTE, particularly when reading texts. Perhaps, equipping students with strategies and training could be useful, so that interests and prior knowledge are not such a crucial factor to success. Motivation in LOTE could possibly improve if students can see that strategic effort, that is, the conscious use of particular strategies, can lead to greater language skills (Baker Smemoe & Haslam, 2013).

Grenfell (2007) says that strategy use is highly individual-dependent and that there are possibly large differences between gender, learning style, age and stage of learning. For example, some strategies are very broad with wide usage, while others are quite specific, such as skimming and scanning. Through explanation and practice, strategy improvement is possible and may lead to improved performance.

2.9.2 Summary

The current literature shows that after more than thirty years of research into Language Learning Strategies there is still a considerable gap in our knowledge about the role they may play in the LOTE classroom. Early research focused on the traits that a ‘good’ language learner possessed; it was hoped that by better understanding what successful learners did, this knowledge could be used to help all students learn successfully. Over the years, this belief has given way to the realization that the task is far more complex than originally thought (Griffiths, 2013; Oxford, 2011; Rubin, 2008).

Early Language Learning classification schemes focused on identifying and defining the strategies used by successful language learners that appeared to contribute to their learning. For the first time it seemed possible that strategies were not the domain of highly capable students but could be learnt by students who had not discovered them on their own. These early classification taxonomies tended to divide Language Learning strategies into broad groups and then branched into smaller sub-groups (Naiman et al., 1978; Oxford, 1985, 1986; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). A common criticism of these taxonomies was their broad, all-embracing definition of learner strategies. Despite their short-comings, these schemes provided the foundation for the way in which Language Learner Strategies are perceived and used today. Two taxonomies in particular are most frequently referred to and appear to form the foundation of more recent taxonomies and subsequent research. These are the classification schemes developed by O’Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford’s (1990) taxonomy.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) categorised learning strategies into three distinct groups:

- cognitive strategies;
- metacognitive strategies;
- socio-affective strategies.

Oxford (1990) categorized learning strategies into the following groups:

- direct strategies (memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies)
- indirect strategies (metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, social strategies)

My study will be based on Oxford's (1990) seminal classification scheme. This scheme is comprehensive and demonstrates the complex nature of Language Learning Strategies; that is, that Language Learning Strategies are interconnected: both direct and indirect strategies play a role in helping students to achieve LOTE competence. These strategies support each other, rather than being used in isolation. The ability to appropriately use Language Learning Strategies supports Vygotsky's (1978; 1986) sociocultural approach to learning, as students are able to work within the ZPD using learning strategies to provide scaffolding, thus enabling them to perform tasks that might otherwise be too difficult to achieve individually.

Although there is much evidence to support the idea that Language Learning Strategies are teachable and learnable, the knowledge of a bank of strategies alone will not guarantee learner success. The literature consistently demonstrates that it is not the strategy itself that is useful, but the way in which it is used (Dornyei, 2001; Griffiths, 2008; Macaro, 2003; Rubin, 2008). Language Learning Strategies can be a useful tool for students to draw upon, but learner success is far more complex than simply possessing a range of strategies. It seems that various interrelating factors can greatly influence students' learning outcomes.

It appears that the students' learning environment plays a crucial role in the students' learning outcomes. While strategy training can be useful, students must first have the motivation to use these strategies. The literature shows that motivation is complex and can fluctuate, depending on a range of factors (Chamot et al., 1996; Dornyei, 2001;

Graham, 1997; Macaro, 2003; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) There is a belief that students who possess high levels of motivation towards learning a LOTE are more willing to devote time and effort to the subject and will therefore be more likely to achieve competence in the language (Aoki, 2012; Baker Smemoe & Haslam, 2013; Bialystok, 1990; Graham, 2002; Miller, 2007; Sen & Sen, 2012; Wingat, 2004; Wright & Brown, 2006).

The literature consistently refers to three major factors that seem to influence students' motivation. It seems that learner success stems from the students' environment and that the students' environment is shaped by these three factors:

- The ability to work autonomously
- The role of the LOTE teacher
- The use of technology in the classroom.

The literature shows that it is the LOTE teacher in particular who has the most significant impact on students: an understanding of Language Learner Strategies, the ability to foster autonomous learning, an awareness of technology and the ability to engage and motivate students all stem from the LOTE teacher. This suggests that it is the LOTE teacher who has the most significant influence on the student.

Guided by previous research, and drawing upon Vygotsky's (1978; 1986) Socio-Cultural Theory, this study will build on the role that Language Learning Strategies play in fostering learner autonomy and it will explore the significant role that the LOTE teacher plays in motivating and engaging learners. While an understanding of Language Learning Strategies can enhance students' skills, and their confidence and ability to work autonomously, success will not occur unless the student is first motivated to learn. It is this framework that guides the methodological approach of the study which will be presented and discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodological approach of the study. The chapter describes the research participants and the educational settings in which they worked, as well as the process for the selection of the participants. It then explains the instruments used when collecting the data and the data analysis. The over-arching research question that frames the study is:

What role does the teacher play in students' perceived ability to use Language Learning Strategies in the language classroom?

The supporting research questions that will be explored within the course of the study are:

- How do teachers implement Language Learning Strategies in the classroom?
- How do students use Language Learning Strategies?
- How can students benefit from the use of Language learning Strategies?

My principal aim when beginning this study was to find out *what* Language Learning Strategies LOTE teachers were teaching in their classrooms and *how* they were going about this. I then hoped to find out the impact - if any - the students' knowledge and understanding of when and how to use Language Learning Strategies had on their levels of motivation, enjoyment and success in the subject. My central goal was that the findings from this study would be of some use to LOTE teachers; firstly, I hoped that a deeper understanding of the role of Language Learning Strategies would enhance my own teaching practices and also that the outcomes of this research could make a small contribution to our greater understanding of Language Learning Strategies and the role the teacher plays in helping students to successfully use these strategies.

The framework of my study rests on the premise that positive attitudes and language competency may be enhanced if students are instructed by their LOTE teachers how to effectively use Language Learning Strategies. If students can experience greater levels

of autonomy in the LOTE classroom through the ability to implement Language Learning Strategies, then this may increase their success in the subject as they develop greater independence and are equipped with the necessary skills to tackle language tasks (Coleman & Klapper, 2005; Graham & Macaro, 2007; Harris, 1997; Macaro, 2006; Okada et al., 1996; McDonough, 1999; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

This framework guided my study as I sought to explore how LOTE teachers use Language Learning Strategies in their own classrooms and how this may impact upon secondary school students learning a LOTE. This chapter begins by providing an overview of the research design. It describes the research participants, their work setting and also how the participants were selected. The chapter concludes with the method of data collection and analysis.

3.2 Research Design

A Qualitative Approach

This study used a qualitative approach in order to gather information about the way in which secondary school LOTE teachers use Language Learning Strategies in their classrooms and the impact that they perceive this to have on their LOTE classes. Chaudron (1988) asserts:

Whether an essentially qualitative or quantitative approach is preferred by a researcher, the research goal is to produce descriptions and interpretations of classroom events, and the relationships between them, that will be identified by others as real and meaningful for teachers, learners and learning (p. 88)

I believed that a qualitative research approach would allow me to explore the role of Language Learning Strategies in detail. As the study was asking LOTE teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and to also speculate on their students' progress, a qualitative research methodology appeared to be the most appropriate way to gather my data.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research in the following way:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of

representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self (p. 3).

Qualitative research can be seen as an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. When undertaking qualitative research, the researcher attempts to study things in their natural environment and to try to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The qualitative researcher is often required to employ a range of strategies, depending on not only the research questions, but also the context in which these questions will be asked and what the researcher is able to do within that particular setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Nelson, Treichler & Grossberg, 1992).

Qualitative research often develops from experiences and issues from life and work contexts (Holliday, 2002) and this is certainly true in the case of the present study. As a secondary school LOTE teacher with more than twenty years' experience, I have encountered first-hand the disaffection that many students experience when learning a LOTE. My previous research (Church, 2006) focussed on the attitudes and perceptions of secondary school boys learning a LOTE, in an attempt to better understand how to address their needs in the LOTE classroom. In order to gain a richer, more detailed picture of a very complex issue, this study will focus on the LOTE teachers themselves and the way in which they view and use Language Learning Strategies in their own classrooms.

In my previous study, my goal was to gain an insight into the attitudes of the students taking part in the study; I wanted to find out their thoughts and feelings towards learning a LOTE and to allow their voices to be heard. In this study, my goal was essentially the same; I hoped that by speaking to, and observing LOTE teachers, I would gain a deeper understanding of how they teach Language Learning Strategies. Essentially, I was interested in finding out more about *what* they do in class and *how* they do it; I was also very interested in what they saw their students doing, that is how students used the Language learning Strategies that they had been taught.

My previous research captured a moment in time – the thoughts and experiences of a small group of secondary school students as they learned a LOTE. This time, I was seeking the thoughts and experiences of the LOTE teachers. There is enormous value in

hearing directly from the students themselves, particularly if students are given the space and time to reflect on their learning experiences (Huttunen, 2003). I believed that by examining the LOTE teachers' experiences, it would help to enrich the picture we have of secondary school LOTE students, who, as the research consistently demonstrates, are becoming increasingly disaffected with learning a LOTE in the post-compulsory years (DEECD, 2013b). It is hoped that by adding to the growing body of knowledge about the way in which students engage in learning a LOTE, educators and researchers may be better equipped to successfully meet their students' needs.

The participants in my study were close observers of their students. Many had taught the same group of children for several years and were highly aware of their strengths and weaknesses as they progressed through the secondary school LOTE program. Consequently, they were able to carefully consider and discuss the impact teaching Language Learning Strategies had on their students and how this possibly benefitted them as they continued their LOTE studies through to the senior secondary school years.

Indeed, the participants' ability to reflect on their students' progress and their own teaching strategies created data that was thoughtful and perceptive; it was through this willingness to reflect and question what they did as teachers that insights were gained into how Language Learning Strategies were taught and used. Huttunen (1993) points out the benefits of teacher reflection:

Learners need to make sense of what they encounter in class, and being active, responsible learners requires reflection. However, the teacher needs to reflect even more, since it is up to her to build learning environments that make meaningful learning possible. (p. 128)

It is hoped that the reflections of the teachers in the present study can contribute to our growing body of knowledge and understanding about the way in which Language Learning Strategies are taught and used in the secondary school classroom.

Wenden (1991) says that teachers are the major agents of curriculum change. If this is true, then it is by examining LOTE teachers and the practices they employ in the classroom that may begin to bring about change in the way that LOTE is perceived by disaffected students.

Qualitative research involves the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials, including: case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artefacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Each of these materials can be used to describe and interpret both mundane and challenging moments in individuals' lives. According to the authors, it is therefore necessary to employ a wide range of interpretive practices in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the subject matter. They state that each practice helps make the world of the research subject visible in a different way; consequently, more than one interpretive practice needs to be employed in any study.

This study aims to explore the role of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom. As the research project involved examining the attitudes and teaching practices of a small group of secondary school LOTE teachers, qualitative research seemed the most suitable way to identify and capture the experiences of the teachers central to the study. Erickson (1981) points out:

What qualitative research does best and most essentially is to describe key incidents in functionally relevant descriptive terms and place them in some relation to the wider social context, using the key incident as a concrete instance of the workings of the abstract principles of social organization (p.22)

In the case of this study, qualitative research allowed me to gather a detailed description of a group of secondary school LOTE teachers and the Language Learning Strategies that they employ in their own classrooms, as well as gaining a greater understanding of their attitudes towards the effectiveness of learner strategy training. Holliday (2002) describes qualitative research as interpretive, saying, "It maintains that we can explore, catch glimpses, illuminate and then try to interpret bits of reality" (p. 5). He goes on to assert,

Rather than controlling variables, these studies are open-ended and set up research opportunities designed to lead the researcher into unforeseen areas of discovery within the lives of the people she is investigating (p. 5).

Although no research approach is suitable for every situation or question, it seems clear that researchers should choose a research approach in light of the purpose of the study:

What is important for researchers is not the choice of a priori paradigms, or methodologies, but rather to be clear about what the purpose of the study is and to match that purpose with the attributes most likely to accomplish it. Put another way, the methodological design should be determined by the research question (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, p. 14)

Qualitative research looks deeply into behaviour within a specific social setting rather than at broad populations (Holliday, 2002). A qualitative study enabled me to conduct a detailed exploration of a particular social setting and examine how these findings are significant to LOTE teachers (McKay, 2006; Wiersma, 2000). Holliday (2002) claims qualitative research:

...builds gradual pictures. The pictures are themselves only interpretations – approximations – basic attempts to represent what is in fact a much more complex reality – paintings that represent our own impressions, rather than photographs of what is ‘really’ there. They are created by collecting a number of instances of social life (p. 6).

3.3 A Case Study

The research project was conducted as a case study, as this would allow me to explore a small group of participants in depth (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Leedy et al., 2005; Wiersma, 2000). Stake (2005) argues that the value of the case study lies in its interest in the particular, which in the context of the present study is the classroom LOTE teacher. He says:

A case study may be simple or complex. It may be a child or a classroom of children or an event, a happening...It is one among others. In any given study, we will concentrate on the one (p. 444).

Case researchers greatly rely on subjective data, such as the testimony of participants and the judgments of witnesses (p. 454).

While a case study appeared to be the most appropriate way to conduct the research, there are, however, some disadvantages with this methodological approach, such as how to manage subjectivity. Furthermore, when the study involves only one case it is difficult to determine whether or not the findings can be generalised to other situations (Holliday, 2002; Leedy et al., 2005). However, Wiersma (2000) states,

Case study research...often is done without attempting broad or even limited generalization, but readers of the research may find applications to other situations (p. 21)

The purpose of the case study is to explore a situation or person in depth (Holliday, 2002; Leedy et al., 2005); therefore, despite its limitations, a case study can still help contribute to the overall understanding of a particular situation and

perhaps provide some insight into the issues raised. Stake (2005) points out, “The purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case” (p. 460).

Case studies are detailed accounts of a particular series of events or actions. Therefore, the case study is essentially a configuration rather than a summary of events (Mitchell, 1984). As my study comprised six secondary school LOTE teachers, it does not attempt to apply its findings to all LOTE teachers, but rather, is specific and particular. Despite the limitations associated with the case study, its primary purpose is, as Leedy et al. (2005) notes, “...to understand one person or situation in great depth...” (p. 144). Consequently, my focus upon a small group of secondary school LOTE teachers, while certainly not attempting to provide definitive results, can still, nevertheless, help contribute to the overall understanding about the way in which students engage with LOTE and perhaps provide some insight into how students may best be able to participate in the subject.

3.4 Selection of the Research Participants

Six secondary school LOTE teachers volunteered to participate in this study, two males and four females. Firstly, ethics permission was sought, and once it had been granted, I approached the president of a local Modern Language teachers’ journal explaining my study and requesting permission to advertise for participants. A flyer was included in the next edition of the journal, briefly outlining the project and inviting interested LOTE teachers to participate in the study. The language journal has a circulation of around six hundred members and I received expressions of interest from six of its readers. Initial contact with the participants was made via email. I sent them an explanatory notice and consent form which they read, signed and posted to my workplace address. I then emailed the questionnaire which they completed and returned either via email or by post. Once this stage had been completed, I had a very broad understanding of the participants’ language teaching background and experience. The questionnaire responses were used as a precursor to the in-depth interviews. I then negotiated a suitable time to conduct the interviews with the research participants. All negotiations

took place via email and meeting times were arranged at the participants' workplace during a free period or at lunchtime. Cresswell (2003) asserts:

Qualitative research uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic...Qualitative researchers look for involvement of their participants in the data collection and seek to build rapport and credibility with the individuals in the study. (p.181)

My study involved talking to and observing a small group of secondary school LOTE teachers about their beliefs and practices when teaching Language Learning Strategies. It was therefore crucial that I was able to develop a rapport with the participants in order for them to feel comfortable enough to speak freely about their experiences. I also hoped that the participants might allow me into their classroom to observe how they taught strategies and how their students implemented them.

After initial contact via email, the first time I met with each participant was during the face-to-face-interview. Each participant was open and enthusiastic when discussing their teaching practices and willing to share their ideas and experiences. My previous study (Church, 2006) took place at the school where I was working at the time and therefore, I had an established rapport with the students; this meant that our interviews were conducted in quite a relaxed manner. In the present study, even though there was limited face-to-face contact time with the research participants, their enthusiasm and passion for LOTE teaching allowed us to quickly develop a connection. Three of the participants invited me into their classrooms to observe them teaching and all of the participants were willing to maintain contact via email after our interviews. Their generosity and warmth allowed me to collect valuable data.

3.5 Background of the Research Participants

The research participants had vastly differently teaching experiences, although, interestingly, all taught LOTE at independent schools. The first participant, Anna, was completing her Diploma in Education and was teaching Italian from Years 7 to 12 at a small inner city independent girls' school, although she had previously taught at a co-educational independent school. Anna was a native speaker of Italian and fifty years old. At the time of the research project, Anna was completing her final teaching round

and was able to offer a great deal of insight into her recent experiences regarding the various students and teaching practices she had encountered.

Alison taught Indonesian at a relatively young, co-educational independent religious school. Originally an agricultural area, the suburb is now an emerging suburb with many new housing estates built in the last ten years. Alison had nine years' teaching experience and was teaching Indonesian from Years 7 to 12.

Sarah was a French teacher at an all-boys school in a semi-rural town. The school is single-sex from Years 7 to 10 and then the boys move to the Senior Campus, a short distance away, in order to complete VCE. At the time of the study, Sarah was in her second year of teaching.

Jan taught German at a co-educational independent school located in a large suburb. The school was well established with a large population ranging from the pre-preparatory year through to Year Twelve. Jan had been teaching for twenty years. A native speaker of German, at the time of the study Jan was teaching German from Year 7 through to Year 12.

Richard taught German at a large, independent girls' school. The school was well established with around 1500 students, ranging in age from Pre-preparatory through to Year Twelve. The school provided a very strong LOTE program, offering a range of languages, including a classical language. The students are required to study two languages until the end of Year Eight, where they then choose one language to study until the end of Year Ten, when LOTE is no longer compulsory.

A native speaker of German, Richard regularly travelled to Germany. He was also fluent in Russian. Richard was in his early forties, with ten years of LOTE teaching experience. Although currently teaching at a girls' school, he had spent the majority of his career teaching German in a co-educational setting, first at a government secondary school and later at an independent secondary school.

Tom taught Chinese at a co-educational independent school in the outer Eastern suburbs of Melbourne. A native Chinese speaker, at the time of the study, Tom was in his seventh year of teaching and was teaching Chinese from Years Seven to Twelve.

The table below presents a summary of the research participants:

Table 3.1 The Research Participants

	Richard	Anna	Sarah	Jan	Alison	Tom
LOTE	German	Italian	French	German	Indonesian	Chinese
Age group	40-50	40-50	20-25	40-50	30-40	30-40
Teaching Experience	10 years	20 years	2 years	20 years	9 years	7 years
Type of school	Girls, Independent	Girls, Independent	Boys, Independent	Co-educational Independent	Co-educational Independent	Co-educational Independent
Year levels taught	7-12	7-12	7-10	7-12	7-12	7-12

3.6 Methods for Data Collection

In the following section I will present the data collection procedures, which involved a questionnaire, in-depth interviews and classroom observations of three participants. I will begin by outlining the design of the questionnaire and the way in which it was implemented.

3.6.1 Design of Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used (Appendix 1, p. 301) followed by semi-structured in-depth interviews (Appendix 2, p. 309) in order to collect the data for the study. The questionnaire design was based upon previous research relating to Language Learning Strategies and incorporated questions relating to the teaching and deployment of direct and indirect learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). It was also designed to gain a broad picture of the LOTE teachers themselves and the way in which they use learning strategies in their own classrooms.

Researchers use questionnaires so that they can obtain information about the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, personality, and behavioural intentions of the research participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p.164).

I hoped that the questionnaires would provide an introduction to the research participants and would allow me to gather a large amount of information in an efficient manner (Nunan, 1987). When designing the questionnaire, it was important to heed Nunan's (1992) advice:

While responses to closed questions are easier to collate and analyse, one often obtains more useful information from open questions. (p. 143)

Although open-ended questions can "present data-analysis problems which may require more sophisticated treatment than counting yes and no answers" (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p.176), I believed that a combination of question types was essential in order to gather useful data; therefore, the questionnaire contained closed response, selected response and open-ended questions.

Nunan (1992) warns that "it is particularly important that the researchers not reveal their own attitudes through leading questions" (p. 143). Although I was careful to avoid guiding the participants in any particular direction, it must also be noted that I did expect the participants to be advocates of teaching and learning strategy use; indeed, this was necessary in order for them to be able to provide their insights into how they taught Language Learning Strategies and how their students used them. However, I could not anticipate the assortment of strategies the participants taught or how their students responded to strategy teaching. Certainly, the richness and diversity of the participants' responses in the questionnaires allowed me to collect interesting data and acted as a springboard for the in-depth interviews that were to follow.

When designing the questionnaire I was also mindful of the busyness of the teachers' daily lives. I did not want the questionnaire to be time consuming or tedious; therefore, I was careful to ensure that the questionnaire was not overly long or difficult to complete (Cohen & Manion, 1989).

The questionnaire consisted of two sections, Part A and Part B. Part A (questions 1-12) contained closed response questions designed to provide an overall picture of the research participants. I was interested in finding out the social factors that might influence their perceptions of language learning strategies; therefore, the initial questions related to their age and teaching experience as well as their native language and their understanding of the term 'language learning strategies'.

Part B (questions 1-14) of the questionnaire consisted of a series of selected response and open ended questions. The selected response questions used a four point Likert scale. A scale of one to four was used to measure responses, ranging from Not at All Important to Very Important (Questions 4 and 6, Part B) and Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (Question 13, Part B). The Likert scale was used in order to ensure that accurate and reliable information was collected (Brown & Dowling, 1998). They assert:

The aim of this procedure is to produce an instrument for the measurements of opinions, attitudes, beliefs or orientations which have face validity, is internally consistent, has discriminative power and is reliable (p. 71)

Questions 1 and 2 in Part B aimed to gain a broad picture of how the participants viewed the role and function of Language Learning Strategies. Questions 2-6 were selected response questions aimed at finding out the type of Language Learning Strategies were used in the participants own classes and how important and effective they thought these strategies were. Questions 7-13 required short answer responses to give the participants an opportunity to elaborate on their thoughts about the role of Language Learning Strategies and particularly, specific information about what they do and observe in their own classrooms. Question 13 in Part B contained a series of selected response questions about the types of strategies they saw their students use, how they used them and what Language Learning Strategies they had specifically taught their students. Question 14 consisted of an open-ended question which enabled the participants to express their own views on issues that were not raised in the main body of the questionnaire and to elaborate on previous questions. It was also hoped that these answers might provide a useful starting point for discussion during the in-depth interviews.

The questionnaires were administered in order to provide a reliable, if rather broad, method of data collection. Questionnaires are however, limited, as Bell (1999) notes:

[questionnaires] can provide answers to questions What? Where? When? How?...it is not so easy to find out Why? Causal relationships can rarely if ever be proved by a questionnaire. The main emphasis is on fact finding (p. 14)

This study is presented as a descriptive narrative, drawing on the participants' questionnaire responses and their in-depth interviews in order to gain a detailed understanding about the role of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom.

The questionnaire underwent several drafts before administering the final version to the participants (Oppenheim, 1992). I first piloted an early draft of the questionnaire to a group of colleagues who, very helpfully, completed the questionnaire and offered advice regarding any ambiguous questions as well as practical advice regarding the length of time it took to complete the questionnaire and the layout of the questions. Following their comments, the questionnaire was further refined. For example, more writing space was provided for Question 7-12 in Part B. Brown and Dowling (1998) explain the importance of the pilot group. They say:

The profile of the pilot group sample should match that of the population you wish to investigate in the main study (p. 71).

As a result of the pilot groups' comments, further revision of the questionnaire took place. The final version of the questionnaire was a combination of short response, selected response and open-ended questions.

3.6.2 Analysis of the Questionnaire

When analysing the questionnaires, the participants' responses were categorised to gain a clearer picture of the types of Language Learning Strategies that the students had been taught, the value placed on Language Learning Strategies by the teachers and the participants' perceived effectiveness of Language Learning Strategies. The participants' responses to the open-ended questions were read carefully and then typed up word for word; I then made my own notes about the responses, such as if there were any recurring ideas or if specific language skills were mentioned. These notes were used as a starting point for discussion during their in-depth interviews.

Each selected response choice was allocated a particular value. For example, in Question 3 of Part B, the response of 'often' was allocated 4 points, 'sometimes' was allocated 3 points, 'rarely' was given 2 points and 'never' was given 1 point. The values of each selected response statement were added together to form an overall score. A high score in Question 3, Part B would indicate that Language Learning

Strategies are frequently used in the participant's LOTE classroom. A high score in Questions 4 and 6 in Part B would show that the participant valued Language Learning Strategies as a useful tool in their classroom. A high score in Question 13, Part B would show that the participant had an awareness of Language Learning Strategies and that class time had been devoted to the teaching of such strategies (see Appendix 1, p. 301). Because the study involved such a small cohort, it was not necessary to further reduce the data into percentages. Instead, the scores were added up and served to paint a broad picture of the participants' attitudes towards, and their use of Language Learning Strategies.

One of the major problems associated with strategy research is that strategies are not directly observable, but rely on learner accounts. Moreover, strategy use is not a fixed attribute but changes according to the set task (White et al., 2007). Research methods to investigate Language Learner Strategies usually include a combination of methods; written questionnaires and oral interviews tend to be the most frequently used and efficient forms of data collection (Cohen & Scott, 1996; Macaro, 2001; Mackay & Gass, 2005). However, written questionnaires have three potential limitations: the participants may not understand or interpret accurately the strategy description in each item; participants may claim to use strategies they do not use; participants may fail to recall strategies they have used in the past. In light of this, it must be kept in mind, that although this form of data collection can provide useful information, it does have limitations. I anticipated that by combining an interview with the questionnaire, a more thorough and comprehensive range of data would be gathered.

3.6.3 In-Depth Interviews

I conducted a semi-structured in-depth interview with each of the research participants after analysing their questionnaires. Brown and Dowling (1998) state,

Interviews enable the researcher to explore complex issues in detail, they facilitate the personal engagement of the researcher in the collection of data, they allow the researcher to provide clarification, to probe and to prompt. (p. 72)

Via email, it was arranged to meet with each participant at their workplace at a negotiated time. With the participant's permission, each interview was audio-taped and the transcripts were provided to the participant to ensure that I had accurately

captured their meaning and intention in the interview. In-depth interviews were conducted as it was hoped that they would provide a greater understanding of each of the participant's approaches to Language Learning Strategies. Moreover, in-depth interviews provide an opportunity for discussion in a relaxed environment which is also flexible. At times I found our conversations strayed somewhat from the set interview questions but created opportunities for discussion in other relevant areas which the participants expressed an interest in. Consequently, the in-depth interview was a relevant form of data collection as it allowed ideas generated from the time of the interview to be further explored (Minichiello et al., 1990; Oppenheim, 1992). Minichiello et al., (1990) says:

If meaningful human interaction depends on language, then the words people use and the interpretations they make are of central interest to the researcher. In-depth interviewing is an appropriate method to gain access to the individual's words and interpretations (p. 100).

Prior to his interview, Tom requested to see the questions I would be asking in order to help him prepare for the interview. As English was his second language, Tom felt that he would be able to provide more insightful responses if he had time to think through the questions and prepare the vocabulary that would best convey his meaning. I had not done this with my previous interviews, believing that it would make the interview less spontaneous and too structured and formal. However, I found that my interview with Tom flowed easily and he appeared very relaxed and well prepared. Clearly, he had thought about his responses and I believe it added depth to his answers as he had time to reflect on his teaching practices. After this experience with Tom, I always emailed the interview questions to the participant, once we had arranged the interview time. However, this practice did not always work in my favour. On one occasion, one of the participants withdrew from the interview as she felt that she had already addressed my interview questions in her questionnaire and consequently, she felt that an interview would not be beneficial as it would not enhance the data already collected.

The semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted within the framework of pre-determined questions to ensure consistency, but they were also flexible so that the participant's responses were able to be followed up in more detail where appropriate. Each interview was scheduled to last approximately 30 minutes; however, depending on the participants' time constraints, the interviews sometimes went over the allotted time,

which was extremely useful as it allowed me to gather more detail. On other occasions, time was quite tight and the interviews were very structured and did not allow room to ask follow up questions. Because the interviews took place in a secondary school, there were occasional interruptions during the interview, usually from staff members and sometimes from students. Quite understandably, I had to fit in with the daily routine of the school, and often found myself waiting during recess or lunchtime for the participant to arrive. I found this very useful as it gave me the opportunity to informally observe the school and the way in which staff and students interacted with each other, to observe the layout of the LOTE classrooms and generally get a 'feel' for the school.

The aim of the interviews was to determine the types of learning strategies taking place in each teacher's LOTE classroom and to examine the way in which the strategies that are implemented in the classroom can affect the students' attitudes and outcomes in the LOTE.

Although the interviews were insightful, there were limitations, however, as the teachers who agreed to participate in the study tended to be teachers who were successfully implementing Language Learning Strategies into their classrooms. While it was useful to find out how they incorporated strategy teaching into their LOTE classes, their experiences and observations were all very positive and did not provide examples of poor learners who had successfully or even unsuccessfully used Language Learning Strategies. The experiences that the participants' drew upon were therefore, somewhat limited as they did not provide a comprehensive picture of a typical secondary school LOTE classroom. It is not clear whether it was the Language Learning Strategies applied in the classroom which resulted in successful LOTE experiences or if the learners themselves were motivated and capable and this is what led to their positive language learning outcomes. Also, there were varying ideas on what was considered a positive learning outcome. Depending on the participant, this might be measured by an improvement in a student's test scores; their active participation in classroom activities; or their ability to correctly use specific strategies.

In addition to the interview transcripts, I also kept informal notes on each of the research participants. These notes included observations about the research site, interesting comments that the participants made during our interview and additional information that I followed up after the interviews. For example, Richard made a

passing comment about the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the way in which language is taught in Europe. This was not an area that I knew a lot about, and although it was not directly related to my study, I felt it was important to understand Richard's views, so through my rough notes, I was reminded to explore this topic at a later date. It allowed the interview to proceed uninterrupted and once I had a better understanding of Richard's reference to the European language model I was able to clarify any questions I had for him via email. My notes were a useful tool when later writing up my research findings as it reminded me of the 'feel' of the school, my first impressions of the students and school setting. Baumgartner and Strong (1994) state,

These notes can be portraits of participants, reconstructions of conversations, descriptions of the setting and accounts of particular events and activities. (p. 183)

One of the major problems in strategy research is that the strategies used by students are generally not directly observable but rely on learner accounts. In this case, I was relying on the teacher's account of the type of Language Learning Strategies employed. Also, strategy use is not a fixed attribute but changes according to the task (White et al, 2007). It was hoped that by combining methods of a self-report questionnaire and oral interview and then supplementing this with informal observation, notes and email a more detailed account of how Language Learning Strategies are used in the classroom would emerge (Cohen & Scott, 1996; Macaro, 2001; Mackay & Gass, 2005). This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

3.6.4 Analysis of Interviews

The data from the in-depth interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Pseudonyms were used when transcribing the participants' responses in order to ensure confidentiality. The interview transcripts were then coded and categorised using visual inspection. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) highlight the significance of categorising the data, as it is these categories that help the researcher to work out what is important and what issues begin to emerge from the raw data. They say,

Codes are...tools to think with. They can be expanded, changed or scrapped altogether as our ideas develop through

repeated interactions with the data. Starting to create categories is a way of beginning to read and think about data in a systematic and organised way. (p. 32)

The interview transcripts were coded by topics, as were the questionnaires. These topics were selected on the basis of the literature and included the importance of Language Learning Strategies, the effectiveness of Language Learning Strategies and the types of strategies used for each of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. I then examined these topics to ensure that they accurately represented the content of the interviews and began to search for common themes as well as differences between the research participants. When analysing the data, unexpected ideas began to emerge. For example, the warmth and rapport between the teacher and their students was frequently mentioned during the in-depth interviews; the empathy that the participants had for their students was another unexpected theme that took shape; the importance of technology as a teaching tool and the need to provide interesting lesson content. These new themes led to “refinements of the categories and the discovery of new commonalities or patterns” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p.205). This meant that the data analysis required close examination as commonalities and differences were discovered and described.

Finally, the data from the interviews were compared to the data from the questionnaire responses and broad themes were then established regarding the way in which Language Learning strategies are perceived and used in the LOTE classroom. Simple quantification, that is, counting occurrences in each category, was employed in order to gain a greater understanding of the teachers’ attitudes towards Language Learning Strategies. Consequently, I was able to compare the participants and gain a greater understanding of the way in which Language Learning Strategies are viewed and used in the LOTE classroom. Morse and Richards (2002) note:

In qualitative research, collecting data is not a process separate from analysing data. The strength of qualitative inquiry is in the integration of the research questions, the data, and the data analysis. (p. 1)

It is hoped that the questionnaires and the in-depth interviews provided an insight into how Language Learning Strategies are taught and used by the participants in this study. These results will be examined and discussed in detail in the following chapters.

3.7 Classroom Observations

Sarah, Tom and Jan also allowed me to observe some of their lessons, which was invaluable, as not only did it allow me to see the use of Language Learner Strategies in practice, it also provided me with a clear impression of the students and the tone of the school. I certainly found this useful later on, when analysing the interview data as I was able to envisage the classroom environment, such as the position of the students' desks and the types of technology available in the classroom. Holiday (2002) describes the significance of the research setting. He says the research setting is:

exactly where, when and with whom the research will take place...the aim is to go deep into a definable setting in which phenomena can be placed meaningfully within a specific social environment. (p. 37)

Consequently, the research setting itself was an important part of the project as it provided insight in to why the research participants employed particular Language Learning Strategies and why they upheld certain ideas in regard to their teaching practices. The culture and academic expectations of the school appeared to influence the teaching styles and practices of the research participants.

In total, I observed six LOTE classes from French, Chinese and German, ranging from Year 7 to Year 12. The data was collected in a very straight-forward manner; using a note-book computer, I simply sat near a small group of students for a period of 15 minutes and wrote down what I saw and heard. I then moved to another part of the classroom and repeated the procedure with another group of students. I did not have a set criteria before embarking on the observations; instead, I simply allowed the data to emerge. I later transcribed the observations and made my own notes of any recurring themes or ideas. The observations will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.

3.8 Ethical Issues

The research participants were all secondary school LOTE teachers. It was essential that the participants felt free to discuss any issues of importance without the concern that their ideas and opinions would reflect negatively on them in any way. Therefore, it was essential that they were aware that their participation in the study was voluntary and confidential (Babbie, 2002). Pseudonyms were used to ensure that the participants' identity and their workplace could not be identified. Also, when our discussions

concerned teaching practices, LOTE classes were discussed in very broad terms, so that no reference was made to individual students.

3.9 Summary

This study explored the role of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom. It examined what Language Learning Strategies are and how they were perceived and implemented by a small group of secondary school LOTE teachers. The ideas and experiences of six LOTE teachers were explored in detail during the research project. Thus, the study was exploratory and descriptive (Cohen & Manion, 1989). Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were employed in order to describe and interpret the data collected. In order to ensure that the data collected were comprehensive and thorough, a range of data was collected, through the use of written questionnaire, interview and informal observations (Cohen & Manion, 1989).

Denzin (1994) state:

A thin description simply reports facts, independent of intentions or circumstances. A thick description, in contrast, gives the context of an experience, states the intentions and meanings that organized the experience, and reveals the experience as a process. (p. 505)

By employing a qualitative methodological approach and gathering a range of data, I expected to produce a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973, p. 6) of my findings.

The case study was selected as the methodological approach, as this provided valuable insights into the way in which Language Learning Strategies are perceived by LOTE teachers, within the realistic and natural secondary school setting. It was also hoped that by exploring the role of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom, my understanding of their importance and function might improve and in turn, impact upon my own teaching practices. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) emphasise the importance of research in an educator’s professional life. They point out,

[educational research is] viewed as a critical, reflexive, and professionally oriented activity...regarded as a crucial ingredient in the teacher’s professional role...generating self-knowledge and personal development in such a way that practice can be improved...(pp. 3-4)

Although this study was small, the information gathered from the project may provide some insight into the way in which Language Learning Strategies are perceived and implemented in secondary school LOTE programs. In Chapter Four I will present and discuss the results of the questionnaires. In Chapter Five I will present the results of the in-depth interviews.

Chapter Four

Results of the Questionnaires

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present the results of the data. The first stage of the data collection involved a questionnaire. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were then conducted with each of the research participants, using the questionnaire responses as a reference point. In this chapter the results of the questionnaires will be presented and discussed, comparing and contrasting each of the research participants.

In Chapters Five and Six I will present the results of the in-depth interviews and draw together the ideas expressed by the research participants in an effort to gain a greater understanding about a small group of LOTE teachers' perceptions and use of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom. The table below presents a brief overview of the research participants:

Table 4.1 A Snapshot of the Research Participants

	Richard	Anna	Sarah	Jan	Alison	Tom
LOTE	German	Italian	French	German	Indonesian	Chinese
Age Group	40-50	40-50	20-25	40-50	30-40	30-40
Teaching Experience	10 years	20 years	2 years	20 years	9 years	7 years
Thoughts on Language Learning Strategies	"Strategies enhance learning, improve memory and develop language skills."	"Language Learning strategies influence language acquisition"	"Strategies help students develop; they facilitate the acquisition of language."	"Learning strategies are the different methods by which students can acquire language skills."	"Strategies help to engage, motivate and inspire students to become independent language learners."	"Strategies help students to learn the language."

4.2 Questionnaire Results

Six secondary school LOTE teachers completed the questionnaire relating to how Language Learning Strategies are taught and implemented in the LOTE classroom. It must be kept in mind that the questionnaires were completed by a small group of teachers and while the information gathered from the questionnaires can provide some insight into how Language Learning Strategies are perceived and used in their own classrooms, their attitudes and experiences cannot be seen as representative of all secondary school LOTE teachers.

4.2.1 Background of the Participants

The first section of the questionnaire (Part A) was used to gain a clearer image of the participants' background (see Appendix 1, p. 301). In this section I will present a brief overview of the participants' history as LOTE teachers, including their qualifications, past teaching experiences and their understanding of the concept of Language Learning Strategies. Recent literature demonstrates that it is the LOTE teacher themselves who can influence the way in which students, particularly boys, engage with the subject; therefore, assembling a brief outline of each participant, as a LOTE teacher, was a worthwhile exercise (Abbott, Jones, O'Donnell & Slattery, 2004; Dornyei, 2001; Ellis, 2008). To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used.

4.3 Richard

The first participant, Richard, was born in Germany and at the time of the research, had been living in Australia for less than a decade. In addition to German, Richard was also fluent in Russian. Richard is qualified to teach German throughout secondary school and, at the time of the study, was teaching German from Year 7 through to Year 12. Richard was aged in his early forties and had ten years of experience as a LOTE teacher. He seemed well informed about Language Learning Strategies and their purpose, stating in his questionnaire that Language Learning Strategies:

enable students to learn a language in the long term, enhance their learning, improve their memory, make it easier to understand and acquire grammatical structure and develop their active and passive skills.

4.3.1 Frequency and Types of Language Learning Strategies Used

Part B of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1, p. 301) focused on how the participants used Language Learning Strategies in their own classroom. Question 1 highlighted the attitudes that the participant upheld towards Language Learning strategies.

In this question, Richard expressed that Language Learning Strategies were a valuable tool, as they enabled students to function more independently in the classroom. He was able to clearly define Language Learning Strategies and their function in the LOTE classroom.

Questions 2 and 3 focused on the types of Language Learning Strategies used by students and the frequency with which they used them. Here Richard indicated that his students were aware of Language Learning Strategies and were able to draw upon a range of strategies to help them to complete various LOTE tasks. In addition to the strategies listed in Question 3, Richard stated that his students were able to use their morphological knowledge to help them understand and produce unknown words; their phonological knowledge enabled them to develop authentic pronunciation; an understanding of language history and cognates enabled students to understand unknown words and memorise new words. He also listed reading aloud as a useful strategy as it aided the learning of new vocabulary and improved listening and pronunciation skills.

Question 4 related to the value placed on Language Learning Strategies. Richard indicated that he considered a range of strategies to be valuable, such as using orthographic information, collaborating with peers and dictionary use. He did not seem to place a great deal of importance on encouraging his students to use strategies prior to beginning a task. For example, he indicated that he did not instruct his students to examine the illustrations in a text as a pre-reading strategy. Rather, he placed more emphasis on encouraging his students to draw on a range of strategies whilst completing the task, such as identifying key information during reading and checking class notes.

Question 5 of the questionnaire related to the types of Language Learning Strategies taught by Richard. He appeared to have spent a significant amount of class time teaching specific strategies. His responses indicated that he had taught his students an array of strategies relating to the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Not surprisingly, his response to Question 6 demonstrated that he believed that

it was important that his students were aware of, and able to use, a variety of strategies, depending on the task they needed to complete.

Questions 7-12 in Part B of the questionnaire required short responses rather than the Likert Scale format of the previous questions. Richard's responses in these questions provided interesting insights into his philosophy as a LOTE teacher and served as a useful starting point when I later spoke to him during the in-depth interview. Richard stated that dictionary skills were a strategy that his students often misused. He felt that students often reach for a dictionary to help them with unknown vocabulary and were not sufficiently trained in how to use a dictionary correctly, which could often result in gross mistakes, particularly when completing extended writing exercises.

Richard appeared to place equal value on a range of strategies but felt that his students tended to require more assistance when writing extended pieces. He regularly incorporated strategy teaching into his lessons, saying:

It's impossible to learn without applying strategies...As a teacher you should always integrate learning strategies and explain them. As much as it is impossible to learn without applying strategies, it is impossible to teach effectively without integrating and discussing learning strategies.

Richard did not believe that the ability to successfully use learning strategies was only the domain of the more able students, but felt that all students were capable of success if provided with the correct tools. His ideas are reflected in the current literature which advocates the benefits of specific strategy training (Macaro, 2003; Grenfell, 2007; Griffiths, 2008). Richard said,

It comes down to knowing and applying learning strategies consistently.

Richard had spent the majority of his career teaching in a co-educational setting. At the time of this study he had worked for less than ten months at a girls' school. When asked about the differences between the way that boys and girls use Language Learning Strategies (Question 12). Richard felt that boys were not as aware of Language Learning Strategies as girls:

Boys can acquire learning strategies implicitly by using them, often without knowing them as learning strategies. Girls usually need explicit explanations of learning strategies and need to

experience how they can be useful in a context and specific situation. Girls learn inductively. I've also found that girls want both to have short-term goals and at the same time to know how they fit in the overall picture.

Question 13 of the questionnaire demonstrated that Richard had spent a substantial amount of time teaching and practising strategy use with his students. The strategies he drew upon related to all four language skills and included strategies such as identifying key words in a reading passage, and learning stock phrases when speaking.

Question 14 allowed the participants to make any further comments regarding their experiences and in this section of the questionnaire, Richard made some interesting observations. He felt that there appeared to be an emphasis on teaching strategies to assist students with reading comprehension and listening and speaking skills but there was very little importance placed on strategies aimed to improve creative writing skills. He expressed a desire to learn more about how to better assist his students to develop their writing skills through a greater understanding of writing strategies

Richard expressed his concern about the current emphasis on “fun” in the LOTE classroom. He felt that there was increasing pressure on LOTE teachers to entertain students and while he conceded that enjoyment in the classroom was indeed important, Richard felt that too often, real learning was replaced by “busy work” which, in his view, did little more than amuse the students. He felt that there should be a greater focus on teaching linguistic structures. He said:

“Fun” is not a learning strategy. I don't question that fun is important...but in my experience, “fun” has replaced serious thoughts about learning...and teaching strategies in Australia. Learning strategies can also not replace basic linguistic knowledge...language learning strategies are usually based on linguistic skills. Using a dictionary, for example, requires linguistic knowledge and skills. You can't teach Maths without numbers and formulae, and you can't teach a language without grammatical and linguistic knowledge.

While most students certainly enjoy entertaining and exciting classroom tasks, the literature demonstrates that this alone will not encourage students to continue their LOTE studies beyond the compulsory years; moreover, enjoyable LOTE lessons will not necessarily improve students' intrinsic motivation or inspire them to devote more time and effort to their LOTE studies. As the literature demonstrates, the disaffection

many students feel towards LOTE is a complex issue and influenced by a range of factors (Benson, 2001; Legenhausen, 2009; Miller, 2007).

4.4 Anna

The second participant, Anna, was born in Italy and was qualified to teach French and Italian. In addition to being fluent in German, Anna was also able to speak Japanese and Chinese, after spending several years living in these countries as an English teacher. At the time of the study, Anna was fifty years old and had been teaching in Australia for two years, having recently completed her teaching qualifications, but prior to this, she had taught overseas for fifteen years.

At the time of the research, Anna was teaching Italian at a small girls' school but over her teaching life, had taught in a range of settings, including co-educational schools and single-sex schools as well as teaching adults.

Anna demonstrated a clear understanding of what Language Learning Strategies were and their function in the LOTE classroom. She defined Language Learning Strategies as, "attitudes and ways which will influence the learners' language acquisition."

4.4.1 Frequency and Types of Language Learning Strategies Used

In Part B, Question 1, Anna stated that Language Learning Strategies were an important device which allowed students to work independently of the LOTE teacher.

In Questions 2 and 3, Anna indicated that her students were aware of Language Learning Strategies and were able to use them, where necessary, in order to complete set classroom tasks. As well as the strategies listed in Question 3, Anna said that her students also used cue cards to assist them with speaking tasks and IT to help them build vocabulary.

Question 4 related to the value placed on Language Learning Strategies. Anna indicated that she considered a range of strategies to be valuable, particularly peer collaboration and using all of the information provided when reading a piece of text, such as looking at the title of a passage and identifying key words.

Question 5 of the questionnaire related to the types of Language Learning Strategies taught by the participant. Anna's responses demonstrated that she had regularly devoted class time to teaching Language Learning Strategies. She indicated that she had taught her students a variety of strategies relating to the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In this question Anna once again emphasised the importance of peer collaboration. Anna's response to Question 6 demonstrated that she felt that it was important that her students were able to identify which strategies were appropriate for the set task. She felt that listening and speaking were the two areas where skills needed to be developed, particularly as set classroom tasks usually focused on reading and writing.

Questions 7-12 in Part B of the questionnaire required short responses. Anna's responses in these questions provided an insight into the range and depth of strategies she implemented in her classroom, as well as providing a valuable starting point when she later participated in the in-depth interview.

Anna felt that listening and speaking skills were important but were often less frequently used in class. She believed that this was, indeed, an area where students tended to lack strategies. She stated that students need greater grounding in primary school in order to help them prepare for the demands of secondary school and that ideally, strategy training should begin in the primary years.

Anna appeared to place importance on a range of strategies and thought that regular practice and reinforcement of strategies was crucial. She felt that the students who possessed a range of strategies had "more courage and self confidence" and that being able to draw upon a range of strategies gave students greater freedom and "more creativity". She believed that strategies which helped students to improve their understanding of grammar conventions and extend their range of vocabulary were particularly important.

Anna wrote that it was important to teach students specific strategies. She stated that other skills, such how to revise concepts introduced in class were valuable tools. She also felt that success in strategy use depended on how much time the teacher had to devote to individual students.

Question 13 of the questionnaire confirmed that Anna had spent a significant amount of time teaching and practising strategy use with her students. The strategies she taught her students related to all four language skills and included strategies such as the ability to competently use a dictionary, how to plan and draft their writing and how to skim and scan when completing reading tasks.

Question 14 allowed the participants to make any further comments regarding their experiences and in this section of the questionnaire, Anna commented that success when learning a LOTE related to more than just understanding and effectively using set strategies; students also needed to take risks, saying that students should, “be curious, explore what’s ahead in the text book, read, read, read.”

4.5 Sarah

The third participant, Sarah, was a French and English teacher at an all boys’ school and at the time of the study, was in her second year of teaching. As well as French, Sarah was also qualified to teach German and at the time of the study, she was teaching French from Year 5 through to Year 9. Sarah was in her early twenties and had been teaching at the school for almost two years. She was very aware of the role Language Learning Strategies play in the LOTE classroom. In her questionnaire she stated that strategies:

Help students develop so as to facilitate the acquisition of the language (such as “reading for gist” or using a dictionary effectively)

4.5.1 Frequency and Types of Language Learning Strategies Used

Part B of the questionnaire looked at how the participants used Language Learning Strategies in their own classroom. Question 1 showed the attitudes that the participant upheld towards Language Learning Strategies.

In this question, Sarah responded that Language Learning Strategies were important as they helped students to gain confidence and greater independence in the classroom. She was able to explain the role and purpose of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom.

Questions 2 and 3 highlighted the types of Language Learning Strategies used by students and the frequency with which they used them. In Questions 2 and 3 Sarah stated that her students were able to use a range of strategies to help them complete various LOTE tasks. As well as the strategies listed in Question 3, Sarah wrote that when completing listening tasks, her students knew how to listen for additional information, such as the tone of voice and expression of the speaker to help them understand the meaning of the conversation.

Question 4 looked at the value placed on Language Learning Strategies. Sarah's answers demonstrated that she considered a range of strategies to be valuable, such as the recognition of the text type and using orthographic information. She seemed to regard strategies relating to all four language skills to be equally important and did not appear to focus on strategies to improve skills in one particular language area.

Question 5 of the questionnaire related to the types of Language Learning strategies taught by the participant. Sarah reported that she spent a substantial amount of class time teaching specific strategies. Her responses showed that she had taught her students a wide variety of strategies relating to the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Her response to Question 6 demonstrated that she believed that it was important that her students were competent in strategy use and were able to draw upon a range of strategies as the need arose.

Questions 7-12 in Part B of the questionnaire required short answers and these responses were used as a starting point for our conversation during the in-depth interview. Like Richard, Sarah also felt that students required greater training in correct dictionary use and that they needed to understand the different functions of a dictionary in order to help them use this tool more efficiently. She also felt that students would benefit from being able to draw upon a range of "fillers" when speaking, as well as knowing how to read purposefully. For Sarah, strategy training was "a high priority" but she also acknowledged how time consuming it can be, particularly when faced with the demands of a full curriculum:

Learning a language cannot be mastered without developing strategies – and it's much easier if you learn them in class than if left to discover them via trial and error.

Sarah thought that the more able students were able to use the strategies that she had taught them more often and more effectively. One example that she cited was students' ability to detect the relationship between words, such as the connection between the French word for 'food' (*nourriture*) and the English word, 'nutrition'. She believed that the students' ability to find similarities between French and English gave them a deeper understanding of the origin of many English words; furthermore, it was a useful tool, allowing her students to approach unfamiliar vocabulary with greater confidence. The ability to remember vocabulary and to be able to apply this knowledge to other situations was a strategy that the more competent students seemed to possess.

Sarah felt that boys appeared less responsive to grammar tasks than girls and seemed to have fewer strategies in this area. Interestingly, she said that her students tend to prefer structured, formulaic tasks, such as translation, even though this was not a skill that she saw as particularly valuable. She said that boys also enjoyed reading tasks and tended to possess a wide range of reading strategies.

Question 13 of the questionnaire showed that Sarah had spent a great deal of time teaching and practising strategy use with her students. The strategies she had taught her students related to all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing and included strategies such as pre-reading exercises, planning and drafting strategies before beginning a writing task and memorising stock phrases to help them during conversations.

4.6 Alison

The fourth participant, Alison, was an Indonesian teacher in a co-educational independent school and at the time of the study, was teaching Years 7 to 12. As well as being fluent in Indonesian, Alison was also able to speak Russian, German and French. At the time of the study, she had been teaching for almost ten years.

Alison demonstrated a clear understanding of function and value of Language Learning Strategies. She defined Language Learning Strategies as, "the method of engaging, motivating and inspiring students to become independent language learners."

4.6.1 Frequency and Types of Language Learning Strategies Used

In Part B, Questions 1 and 2, Alison demonstrated a sound knowledge of the role of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom. Alison regularly saw her own students using a range of strategies and she felt that competency in using Language Learning Strategies enhanced students' confidence and independence in the LOTE classroom.

In Question 3, Alison indicated that her students were able to use a range of strategies and were aware of their value when completing set tasks. As well as the strategies listed in Question 3, Alison said that her students were familiar with, and able to draw upon a wide variety of strategies. These strategies included: using class notes, referring to the set text and using IT to assist with vocabulary building; understanding the structure of words i.e. being able to recognize the base word, the prefix and suffix in a word; colour coding sentences to assist with the correct word order and making connections between English and Indonesian words.

Question 4 related to the value placed on Language Learning Strategies. Alison indicated that she considered a range of strategies to be important, including pre-reading tasks, using phrases during speech to "buy time" as well as using approximation to convey meaning during speech.

Question 5 of the questionnaire related to the types of Language Learning strategies taught by the participant. Alison's responses demonstrated that she had consistently devoted class time to teaching Language Learning Strategies. Her responses indicated that she had taught her students a variety of strategies relating to the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Her students were able to evaluate set tasks and decide which strategies would be most appropriate to use. She seemed to focus on teaching her students how to use strategies before they began the set task, such as pre-reading tasks and planning and drafting before beginning a writing activity. Her students also knew how to monitor their progress during a set task, such as evaluating comprehension while reading a piece of text.

Questions 7-12 in Part B of the questionnaire required short responses. Alison's responses in these questions showed the significant amount of time and effort required to teach strategies and highlighted the areas where she felt students still needed strategy

instruction. These comments were used as a starting point during our in-depth interview and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Alison felt that motivation was a key ingredient in strategy training. While she could teach students strategies, such as how to remember and recall vocabulary, students also needed to practise these strategies in their own time and in her experience, often students were not willing to devote time and effort to strategy training. She felt that the more able students were also those students who showed initiative and practised the strategies introduced in class. She also felt that students needed to be aware of their individual learning styles and preferences in order to help them achieve competency in the language. She felt that catering to individual needs and differences was often extremely challenging and time consuming:

Each student is different and has a different way of retaining the information...Once they have found the strategy that works best for them, their language learning can progress.

Alison felt that strategy training was an excellent way to help students of different abilities, as the ability to successfully apply strategies to set tasks gave students confidence and greater independence in the classroom. This is an interesting point, one which was also raised by Tom, the sixth participant, during his in-depth interview. I will return to this idea and discuss it in greater detail in the following chapter.

Another difficulty that Alison identified was that in order to reap its full benefit, strategy training needs to be introduced from a young age, yet very often, children in Years 7 and 8 cannot seem to see the value and purpose of being able to use strategies when completing tasks. By the time they reach the upper secondary years, they are more aware of strategy use but have not had the advantage of using strategies and are still not competent in being able to identify when and how to use them. She suggested that simple strategies need to be introduced from a young age and more complex strategies should be gradually introduced. She wrote:

In Years 10, 11 and 12 it is easier to devote time to strategy training because you can make reference to the end of year VCE examination and students can see how the strategies they learn early on will serve them well for the demands of the final examination.

Alison noted the differences between the ways in which boys and girls use strategies. She felt that boys worked well when collaborating with peers and responded particularly well to peer assessed tasks. The boys Alison had taught tended to need greater interaction and monitoring from the teacher, whereas the girls tended to show more independence and could work effectively without requiring as much teacher feed-back.

Question 13 of the questionnaire confirmed that Alison had spent a significant amount of time teaching and practising strategy use with her students. The strategies she taught her students related to all four language skills and included strategies such as the ability to recognise text types and to guess the context to try to guess the meaning of unknown words.

4.7 Jan

The fifth participant, Jan, was a German teacher who had taught LOTE for more than twenty years. Jan was fifty years old and was also fluent in French. Jan showed a great interest in Language Learning Strategies and their purpose. In her questionnaire she defined Language Learning Strategies as:

Different methods by which students can acquire language skills...Different methods will appeal to/suit different students.”

4.7.1 Frequency and Types of Language Learning Strategies Used

Part B of the questionnaire focused on how the participants used Language Learning Strategies in their own classroom. Question 1 highlighted the attitudes that the participant upheld towards Language Learning strategies.

In this question, Jan wrote that Language Learning Strategies were a valuable tool as they enabled students to function with greater independence and confidence in the classroom. The literature supports this idea that correct strategy use may contribute to students experiencing greater confidence and autonomy in the LOTE classroom (Benson, 2001; Dam, 2003).

Questions 2 and 3 focused on the types of Language Learning Strategies used by students and the frequency with which they used them. In Questions 2 and 3 Jan

indicated that her students were aware of Language Learning Strategies and were able to use a range of strategies when required to complete set LOTE tasks. In addition to the strategies listed in Question 3, Jan stated that her students were taught strategies such as rhymes and word games to help them to remember and recall vocabulary. She also taught her students colour coding to help them to understand the gender of nouns.

Question 4 related to the value placed on Language Learning Strategies. Jan indicated that she considered a range of strategies to be valuable, such as using orthographic information, collaborating with peers and dictionary use. However, she also stressed that the type of strategies used and the frequency with which they were used depended on the year level of the students. Simple strategies, such as correct dictionary use, were introduced in Year 7 and frequently revised, and as language skills progressed, students were introduced to other, more complex functions of the dictionary, such as demonstrating parts of speech.

Question 5 of the questionnaire related to the types of Language Learning Strategies taught by the participant. As well as the strategies listed in the questionnaire, Jan also felt that students needed ample opportunities to speak in a range of different settings, including formal tasks, such as public speaking. Jan felt that less formal activities, such as conversation games were important to help students remember and recall vocabulary and practise correct pronunciation.

Jan appeared to have spent a great deal of class time teaching specific strategies. Her responses indicated that she had taught her students a range of strategies relating to the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Jan considered it important that her students were able to use a range of strategies, and that they were also able to identify the appropriate strategy to use, depending on the set task.

Questions 7-12 in Part B of the questionnaire required short responses. Jan's responses in these questions were thoughtful and detailed and provided an excellent starting point for our in-depth interview. Jan stated that when completing listening tasks, students tended to lack the ability to identify key words. When speaking, students did not use stock phrases or common vocabulary, which Jan believed was due to lack of revision. She also felt that when reading, students did not draw upon clues in the text, such as using key words to deduce the meaning of the passage. She stated that students did not adequately plan and draft their work before embarking on a writing task.

Jan wrote that students would benefit from developing reading strategies, such as inferring meaning from a piece of text and she also felt they needed strategies, such as memory training skills, to assist them in developing a wider vocabulary bank.

Jan believed that training learners to use strategies was useful as they, “become tools that students need for success at VCE language studies.” She also wrote that strategy training, although worthwhile, is time consuming and can be difficult when teaching a large group of students. She stated, “strategy skills are not taught in isolation, they are an integral part of teaching.” This notion is supported by current literature that asserts that the strategies themselves are not significant, but rather it is how they are used that is important (Rubin, 2008).

Jan also made reference to the way in which more capable LOTE students use strategies:

Very able students are interested in how language works i.e. structure and formation of words. Able students enjoy acquiring vocab, that is the main determinant of success, I find.

She also noted the different ways that boys and girls use strategies. She commented that boys tend to rely on their memory rather than specific steps or strategies, whereas girls often consult their notes and use more writing strategies. She also commented that students, regardless of gender, tend to use strategies linked to the skills they enjoy completing. She suggested that perhaps teachers should train students to use strategies in the language areas that they do not enjoy as much in an effort to help them improve their skills in this area.

Question 13 of the questionnaire indicated that Jan had devoted considerable time teaching and practising strategy use with her students. The strategies she had taught her students related to all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, Jan also commented that she would like to devote more time to strategy teaching but often felt restricted from doing so, due to the demands of meeting the criteria of the set curriculum. This was a common theme touched upon by all of the participants in both the questionnaires and the interviews. This tension between the desire to incorporate strategy training into each lesson while still trying to meet curriculum demands is acknowledged in the literature (Ushioda, 2008). For this reason, it is worthy of further exploration in the discussion in Chapter 6.

Question 14 allowed the participants to make any further comments regarding their experiences and in this section of the questionnaire, Jan noted the importance of using IT to help reinforce strategies. She wrote that boys, in particular, responded positively to the use of IT in the LOTE classroom and this was a useful way to engage them in the set tasks, as well as helping them to develop strategies, such as vocabulary building. She also commented that she uses many “basic vocab learning strategies” which she believes is the foundation for language acquisition. She stated that once students acquire a wide vocabulary bank, the process of language acquisition becomes much easier. These points were further discussed in our in-depth interview which will be presented in the next chapter.

4.8 Tom

The sixth participant, Tom, was born in China and was a qualified Chinese and EAL teacher. At the time of the study, Tom had been teaching in Australia for seven years. Tom was teaching Years 7 to 12 Chinese at an independent co-educational school and defined Language Learning Strategies as, “methods used in language learning.”

4.8.1 Frequency and Types of Language Learning Strategies Used

In Part B, question 1, Tom showed an understanding of how Language Learning Strategies can assist students in the LOTE classroom. He believed that Language Learning Strategies were an important tool which helped students to work independently of the LOTE teacher.

In Questions 2 and 3, Tom indicated that his students were aware of Language Learning Strategies and were able to use them where necessary in order to complete set classroom tasks.

Question 4 related to the value placed on Language Learning Strategies. Tom indicated that he considered a range of strategies to be useful, particularly reading strategies, such as prediction, finding key words and using information provided in the text to aid comprehension.

Question 5 of the questionnaire related to the types of Language Learning strategies taught by the participant. Tom's responses confirmed that he had devoted class time to teaching Language Learning Strategies relating to the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing; however, he did not appear to have spent as much time on speaking strategies, such as hesitation and filler devices, approximation, circumlocution and prior preparation. Tom's response to Question 6 established that he felt that it was important that his students were able to identify which strategies were appropriate for the set task. He also pointed out that this was a skill that many of his students lacked.

Questions 7-12 in Part B of the questionnaire required short answers and Tom's responses in these questions served as a valuable starting point when he later participated in the in-depth interview. Tom felt that students tended to lack "memory skills" which he believed were crucial when learning Chinese. He wrote that students need to be taught how to memorise and that technology can be a useful tool to assist students in this area. He gave an example of how his students use their iPods to record key words and listen to them on their way to and from school in order to build their range of vocabulary. Tom felt that the students had a greater chance of mastering a skill if they were given the opportunity to use contemporary tools that they were competent with, and enjoyed using.

Like previous participants, Tom wrote that time constraints prevent him from devoting more class time to strategy teaching and he also noted that the more able students do not necessarily possess a broader range of strategies, but rather, they are better able to choose the appropriate strategy to suit the set task. In contrast, he believed that the less able students were capable of identifying particular strategies, such as pre-reading strategies but they did not always use them; instead they often elected to launch straight into the set task with little plan on how to best tackle the activity.

Question 13 of the questionnaire demonstrated that Tom had spent class time teaching strategies to his students. These strategies related to all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing and included strategies such as planning and drafting their writing and checking their completed work.

Question 14 allowed the participants to make any further comments regarding their experiences and in this section of the questionnaire, Tom stated:

In my opinion, learning strategies are the key to learning LOTE.
With suitable strategies, LOTE learners will accelerate their study.

4.9 Comparing and Contrasting the Research Participants

Each participant was able to provide a succinct definition of the term, ‘Language Learning Strategy.’ Each conveyed the idea that strategies were a valuable tool that needed to be taught to students and if used correctly, could assist learners in their acquisition of a second language and their intrinsic motivation, confidence and autonomy.

As learners, each participant had used strategies themselves and they felt that their own experiences could help their students better understand the role of strategy use. This ability to identify and empathise with their students was a common thread throughout the responses to the questionnaires and will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

While each participant valued strategy training, there did not seem to be many opportunities for them to up-date their own skills in this area. Time constraints were regularly mentioned as being a source of frustration. There seemed to be neither enough time to attend professional development training nor enough time in class to devote to strategy training. While all participants were aware of the importance of Language Learning Strategies, the reality of daily school life was that finding specific time to devote to teaching and practising strategies was highly improbable; instead they felt compelled to meet curriculum demands, particularly in the senior secondary years. Nevertheless, this situation was not necessarily detrimental to the students. The questionnaires revealed that the participants seemed to constantly weave strategy training into their lessons whenever an opportunity arose.

The participants reported that they devoted more time to teaching listening strategies than speaking and writing; they all seemed to teach their students similar types of reading strategies whereas there was greater variation between the participants in the way they approached teaching listening and speaking strategies. Alison, Sarah, Richard

and Jan revealed that they did not feel as well equipped to teach writing strategies and consequently did not devote as much class time to this, even though they believed their students would benefit from more training. Richard made the interesting observation about his students' lack of creative writing skills and the difficulty he had trying to teach strategies to develop this skill; this perhaps highlights a need for greater access to professional development in this area.

While all participants saw strategy use as advantageous, the way that strategy training took place in the classroom varied. Richard attested that, "fun is not a strategy" whereas Anna, Jan, Alison and Sarah made a point of trying to make strategy training enjoyable through the use of stories, games and songs. While Richard saw these types of activities as trivial, to the others, they were opportunities to engage and enthuse their students. All participants believed that strategy training helped students to achieve greater independence and confidence; Anna, Jan, Alison and Sarah stated that in order to successfully use strategies, students first needed to be motivated and an effective way to motivate them was through enjoyable learning experiences. This connection between motivation, confidence and independence, and the role of the teacher in these three areas is important and will be re-visited in later chapters.

The types of strategies the participants chose to teach their students depended on the age level and individual abilities of their students. Anna and Tom felt that students should enter secondary school with a mastery of some strategies, such as the ability to correctly use a dictionary, whereas the remaining participants made no assumptions about the strategies their students possessed and were willing to teach basic strategies if necessary. The strategies the participants taught their students varied in complexity. Anna devoted significant time to developing listening skills through the use of film, whereas Sarah taught her students relatively simple listening strategies, such as making language connections by listening for French words that sounded similar to English. The participants seemed to adapt their strategy teaching depending on the needs of their students.

The types of strategies that the learners used and the frequency with which they used them seemed to be dependent on their age level, rather than gender. Jan, Anna and Richard believed that girls tended to use a greater range of strategies than boys, whereas the other participants believed that strategy use was determined by skill level and that

more motivated students were more likely to experiment with a range of strategies. All participants felt that it was important that strategy training took place in the junior years and continued throughout the senior years, becoming more complex as students' skills developed.

4.9.1 Summary

The questionnaires provided a broad overview of the way in which the six participants taught and implemented Language Learning Strategies in their LOTE lessons. All of the participants were able to clearly define the role of Language Learning Strategies in the classroom and how strategy use could enhance their students' confidence and independence when learning a LOTE.

The participants regularly devoted class time to strategy teaching; however, they were also aware of the time required to effectively teach strategies and they acknowledged that it was often difficult to fit in strategy training due to curriculum demands.

The questionnaires revealed that the LOTE teachers appeared to introduce simple strategies in the lower secondary years and built on these strategies as their students moved through secondary school, revising the strategies already known and presenting new and more complex strategies, as their students' abilities and knowledge increased. The strategies taught related to the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. There appeared to be adequate time devoted to reading and listening strategies; however, not as much time seemed to be spent on teaching speaking and writing strategies. The participants stated that speaking and writing were areas where their students not only lacked strategies, but were also skills that they often found challenging.

Many of the strategies the participants taught were quite simple, such as correct dictionary use and pre-reading strategies. The participants also mentioned that effective strategy use could be enhanced through a greater understanding of the students' individual learning styles. They also felt that the ability to identify and use the correct strategy depending on the set task, was a crucial skill that students needed to master if strategy use was to be effective.

The participants appeared to constantly revise the way in which they introduced and used strategies in the classroom and attempted to improve and refine the way strategies were used by their students. They stated that strategy training was often a matter of “trial and error” and that it was necessary to experiment with the way that strategies were presented and used in the classroom. The participants also felt that motivation and a desire to succeed aided the students’ willingness to implement the strategies taught in class.

The participants noted some differences in the way that boys and girls engaged strategy use. A common theme among the participants was that boys preferred to use IT to aid their ability to remember and recall vocabulary; boys tended to rely on their memory and were less willing to revise their class notes; boys preferred to work collaboratively and favoured structured tasks, such as rote learning and translation exercises. As a result, they seemed to draw on strategies that could be used for these tasks. Girls, on the other hand, seemed more willing to revise their class notes and found that organisational strategies, such as using cue cards, colour coding and dividing class notes into topics were often useful tools.

The questionnaires provided a broad overview of the research participants. They delivered an understanding of the participants’ background, teaching experience, and attitudes and practices relating to Language Learning Strategies. However, the questionnaires cannot be seen in isolation. Although they served as a useful starting point for the in-depth interviews that followed, in order to gather a full and more comprehensive representation of how Language Learning Strategies are used in the LOTE classroom, the responses collected in the questionnaire must be viewed in conjunction with the results of the in-depth interviews. The following chapter will present the second stage of the data collection: the in-depth interviews.

Chapter Five

Results of the In-depth Interviews

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the results of the in-depth interviews will be presented. The first stage of the data collection involved a questionnaire. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were then conducted with each of the six research participants, using the information gathered from the questionnaire responses as a starting point for our conversation.

The in-depth interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix 2 p.309; Appendix 3 p. 310). I followed a set of pre-determined questions, and asked each participant these questions in the same order to ensure uniformity. However, the interviews were also flexible so that the participants' responses could be explored further, if necessary. At times, the interviews deviated from the set questions as topics of interest arose and were examined.

5.1.1 Introducing the research participants

The six participants possessed an array of Language Learning Strategies that they drew upon in their lessons. They taught their students very specific strategies that could be applied to listening and reading tasks; however, there was greater variety in the types of strategies they taught their students to use when completing speaking and writing tasks. The underlying reasons for this diversity and its effect on teaching and learning will be discussed in Chapter 7. Each participant appeared flexible in their strategy use; they seemed willing to try new and different teaching approaches in order to help their students work autonomously. This openness to new ideas meant that the participants were constantly experimenting and reviewing their lessons; it also provided great insight into how Language Learning strategies are taught and used in LOTE classrooms.

It must also be kept in mind that the interviews were conducted with a small group of teachers and related to their own experiences. While their interview responses can provide interesting and useful insights into how a particular group of teachers at a particular point in time teach learning strategies, their experiences and attitudes cannot be seen as representative of all LOTE teachers.

5.2. Richard – Builds Confidence

“It’s all right to make mistakes and learn from them...”

Richard is a native speaker of German, who at the time of the study, had been teaching German for ten years. He had experience teaching in both co-educational and single sex schools and is currently teaching in a girls’ independent school. He placed great value on the importance of strategy use and regularly devoted class time to experimenting with various strategies in order to improve the learning outcomes of his students. As English was his second language, Richard displayed a great deal of empathy towards his students and the challenges they faced when learning a LOTE. He often shared his own language learning experiences with his students, using both humour and empathy in order to create a classroom environment that was relaxed and supportive (Urios-Aparisi & Wagner, 2011).

5.2.1 Listening Strategies

“It takes time...”

Summary of Listening Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Use positive self-talk; try to feel relaxed.
- Listen for the gist of the conversation.
- Listen for key words.
- Listen for context.
- Take a guess.
- Keep practising; know that mistakes are inevitable.

According to Richard, listening skills are often very difficult to teach; in order to master listening techniques, students needed a great deal of exposure to a range of conversations in the LOTE. In his view, it can be quite challenging obtaining listening material that suits the students’ ability and skill level. Very often, the listening tasks on the CD that accompanies the set textbook are too simplistic and uninspiring, whereas authentic materials can often be too difficult, resulting in students feeling overwhelmed and disaffected.

He believed that one of the most valuable listening strategies the students could master was the ability to feel relaxed in the LOTE classroom. He found that positive self-talk and the ability to use relaxation techniques were vital strategies to employ. He ensured that the classroom environment was calm and that the students knew what to do if they encountered unknown material during a listening exercise. These strategies included: trying to understand the gist of a conversation, rather than focusing on every word; making sure that the students knew that they would have the opportunity to listen to the conversation more than once, thus ensuring that they felt more relaxed. Richard also reinforced the notion that it was all right to make a mistake; absolute perfection was not necessary.

Richard taught his students to listen for key words to help them understand a conversation. He also taught his students how to break down a conversation into smaller, more manageable parts. Other strategies included listening for the context of the conversation and taking a guess, even if they were not completely sure of the correct answer.

He commented that students require a lot of listening practice, in a range of settings, such as formal speeches and informal conversations, in order for students to feel more comfortable when completing listening tasks. One of the difficulties he had encountered was the heavy reliance his students tended to have on him, as their teacher. He found with other language areas, such as reading, students could quite easily practise the skills alone, by referring back to their class notes. However, he felt that listening required greater input from the teacher and was therefore, a much more difficult skill for the students to master. Because it was largely teacher directed, it tended to be tackled mainly in the classroom, which presented various limitations. He said:

I feel there's not enough time to develop listening strategies, especially because this is something that needs to be done with the teacher...it's often hard to get enough listening material.

5.2.2 Speaking Strategies

“You need to be flexible...”

Summary of Speaking Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Regularly revise phrases and vocabulary.
- Know how to break down parts of speech.
- Learn 2-3 words at a time.

Richard used a range of strategies to help his students develop their speaking skills. He would mime words and phrases and encourage them to do the same in an effort to help them improve their ability to remember and recall vocabulary. In addition to this, his students had also been taught how to memorise and recognise useful phrases and common vocabulary, such as sentence starters and conjunctions. These phrases and words were revised and practised each lesson to help reinforce their purpose and to help the students become used to drawing on them where necessary.

Richard’s students are also shown how to memorise parts of speech. They are taught how to break a sentence firstly into phrases, and then, how to group two to three words together. The students are taught how to memorise two or three words at a time and are then able to reconstruct sentences from these word groups and phrases.

He also discussed the need for flexibility when developing speaking skills. One strategy he uses with his students is to teach them a variety of ways to say something, and then allowing them the choice to use the style that they preferred. Richard felt that Language Learning Strategies could be enhanced by understanding the learning styles of individual students.

5.2.3 Reading Strategies

“They need to know the basics...”

Summary of Reading Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Identify text type.
- Highlight key words.
- Read for gist.
- Look for context.
- Stay calm; know that they will not understand every word.

Richard taught his students what he referred to as “basic” reading strategies. These included: pre-reading the questions to help ascertain the meaning of the text; looking for clues by reading the title and looking at any pictures; identifying the text type and finding and highlighting key words. He believed that it was crucial that this type of strategy training started as soon as students began studying a LOTE and needed to be regularly revised so these strategies would become almost second nature to them and could be applied to any text they encountered.

He also told his students that it is quite normal not to understand every word in the text. He alleged that if students approached a reading task with realistic expectations, then they would not panic when they encountered unfamiliar words. Instead, they would be able to use other strategies, such as using the context to try to deduce the text meaning.

Richard taught his students to take a guess and not worry if they made a mistake. He tried to build up his students’ confidence by exposing them to a wider range of reading material and encouraging them to just, “have a go.” He explained:

I think it’s very important that we give the students lots of opportunities to do comprehension, to read the text and to see how much they can actually understand...it’s important to give the students’ simple texts and say: Here, look! You were able to understand this, even without having to look it up. You could guess what it meant.

5.2.4 Writing Strategies

“They tend to feel quite powerless when it comes to writing...”

Summary of Writing Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Plan and draft their writing.
- Brainstorm ideas as a whole class.
- Work in small group/ pairs.
- Know stock phrases.
- Build sentences around verb.

Richard taught his students specific writing strategies, such as demonstrating how to plan and draft their work. He often provided scaffolding for the students, working together as a class to brainstorm ideas and then breaking into small groups or pairs to complete the writing task. He taught his students stock phrases and vocabulary that could often be used in formal writing tasks.

He also taught other writing techniques, such as writing a sentence by starting with the verb and then building the sentence around it. In addition to this, he encouraged the students to “think in German” rather than trying to translate sentences from English into German.

Richard trained his students to use circumlocution in their writing, so they did not need to use a specific word or phrase in order to express their meaning. He encouraged his students to just write and not worry if their work contained errors, saying, “I don’t insist on a particular word or a particular phrase as long as they are able to convey the message.”

He also taught his students to learn certain formulas so they could confidently write, using the correct word order and word forms. These formulas were introduced to the whole class and then practised and drilled in a range of ways, such as placing posters around the room, games and quizzes and a range of writing exercises. He remarked:

When I return written tasks...I try to find out what they did wrong and say: Here, look! You did look up this word correctly, but then you ended up on the wrong path by choosing the wrong ending. I also find that this is an important strategy because it will help them for next time. I think it's important to keep strategy teaching embedded in the classroom tasks. It's something that is on-going that I do all the time.

Although Richard regularly spent class time teaching writing strategies, he was aware of the time constraints and the need to meet the demands of the curriculum. He felt frustrated that he was not able to spend as much time as he believed necessary to effectively teach writing skills. Moreover, he was aware that writing is a difficult skill that requires a great deal of time and effort; he empathised with the challenges his students faced as they tried to master this aspect of learning a LOTE. In his questionnaire Richard mentioned the difficulty he had trying to teach creative writing skills to his students. During the interview, he spoke again on this topic; he believed that he lacked the expertise to teach his students creative writing strategies and found that rather than helping his students to become more autonomous, their lack of strategies meant that they relied quite heavily on him.

I find that they tend to feel quite powerless when it comes to writing skills. They don't seem to have the skills they need to be able to write a lot, so they often need lots of help from me.

5.3 Anna – Innovative and Creative

“We need to start from where their interests are...”

Anna is a vibrant, enthusiastic teacher of Italian with a host of ideas and practices that she has gathered and refined during her teaching career. As previously mentioned, Anna has taught English and LOTE overseas to both adults and secondary students for many years but has only recently completed her Australian teaching qualifications. As a result, she was in the unique and, from the researcher's point of view, very interesting position of being a highly experienced teacher, with a wealth of knowledge, but she also possessed new and fresh ideas that she gained during her recent university training. Furthermore, she had seen many ideas and practices regarding Language Learning

Strategies whilst on her teaching rounds. I found this extremely valuable, as teaching can often be very isolated; while new ideas and teaching practices are regularly evaluated and shared with colleagues, it is often difficult to observe other teachers in action, in their own classrooms. For this reason, her observations and comments were both insightful and thought provoking.

5.3.1 Listening Strategies

“They need to understand that it takes years of work...”

Summary of Listening Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Stay calm.
- Read the set questions first; know what to listen for.
- Take a guess.
- Listen for clues (background noises, gender of speakers).
- Listen for gist.

Anna had a range of strategies that she used to assist her students with listening tasks. She taught them pre-listening strategies, strategies to apply during the task and post-listening strategies, and, as a whole class, the students would practise these while listening to a CD that accompanied the set classroom textbook. Pre-listening tasks included: looking at the set questions to try to predict what the conversation might be about and the type of vocabulary that they might expect to hear. During the listening exercise, students were encouraged to listen for clues surrounding the dialogue that might provide extra information, such as the gender of the speakers, the number of speakers and background noises to help them to determine the setting. She explained:

When we’re doing a listening task in class, I think it’s important that the first time they hear it that they just listen, they don’t have to do anything. I always say to them: “Close your eyes.” Because it really takes a bit of time to get what they say. So once, twice, three times, just listen. Then I ask: “How many people were talking? Are they male or female?” Just basic questions. We build, bit by bit.

Anna also spoke about the need to have realistic expectations regarding listening skills. Her students know that that they will not understand every utterance that they hear and this is perfectly acceptable:

I tell the students, I've studied many languages and to be able to understand 90 percent of what is being said takes years of work.

Anna also stressed the importance of ensuring that the classroom environment was relaxed and that her students knew what to do if they did not understand parts of the audio, such as staying calm and taking a guess.

5.3.2 Speaking Strategies

“If they make a mistake, I don’t correct them, I just let them speak...”

Summary of Speaking Strategies Taught:

- Students should always have a go, even if they make a mistake.
- Teachers remind students that everyone feels self-conscious.
- Teachers engage students in short, authentic conversations whenever possible.
- At the end of the lesson students write a summary of what they have learned.

Anna stressed the need for speaking tasks to be relevant and meaningful to the students. She focused on encouraging her students to speak in Italian wherever possible and urged them to, “have a go” even if they were not always correct. Anna appeared to devote a significant amount of time to creating a classroom environment that was both relaxed and supportive, so that the students did not feel anxious or self-conscious if they did make an error when speaking. She ensured that intermittent, real exchanges of dialogue occurred throughout the lesson, rather than a set ‘speaking’ task. She explained how she would discuss topics such as the weather, television programs or music while the students were working on a writing task and as she moved about the classroom. She believed that this ensured that the dialogues were meaningful, and even if the students were not directly involved in the exchange, they could still benefit by listening to the conversation. She said, “It helps me to see what they know and don’t know and our little conversations help the others, because they listen to what we’re saying.” She went on to explain:

In the lower levels...I let them get up and just say whatever they want, for example, they tell me about their week-end. Even if it's only one or two sentences, they just have to say something...If they make a mistake, I don't correct them, I just let them speak...I'll find something that they did well, like their pronunciation. And I'll take notes and if there's an error that they consistently make...I'll go over it with them...I want them to feel confident and not have any apprehension about speaking...I think it's very important to let them speak without worrying about being graded or getting it wrong.

These authentic, everyday conversations enabled the students to see the relevance of learning a LOTE. Anna also asked students to summarise, in Italian, the points introduced during the lesson in order to ensure comprehension.

5.3.3 Reading strategies

“They learn from each other...”

Summary of Reading Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Work in pairs/groups and collaborate skills.
- Read authentic, interesting and relevant material.
- Read the set questions before the main text.
- Look for clues, such as the title, illustrations, captions.
- Summarise each paragraph; predict what might happen next.

Anna exposed her students to a wide range of reading materials, in addition to using the set textbook. Her students read comic strips, newspaper articles and magazines, film reviews, book synopses and short stories in order to develop their reading skills. Anna also stressed the importance of providing students with materials that were authentic and that piqued their interest. For this reason, she often took authentic materials and adapted them to suit the students' level of ability. For example, she modified a written interview with the actor Robert Pattinson, as many of her students were fans of the *Twilight* films. This ability to tap into popular culture and understand the students' interests enabled Anna to deliver lessons that were stimulating and engaging.

Anna described how she used scaffolding to help students develop their independence when reading. Students begin reading a passage as a whole class, then once their skills improve, they complete a reading task in small groups, then pairs, until, finally, they are able to complete a set reading task on their own. Anna places students in mixed ability groups. She believed that working in mixed ability groups and peer collaboration was a valuable way for students to learn from each other:

I usually get them to work in small groups, maybe in pairs or groups of three to four. I find this is a really good way for them to learn, because they learn from each other. If one doesn't know something, then someone else in the group will. I often group them according to ability, putting the stronger ones with the weaker ones, so they can help each other.

Other reading strategies included pre-reading tasks, such as teaching the students to read the questions first, before beginning the reading task, to cue them in to what the passage might be about. She also taught her students to look for other clues to help them with comprehension, such as reading the title of the text and looking at the pictures. She explained that she encouraged her students to gather as many clues about the text as they could, prior to reading.

Anna also taught her students strategies to complete while reading, such as predicting and summarising. During reading, Anna would ask her students to link paragraphs together by reviewing what had happened so far and then predicting what might happen next. She said:

I try to build on what they know...if we do a reading passage, they all take it in turns to tell me something about the passage and we build from there. We don't just translate the passage from start to finish. Before we read, we look at the questions first, so they know what to look out for, we look at the pictures and see if there are any clues there to help us with the passage. We try to link the paragraphs together. What has happened so far, what do they think might happen next.

5.3.4 Writing Strategies

“Once they know what to do, they become more confident to do it on their own...”

Summary of Writing Strategies Taught:

Students:

- Work as a whole class/small groups/pairs; gradually reduce scaffolding.
- Brainstorm ideas, plan and draft.
- List key words.
- Recognise features of writing and writing styles.
- Keep a journal, write authentic emails.

Anna described a variety of strategies that she used to help enhance her students' writing skills. She ensured that they had experience writing in a range of styles and that the students were provided with scaffolding that enabled them to gradually gain more independence as their writing skills increased. It appeared that initially, the writing tasks were very structured and teacher-centred and gradually, Anna allowed the students to work with less support. The students were taught to recognise the features of different writing styles. For example, a formal essay required an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion. Anna provided them with this format and showed them how to brainstorm ideas and useful vocabulary and phrases. The students practised writing in this particular style, until eventually, they were able to write a formal essay on their own:

I give them crucial words that they might need, words that are related to the writing topic. We talk about the structure of a piece of writing, the introduction and what we need to include. How do you start a sentence? How do you link the sentences together? So we work together on that. We do this as a whole class and I guide them. Once they know the structure they become more confident to do it on their own.

Anna explained how the students practise writing in a variety of styles and gradually develop their skills, learning to include more detail and a more sophisticated range of vocabulary as their skills progress. Once the foundation has been built, the tasks can be re-visited, each time building upon previous knowledge:

In Year 7 and 8 we do shorter things, like sending emails and keeping a diary and then we build from this. A diary is really good, even with the senior students. They have a little booklet. It's a separate booklet that they use just for [handwritten] diary entries. Every once in a while I look at it and you can really see the mistakes that they keep making all the time. It's really good in the extension classes, there are a lot of really hard working students who really want to be pushed further, so the diary is a really good way to extend them. I try not to correct it. I don't want to just fix up their mistakes for them. It won't help them learn. I point out their mistakes and then they need to go back and fix it up themselves. So their diary entries become their writing drafts.

Many of Anna's writing strategies were based around the idea of meeting the children where they were at; that is, understanding their abilities and their interests and basing activities around this information:

What I noticed is, we don't actually ask the kids to start writing little sentences from early on. Because learning a second language is new to them, they just expect everything that they learn can be transferred to English. They don't think in the second language, they think in English. But if we get them to start writing from where they are right now, using what they know, focusing on the basic things and descriptions: colours, adjectives, family, linking to what they know, what their interests are, like sport. We need to start from where their interests are, because that's all we have.

5.4 Sarah - Challenges Students

"I present it as a game and they really love it..."

Sarah is a young, enthusiastic French teacher, just beginning her career; at the time of the study she was half way through her second year of teaching. She saw great value in using strategies to assist students in developing their LOTE skills and specifically taught them a range of strategies related to each of the language skills. Working in an all-boys' school, Sarah was highly aware of the need to keep students engaged and motivated. She felt that the students needed to experience feelings of accomplishment and progress, and for this reason, felt that strategy use was a valuable tool. As a new graduate, she had recently completed teaching rounds and had gathered a variety of ideas and experiences which she was learning to refine and implement in her own classroom. She also was extremely competent incorporating Information Technology into her lessons and, as each student had their own notebook computer, Information

Technology was used every lesson. Like the previous participants, Sarah often interchanged the term “strategy”, using it to refer to set steps or actions taken by the students when completing a task, as well as classroom tasks or activities that the students completed, which were usually teacher led or directed.

5.4.1 Listening Strategies

“It’s important to make sure they’re prepared...”

Summary of Listening Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Stay calm; it’s normal not to understand everything.
- Read the comprehension questions; underline key words, predict the dialogue.
- Listen for clues e.g. background noises, number and gender of speakers.

Sarah used a range of listening strategies to help develop her students’ skills but also acknowledged that she found listening a difficult skill to teach. The set listening tasks usually involved listening to the C.D that accompanied the prescribed text and was followed by answering a set of comprehension questions.

Sarah spent a significant amount of time ensuring that the classroom felt calm and relaxed. She believed that it was important that the students felt comfortable discussing the difficulties they encountered when completing listening tasks and that they knew that it did not matter if they did make a mistake. Sarah tried to promote this atmosphere of support by sharing her own experiences as a student, as well as ensuring that success was achievable by allowing the student to listen to the audio material more than once.

Sarah completed a number of pre-listening tasks including: reading the comprehension questions to gain a broad understanding about what the listening task might be about; underlining important words and known words to assist comprehension and using all of these clues to discuss, as a whole class, what the conversation might be about, as well as other details such as the time and location of the conversation. She explained:

I'll ask them to use clues from the background noises. Can they hear an aeroplane? Maybe they're at an airport. And to listen out for other sounds as well. How many people are there? Also, look at the questions they are given. You can tell by the questions the type of conversation you're going to hear. What words are being used? Are they at a market place? If they are, then what type of conversation might they hear? Is it going to involve an exchange of money? Asking the price of something? Then what words and phrases might they hear? They will probably hear numbers. So we reinforce all of these things before we begin so they have an idea about what to expect.

Sarah believed that preparation was an important listening strategy: that is, students should utilise all of the clues available to help them complete the task; they should take notes while they were listening and know not to panic if they do not understand every word. They should try to guess the unknown vocabulary and phrases. She said:

I think when they're doing a listening task it's really important to make sure they are prepared: they know what to listen out for; how many times they will hear it; what they are expected to do; what to do if they don't get it the first time. Things like this really help them to prepare for the task. It's important to make sure that they're ready, right from the start.

5.4.2 Speaking Strategies

"They need to be able to commit phrases to memory..."

Summary of Speaking Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Know how to use sentence starters, hesitation devices, fillers, conjunctions and circumlocution.
- Know how to ask for clarification; ask sentences to be repeated.
- Be prepared; have a wide bank of vocabulary to draw on.
- Speak often; short, simple conversations help build confidence.

To assist students with speaking tasks, Sarah taught her students common phrases and vocabulary which they could draw upon during a conversation. These included sentence starters, conjunctions and hesitation devices and fillers. She also taught her students circumlocution, so if they found themselves unable to recall a particular word

or phrase they would attempt to use similar words in order to convey their meaning. They also knew how to ask for clarification and to request a phrase to be repeated. Sarah felt that it was important that her students had a bank of vocabulary and phrases that they could draw upon to assist them in unknown situations. She believed that this preparation helped to develop speaking confidence. She said:

When they're speaking, when they have to do an oral task, I'll teach them the strategies that can help them carry a conversation. Things like fillers and hesitation devices. So just a couple of weeks ago, we spent an entire lesson just looking at these two techniques. I'll introduce it to them and then we practise, so they can get used to it and can draw on them when they need them...Things like, 'in my opinion' or 'on the other hand' things like this are really useful and can help give them more confidence when they're speaking. If they can commit those to memory, it can be really helpful. And I see them being able to use these.

Sarah also felt that it was important that students were given ample opportunities to speak and often engaged them in simple conversations each lesson. Her main goal appeared to be to help her students gain confidence when speaking French. Sarah hoped that over time, with continued practice, her students would overcome their reservations and no longer see speaking as a daunting and overwhelming task.

5.4.3 Reading Strategies

"I suddenly realised, they're not getting this..."

Summary of Reading Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Read the title.
- Read the comprehension questions first, before the main text.
- Underline key words.
- Use visual clues e.g. pictures.
- Skim and scan text.
- Identify text type.
- Know how to use a dictionary.

Sarah taught her students a number of reading strategies, including pre-reading strategies, such as looking at the title of the passage, reading the comprehension questions first, underlining key words and using visual clues, such as pictures.

Her students knew how to skim and scan a passage, gaining an overall understanding of the text before reading for specific information. She said:

...when you give students a reading passage, to read for gist, rather than trying to translate word for word. To just get an overall feel for what it is about, and then to break it down and look for more detail.

Sarah also noticed that at times they used strategies on their own, without specific instruction or guidance:

They're good at identifying the type of text it is – you know, a letter or email or something like that. We really read a lot of different types of texts: newspaper articles, stories, the blurb from a DVD cover. I'm also an English teacher so I see a lot of the boys use their knowledge from English in French. We read a lot of different types of texts in English so they know the format, what a certain type of text looks like, so this seems to help them in French. Even with the younger boys, the primary school boys, even they know how to identify a text type. They really bring that strategy to the class themselves. It's not something that I've specifically taught them.

Sarah also explained how she specifically taught her students how to use a dictionary, ensuring that they knew, not only how to look up unfamiliar words, but to also be aware of other, valuable functions of a dictionary. She felt that by spending time specifically teaching these skills, the students would then be able to competently use a dictionary on their own. Interestingly, she spoke about how she assumed that her students would automatically understand how to effectively use a dictionary and her surprise that these skills needed to be taught, not just once, but required regular revision and practice:

This is something that I've really had to spend time teaching them in class, you know, how a dictionary functions. They don't know how to do this...I just thought they would know how to use a dictionary. I always thought it was just second nature, so I didn't spend any time teaching these skills. But then, later on, I suddenly realised, oh, they're not getting this, they don't know how to do this. It just never occurred to me! So this year, with my Year 7s, we've spent time in class, working on their dictionary skills and it really has made it a lot easier. Once they know this, once they have these skills, it helps them when they have to do more

complex tasks. They know how a dictionary works, and not just how to look up definitions. It's things like using the whole of the dictionary, you know, those middle pages that shows them verb conjugations. It's really helped, explicitly teaching them how to use a dictionary.

5.4.4 Writing Strategies

"They can always find mistakes in each other's work but never their own!"

Summary of Writing Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Be familiar with strategies and keep practising.
- Brainstorm ideas, plan and draft writing.
- List all known vocabulary and phrases before beginning.
- Collaborate ideas in small groups/pairs.
- Revise their class notes.
- Recognise different writing styles.
- Recognise the structures and conventions of writing.
- Know useful phrases such as opening sentences, conjunctions.
- Edit and proof-read in pairs/small groups.

Sarah believed that writing strategies were teachable and felt that they needed to be introduced at an early age and regularly revised and reinforced.

Sarah taught her students to brainstorm ideas about the writing topic before beginning the task. At first, this was done as a whole class, then in small groups, then pairs, until eventually, the students were able to complete this task on their own.

Students were then taught to list all of the vocabulary and phrases they knew that might be related to the topic. They were encouraged to look through their class notes and text to find useful phrases that could be included in their writing.

They were also taught to recognise the structure of different writing styles so they would know appropriate features to include, such as a title if they were writing a newspaper article, appropriate opening sentences if they were writing an email or an invitation and so on. They knew that an extended piece of writing required paragraphs,

including an introduction and conclusion. The boys were taught a range of useful opening sentences and vocabulary to help them begin and end each paragraph.

Sarah had also taught her students how to proof-read their final piece of writing. They knew how to check for spelling errors by revising their class notes or using their dictionary or class text. She encouraged them to pool their knowledge by checking each other's work before submitting their final copy. She explained the benefits of peer collaboration:

**When they've finished, they share their work with a partner.
And this is something that I've found to be really beneficial.
Their partner might give them ideas on how to improve
their work or they might pick up on any errors. They're
great detectives! They can always find someone else's
mistakes but they can never see it in their own work!**

5.5 Alison – Understands Individual Differences

"I really just try to build up their confidence..."

Alison is an experienced Indonesian teacher who, at the time of the study had been teaching Indonesian in a co-educational secondary school for almost ten years. Alison showed great interest in strategy training and had devoted a significant amount of class time to teaching her students specific strategies which she believed would help them to achieve greater competence and independence in the LOTE classroom. She spoke of how strategy training was often "trial and error", as some students would immediately see the benefit of certain strategies and would be able to apply these steps to different tasks, whereas other students would tend to use the same strategies time and again, and appeared unwilling to attempt using new and different strategies. Alison felt that her ability to devote class time to strategy training was hindered by the demands of meeting the set curriculum, particularly in the senior secondary years.

5.5.1 Listening Strategies

“Basic vocabulary needs to be second nature...”

Summary of Listening Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Read the set questions before beginning the listening task.
- Predict what the dialogue might be about.
- Use clues such as background noises and the number of speakers.
- Take brief notes; take a guess.
- Know simple vocabulary: numbers, days of the week, times.

Like the previous participants, Alison spoke about the importance of completing pre-listening activities. She taught her students to look at the set questions before beginning a listening task in order to guide them towards what they should listen out for and what the conversation might be about. Alison encouraged her students to make predictions about the type of conversation they might hear and to also use other clues available, such as the number of speakers; their gender and age; to listen to, and try to interpret, any background noises; and finally, to make a guess, even if it might not be entirely correct. Alison also ensured that her students had a wide bank of commonly used vocabulary, such as numbers, days of the week, months of the year, clothing, food and so on. She believed that if her students could easily access vocabulary, almost without thinking, this automaticity would make listening tasks much easier and less daunting. Consequently, Alison devoted regular class time to vocabulary building exercises, including games, quizzes and computer-based activities. She explained:

The kids who do really well, they’ve got a really good idea about what to expect. I’ve told them, all of these things come up, all the time on the exam. For example, you know, easy things really, the days of the week, the time, all those things that set the scene. They need to be able to draw on all of that basic vocabulary really quickly, almost without thinking, so that it’s second nature. They need to revise all of that basic vocabulary so that when they hear it on the exam, it won’t throw them.

5.5.2 Speaking Strategies

“I teach them strategies to buy them a bit of time...”

Summary of Speaking Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Work in pairs/small groups; collaborate knowledge.
- Understand and use sentence starters, hesitation devices etc.
- Use simple, familiar vocabulary correctly.
- Listen to fluent, accurate speech as often as possible.

Some of the strategies Alison’s students used to aid them with their speaking included: peer collaboration, asking the teacher for assistance and using a dictionary to help them prepare for a speaking task. Alison had spent time in class teaching her students useful phrases and vocabulary that could be easily incorporated into conversations and her students regularly practised these. She explained:

I teach them useful phrases, you know, stock phrases that will help them: *I believe...according to...I think...And strategies to buy them a bit of time until they formulate their answers: *let me think...umm...I’m not sure...And we just practise saying them.**

Alison provided her students with lists of useful phrases and her students also knew to refer to their text for common vocabulary, such as conjunctions. She spent class time ensuring that her students were familiar with using particular words and phrases in their speech until it became almost second nature. She emphasised that quality was the key, rather than quantity, telling her senior students to regularly revise stock phrases and commit them to memory, saying:

Some of the phrases, you know, *although, but, however*, they’re really useful...I always tell them to refer to those pages and try to use at least five of those phrases...And even if you keep using the same five, when you get to your speaking exam, at least it will be at the top of your head, you’ll remember it.

Alison spoke of the need to make sure that her students were relaxed and confident when speaking and said that she would rather students use simple, familiar vocabulary and phrases in their conversations, and to use them accurately, instead of attempting to use a wider range of vocabulary and feel uneasy. She felt this was particularly important in the junior years. Alison often tried to ensure that classroom speaking practice

revolved around known topics to help develop students' confidence, particularly in the junior secondary years. She said:

But with the younger ones, I really just try to build up their confidence, make them comfortable. So we do keep using the same words and phrases and I'll set it up when I ask them a question so that they will use the words and phrases that they know. I'll make sure that the question is similar to what they have been doing, like, to get them comfortable.

This repetition and use of familiar topics and vocabulary seemed to help students to build up their confidence when speaking. It also enabled more capable students to add more detail if they were able but did not place pressure on those students who found speaking difficult. Alison was also mindful of the importance of listening to others' conversations. The less competent students were able to listen to how sentences were structured before being called on to speak.

5.5.3 Reading Strategies

"I encourage them to ask questions..."

Summary of Reading Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Identify the text type.
- Use clues, such as pictures, captions, title.
- Read the comprehension questions before the main text.
- Use prior knowledge.
- Be able to recognise the base word; recognise prefixes and suffixes.
- Skim and scan.
- Look for key words.

Some of the reading strategies Alison taught her class included pre-reading tasks, such as identifying the text type; using visual clues such as pictures and captions; reading the title and questions first in order to gain a greater understanding about what to look for when reading and what the passage might be about; looking for familiar words and key words; skimming and scanning when reading the passage; taking a guess when unsure. Alison also specifically taught students to use their prior knowledge and to draw on this when they encountered unfamiliar material. She showed me a reading passage her students had recently completed and explained:

Because I know which words they've learnt, which words they haven't learnt I can help them to draw on their previous knowledge...they've had this one (points to a word in the text) *mengaman*, which means 'to protect' before. But in this case, it's to do with protecting Australia, protecting its citizens. But when they came across it earlier, it was in a passage about the environment and protecting wildlife. We did a whole topic about tigers being endangered and protecting the tigers. So I said to them: Do you remember where we've seen this before? Do you remember when we were talking about the tigers and they had to be protected? And straight away they remembered it was the same word. They had to go back and connect where they had seen that word.

Alison also taught her students strategies to help them identify unknown words. They knew how to break down a word, to take away the prefix and suffix until it was in its base form. From there, the students could work out the meaning. Once again, Alison demonstrated to me how she did this, using material her students had recently read:

When we're reading...I might pick out a word that I know they haven't learnt, just say, *mencabut*, 'to get rid of' for example. And so I'll ask that student to have a go at translating it. And I always say to them: Look inside, into the middle of the word and from there, read out. And then you can work it out. And usually they can work it out.

This type of strategy, once understood, could easily be transferred to other reading material and most certainly, could be used without teacher guidance.

Alison regularly discussed and practised various reading strategies in her lessons across all year levels. She spoke about the need for senior students to be able to, "read with purpose" so they consciously applied the reading strategies they knew to every text they encountered. She told me:

What I'm going to do next is to really try to focus on reading strategies even more by getting a whole lot of past exams so they really get a chance to read different texts and practise these skills...they need to be able to remember these features so when they're reading a text they can recognize them and know straight away the type of text it is. And we talk about different text types all the time. I encourage them to ask questions and to try to guess what they're reading by looking at the clues on the page.

Alison taught her students to break down the text into smaller, more manageable sections. They also knew how to skim and scan the text in order to use all of the available information. For example, she taught her students to read the questions first

and then try to find similar words and phrases in the main body of the text to guide them to where the correct answer might be; to use the passage to guide them towards correct spelling and sentence structures; they knew how to identify Indonesian words that were similar to English and to use all information in the text to their advantage, including reading all instructions carefully. She explained:

Certain strategies, like looking at the questions first, really helps...And heading towards the exam, having a few useful strategies really can save a lot of time. They need to be able to use the reading time in the exam effectively. You know, use it to read all of the questions, look for key words, look for Indonesian words that are in the questions that are also in the text so you have an idea where you might find the answer. And sometimes there are a lot of clues in English, you know, find the English words to help you, read the instructions carefully...There are a lot of clues on the exam that can help them with correct sentence structure and the word order.

5.5.4 Writing Strategies

Keep it simple. Don't overcomplicate it...

Summary of Writing Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Brainstorm ideas; plan and draft writing.
- Know how to correctly use a dictionary.
- Highlight useful vocabulary/phrases in class notes and refer to them.
- Work in mixed ability groups; pool knowledge.
- Recognise text types.
- Know sentence starters, conjunctions and other useful phrases.
- Begin with 2-3 key words and build sentence around these words.
- Know that each sentence must have a subject, object and verb.
- Revise, edit and proof-read in pairs/small groups.

Alison taught her students a number of writing strategies; these included knowing how to correctly use a dictionary so that the children could use the correct word form in their sentences. They also knew to first check their textbook and refer to their class notes if they were unsure of the correct sentence structure. They had been taught to highlight useful phrases and vocabulary in their class notes that they might be able to use in their writing. The students often worked collaboratively on writing tasks and Alison ensured

that the groups were mixed ability so that each student would bring their individual strengths and learning styles to the task. Alison often demonstrated different writing styles by showing her students various examples, such as letters, invitations and informative pieces of writing. These samples were discussed and useful phrases and interesting vocabulary were highlighted and practised in various writing tasks.

The students knew to brainstorm their ideas before beginning to write and they knew how to plan and draft their work. Alison also devoted class time to specifically teaching useful phrases and vocabulary, such as conjunctions and sentence starters so that the students would be able to easily remember and recall these words and phrases when completing a writing task. She explained:

I'll show them how to join their phrases together using conjunctions that they've learnt. So I might put two grammar points on the board...and we'll go over their meaning and how to use them and then I'll say to them: When you're writing your text, it can really enhance your writing if you can include those points. So I always try to focus on getting them to think about the grammar points they've learnt and how they can fit them into the writing task that I've set.

This guidance seemed to help the students to develop confidence and provide scaffolding until they were able to work independently on a piece of writing.

Another strategy Alison taught her students was to write, what she called, "word groupings" – that is, two or three words associated with the topic that could later be fleshed out into formal sentences and paragraphs. She told them to write short, simple sentences to begin with, and then to add detail later, once they had written their main ideas and ensured that their sentence structures were accurate. She advised:

You have to keep your sentences short and whatever information you've got there, just have a subject, your object, your verb. And don't write too much because that's when you get confused. Keep it simple. Don't over complicate it.

She succinctly summarised the writing strategies she taught her students:

So really, for writing strategies, we do things like planning, drafting, note-taking, modelling, peer support. (via email)

5.6 Jan – Enthusiastic

“It’s really just about trying to keep them engaged...”

Jan is a highly experienced German teacher, who, at the time of the study was working at an independent co-educational secondary school, teaching German from Year Seven through to Year Twelve. Despite her enormous wealth of experience, Jan was constantly trying to improve her teaching skills, experimenting with new strategies and techniques. She commented that participating in the research project provided her with an opportunity to reflect on her own classroom practices and enabled her to consider incorporating different strategies in her lessons. It was this continual striving to improve her students’ learning experiences that made Jan’s contribution to this study invaluable.

5.6.1 Listening Strategies

“In exams they need to remember that it’s just like what we did in class...”

Summary of Listening Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Read questions before listening to audio.
- Take brief notes while listening.
- First listen for gist, then listen for detail.
- Listen for key words.

Some of the strategies that Jan taught her students included pre-listening activities, strategies to use during the listening task and post-listening strategies. These included: reading the questions accompanying the audio first so the students knew what to listen for; note taking during the task; knowing to take brief notes, rather than trying to answer specific questions in full; listening several times and using each listen for a specific purpose, such as listening for gist the first time and then using the second listen for detail.

Jan also used regular classroom listening activities as preparation for the more important exams. She spoke about how the listening tasks in the early secondary years are often considered to be “dead easy” by the students and then suddenly increase in difficulty during the upper secondary years. She felt that this often meant that the students were

not adequately prepared for upper secondary LOTE and struggled with listening tasks. Therefore, Jan felt that constant practice was essential to help develop listening strategies, which meant that regardless of the difficulty of the task, the same strategies could be applied. She said:

The listening tasks are very clear and fairly easy...But then in the later years, they suddenly become more difficult, the tempo speeds up by Year Ten and so this is when they need to be able to draw on strategies...so I keep reminding them of the same things, whether it's under exam conditions or just in class: know what to listen for, jot down notes as you go, write your answers afterwards, don't write it while you're listening.

5.6.2 Speaking Strategies

“I try to keep it interesting...”

Summary of Speaking Strategies Taught:

- Teachers should ensure conversations are short, manageable and authentic.
- Teachers should model and practise accurate pronunciation.
- Students should rote learn specific vocabulary and phrases; practise in class.

To help develop speaking strategies, Jan taught her students specific “fillers” and stock phrases that could often be drawn upon in various situations. These were practised and reinforced during short, intermittent conversations during the lesson. She also set up a range of speaking opportunities during her lessons, ranging from scripted role-plays to games. Jan ensured that she modelled correct pronunciation and word order for her students so they were able to learn accurate pronunciation.

5.6.3 Reading Strategies

“You just have to keep at it...”

Summary of Reading Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Pre-read comprehension questions.
- Predict using clues such as heading, illustrations.
- Highlight key words and recurring words.

Jan taught her students pre-reading tasks, such as reading the questions first, using clues in the text, such as the heading and illustrations, highlighting key words and recurring words and marking where they thought the answer might be in the passage. These strategies were specifically taught in class and regularly revised and practised. Jan was aware that these strategies needed to be constantly reinforced, saying:

You have to keep going over strategies. You can't expect just to show them once and they've got it. You need to model it in different ways, explain it differently, until you think they really understand it.

5.6.4 Writing Strategies

“The text can be useful...”

Summary of Writing Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Brainstorm ideas as a whole class.
- Plan and draft writing in pairs.
- Refer to the textbook for vocabulary/phrases.
- Regularly revise their notes.
- Share strategies as a whole class.
- Teachers organise games and competitions using the dictionary.
- Teachers organise games and competitions to build vocabulary.

Jan felt that her students lacked writing strategies and was conscious that she needed to devote more class time to teaching explicit strategies. She felt that trying to meet the demands of the curriculum often prevented her from spending more time teaching specific writing strategies. Some of the strategies Jan taught her students included: brainstorming the topic on the board, as a whole class; planning and drafting and working on a writing task in pairs. Jan also relied on the set classroom text to help teach writing strategies. She explained that the text contained a range of useful phrases and vocabulary, including the formula for starting and ending sentences, conjunctions and so on. Her students knew how to locate these in their text and draw upon them where necessary. Jan believed that regular use and revision of these words and phrases made it easier for the students to incorporate them into their own writing.

Jan also commented that while she specifically taught writing strategies, some of her students appeared to develop strategies of their own. She noted:

I've noticed some kids have developed their own writing strategies, without me actually telling them. So they might make up their own little list of phrases and vocabulary. Others might use colour coding that they've devised but I've noticed that girls tend to do this more than boys. Boys tend to rely more on their memories, which may or may not be effective, it depends on the student.

Jan encouraged the students to share their strategies with each other and to experiment with using them; however, she also noted that boys tended to possess a narrow range of strategies and seemed less willing to implement strategies, preferring to rely on their memory. She felt that although this technique enabled the boys to cope reasonably well with the set classroom tasks, it was not providing them with a solid foundation, so in the later years, they tended to struggle with the more complex nature of learning a LOTE. She said:

I don't think that boys have a wide range of strategies, not as much as girls. So in the earlier years, if a boy has a reasonably good memory, he will probably do very well. For example, if they do a test, the writing tasks will be based on what we have done in class, they will be based on the same format. So if a boy has a reasonable memory, he will be able to draw on this and use this. And this strategy can work well in the younger years but it's not enough by the time they get to Year Nine. So if he only has this one strategy, it is harder once the language starts becoming more complicated and the tasks become more sophisticated.

Although Jan was aware of this tendency and incorporated strategy teaching into her lessons, she still found it challenging to ensure that all students were willing to attempt using these strategies. One success that she did mention was the use of computers to help keep the students engaged and motivated in LOTE. She felt that IT was a valuable tool to help reinforce strategy use. For example, students who were reluctant to write in the LOTE seemed more enthusiastic when typing on the computer and seemed more willing to attempt some of the writing strategies that she had taught the class. Jan also found students were more readily able to remember vocabulary when completing games and quizzes on the computer. She felt that particularly in the junior secondary years, it was important that the students felt happy and enthusiastic about LOTE and strategy training was something that could be introduced, but not focused upon. She said,

I find that in Year Seven, it's really just about trying to keep them engaged. I try to develop cohesion as a group and really, I just want them to be happy in the classroom.

Jan believed that writing skills were more likely to develop if students possessed a wide range of vocabulary. As previous participants mentioned, this gave the students greater freedom and moreover, they experienced less frustration, when they could write exactly what they meant, resulting in a more interesting and detailed piece of writing. Jan believed that this helped the students to write confidently and when faced with a new writing task, they had a significant vocabulary bank to draw upon that would help make the writing task more manageable. For this reason, she devoted a significant amount of class time to vocabulary building, often using the dictionary. She devised a number of games and competitions where students had to find definitions or word derivatives, as she found that the ability to correctly use a dictionary helped to develop students' writing skills.

Jan also encouraged the students to search for the connections between German and English to help deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words. She found that dictionary exercises helped students to better understand word origins and assisted them with both their reading and writing skills.

5.7 Tom – Understands Learning Styles

“There are different types of learners...”

Tom is a native speaker of Chinese, who was teaching Chinese from Years Seven to Twelve in a co-educational independent school. At the time of the study, he had been teaching in Australia for seven years and was also teaching English as an Additional Language (EAL). During our interview the conversation was often quite stilted and Tom did not offer a great deal of information beyond my set questions. However, when I observed him teaching, he really came to life. He was animated and enthusiastic and I was able to see first-hand the strategies and teaching methods he employed; this helped me to make sense of his sometimes very brief verbal responses. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7. What did stand out when I spoke to Tom was the empathy he had for his students. He was very aware that Chinese is a difficult language to master and tried to incorporate a range of strategies in his lessons to help his students.

Because he had lived in Australia for a relatively short time, he understood the challenges of learning a second language and often shared his own language experiences with his students. His strategies often involved highlighting the similarities and differences between English and Chinese and he was also interested in finding out more about students' individual learning styles in an effort to support their language studies.

5.7.1 Listening Strategies

“Just listen for key words...”

Summary of Listening Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Pre-read the comprehension questions.
- Listen for key words.
- Take a guess.
- Firstly, listen for gist; listen for detail the second time.

Tom taught his students pre-listening strategies which he believed were useful as they could be applied to any listening task, regardless of the level of difficulty. The strategies his students knew included: pre-reading the set questions to gain an idea of what the listening material might contain; to listen out for key words; to take a guess, even if they are unsure; to listen for the overall gist of the conversation on the first listen and then try to listen for specific detail in the subsequent listening opportunities. He explained:

Normally I will ask the students to try to grasp the key words and then extend it from the key words.

5.7.2 Speaking Strategies

“We work together...”

Summary of Speaking Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Know useful phrases such as hesitation devices, conjunctions.
- Know how to ask for questions to be repeated/speaker to slow down.
- Refer to class notes and texts for key phrases.
- Commit vocabulary to memory; learn a few words at a time.
- Break sentences into parts to aid memorisation.
- Understand function of each part of the sentence (object, verb etc.)

Tom taught his students specific strategies to help them improve their speaking skills. He taught them useful vocabulary and phrases that could be incorporated into their speech, including hesitation devices, sentence starters and conjunctions. He had also taught his students specific phrases, such as asking for a question to be repeated or asking the speaker to slow down a little. His students knew to refer to their classroom textbook for these key phrases and Tom encouraged them to commit these phrases and vocabulary to memory.

Tom taught his students to break their sentences into smaller parts to help them remember the correct word order. He encouraged them to understand the meaning of each part of the sentence and its function in the sentence. He believed that this helped students to improve their speaking skills. He told me:

We normally put, for example, if that’s a sentence, we’ll separate them into chunks. Like, the sections, whether it’s a verb. And try to remember, each of the sections, what do they mean. And what’s the function of this part of the whole sentence. Rather than just memorizing the whole thing.

As a native speaker of Chinese, Tom was very sympathetic to the difficulties Australian school children often encountered when having to learn a language that was so different from English. In particular, he found that his students struggled with the correct

Chinese pronunciation. He reminded his students to use their prior knowledge and keep linking back to past speaking activities to assist them. He explained:

This can be very difficult because in many other languages, English is derived from them, so it's very easy to find links between English and the language, words that sound the same. But in Chinese, this is a problem because the pronunciation is very different. The students can't compare to English. It is just so different. It's not the same alphabet. So what we've been doing is, we use quite a few different strategies. So, for example, we might use prior knowledge. So, if a part of a [Chinese] character, say in the class before, it has already been covered, so I'm going to link this one with the new character. So, I'll say: Okay, look, the pronunciation is very much similar because of the common part, which is this. So, prior knowledge.

5.7.3 Reading Strategies

“They find it frustrating sometimes...”

Summary of Reading Strategies Taught:

Students should:

- Read the comprehension questions first.
- Identify the text type.
- Use clues, such as the heading, pictures.
- Locate key words.
- Peer collaboration.

Tom taught his students pre-reading strategies, such as reading the questions prior to reading the text, identifying the text type, using available clues, such as the heading and pictures and locating key words. He also found that peer collaboration was a useful strategy, particularly in the lower secondary years, where students often feel frustrated when unable to understand the text. He found that pooling knowledge helped students to feel greater levels of success and helped improve motivation. He said:

They normally link the reading with the pictures...I ask them to locate the words that we have learnt and to go from there. Try to put that into the context and then they have a guess.

5.7.4 Writing Strategies

“I had to lower my expectations...”

Summary of Writing Strategies:

Students should:

- Look for visual cues.
- Try to relax; it doesn't matter if the stroke is not perfect.
- Break down sentences into smaller parts.
- Understand the formula for the correct word order.
- Work as a whole class/small groups/pairs until they can work individually.

To assist students to learn how to write the correct Chinese characters, Tom encouraged them to find pictures or images within the character to remind them of the meaning of the word. For example, when Tom taught his students how to write the Chinese character for 'house' he tried to get them to visualise the shape of a house within the character – that is, certain strokes to symbolize the 'roof', strokes to indicate the 'walls' the 'floor' and so on. He further explained, “I try to use pictures, to visualize the characters and the marks that we make.”

Tom also stressed the need to relax his expectations a little and meet the students where they were at. He realised that the outcome of writing a Chinese character was, at times, more important than the process, if it helped the students to gain confidence with their writing skills. He said:

I used to focus on the order of the stroke. When I first started teaching I thought that it was important that they wrote each stroke in the correct order. But now, I think as long as the kids can write the character and know what it means, the order is not so important. Who cares?

Another strategy Tom uses to help students with their writing skills is to help them understand and break down the sentence into smaller parts. He begins by examining the sentence structure as a whole class, explaining the 'formula' of the word order and practising it together, until eventually, the students are able replicate it on their own and write their own sentences. He said:

What I do with the structure of the sentence, is that I put the sentence on the board and we break it down into parts and I try to help them work out the structure...the formula. And normally, at the start, they find this a little bit hard, but then with a bit of instruction and my help, it becomes easier.

5.8 Summary

This chapter presented the results of the in-depth interviews. Each participant clearly demonstrated a wide range of strategies that they used in their classroom to help teach the four skills of language – listening, speaking, reading and writing. There appeared to be numerous very clear and precise strategies that were used to teach reading and listening skills; however, there seemed to be greater variety in the depth and breadth of strategies used to teach the skills of speaking and writing. Possible reasons for this will be explored in Chapter Seven.

Of interest was the interchangeable way in which the participants used the term ‘strategy’. At times, their definition of strategy use was in line with Oxford’s (1990) explanation, where strategies were understood to be specific actions undertaken by the students to help make their learning more effective and self-directed; however, at other times, the participants’ use of the term ‘strategy’ seemed to refer to the classroom activities they directed, designed to support their teaching practices and to help students feel more confident and calm in the classroom. Both these ‘strategies’ and ‘activities’ seem to play a key part in the LOTE classroom. In the next chapter, the ‘activities’ and their function in the LOTE will be presented.

Chapter Seven will discuss the results of the data and draw together the ideas expressed by the research participants in an effort to gain a deeper understanding about a small group of LOTE teachers’ perceptions and use of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom.

Chapter Six

The Role of Language Learning Activities

6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the presentation of the results of the in-depth interviews. In their interviews, each participant demonstrated a diverse array of strategies that they used in their classroom to help teach the four skills of language – listening, speaking, reading and writing.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, an interesting and unexpected aspect of these interviews was the ambiguous nature of the term ‘language learning strategy’. While each participant could easily and clearly define the term in their questionnaires, often, during the interviews, what they described as a ‘strategy’ appeared, in fact, to be activities or tasks used to reinforce and practise language skills. These activities seem to be a valuable part of teaching and learning a LOTE as they provided opportunities to strengthen and support the specific strategies introduced in class.

Further strategies also emerged during the interviews, which are somewhat more difficult to define and classify. The participants all demonstrated enormous empathy towards their students, often devoting significant lesson time to ensuring that the classroom environment was safe and supportive. The participants used various methods to try to achieve this sense of security, such as, sharing their own language learning experiences and using humour to help ease the pressure when completing more challenging tasks (Urios-Aparisi & Wagner, 2011). It seemed important that the children knew that mistakes were a part of learning a LOTE and should be expected, perhaps even celebrated, as it demonstrated a willingness to take a risk. It appeared that a sense of confidence and the ability to relax when facing a demanding task were as vital for success as other, more tangible Language Learning Strategies (Hattie, 2012; Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009; Sabet et al., 2013).

This chapter will present this quite unanticipated, additional data that emerged during the interview phase. In the next chapter Language Learning Strategies, learning activities and the role of empathy in the classroom will all be discussed in an attempt to

gain a greater understanding of the complex role of Language Learning Strategies in the LOTE classroom.

6.1.1 Defining Language Learning ‘Strategies’ and ‘Activities’

While conducting the interviews it became clear that the participants possessed quite a broad understanding of what constituted a ‘learning strategy’. When they each talked about the strategies they used in their classes and what they had taught their students, they often spoke in terms of what they *did* in the classroom. The term ‘strategy’ often seemed to refer to activities that the participants taught their students and tasks that the students completed. The participants might, for example, refer to a “speaking strategy” and describe how they provided students with a list of useful vocabulary that could assist them when tackling a writing task. While a useful exercise, it did not really fit into the definition they provided on their questionnaires that defined ‘strategies’ as the actions taken to help students work more independently from the teacher. For this reason, at times, the term ‘strategy’ took on a somewhat ambiguous meaning.

There is a body of research devoted to ‘task-based instruction’ (Ellis, 2003; Long, 1985; Skehan, 2003). Stemming from the shift towards Communicative Language Teaching in the 1970s and 1980s (see Chapter 2) these ‘tasks’ were seen as vehicles for learning and allowed learners to use the LOTE in meaningful, authentic situations, as opposed to the earlier focus on language structure (Long, 1985; Skehan, 2003).

Bygate, Skehan and Swain (2001) provide the following definition of a ‘task’, stating: “A task is an activity which requires learners to use language with an emphasis on meaning to attain an objective” (p. 11). According to Skehan (2003), the task itself is not important, rather, what is significant is how that task benefits students; according to Skehan, ‘task-based instruction’ is important as it is interactive and provides opportunities for learners to receive personalised feedback.

During this study the participants readily interchanged the terms ‘strategy’ ‘task’ and ‘activity’. The previous chapter presented the strategies that the participants taught their students to aid learning and to foster autonomy. This chapter will examine the role of language ‘activities’ or ‘tasks’.

For the purpose of this study, I will define the term ‘activity’ as an umbrella term, used to refer to what students do in their LOTE lessons. These activities or tasks are teacher-led and are designed to foster enjoyment and help to build students’ confidence and motivation. They tend to be personalised, allowing teachers the opportunity to refine their lessons in order to suit individual learning styles and preferences.

This chapter presents the activities described by the LOTE teachers during their interviews; it presents the recommendations that the teachers tell their students and describes the types of activities that the students complete in their language lessons to help them to develop their skills and gain confidence in the LOTE classroom. These data are presented from the teachers’ perspective and summarise the teachers’ words.

6.2 Richard

Listening Activities

“Confidence is the key...”

Summary of Classroom Listening Activities:

- Teachers provide students with the opportunity to listen to a range of materials.
- Teachers help students to build confidence; tell students that mistakes help them to learn.
- Students participate in general conversations in the target language.

Richard ensured that his students, across all year levels, regularly completed a range of listening activities in order to build up their skills and help them to overcome the stress that often accompanies listening tasks. He ensured that his students listened to a range of material, including general classroom conversations, films, television programs and radio programs. He believed that the greater the range of experiences his students had, the greater chance they would have to develop their confidence and skills when faced with listening tasks.

6.2.3 Speaking Activities

“They need to know that it’s safe to make a mistake...”

Summary of Classroom Speaking Activities:

Students should:

- Try to see the humour in errors.
- Understand that they will feel self-conscious.
- Know that mistakes are inevitable.

Richard believed that it was essential that students felt calm when completing speaking activities. He empathised with the stress that students could often experience when speaking and tried to use humour to help them feel relaxed (Urios-Aparisi & Wagner, 2011). He believed that it was necessary to make errors in order to improve. In fact, Richard actually celebrated these mistakes, telling his students it was a sign that they were extending themselves and attempting to use new vocabulary and phrases, rather than resorting to the same, familiar “safe” vocabulary. As a non-native English speaker, Richard felt that he understood the challenges that his students faced. He commented:

I also make fun of my own mistakes. I tell them about when I speak English and say the wrong thing and make a joke about it. It’s extremely important to create an environment where it is safe to make a mistake.

6.2.4 Reading Activities

“The textbook is often uninspiring...”

Summary of Classroom Reading Activities:

Teachers should:

- Use materials that are engaging and relevant.
- Use authentic materials.
- Modify materials.

Richard expressed his frustration with the lack of suitable reading material. He felt that very often the reading passages in the class textbook were unmotivating. Consequently, he tried to draw on authentic material as much as possible, believing that these text types were more engaging and relevant to the students. To assist students, he would often provide them with vocabulary lists to help them navigate the text.

6.2.5 Writing Activities

“It’s not just about getting it right...”

Summary of Classroom Writing Activities:

Teachers hold classroom discussions about:

- The challenges of writing.
- The time it takes to develop skills.
- How mistakes are a normal part of learning.

Richard demonstrated an awareness that different skills develop at different levels; he seemed to constantly remind his students not to panic if they found one language skill, such as reading, easier than another skill, such as writing or speaking. He regularly spoke to his students about this, so once again, when they encountered difficulties, they would recognise that this is a normal part of learning German:

I keep telling the students that comprehension develops much faster, that it’s quite normal that they are able to understand the text but when they try to speak or write it, it can be more difficult. It just takes more time, but it’s quite normal. I think it’s important to stress this all the time.

He regularly emphasised the importance of the process of writing rather than the end result:

It’s really important that they can see that mistakes are part of learning a language and mistakes can be used to help them learn. It’s not just about getting it right. And I really make fun of mistakes. I say: Hey, this is wonderful! It shows that you are trying to use different vocabulary and structures. I just don’t want them to be scared of making a mistake. I say to them...You will learn from those mistakes and know for next time. It’s all right to make mistakes and learn from them.

6.3 Anna

Listening Activities

“If it’s too hard, they can’t see the point...”

Summary of Classroom Listening Activities:

- Teachers use relevant and engaging materials.
- Teachers refer to popular culture to create interest and enthusiasm.
- Students watch films in class.

Anna described a range of classroom activities that she used to develop students’ listening skills. Although she referred to them as ‘strategies’, they do not fit the description provided earlier by Oxford and Cohen (1992, p.1) as “...steps or actions taken by learners to improve the development of their language skills...” The activities Anna described were not a conscious set of behaviours designed to enable the learner to independently and successfully complete a set task. They were not instigated by the learner, but rather, were teacher-designed and teacher-led. They were, however, very useful and engaging activities, that appeared to help the learner to feel more comfortable and confident when tackling listening activities. Anna spoke frequently about the need to create an environment where students felt comfortable and supported and it appears that the activities she described not only helped her students to gain confidence and experience when completing listening tasks, they also seemed to be interesting and fun and consequently helped motivate students to improve their listening skills, as well as helping them to see the benefits of developing these skills. For these reasons, they are worthy of attention (Baker Smemoe & Haslam, 2013; Hattie, 2012; Ushioda, 2008).

Anna frequently refined and modified the listening activity on the set CD to suit the students’ skills and interests. She seemed highly aware of popular culture and the types of music, books and films that attracted her students. She ensured that the listening activities reflected the students’ interests and level of ability. The activities that Anna devised seemed to evolve out of her frustration with the apparent lack of engaging and relevant listening material available:

In VCE, if you look at where they always do poorly, it’s listening. So what is this telling us? It’s telling us that we’re not teaching it effectively. Even with the junior

students, we just purchased a new text for the Year Sevens and Eights and the listening component is ridiculously easy! The kids, they all look at me and laugh!...I want real conversations on topics that real kids are interested in...I think there is so much stuff out there that we can use...Even short documentaries, real stuff on the country, because it's very hard to try to keep them interested if the material they are using isn't authentic. It just seems too abstract and they can't see the point.

Anna often used film to teach listening skills across all year levels. She explained how she would show her class a particular scene from an Italian film. She would then ask the students questions in Italian to gauge comprehension. As a whole class, the students are encouraged to describe and summarise the scene in Italian and predict what they think might happen next. They then write about the scene in detail.

Another activity Anna employed to promote listening skills through film was placing the students in pairs and setting them the task of describing a scene in as much detail as possible. Anna explained how one student in each pair would watch the scene, while their partner was facing away, unable to see the film. The student watching the film had to describe the scene in as much detail as possible, while their partner asked as many questions as they could, in order to gather information about the scene. The students would then re-group, and, as a whole class, the students would explain the information that they had collected, each building on previous information, while Anna wrote their observations on the board:

I think a film can be used to teach just about anything. The fact that you have images, the kids respond in a far more productive way. They learn much faster...I pick certain crucial scenes and I play, maybe, three minutes, four minutes. And I build on the scene, everything, every single movement of the actors. What are they wearing? Where are they going? What are they doing? So you can use things that they know: eating, drinking, cleaning, driving. There might be a scene in the supermarket. So they describe what they can see on the shelves. Then the kids have to go home and write about the scene, the way they interpret it. You can build three or four scenes like that. It's a good listening exercise. Look, she's sweeping the floor! With what? A broom! Much better than translating! They're showing me what they know! They can tell me the story in present tense. Then do past tense. It works for anything.

While Anna called this technique a ‘strategy’ it certainly does not seem to promote autonomy in the classroom; nevertheless, it appeared to be a valuable technique to develop confidence and competence when completing listening activities in an interesting and engaging manner.

6.3.1 Speaking Activities

“Simple things are good, the kids are excited...”

Summary of Classroom Speaking Activities:

- Teachers talk about interesting, relevant topics.
- Teachers talk about daily life in the target country, so students can relate.
- Students use technology to create authenticity e.g. Skype, Google Maps.

Anna described the types of authentic speaking “strategies” she used in class. For example, she asked her brother, who lives in Italy, to take a photograph of his refrigerator. She then showed this to her students and they discussed the contents of the refrigerator and compared and contrasted the type of food found in Italy to that of Australia. The students then took a photograph of the contents of their own refrigerator and brought it in to school to show the class; this led to relevant and real conversations, as well as discussions about cultural similarities and differences. As previously mentioned, while not a “strategy” as explained in the Literature Review, nevertheless, this activity enabled the students to use everyday language for a real purpose and appeared to develop their confidence when speaking, as well as fostering an enjoyment for the language. Anna explained:

It was funny because the kids could see that there really wasn’t a lot of difference between what Italians ate and what we ate...You know, simple things like that are really good. The kids are excited.

6.3.2 Reading Activities

“These kids are the digital generation, so it’s the way we need to teach...”

Summary of Classroom Reading Activities:

- Students use technology to read authentic materials.
- Teachers ensure reading activities relate to useful, everyday skills.

Anna described how Information Technology is used in every lesson to enhance students’ reading skills (Kohm, 2009; Nunan, 2010; Stockwell, 2012). They each have their own notebook computer and they are given many opportunities to read authentic material. Anna said:

Everything I do is related to the computer...Whatever topic we do, we use computers. For example, we look at the times around the world; we use Google Map to do directions; we work out how to get to Rome, where to go right or left. We use real things...there’s so much information available, and the kids are the digital generation. It’s ingrained in them, so it’s the way we need to teach.

6.3.3 Writing Activities

“We need to get them started from where they are right now, using what they know...”

Summary of Classroom Writing Activities:

- Teachers provide constant revision through games, quizzes and discussions.
- Teachers provide authentic, engaging, materials.
- Students should read well-written material to glean ideas.
- Students should refer to vocabulary/phrase lists.

Anna provided her students with lists of useful vocabulary and phrases that they could regularly refer to. These lists were constantly revised in class through written examples on the board, in work sheets, whole class discussions and quizzes and games. Anna believed that by regularly using and referring to these phrases, they would eventually become familiar to the students, enabling them to confidently incorporate them into their own writing.

Anna also provided her students with a range of written material. She believed that providing her students with well written material that appealed to their interests, would help them when faced with their own writing task.

6.4 Sarah

Listening Activities

“Most boys like to be up and moving...”

Summary of Classroom Listening Activities:

Teachers should:

- Provide students with opportunities to listen to a range of genres.
- Use facial expressions and gestures to help students understand gist.
- Understand students’ learning styles and preferences.

Sarah ensured that her students had the opportunity to listen to a range of genres in order to improve their listening skills. This included: listening to radio programs, news bulletins and watching French films and television programs. She taught her students to use visual clues, such as gestures and facial expressions in order to gain a greater understanding of the conversation taking place.

Sarah was also very aware of the learning styles that her students tended to prefer and drew on this knowledge to help them with listening activities. She spoke about how the boys enjoyed moving about the classroom and she tried to develop listening activities that enabled them to move around; she felt that learning was more effective if the students were engaged and enjoying the activity (Grenfell, 2007; Griffiths, 2008). She explained:

I don’t mean to stereotype...but most boys do like to be up and moving, so I try to use movement wherever I can...you do see tendencies in the ways that boys like to learn and what works. For the most part, boys in French like to be loud and moving around and they like to be a little bit silly. They like it to be kinetic. So when they’re learning new vocab I’ll really use this. They have to...throw a ball around the classroom when we’re doing something with vocab building. The boys really get into those types of activities.

Once again, although these activities could not be classed as “strategies” in the sense that they are particular steps or procedures that could be applied to a number of different listening activities, they still were effective as they helped students to develop confidence and enjoyment when learning French and helped them to remain motivated and involved in the set classroom activities. From Sarah’s experiences, it seems that an awareness of students’ individual learning styles can be beneficial when planning and delivering LOTE lessons.

6.4.1 Speaking Activities

“They have to put themselves out there and risk sounding silly...”

Summary of Classroom Speaking Activities:

Teachers should:

- Allow students to speak in groups/pairs to avoid self-consciousness.
- Acknowledge that speaking can be difficult.
- Assure students that not every activity will be assessed.
- Provide costumes and props to add fun and interest.

Sarah was highly aware of how adolescent boys can often feel self-conscious when speaking in French and regularly experimented with different ways to help them overcome any feelings of anxiety and embarrassment. She found that as the boys moved into the middle secondary school years, this sense of self-consciousness became a bigger problem. She commented:

It seems that as they get older, it’s not just the confidence that goes, it’s the accent that goes with it! They don’t even try to imitate a French accent. It’s Aussie! And it is a risk, I know that. They have to put themselves out there and risk sounding silly.

Sarah discovered that one of the most effective ways to help the boys feel more comfortable was to draw as little attention as possible to individual students. Sarah described how she would often have the boys speaking together as a whole class, without any particular emphasis on individuals. The goal appeared to be gaining

confidence to speak in French, rather than a focus on using accurate sentence structures and pronunciation. She explained how she implemented this strategy with a class of Year 9 boys:

I noticed that some of the boys were really self-conscious...they would mumble their answers or speak into their hands, look down and not make eye contact...Half the class is just trying to get through the year...their only goal is to pass and to try to draw as little attention to themselves as possible...So I do this thing where we shout! If they have to speak, I'll get them all standing up and we shout it across the room, so one voice doesn't stand out. They're not afraid to speak! It helps them to get over their fear. There's so much noise going on around them in the classroom, that they don't have the chance to feel self-conscious.

Sarah encouraged the students to perform speaking activities in small groups or pairs in an effort to overcome feelings of discomfort. She was highly aware of the need to look beyond apparent confidence and assess students on their genuine ability to speak in French, rather than their ability to perform:

I think sometimes, getting them to speak on their own, isn't really a test of how skilled they are at speaking but it's more of a test of confidence. Some students are really confident when they speak but it doesn't mean that they're actually better at speaking. I want to be able to assess them based on their skill, not their level of confidence.

Sarah also used humour and honesty to assist her students. As a class, they would regularly discuss the difficulties associated with being a teenage boy trying to speak French (Carr & Pauwels, 2006). By acknowledging the challenges, Sarah hoped that the boys would feel a sense of camaraderie and this would help to create a safe and supportive classroom environment:

You know, that perception that French is for girls, we kind of joke about it. When the boys have to speak, we'll say: Doesn't that sound silly! Doesn't it feel ridiculous to make sounds like that! Doesn't that sound girly! And then I'll say: Well, what can we do about it? And then I'll go (imitates a French man with an exaggerated accent). So we make it sound macho and really just try to overcome any self-consciousness by...being a little bit silly about it. It just seems to work!

6.4.2 Reading Activities

“It’s good to get them started from a young age...”

Summary of Classroom Reading Activities:

- Students should look for similarities between the target language and English.
- Teachers should provide opportunities for students to revise and practise skills.
- Teachers should use competitions and games to enhance enjoyment and interest.

Sarah spoke about some of the reading activities that she completed with her students, referring to these activities as “strategies.” One activity she described involved transforming the task of reading a piece of text into a competitive game. She taught her students how to recognise what she called “language connections,” that is, French words that are similar to English words, so that her students were able to see the relationship between French and English. Some examples she showed me included: *passez* (pass); *carrotte* (carrot); *chocolat* (chocolate) and so on. When her students were reading a piece of text she encouraged them to find as many of these connections as possible, with the student who managed to find the most declared the winner. She felt that this sense of competition provided the students with a fun and effective way to build their vocabulary bank and aid their reading ability. She explained:

So we’ll be reading a passage and I’ll say: Okay, that looks like a word in English! What do you think that could be? And once they pick up on it, once they get the idea of what to do, we sort of make it a competition, like who can find the most language connection. It’s a really good way to help them with their vocab learning...I think getting them started from a young age is really good...I present it more as a game...like code-breaking. And they really love it, they really get into it.

Sarah also emphasised the need to regularly revise dictionary skills. Again, she used games and competition as a way of reinforcing these skills. She believed that if students were engaged in the activity and enjoying it, they were more likely to remember the skills and be able to apply them to different situations. She stated:

Once they know this, we keep practising, to make sure they don’t forget. So we do things like using the dictionary to do,

well, we call them ‘grammar crack teams’. So they’re in teams and I’ll give them a word and they have to use the dictionary to look up a word and then another team will look up the indefinite article for it and spell it. So it’s like a competition to see which team will finish first.

6.4.3 Writing Activities

“They can identify with it...”

Summary of Classroom Writing Activities:

- Teachers provide topics that interest the students.
 - Teach stock phrases, sentence starters and conjunctions.
- Students should:
- Use technology.
 - Write short pieces to build confidence.
 - Use simple sentences.

Sarah used computers to aid the teaching of writing skills. She used a particular program that formatted comic strips so her Year 7 students were able to produce a piece of writing using uncomplicated sentences. She believed that this developed a sense of competence and confidence, as even though the students were producing quite short, simple pieces of writing, they were still able to write a meaningful piece of work with a clear beginning, middle and end, resulting in a sense of accomplishment and success. She also felt that it was important that students could write about topics that interested them and were relevant to them, in order to maintain interest and enthusiasm. Sarah provided students with a list of stock phrases and vocabulary, including sentence starters and conjunctions. She said:

They were able to use all of those stock standard words and phrases that I’d taught them but it’s in a way that’s really modern and they can identify with it.

As seems to be the case with all of the set classroom activities that the participants often referred to as “strategies”, these activities, while perhaps not leading to greater autonomy in the classroom, appear to serve the purpose of developing certain language skills, as well as helping the students to feel more confident in their own ability. Perhaps the ability to work on an activity with a sense of self-confidence, is indeed, a

useful trait for students to possess and this sense of confidence may stay with students as they move through their LOTE education (Benson, 2001; Miller, 2007).

6.5 Alison

Listening Activities

“Just relax and you’ll hear it...”

Summary of Classroom Listening Activities:

- Assure students that they will hear familiar vocabulary;
- Tell students to expect the conversation to make sense.
- Tell students to stay calm; be familiar with the conventions of listening tasks.
- Inform students to take their time, do not rush.
- Encourage students to plan their actions; take brief notes.

As well as specific strategies, Alison taught her students a key point: that they should expect the conversation they would hear to make sense. She explained that the students should expect, on the whole, to hear familiar vocabulary, and although there would almost certainly be some words and phrases that they did not recognise, they would be able to comprehend enough to be able to make sense of the conversation and therefore, would be able to complete most of the comprehension questions that followed. This expectation, although simple, ensured that the students began a listening activity feeling calm and confident. She said:

The main thing is that they don’t panic. Helping them to be calm and confident. Just relax and you’ll hear it. And that usually works well.

Another thing Alison did to ensure this sense of calmness was to make certain that her students knew what to expect before beginning the listening activity. She told her students how many times they would hear the audio played and instructed them on *how* to listen: for example, to just listen in the first instance and then during subsequent listening periods to take brief notes, rather than trying to answer specific questions in detail. Alison also provided her students with a short break in between each playing of the audio piece so that they had the chance to comprehend what they had heard and

focus on the gaps where they did not understand the dialogue. This preparation helped her students to feel relaxed both before, and during, the listening activities.

6.5.1 Speaking Activities

“You kind of have to let go a little bit...”

Summary of Classroom Speaking Activities:

Teachers should:

- Ensure there are opportunities for students to speak without being assessed.
- Use peer assessment/provide positive feedback.
- Provide opportunities for student self-reflection.
- Ensure classroom speaking activities are short, achievable and interesting.
- Allow students to work in pairs/small groups to minimise self-consciousness.

Alison believed that in order for her students to speak with ease and confidence it was essential that they felt relaxed. She therefore ensured that they were given ample opportunities to speak, without being assessed or having to worry about grades. The purpose was to just talk, without having to focus on any particular outcome. She found that if all students were speaking together, they were less likely to feel self-conscious. So, rather than having her students perform a short role-play to the entire class – from my experience, a common event in secondary school LOTE classrooms - Alison set up “stations” around the classroom, where students would perform to a small group at a time. Interestingly, Alison admitted her initial discomfort in allowing this type of activity to take place. She worried that there would be less classroom control and, without doubt, more noise, if all students were speaking at once and moving freely around the room. However, to her surprise, this type of activity worked extremely well and achieved her goal of helping her students to speak with less self-consciousness:

You kind of have to let [them] go a little bit. And, like, with the Year Nines, I was a bit nervous, but then, they just got into it! And they were all, like, you know, busy chatting and practising with each other.

To further reduce the anxiety that often comes with speaking in a LOTE, Alison changed the way these activities were assessed. Letter grades were not used at all; instead, each

student had a sheet that they had to complete at the end of their performances. This self-assessment sheet included a number of statements regarding the student's own performance, such as: How did you feel after each performance? Did you feel that your speaking improved? Which aspects improved? Fluency? Pronunciation? What problems arose during the task? How did you go about addressing these problems?

After completing the self-assessment sheet, the students then spoke in small groups with their peers and provided verbal feedback on each other's performances and shared their own experiences. Alison believed that this allowed students to pay greater attention to their strengths and weaknesses when speaking in Indonesian and also allowed them to support their peers by sharing this information. This type of activity was very new to Alison's teaching repertoire, and at the time of our interview, she was still experimenting with what worked well. Nevertheless, her enthusiasm for this type of activity was evident and due to her early successes, she appeared keen to try to further develop this task as a way to help her students gain greater confidence when speaking in Indonesian. She had already shared her early experiences with her colleagues and was working on other ways to use self and peer assessment. She said:

I started doing this last year but I'm still doing it all the time now. And I've found a lot of other teachers are using it as well in their assessment...So, we're letting them do peer assessment with each other.

It seemed that this willingness to abandon traditional modes of assessment could be beneficial in helping students feel more comfortable when speaking in the LOTE (Mutton, 2014; Topping, 2009).

6.5.2 Reading Activities

"You have to be flexible..."

Summary of Classroom Reading Activities:

Teachers should:

- Provide vocabulary lists in advance.
- Instruct students to divide vocabulary into sections: nouns, verbs, adjectives.
- Instruct students to use pictures to prompt memory.
- Understand students' preferred learning styles.

After our interview concluded, Alison emailed me with some additional activities that she did with her students to further help them develop their reading skills. Before beginning new reading material, she provided her students with a list of new vocabulary that would be found in the reading passage. The students divided the vocabulary into columns: nouns, verbs, adjectives and extra expressions. Next to each word, the students drew a picture to demonstrate its meaning. This list was then used to help students comprehend the text, and by associating each new word with a picture, students were better able to remember and recall vocabulary. For older students, in Years Eleven and Twelve, Alison ensured that all students created their own “base word book” where they used an exercise book and wrote, in alphabetical order, all of the base words and their derivatives. The students used this book as a reference throughout the year and regularly added to it as new words were introduced. This activity seemed to help students to broaden their vocabulary bank and assist them when they encountered unfamiliar words during reading activities.

Alison also mentioned the importance of understanding students’ individual learning styles. She believed that each student had different learning preferences and it was important that they were given the chance to explore and find the way that worked best. She often showed the students different approaches to completing set activities and then allowed them the opportunity to find a way that best suited them. She explained:

They’re all different, they have preferences in the way that they go about tasks, so you have to be flexible and allow them to do things in their own way. You know, some of them like to read a paragraph and then answer the question that goes with that paragraph and then another one will want to read the entire text first and then just try to get an idea about the content and think about it and then answer the questions. So they all have their own ideas about what works for them.

This flexibility and willingness to allow the students to experiment seemed to be an important factor in helping them to develop confidence when approaching reading activities.

6.5.3 Writing Activities

“It helps to see real examples...”

Summary of Classroom Writing Activities:

- Teachers generate relevant and interesting writing samples for students.
- Teachers discuss and practise grammar rules as a whole class.
- Students write useful phrases and vocabulary on cue cards.

In addition to teaching her students specific writing strategies, Alison also devoted a significant amount of class time to practising and discussing writing skills.

Before beginning a writing activity, she would often provide her students with a list of useful vocabulary that they might include in their writing. She offered examples of the writing task that they were about to tackle, in order to provide them with an example of good quality writing that they could model their own work on. Sometimes she found these examples in newspapers or magazines, textbooks or past students' work. Alison also regularly generated the writing samples herself. She believed that this helped students to recognise the features and style that they should include in their writing. For example, at the time of our interview, Alison's Year Eleven students were writing an editorial piece. Alison had shown them several samples of recent editorials so the students knew to include an appropriate heading, the date and so on in their own writing. Alison believed that an understanding of how to accurately set out a formal piece of writing helped the students feel more confident when embarking on the activity.

She also spent class time showing students how to break down sentences into smaller, more manageable sections. Alison ensured that their writing was relevant and meaningful, using students and their real life activities to help make the writing activities more accessible. She explained:

I use my fingers to count out the words [in the sentence]...I break it down for them (Demonstrates by holding up a closed fist and says each Indonesian word slowly, and as she does, holds up a finger to represent the subject, object and verb to show the correct word order)...I say: Look! Count it on my fingers! And then I say it again and I get them to write the English down underneath for each word. So I say

a sentence that is about them so it makes sense to them. And that really helps them with their writing when they can see real examples of it and the word order is really broken down for them. It helps them to write their own sentences.

Alison believed that the students needed to possess a wide range of vocabulary to help them complete an extended writing task. She frequently devoted class time to various activities in order to help students extend their range of vocabulary. The ability to readily access suitable vocabulary and an awareness of the correct sentence structures helped students to write with greater ease and accuracy. She explained, “it just helps to give them a little more depth to their writing.”

Alison also used journal writing in an effort to improve students’ writing skills. She often spent ten minutes at the beginning or end of the lesson, where students would write continuously on a set topic. Each student had a designated exercise book where they would write and Alison made it clear that it was not an assessed task but merely an opportunity to experiment with writing. Alison believed that this exercise helped the students to develop a wide range of vocabulary and help them to practise using the correct sentence structures. Once again, this knowledge that an activity would not count on the students’ final grade seemed to ease the pressure and allow them to write freely and perhaps take greater risks.

Alison noticed that the students who appeared to possess a wide range of strategies also seemed to be quite organised. Their class notes were orderly and clearly divided into topics; they regularly brought the required materials to class, so were able to work efficiently and they show initiative by finding their own strategies and methods that help them to learn, such as writing vocabulary lists on cue cards and highlighting various parts of speech to assist them when trying to learn the correct word order. Alison realised that students do not automatically possess this knowledge and, consequently, had devoted class time to specifically teaching organisational skills. However, she acknowledged that despite being clearly shown these techniques, not all students embrace them.

6.6 Jan

Listening Activities

“It helps if they can relate to it...”

Summary of Classroom Listening Activities:

Students should:

- Use technology to provide authentic listening experiences.
- Watch films.
- Pool knowledge.

Jan used authentic materials, such as YouTube clips, popular songs and films, to help students develop their listening skills. She was aware of the value of listening for gist, rather than needing to understand every word and encouraged her students to guess the meaning using other clues. For example, when watching a film, Jan asked her students to use the characters’ facial expressions, background music, lighting and the like to assist comprehension. She also encouraged students to work together as a group, each building on previous knowledge and observations to help gain an overall understanding of a film scene.

6.6.1 Speaking Activities

“As long as they’re speaking, that’s all that matters...”

Summary of Classroom Speaking Activities:

- Teachers advise students to have a go; do not worry about errors.
- Students play language games to develop confidence speaking.
- Students play vocabulary-building games.

Jan incorporated speaking practice into every lesson, through games and quizzes. She also conducted, what she referred to as “circle work” where the students sat in a circle and a general conversation ensued. Jan often played accumulative, memory type games or alternatively, a ball was thrown around the circle and whoever was holding the ball had to speak on a pre-determined topic or perhaps answer a question. Jan explained,

“It’s just to get them speaking, getting them used to it, it doesn’t really matter what the activity is.” Like the previous participants, Jan believed that the value of these tasks was in ensuring that students felt confident and comfortable speaking in German, experimenting with using various vocabulary and phrases; the content and accuracy of their speech appeared to be less important.

6.6.2 Reading Activities

“I just keep reinforcing and practising and hope that they’ll get it...”

Summary of Classroom Reading Activities:

- Teachers provide students with a vocabulary list prior to reading.
- Students read a wide range of engaging, relevant materials.
- Students use technology.

Jan ensured that her students were exposed to a range of reading material, such as comic strips, letters and newspaper articles. She aided her students by providing lists of unfamiliar vocabulary and also tried to incorporate IT into her lessons to help develop reading skills. For example, her students often completed research projects using authentic websites to gather material.

6.6.3 Writing Activities

“The students aren’t all that keen on writing...”

Summary of Classroom Writing Activities:

- Teachers ensure classroom tasks are short and manageable.
- Teachers assure students that not every task will be graded.
- Students practise writing in different styles.
- Students keep a journal.
- Students type tasks rather than handwrite.
- Students use technology for authentic materials; write for real purposes.
- As a class, play games to foster enjoyment and motivation.

During our interview Jan acknowledged the difficulty of trying to teach students writing strategies. She said, “I find teaching writing strategies quite challenging because a lot of the students aren’t all that keen on writing, even in English.” Consequently, she set short, manageable writing activities, such as writing a post card or email in order to help foster more positive feelings about writing and to in turn, help to enhance students’ confidence in their writing ability.

Jan introduced her students to different text types and the students regularly practised writing in a range of styles, including letters and invitations. One activity Jan used to enhance students’ writing skills was journal writing. Each student had an exercise book in which they completed a weekly journal. She did not assess this writing, but would regularly check it and note the errors made and the types of vocabulary and phrases the students were using. She felt that this task helped students to write in different styles in preparation for the upper secondary years. She said:

One of the things I do with them from Year Ten onwards is to get them to keep a regular journal...so every week they’re practising, they’re building on the structures that they know and there’s certain text types that they need to know, so we’ll do things like write a weekly postcard.

Jan also found that using authentic materials and writing for real purposes helped students to develop their writing skills. For this reason, she ensured that the students completed activities such as writing to a German pen pal and completed a research project, investigating aspects of German life.

Tom 6.7

Listening Activities

“Some learn better when they hear it...”

Summary of Classroom Listening Activities:

Teachers should:

- Understand students’ different learning styles.
- Vary classroom activities and teaching methods to suit individual needs.

Tom was highly aware of students' learning styles and preferences and ensured that he varied his teaching techniques in order to cater to individual needs. He was aware that some students preferred to learn vocabulary and sentence structures through listening, and tried to teach to their strengths:

With my Year Seven Chinese class, I have already found quite a few very different types of learners...there are learners who like everything to be heard...They like to remind themselves, you know, keep hearing things.

6.7.1 Speaking Activities

“Sometimes they just have to learn it by rote...”

Summary of Classroom Speaking Activities:

Students:

- Play language games and quizzes to build vocabulary.
- Complete vocabulary building tasks using computers (e.g. Quizlet).
- Play language games to develop memory skills (e.g. accumulative games).

Tom asserted that many of the skills needed to achieve fluency in Chinese - such as correct pronunciation, building a wide bank of vocabulary and understanding the correct sentence structures - often could only be learned by rote. Because it was difficult to find links and similarities between English and Chinese, many strategies that other participants spoke about, such as finding “language connections” were not viable. Therefore, Tom tried to build up his students' memory skills through language games and computer activities.

6.7.2 Reading Activities

“It puts them off if it's too hard...”

Summary of Classroom Reading Activities:

Teachers should:

- Use authentic materials add interest.
- Modify material to suit students' needs.
- Provide vocabulary lists before reading.

Wherever possible, Tom provided his students with authentic reading materials, such as magazines and newspapers. However, he also pointed out that authentic material was often quite challenging in its level of difficulty and could be off-putting for the students. Consequently, he tended to modify the material to suit the needs of his students, often providing a vocabulary list for unfamiliar words and phrases. He felt that this gave them the opportunity to read relevant and interesting material that met their level of ability.

6.7.3 Writing Activities

“It has to be fun...”

Summary of Classroom Writing Activities:

- Students play language games.
- Teachers ensure writing tasks are short, manageable and enjoyable.

To assist students with their writing skills, particularly the challenging task of writing Chinese characters, Tom uses a range of games and competitions to help students remember the correct character strokes. He feels that these types of activities help the students find enjoyment in what is often perceived to be a difficult task. Moreover, Tom believes that by remembering the fun they had when participating in a game, even if they made mistakes, students are more likely to recall the character strokes they used. He found this sense of fun and competition particularly valuable for boys. He commented:

I put them into groups and they have to compete with one another...they have a sort of writing competition. And this way they can really try to memorise the character as well as try to write faster.

6.8 Summary

This chapter presented the important role of language learning activities in the LOTE classroom. These activities appeared valuable because, even though they did not seem to contribute to learner autonomy or help to develop skills in strategy use, they provided valuable opportunities to reinforce and practise language skills. This in turn, seemed to improve students' motivation, enjoyment and confidence in the language classroom (Aoki, 2012; Sen & Sen, 2012). Importantly, these activities also served to develop students' confidence and helped them to feel at ease in the language classroom, particularly when tackling challenging or unfamiliar tasks. The advice and encouragement that the teachers imparted to their students helped to create a supportive and caring learning environment.

In the next chapter, the role of both language learning strategies and language activities will be discussed as I compare and contrast each of the participants in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the complex nature of strategy teaching and learning and the important role the LOTE teacher plays in nurturing students.

Chapter Seven

Examining the In-Depth Interviews

7.1 Introduction

This study explored the role of Language Learning Strategies when learning a language other than English. It was hoped that by examining the strategies used by a small group of secondary school LOTE teachers, greater insights could be gained into the frequency and variety of strategies taught and the perceived function of these strategies. I embarked on this study with the over-arching question that frames the research:

**What role does the teacher play in students' ability to use
Language Learning Strategies in the language classroom?**

I then attempted to answer this question by exploring the following supporting questions:

- How do teachers implement Language Learning Strategies in the classroom?
- How do students use Language Learning Strategies?
- How can students benefit from the use of Language Learning Strategies?

In this chapter, I will compare and contrast the ideas of six secondary school LOTE teachers regarding the way in which Language Learning Strategies are taught and used in their classroom. In Chapter Eight I will present and discuss the findings of the classroom observations. Chapter Nine will comprise an in-depth examination of one of the research participants. In Chapter Ten I will attempt to answer the research questions and discuss the implications of these findings. This chapter will begin with a comparison and discussion of the way in which the research participants teach strategies but firstly, the table below re-visits the research participants and presents a summary of their teaching history:

Table 7.1 Summary of the Research Participants

	Richard	Anna	Sarah	Jan	Alison	Tom
LOTE	German	Italian	French	German	Indonesian	Chinese
Age group	40-50	40-50	20-25	40-50	30-40	30-40
Teaching Experience	10 years	20 years	2 years	20 years	9 years	7 years
Type of school	Girls, Independent	Girls, Independent	Boys, Independent	Co-educational Independent	Co-educational Independent	Co-educational Independent
Year levels taught	7-12	7-12	7-10	7-12	7-12	7-12

7.2 According to the teachers, what is the relationship between strategy use and the ability to competently use a LOTE in the secondary school classroom?

Without a doubt, all six participants believed that strategy use and success in the LOTE classroom were closely linked. Each participant expressed the view that students, regardless of their year level or ability, would benefit from specific strategy teaching. They also believed that this strategy teaching had to be regularly revised and practised in order for students to be able to competently apply these strategies to a range of classroom tasks. Significantly, each participant felt that the ability to successfully use strategies not only improved their students' success in the subject, but it also allowed them to gain greater independence and confidence in the classroom. These views are supported by the literature which advocates the benefits of strategy training (Benson, 2001; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Each of the participants had a different background in terms of experience, the secondary school setting where they worked and the LOTE they taught. However, all six strongly believed that strategy teaching was beneficial and an integral part of the LOTE classroom. Sometimes the strategies taught were quite simple and straightforward, such as looking for similarities between the English word and the LOTE; at other times, the strategies were very specific and required much practice until the strategy was achieved, such as the ability to use a dictionary correctly or the ability

to write a sentence using the correct structures. Each participant believed that it was important for students to possess a broad range of strategies rather than just a handful; just as importantly, students should know exactly *when* and *how* to use these strategies. The teachers understood that strategy use is “context dependent” (Liyanage and Bartlett, 2013, p. 9) and therefore students needed to be able to draw upon a range of suitable strategies depending on the learning situation. This belief supports the idea posed by Rubin (2008) where she asserts that the knowledge and recognition of strategies are not enough; learners need to be able to use strategies effectively and moreover, be able to link them with other strategies.

The participants believed in the value of automaticity (Garrod & Pickering, 2007; Gass et al., 2013) and regularly revised and practised ‘routines’ such as sentence starters, hesitation devices, conjunctions and rote learned vocabulary (Rodgers, 2011). This practice is in line with Gass et al. (2013), who assert, “learning words is a recursive process and does not occur instantaneously” (p. 472).

The participants’ views were based on anecdotal evidence and had not been formally tested; however, they firmly believed that the strategies they mentioned were effective, particularly when practised and reinforced over a period of time. It was also noteworthy that the participants’ strategy use was, by their own definition, a matter of “trial and error.” All six participants appeared to be constantly experimenting with new strategies. Their willingness to try new approaches in order to engage and stimulate their students demonstrated their dedication to improving their students’ language outcomes. Even the highly experienced teachers, such as Anna and Jan, who had each taught for around 20 years, were still investigating and testing fresh ways to help their students. They accepted that not every technique they trialled would be successful for all students, but nevertheless continued to attend Professional Development sessions, share ideas with their peers and locate new resources. They understood that language teaching and learning was an on-going process, constantly changing and developing. An example of this was demonstrated through Jan, who spoke about her desire to survey her students so that she might be able to find out more about their learning styles and strategy preferences; she thought that a deeper understanding of her students might help her to tailor her lessons to better meet their needs. The participants’ practices support a body of literature that asserts that successful language learners choose strategies to match

their learning preferences, and that more proficient learners use more sophisticated strategies, thus highlighting the value of investigating new and diverse strategies (Koenig, 2010; Liyanage & Bartlett, 2013; Tragant et al., 2013). This idea is demonstrated by Liyanage and Bartlett (2013) who state, “learners use strategies deliberately and consciously and in ways that reflect their preferences in learning a new language” (p. 3).

Jan also mentioned that her participation in my study led her to look more closely at the types of strategies she taught her students and areas where she believed she needed to focus on. This self-reflection, willingness to try new techniques and deep enthusiasm and passion for teaching supports the literature that links students’ motivation and success when learning a LOTE directly to the teacher (Gass et al., 2013; Pachler et al., 2013; Slade & Trent, 2000; Yajun, 2003). Each participant reported success when teaching strategies, but what is of particular interest is that they also displayed enormous dedication and commitment to teaching, suggesting that while strategy training is useful, it is the teachers themselves who help foster confidence and motivation in their students.

It was interesting to note the participants’ broad definition of a Language Learning Strategy. As discussed in the previous chapter, in their questionnaires, each participant described a strategy as the actions taken to assist students towards achieving competence and independence in the LOTE. However, their interviews revealed that the term ‘strategy’ also referred to the activities the participants taught their students and the range of tasks that the students completed. For example, Anna referred to using popular music to help develop her students’ listening skills and described a range of tasks designed to expose them to the LOTE in a real and meaningful way. Oxford (1990) described Language Learning Strategies as “specific actions taken by learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferrable to a new situation” (p. 81). Certainly, the exercises Anna incorporated into her lessons were interesting and useful but they did not really fit into the specific definition of a Language Learning Strategy that was used in the questionnaires, based on the literature relating to Language Learning Strategies.

Perhaps this precise definition of a strategy is not as important as the fact that these tasks and activities provide the students with engaging and meaningful experiences.

Even though these activities may not develop autonomy, they appear to aid motivation, confidence and interest in the subject. Their significance draws attention to the idea that strategies alone cannot improve students' performance in the LOTE classroom; it is motivation that is crucial to the way in which students engage with the subject (Legenhausen, 2009; Ushioda, 2008). These factors are arguably as significant as providing students with the strategies to help them to work independently and competently. The participants' experiences and ideas highlight the intricate nature of LOTE teaching and learning.

Of particular interest were the very realistic expectations of the participants. Each participant was highly aware of the difficulties associated with learning a LOTE. They knew that it was a long process and seemed prepared to accept that there would be times where their students would be less motivated and interested in the subject; they were equipped to help them through these stages. While they obviously had long term goals for their students, such as achieving fluency in the LOTE, they also knew that their students needed short term success, through small, achievable tasks; each participant seemed willing to try to achieve the difficult balance of providing both challenging and enjoyable tasks. Research shows the dynamic nature of learning a LOTE and how students' motivation and interest in the subject can fluctuate over time (Dornyei, 2001; Williams et al., 2002). The participants seemed to understand that motivation is both complex and challenging; various factors contributed to changes in students' motivation and motivation itself varied depending on the individual learner (Ushioda & Dornyei, 2012). Consequently, they were willing to adjust the types of activities and strategies introduced in their lessons in order to meet individual learners' needs.

7.3 What types of Language Learning Strategies are LOTE teachers using in their classrooms?

It appears that the LOTE teachers use a range of strategies in their classrooms. These strategies relate to the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. The types of strategies the teachers introduced to their students depended on the specific LOTE taught. For example, the strategies that Tom used in his classes to teach Chinese characters were vastly different from the strategies that Sarah used to teach her French students the correct gender use. For example, Tom taught his students memory

strategies, such as visualising a Chinese character to help them remember how to draw it; he also taught his students social strategies, such as working with peers to help remember the correct stroke order, while Sarah taught her students metacognitive strategies, such as referring to the class text book and using a dictionary to help remember the grammatical rules for gender use (Oxford, 1990).

The participants' personal interests and strengths also appeared to influence the type of strategies they taught their students and the way in which they introduced them to the students. Anna, for example, showed a great interest in using Italian films to enhance her students' listening skills and introduced films at every year level that she taught, ranging from Year 7 through to Year 12. The use of film to aid listening skills is considered beneficial as it provides students with authentic, relevant and engaging conversations, helping them to see the language used in a natural environment as opposed to the formality of the classroom (Lo Bianco, H. 2010). Anna's use of film involved a number of very intricate steps and while other participants used film in their classes, it was certainly not as detailed, nor was it used as frequently.

It seems that the participants, while adhering to the prescribed curriculum, also followed their individual interests and strengths; this was demonstrated through the lack of class time devoted to developing writing strategies, even though all participants believed that their students required more time in this area; the participants felt that at times they lacked the skills to adequately train their students in writing strategies, particularly creative writing. This emphasises the inconsistent nature of LOTE teaching and perhaps reinforces the benefit of Professional Development for LOTE teachers, where successful strategies can be shared.

It appeared that simple strategies were introduced in Year 7 and were continually revised and became increasingly more complex and varied as the students' skills and knowledge developed. It also seemed that some strategies were universal and could be applied to any language setting, such as reading strategies. I will begin with a discussion and evaluation of the listening strategies used by the participants.

7.4 Listening Strategies

All six participants taught their students very similar listening strategies. These strategies included: pre-reading the questions to gain an understanding of the conversation; listening for clues to identify the setting, such as background noises and the gender of the speakers; listening once for gist and then taking notes on the second listening; taking a guess using the information available (Oxford, 1990).

All six participants regarded listening as a key skill and spent a significant amount of class time attempting to improve the students' ability to effectively listen through specific strategy training. Each participant mentioned that in recent years their Year 12 students had tended to under-achieve in the listening component of the VCE examination. During our interviews both Anna and Richard indicated that this is an area where they work intensively with their students with the specific goal of improving their VCE results. All six participants mentioned that they had either attended, or planned to attend, Professional Development that was devoted to improving students' listening skills.

My study did not investigate this issue in great detail, with my only evidence being anecdotal, but clearly, the research participants were aware that listening is an area where students tend to under-perform and consequently, specifically taught strategies to help improve VCE results. While the short term goal of the participants was to help students to gain confidence and experience when completing listening tasks, the long term goal was to improve VCE results. Of interest is the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority's (VCAA, 2013a) report into LOTE students' performances during the 2012 listening exam. While Chinese students had shown a remarkable improvement in their listening skills, students in French, German, Italian and Indonesian still lacked essential skills such as the ability to identify key words, take effective notes and use a dictionary correctly; VCAA also noted the limited range of vocabulary that the students possessed. These skills were also identified by the research participants as significant and consequently, they spent a substantial amount of class time developing them, beginning in Year 7 and continuing through to the senior years. It seems that effective strategy use, over an extended period of time can benefit students in their LOTE studies.

This focus on strengthening students' listening skills might be at the expense of other strategy training; this 'washback effect' (Djuric, 2008; Chambers, G., 2013) highlights how interconnected strategy training is and that a focus on one skill might negatively impact on another. All six participants demonstrated less confidence when teaching their students writing strategies and also seemed to possess fewer strategies in this area; this perhaps indicates the challenges teachers face when trying to deliver a strong and balanced strategy-training program.

The participants all spoke about the need to create a classroom environment that was calm and relaxed. This empathy for their students was evident throughout the entire research project; each participant demonstrated empathy in their questionnaires and again mentioned it during the in-depth interviews. It is this empathy that seems to help the teacher to engage effectively with their students and it helps them to provide an appropriate level of scaffolding, enabling their students to successfully complete set tasks (Arnold, 2005a).

This highlights the vital role the teacher plays in the LOTE classroom. It is the teacher who ensures that their students are adequately prepared to complete classroom activities; that they know *what* to do, *how* to do it and *when*. The participants specifically taught their students strategies to help them remain focused on the listening task, such as telling the students how many times they would listen to the audio; encouraging students to take notes and aim for a broad understanding rather than trying to answer in detail; to take a guess and significantly, to stay calm, even if they did not understand the entire conversation. Jan and Alison actually stressed to their students that it was quite normal not to be able to understand every word in the dialogue on the CD. They explained that part of the expectations as a LOTE student is to be able to use the surrounding context to gauge meaning and then pool all information available to answer the question. They thought that this understanding helped to reduce their students' anxiety. They also believed that students would perform better if they felt relaxed and confident when approaching the listening task. Each participant also reinforced to their students the idea that they should focus on the whole conversation and to aim for a broad understanding, rather than trying to translate every word. The important thing seemed to be to understand the gist and to take a guess, while remaining calm and composed.

When completing listening tasks, it seemed important that the students worked collaboratively in order to further reduce stress (Wong, Hsu, Sun & Boticki, 2013). This was of particular importance in the junior levels. Often, a strategy such as pre-reading the set questions was completed as a whole class activity; students were encouraged to work in pairs and pool their knowledge; after the listening task was completed, the students re-grouped as a whole class and discussed what they heard. These results are in line with recent research that attests the importance of collaborative learning tasks in the LOTE classroom (Tragant et al., 2013; Wong et al. 2013). These strategies were particularly common in the lower secondary years. It appeared that in the junior years the aim was to help students to gain confidence when approaching listening tasks and then gradually, as they developed their skills, they were able to work more autonomously. This provision of appropriate scaffolding supports Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the ZPD, where children are provided with suitable support that is gradually reduced, allowing them to work more independently as their skills and knowledge develop.

7.5 Speaking Strategies

Once again, certain speaking strategies were common amongst all six research participants. Of interest was the empathy that the participants showed their students. They were highly aware of the difficulties associated with speaking in a LOTE and many of the strategies taught related to reducing their students' anxiety and creating a "safe" classroom environment (Oxford, 1990). Tom, Anna, Jan and Richard, the non-native English speakers, shared their experiences of trying to learn English with their students. They often related humorous anecdotes of the mistakes they made when first arriving in Australia as a way of strengthening their rapport with the students and helping them to realise that it is possible to overcome difficulties such as fear and stress.

For example, Richard often told his students a story about when he first arrived in Australia and his confusion over the difference between formal English and colloquial speech. While he was familiar with, and could confidently use greetings and conversation starters, he had never heard the greeting, "How's it going?" until he arrived in Australia. He told his students his confusion over meaning of the words "it" and "going" in this context; he then explained how he learned to watch facial

expressions and listen to other conversations before finally understanding the gist of the question. According to the VCAA (2013b), during their 2012 VCE LOTE oral examinations, students from French, German, Italian and Indonesian often lacked the ability to engage in authentic, meaningful exchanges and were unable to relate anecdotes; instead relying on pre-learned phrases and exchanges. Richard's anecdotes, while certainly not specific strategies might still benefit learners as they provided his students with real-life, humorous stories and perhaps allowed his students the opportunity to rehearse and relate their own anecdotes.

The native English speakers, Sarah and Alison, used their experiences to help identify with their students. They explained the difficulties they had to overcome when they were students learning a LOTE and often shared stories of the strategies they used to improve their speaking skills. The literature supports the value of creating a relaxed classroom environment, where the focus is on building confidence and enjoyment (Pachler et al., 2013; Wong, et al., 2013; Yajun, 2003).

While empathy was an important factor in the LOTE classroom, another crucial point was that the participants all stressed the need to create a classroom environment where mistakes were accepted, and in Richard's case, even celebrated, as according to Richard, this showed that the students were extending themselves and moving beyond simple, formulaic responses. The participants pointed out to their students that mistakes are a part of learning and encouraged them to "have a go" with the emphasis on overcoming self-consciousness and using every speaking experience as an opportunity to learn. Anna demonstrated this when she referred to the importance of allowing students to speak without the fear of being graded.

As with the listening strategies, the participants seemed to provide strong support in the junior levels and then gradually encouraged greater autonomy as the students' ability and skills increased (Tragant et al., 2013). For example, group oral drills were common in the junior classes and speaking tasks were often completed in pairs or small groups. Once again, humour was a common method to help reduce students' anxiety. This was highlighted when Sarah, who taught at an all boys' school, said:

we...really just try to overcome any self-consciousness by making a joke about it.

Sarah also described an activity she often used, where her students, as a group, shouted in French in order to reduce their level of self-consciousness. Sarah's use of the "shouting technique" (Wong et al., 2013, p. 5) shows that reducing students' level of fear and self-consciousness might help to improve their learning outcomes as they are able to gain confidence in their speaking skills without the underlying fear of failure. Interestingly, in recent years, this technique has become increasingly common in China; as English classes become less formal, there is a growing idea that this technique may help students to "overcome the sense of fear" (Yajun, 2003, p. 5) that is often associated with second language learning.

Specific strategies used to help develop speaking skills included: providing students with unanalysed chunks, such as sentence starters, hesitation devices and fillers and conjunctions (Oxford, 1990). Alison, in particular, spoke about the importance of automaticity when engaging in conversations. The literature shows that it is a valuable tool as it forms the foundation of conversations in inexperienced speakers. As students' skills increase, they can build on these simple phrases and add more sophisticated vocabulary and complex sentences in order to enrich their speech (Garrod & Pickering, 2007; Gass et al., 2013; Rodgers, 2011).

Some participants, such as Anna, Jan and Alison taught their students circumlocution and all participants taught their students clarification phrases, such as asking for a question to be repeated or requesting the speaker to slow down. The participants believed that this knowledge gave the students greater independence and confidence when speaking as it gave them a sense of control over the direction and pace of the conversation.

All participants devoted class time to vocabulary building strategies, assuming that if students possessed a wide bank of vocabulary, this would improve their speaking skills. This belief is supported by VCAA (2013a) who suggest that students who are able to draw on a broad range of vocabulary tend to engage in more detailed and interesting conversations. These strategies included games, particularly using IT, as well as teaching students specific techniques, such as, "look, cover, say, write, check" to help memorise vocabulary. The use of games as a teaching tool is particularly valuable as it builds vocabulary and helps to develop self-esteem, confidence and enjoyment for the subject (Wong, Chen, Chai & Gao, 2011; Wong et al. 2013; Yajun, 2003).

The use of IT in the classroom is considered to be of particular importance as it helps to engage and enthuse students (Kohn, 2009; Nunan, 2010). The participants used strategies such as trying to find similarities between the LOTE and English to help students with their pronunciation and taught their students how to break down their sentences into smaller “chunks” to aid their speech.

All participants mentioned that the students often scripted short role-plays or wrote brief notes before performing a speaking task in order to, once again, build confidence through prior preparation. This sense of creating a controlled classroom environment was a consistent theme amongst the participants; each teacher made sure that their students, no matter their year level, knew what would happen during the lesson, why they were completing a particular task, how the task would be completed and what to do before, during and after the set activity. Interestingly, in their report on LOTE students’ performances in the 2012 VCE oral examination, VCAA (2013a) noted the overall lack of spontaneity in the conversations of the Indonesian, French, Italian and German students, particularly their tendency to rote learn phrases. Clearly, generalisations cannot be made from such a small cohort but it is worth noting that while it is important that students feel calm and prepared by memorising hesitation devices, sentence starters and the like, perhaps these types of strategies are ineffective when participating in authentic conversations. It might suggest that teachers should gradually reduce this level of scaffolding as students progress through secondary school and move into the senior years.

7.6 Reading Strategies

All six participants described remarkably similar reading strategies that they taught their students. These strategies included: the ability to identify the text type; pre-reading the questions to gain an understanding of the content of the text; using clues such as the title and illustrations; skimming and scanning the passage and reading for gist; highlighting key words; identifying familiar words and words that are similar to English. All participants taught their students to take a guess, even if they did not fully understand the entire passage.

As was noted with previous strategy use, these strategies were often taught and practised as a whole class, in order to reduce anxiety and improve confidence until eventually, students were able to use these strategies when working alone.

All of the participants emphasised the need to constantly practise and reinforce these strategies. Out of the four language skills investigated in the course of this study, reading strategies appeared to be taught in the most consistent manner and all participants appeared confident in their approach to teaching reading strategies; they also believed that reading tended to be their students' strongest skill (Gass et al., 2013).

The reason for this common agreement among teachers is unclear. Perhaps, as Richard alluded to during our interview, reading is a more accessible skill. Richard suggested that students acquire reading skills much easier and faster than other skills and in turn, this helps them to gain confidence (Gass et al., 2013). This is supported by the literature that suggests reading materials are more readily available, varied and importantly, visible to the students; this helps to make reading comprehension a more permanent skill. The ability to successfully read in the target language allows students to engage more fully with the language; this is often quite difficult to achieve with listening and speaking until students are more adept in the language (Pachler, et al. 2013; Tragant et al., 2013). LOTE teachers might focus more on reading skills for this reason.

Perhaps there is simply more Professional Development available to help teach this skill and therefore teachers have greater knowledge and skills in this area. Certainly, finding appropriate reading material seems much easier than sourcing material in other language areas. All six participants were able to readily adapt material to suit their students' abilities and interests, whereas all participants mentioned their frustration when trying to find suitable listening material. Anna and Jan both reported that they were able to easily find suitable reading materials, often using magazines, newspapers, advertisements, book synopses, folk tales and film reviews for reading comprehension tasks. They explained how they modified or extended the tasks, depending on their students' abilities; yet this same flexibility did not exist with listening materials. Both Jan and Anna reported that the prescribed CD that accompanied the set textbook was either "too easy" or "too hard" which often led to students feeling disaffected.

The wide range of reading materials available to teachers when compared to listening materials is important and might to some extent contribute to the weaker performances in the listening component of the LOTE VCE exams (VCAA, 2013a). My study did not delve deeply into the reasons for this strong focus on reading strategies; it might simply be an area that this cohort was skilled at and interested in; however, it might be significant and therefore worthy of further exploration.

7.7 Writing Strategies

The participants taught their students similar writing strategies including: brainstorming ideas before beginning the writing task, as well as planning and drafting. The participants also modelled correct sentence structures for their students and provided them with lists of useful vocabulary and phrases. The participants encouraged their students to use their imagination to find word associations to help them remember vocabulary and phrases when writing. This use of creative thinking, particularly when writing Chinese characters, helped students to find meaning in their writing, instead of simply rote-learning (Wong et al., 2011; Wong et al. 2013; Yajun 2003).

Peer collaboration was a commonly used strategy across all year levels. In the junior years, all stages of the writing process were completed either as a whole class or in small groups; however, in the upper secondary years peer collaboration tended to be used mainly during the planning and drafting stages (Oxford, 1990).

Another writing strategy was to teach students to break down their sentences into small groups or phrases and when planning, teaching them to write just two or three words, rather than the whole sentence. Students were also taught to write short, simple sentences, with an emphasis on accuracy, rather than attempting to write more complex sentences (Pachler et al., 2013; Gass et al., 2013). This strategy was very different from the way in which speaking strategies were taught, where the emphasis seemed to be on “having a go” with less importance placed on accuracy. Grabe and Stoller (2009) state that writing is a complex cognitive activity that “requires extended and extensive practice, not only with writing itself, but also with the related skills and resources required for writing” (p.452). These skills include: the ability to generate and organise ideas, revise and edit. Of importance is the ability to ensure that a range of complex

sentences have been included in the text and that a variety of sophisticated vocabulary has been used (Grabe & Stoller, 2009).

The students had been taught how to revise their class notes and how to use a dictionary to enable them to include correct sentence structures in their writing. Interestingly, both Tom and Sarah spoke about their assumptions regarding dictionary use. Both participants presumed that their students already knew how to use a dictionary and were surprised to discover the errors that their students frequently made. Sarah explained that as a result of this initial experience in her first year of teaching, she specifically devoted class time to teaching students how to use a dictionary and ensured that this skill was frequently revised in class in subsequent years. Tom, however, believed that students should come to class already able to use a dictionary and did not spend class time teaching this skill.

Pedrazzini and Nava (2012) assert that dictionary training in the LOTE classroom can be beneficial, although they advise that dictionary skills should not be taught in isolation but should be introduced and practised within the context of the lesson. For maximum benefit, students need to understand what they are doing and why. As earlier mentioned, VCAA (2013a) reported a trend of poor dictionary skills in the 2012 VCE LOTE examinations, which might indicate that it is worthwhile devoting class time to improving these skills.

The writing strategies tended to vary depending on the LOTE. Tom, for example, taught specific strategies to aid students with writing the Chinese characters. These memory strategies included imagining that the characters looked like particular objects and counting the strokes of the character. Tom was aware that the most common method of teaching Chinese characters as a second language involved the rote memorisation of strokes (Wong et.al, 2013); however, he understood the importance of developing his students' confidence and enjoyment and subsequently, learned to relax his ideas. He encouraged his students to use their imagination when writing characters and incorporated games and collaborative learning into his lessons to help develop writing skills (Wong et al., 2011; Wong, et al., 2013).

The other participants taught their students to colour code the parts of speech and sentence beginnings and endings. Although each participant reported that their students responded positively to writing tasks when they were able to use computers, it is unclear

whether computers help to improve and develop important writing strategies such as planning, drafting and revising (Hawisher & Selfe, 2009). It seems that IT can enhance motivation and engagement when writing but at the same time, it might not help develop specific writing strategies (Yajun, 2003).

Writing seemed to be an area where there was a greater range of strategies taught and used; there seemed to be less consistency amongst the research participants. Richard, for example, mentioned his apprehension when teaching creative writing strategies; he was aware that this was an area where his students lacked skills and strategies but he appeared to be less confident in teaching specific writing strategies than in the other language skills. A body of evidence asserts that reading and writing skills are linked and should be integrated to help develop writing skills (Belcher and Hirvela, 2001; Graham, 2006; Grabe & Stoller, 2009; Shanahan, 2006). For example, students might read a piece of text and use it as a springboard for their own piece. The sample text will help to engage students if it is relevant and meaningful and it will model suitable vocabulary and sentence structures to the students. Grabe and Stoller (2009) assert that students will also feel more motivated to write if provided with a specific, authentic reason to write and that the task needs to match the students' interests and abilities. They say, "A classroom context can promote student motivation by developing group cohesiveness and communities of learners (with, for example, cooperative learning) who support each other's learning, efforts with challenging tasks, and increasing expectations for success" (p. 449). Given that each research participant possessed great confidence and skill when teaching reading strategies, it might be worth considering combining reading and writing activities in order to help students develop their writing strategies and skills.

7.8 Final thoughts: Experiences of a Trainee Teacher

During the data collection and analysis phase of this study, I spoke to a number of people - work colleagues and peers - regarding my research. As my findings began to emerge, I became increasingly interested in how teachers learnt about strategies when they were students and how their experiences, in turn, affected the way that they taught their students. In my own experience, strategy training was not specifically taught during my teacher training. Rather, the strategies I learnt, and then passed on to my own

students, were taught during my Indonesian language lessons, both at secondary school and later, as a university undergraduate.

I was interested in the experiences of other language teachers, and as a parallel to this study, I collected some additional, informal data, which turned out to be significant as it highlighted some of the issues that emerged from my main research.

At the time of my study, Kate was in her final year of her teacher-training course, while working part-time, teaching Year 7 French at a small independent co-educational secondary school. Due to the demands of balancing university study while still in her first year of teaching, she was reluctant to fully participate in my study but was willing to speak with me about her experiences as both a language student and teacher. Our communication took the form of several unstructured conversations and emails; I did not follow set interview questions but allowed our conversations to flow naturally, keen to hear about Kate's recent university experiences. As a result, Kate made some astute observations regarding strategy teaching and learning. The table below summarises her teaching experience:

Table 7.2 Profile of a Trainee Teacher

	Kate
LOTE	French
Age Group	20 – 25
Teaching Experience	Less than 1 year
Type of School	Co-educational, Independent
Year Level Taught	7

As a trainee teacher, Kate was not taught specific strategy training as part of her teaching degree. Strategy training was briefly discussed at different times throughout her course; this was determined by the course lecturer and was guided by students' specific questions. A greater focus in the teaching degree was placed on how to engage students in the LOTE classroom. A significant amount of time was spent on developing an awareness of the types of activities and games that might help to motivate students and keep language learning interesting. The types of activities that were discussed in Kate's university classes, included: incorporating popular culture into the lessons and

using films, music, IT and language games to help add diversity and interest to language lessons. The activities she described supported my data; Kate's observations highlighted the value of 'language activities' that were described by the six research participants.

Kate explained that these 'activities' helped to develop language skills and while strategies were, "briefly touched upon" there was a greater focus on language acquisition, particularly how listening and speaking skills were attained; Kate was taught that a deeper knowledge of the language acquisition process would help teachers to assist and understand their students. Interestingly, Kate observed that strategy training seemed to depend on the lecturer's particular interest in the topic and did not seem to be part of the set curriculum. She commented:

In Semester Two, our teacher just focused on theory...we didn't do much related to teaching in the classroom, so, no specific strategies at all.

I found that this was also the case with the research participants; this was demonstrated with Anna, who regularly used films in her Italian classes to help develop students' listening skills. This stemmed from her interest and passion for films, and was not determined by curriculum guidelines.

Kate explained that she did learn specific strategies as a French student, both in secondary school and particularly, while at university. It was in these language lessons that specific strategies were taught and practised:

I noticed our tutors/lecturers used these specific strategies to help our learning. They'd tell us to break up the words, contextualize the reading, highlight words you recognise etcetera, so it was more my own experiences as a student that helped me better to teach specific strategies (email).

Certainly, Kate's experiences cannot be generalised to all language learners; however, her comments were remarkably similar to my own experiences, decades earlier, as a university student learning Indonesian. For this reason, it might be worth considering the important role university language classes play in strategy training.

7.9 Summary

In summary, it seems that the ability to successfully use a range of strategies in the LOTE classroom is closely linked to the students' competence and confidence in the subject. Regardless of their aptitude and experience, an understanding of strategy use can benefit students. Each participant taught their students a range of strategies similar to those in Oxford's (1990) classification scheme, although it was not clear if they were aware of Oxford's research; they each believed that the ability to effectively use strategies enhanced their students' learning experiences.

Strategy training needs to be regularly revised and reinforced, but importantly, in order for strategy training to be successful, it is vital that the atmosphere in the classroom is caring and tolerant and that there is a strong rapport between the students and their teacher. This atmosphere of support seemed to be created through peer collaboration, and co-operative learning activities, humour and games (Oxford, 1990). It was further reinforced by emphasising that learning a LOTE is a long process and mistakes are inevitable; consequently, less focus was placed on test results and grades than on developing language skills and building confidence. Of interest, was the empathy the participants displayed and their willingness to try to reduce students' stress and anxiety; this was particularly evident when they shared stories with their students of their own language learning experiences. The use of IT in the classroom also played a crucial role in engaging and motivating the students

The participants recognised that strategy training was beneficial in all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing, but the amount of time devoted to strategy training in each skill varied, depending on the participants' interests, goals for their students and their personal teaching style. This was highlighted through Anna's emphasis on using film to teach listening skills and the lack of value Tom placed on teaching dictionary skills. Strategy training was introduced at the junior levels, where simple techniques were taught, such as memorisation skills, and gradually, these strategies were developed in both range and complexity as the students' ability increased. The participants stressed the need to constantly revise these strategies and for students to understand why they were important.

There were similarities between the *types* of strategies taught and the *way* that they were taught. This was particularly evident with reading strategies. All six participants had

taught their students a wide range of similar strategies to help develop reading skills. These strategies included: identifying the text type, reading the questions first, using visual clues such as illustrations, skimming, scanning identifying key words and finding familiar words (Oxford, 1990). The participants believed that a mastery of these strategies would equip their students with the ability to approach any reading task with skill and confidence. However, the reasons why reading seemed to be important and why the students seemed stronger in these skills were unclear. It might be, as Richard suggested, that this was a skill that students naturally developed faster than others. Another explanation could be that there seemed to be a greater range of easily accessible reading resources available. This was in contrast to the frustration all participants expressed at the lack of stimulating and suitable listening material.

Certain language skills tended to have less emphasis placed on them. For example, all six participants agreed that writing strategies were vital; however, this was an area where there tended to be greater variety in the types and strategies taught and the manner in which they were delivered. Once again, I can only speculate on the reasons for this. It might be due to the lack of Professional Development available in this area or perhaps it is not seen as important as other skills, such as speaking. Perhaps, with such a small cohort of participants, it was simply too difficult to find similarities and trends in the writing strategies they mentioned. One possible explanation might be the result of the 'washback effect' from external examinations (Chambers, G. 2013; Djuric, 2008) where teachers focus on developing skills such as listening and reading, at the expense of writing strategies. Once again, with such a small cohort, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions; however, it might be worthy of further investigation.

All six participants demonstrated very realistic expectations for their students. While fluency was the ultimate goal, the participants realised that learning a LOTE is an on-going process and were flexible in the way in which they delivered the course material, willing to meet the students' individual abilities and interests. While strategy teaching was a crucial aspect of the LOTE course, of equal importance were the activities - which all six participants referred to as "strategies" - that were incorporated into every lesson. While not technically Language Learning Strategies, nevertheless, these language activities helped to reinforce language skills, and engaged and stimulated the students, making this an important part of the LOTE curriculum.

The participants were constantly searching for new materials and different ways to motivate and interest their students (Liyanage et al., 2013). Even the most highly experienced teachers, such as Anna and Jan, were very aware that they needed to keep finding innovative and fresh activities and resources. This seemed to be achieved through the use of technology and understanding the world in which the students functioned. Anna and Jan also had a strong understanding of popular culture and were able to include popular culture references in their lessons. Certainly, the LOTE classroom is dynamic and constantly changing, where “trial and error” is a part of every lesson for both teacher and student. In the next chapter, the classroom observations will be presented and discussed.

Chapter Eight

Classroom Observations

8.1 Introduction

In this section I will present the information gathered from the classroom observations. Although it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions from such a small sample of classroom observations, the opportunity to step inside the secondary school LOTE classrooms of some participants was, nevertheless, interesting and highlighted many of the issues raised by the participants during the in-depth interviews.

During the data collection stage I observed six LOTE classes, ranging from Year 7 to Year 12. I observed classes from French, Chinese and German. Ideally, I would have also liked to have observed an Indonesian and Italian lesson; however, at the time of the data collection, it was a very busy period in the school calendar and was not convenient for the research participants.

Table 8.1 Classroom observations

Language	Teacher	Year Level	Number of classes Observed
French	Sarah	Year 7	1
Chinese	Tom	Year 7	2
German	Jan	Year 8	1
German	Jan	Year 10/11	1
German	Jan	Year 12	1

While mindful of the “Observer’s Paradox (Labov, 1972), the classroom observations were particularly interesting as they allowed the opportunity to see a range of strategies being used by the students and actively taught by the participants. Many of the strategies from Oxford’s (1990) classification scheme were identifiable and observable (see Chapter 2, p. 36).

The table below provides an overview of Oxford's classification system:

Table 8.2 Examples of Oxford's classification scheme

Direct Strategies	Indirect strategies
Memory strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making up songs or rhymes to remember how to pronounce words. 	Metacognitive strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading reference material about grammatical and phonetic rules.
Cognitive strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trying to recall the pronunciation of a word; • speaking slowly to ensure accurate pronunciation. 	Affective Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having a sense of humour about mispronunciations.
Compensation strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • guessing intelligently 	Social Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operating with peers; • Asking someone to correct one's pronunciation.

The classroom teachers specifically taught their students direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies included memory strategies to help students recall vocabulary, cognitive strategies to aid pronunciation and compensation strategies to help students make an intelligent guess when faced with unfamiliar words and phrases. Indirect strategies included metacognitive strategies, such as planning and drafting a writing task. Of interest was the strong emphasis all participants placed on social and affective strategies. These strategies included recalling humorous anecdotes about mispronunciations and speech errors, peer-group collaboration, modifying and extending tasks to suit the learners' needs and using games to enhance motivation and confidence.

8.2 Listening Strategies

A combination of direct and indirect and indirect strategies was used to teach listening skills. The types of listening strategies noted during the classroom observations included cognitive and metacognitive strategies such as pre-reading the comprehension questions to identify what the listening passage might be about, taking notes while listening and listening to the audio at least twice. The LOTE teachers also used affective strategies to help the students feel relaxed, such as informing them how many times they would hear the audio and preparing them for the task by alerting them to the types of phrases they might hear and reminding them where they had previously heard these phrases.

In the junior classes, such as Tom's Year 7 Chinese class and Sarah's Year 7 French class, opportunities to listen were interspersed throughout the lesson, through games, songs, and simple instructions. Some of the instructions overheard included: "Sit down...Open up your books...Take out a red pen...Rule up your page..." and the like.

In addition to this, the students were taught memory strategies and were encouraged to make word associations. For example, when Tom's Year 7 Chinese students were learning body parts, one of the words introduced was 'toe'. Tom told his students, the Chinese word, *jiaozhi* and then explained, "It sounds like tootsie!" This was met with much laughter but seemed to be an effective strategy to help the students remember vocabulary. The children were encouraged to find similar sounding English words to help them remember and recall new vocabulary. Tom told his students that the Chinese word *tou*, meaning 'head' is at the "top of your body so remember that the 't' will remind you of top." Sarah, in her Year 7 French class was also teaching body parts and when introducing the word 'stomach,' first told her students the French *estomac* and asked them to guess its meaning, hinting, "This is very similar to a word in English." She also used the same word associations as Tom, reminding the students to remember the French word *tete*, meaning 'head' because, "you start at the top of your head and work your way down when saying body parts."

Both teachers used repetition, encouraging students to listen for key words and take a guess, even if they did not understand the entire sentence. In both Tom and Sarah's Year 7 classes, exaggerated facial expressions and gestures were also used to help reinforce verbal meanings. These strategies seemed to allow listening skills to develop

in an informal and relaxed manner where the focus seemed to be on listening for gist and overall meaning, gradually building to more sophisticated strategy use as the students' skills and confidence increased.

In Jan's Year 10 German class, a similar approach was also used, although the listening tasks that I observed were more structured. A range of direct and indirect strategies was used. For example, prior to beginning a listening comprehension task using a CD, the students read the worksheet they had to complete and, as a whole class, discussed the questions and what they might expect to hear. During the task, the CD was paused and Jan asked brief questions to ensure that the students understood the dialogue. The students were encouraged to use clues from the context of the dialogue, as well as taking a guess and trying to find connections between German and English words.

From the lessons I observed, it seemed that this combination of specific memory, cognitive, compensation and affective strategies helped students to correctly and confidently complete listening tasks.

8.3 Speaking Strategies

Once again, a range of direct and indirect strategies was taught and used. The types of speaking strategies observed included metacognitive strategies, such as jotting down words and phrases, to remind students of what to include in their speech, using the teacher's question as a model for the correct sentence structure when formulating their reply and also using circumlocution. All of the research participants were highly aware of the difficulties students face when speaking in the LOTE and ensured that they created a classroom environment that was supportive and relaxed. Several times during the observations I heard the classroom teacher remind the students that mistakes were a part of the process of mastering a LOTE and should be expected. When students did make a mistake in their speech, the teacher would model the correct form and then simply move on with the rest of the lesson. These social and affective strategies helped to create a positive classroom environment.

In the junior classes, speaking skills seemed to be gradually developed and nurtured. Opportunities to speak were woven throughout the lesson, often presented in a fun and interesting way. For example, during a Year 7 French lesson, Sarah used a foam ball to

encourage her students to speak. The boys had just completed a listening task where Sarah described a 'monster' to them, using recently acquired vocabulary that included parts of the body, colours and numbers. As Sarah described the 'monster,' the boys had to take notes and later, draw what they had heard. Sarah took turns throwing the ball to each student, who then had to ask her a question about her verbal description. As each boy caught the ball, they would ask a question to clarify the description she had provided. Their questions included asking for the number of legs the 'monster' possessed as well as confirming the colour of its eyes and hair. Interestingly, this activity encouraged the boys to ask questions, not only because they were eager to ensure that their drawing was accurate but also because they knew that they were each required to ask a question and they seemed to want to ask the obvious, perhaps, easier questions, such the number and colour of the 'monster's' body parts. Once these questions had been asked, the boys who had not yet asked a question had to ask more complicated questions in French, such as where the 'monster' lived and specific questions about the type of food it ate.

This task was clearly enjoyed by the boys - I observed them eagerly listening to each other's questions and taking notes or adding to their drawing - but the task was also relevant because they were interested in the information they were gleaning from each other's questions. Meaningful exchanges and active listening were clearly taking place in a relaxed and engaging environment.

After listening to Sarah's description, the boys then had to design and describe their own 'monster,' using not just the nouns they had learned but also adjectives and quantifiers. The boys were given time to prepare for this task in class and were then allowed to rehearse. Sarah provided the students with strategies to help them with their verbal presentation, such as showing the boys how to break down their sentences into smaller parts. On the board, she demonstrated how to read aloud each 'chunk,' cover it up, repeat it, then check for accuracy. Once the students mastered each section of the sentence, they said the whole sentence, then repeated the process with the next sentence until they finally were able to recite a string of four or five sentences. The student worked in pairs testing each other, praising and high-fiving each other when they managed to recite their whole description without an error. Sarah assisted the boys by giving them clues: "What does it sound like in English?" as well as showing them how to hyphenate the French words into smaller parts to aid pronunciation and

memorisation. These strategies ensured that when they finally presented their verbal report to Sarah they were prepared, calm and organised. This once again highlights how direct and indirect strategies complement each other, and are used together to enhance the learners' understanding and enjoyment of the subject.

In the other classes I observed, students were encouraged to prepare for speaking activities prior to the task. This appeared to give them more confidence and a sense of control over the task. In the younger classes, such as Tom's Year 7 Chinese class, the students worked with a partner to write a role-play which was later performed to the rest of the class. The students tried to memorise their scripts but could refer to them, if needed, during their performance. Tom's Year 7 Chinese class was also, coincidentally, learning body parts, which provided some interesting data. In one class I observed, Tom encouraged his students to remember vocabulary by giving them little rhymes and simple rules to follow. He told the students:

**Remember the pattern...Try to remember what word comes
after 'head'...Start at the top of the body and work
down...Remember it sounds like...**

The students then chanted a rhyme starting with the words, 'head' 'neck' and 'shoulders' *tou, jing, jian tuo*. Tom explained to the students that the Chinese words did not rhyme with each other so it helped if they could make up their own little song or rhyme to aid recollection. Accompanied by actions, the rhyme and the clues Tom provided seemed to help the students to remember and recall vocabulary and in turn, enabled them to apply it to their speech.

By contrast, in the senior classes, the students were still given the opportunity to prepare for a speaking task but they required less scaffolding. They were able to prepare by jotting down a few words and phrases, as well as referring to their class notes and dictionaries to confirm accuracy. The use of hesitation devices, fillers, facial expressions and hand gestures were frequently observed to help express meaning.

In one instance, in a Year 12 German class, a boy performed a role play with another student. I observed him planning his dialogue by jotting down a few key words and checking his class notes for useful phrases. During the role play, he appeared to be speaking fluently but mid-way through the dialogue, he hesitated slightly and seemed unsure of a particular word. Without stopping the conversation he said, in English,

while still using a German accent, 'recipe book' and then continued the rest of the dialogue. His partner, also without hesitation, continued the dialogue but as soon as they finished, they, along with the rest of the class, laughed at his mistake and his attempt to cover it up. The teacher, Jan, praised the dialogue and gave him the correct German word for 'recipe book,' *rezeptbuch* which the boy noted in his workbook. Once more, I witnessed affective strategies from the LOTE teacher, where mistakes were accepted, gently corrected and viewed as an expected part of the lesson.

Later, I asked the two students who presented this role play what they did if they forgot a German word when speaking. They told me that they usually tried to paraphrase or describe the word they meant, and if that failed, say the English equivalent. They knew that a small mistake or two when speaking was usually unavoidable but they also knew that they should continue talking and tried to steer the dialogue to an area where they felt more confident. They knew not to focus on their errors but to keep going. These strategies have apparently been taught to them throughout the junior secondary years and regularly reinforced by their teachers as they progressed through secondary school.

This use of scaffolding, gradually decreasing as the students gained more skill and confidence in the subject, seemed to help the students approach speaking tasks with a sense of ease.

8.4 Reading Strategies

During the classes I observed, I noted the students using a number of cognitive, metacognitive and compensation reading strategies. These included skimming and scanning, using the clues in the text to help them with comprehension, such as looking at captions and pictures, taking a guess, looking through their class notes and the class textbook. The Year 7 French students were seen making connections between French and English in order to guess the meaning. The Year 7 Chinese students were also observed applying this strategy, as well as referring to their class notes and textbook while completing a reading task. They were also instructed to look at the overall shape of a Chinese character and try to deduce its meaning by its silhouette. In both the Year 7 Chinese and French classes, as well the Year 8 German class, students were encouraged to break down sentences into smaller groups when reading. It seemed that gaining an

overall sense of the text's meaning was acceptable; reading for gist and making generalisations were encouraged in these junior years. From the lessons I observed, it seems that these simple strategies were introduced at an early age and then reinforced, honed and practised as the students moved through secondary school

In Jan's German classes, the senior students, that is, Years 10, 11 and 12, displayed remarkable independence. In the lessons that I observed, the students did not once ask the teacher for assistance, but instead, possessed a range of strategies that enabled them to work independently. These included peer collaboration as well as consulting their dictionary and class notes, using clues from the text, such as captions and pictures and using the context to take a guess at the meaning.

I later asked Jan whether she had specifically instructed her students to only ask her as a last resort, but she explained she encouraged the students to speak to her at any time throughout the lesson. Once again, this tolerant atmosphere appears to have been fostered and developed over a long period of time.

8.5 Writing Strategies

In the junior classes that I observed - Year 7 Chinese and Year 7 French – technology was an integral part of the writing tasks and seemed to play an important role in helping students to develop writing strategies. Tom's Year 7 Chinese class all had their own iPad while Sarah's French students each had their own notebook computer.

In one lesson, Tom was teaching his students body parts; he wrote the Pinyin on the board while demonstrating how to draw the corresponding character; Pinyin is the Chinese text written using English letters. The students copied his character strokes on their iPads. As Tom was drawing each stroke, he gave the students clues about the stroke order and what each character looked like, pointing out similarities to real life objects. For example, when drawing the Chinese character for 'head,' Tom showed the students a stroke at the top of the character that was the "hat that goes on top of the head." He also told them: "Draw from top to bottom. Left to right." To demonstrate, the Chinese character for 'head' that he drew is shown: 头

These simple cognitive, memory and compensation strategies helped the students to remember how to draw the often complex Chinese characters. The iPads were also used to provide scaffolding when completing writing tasks. For example, the students used an application on their iPads that simplified the Chinese characters, enabling them to draw just the basic strokes until they gained more skill and knowledge. They were also able to write the Pinyin on their iPads which would then convert it into the correct Chinese character. This scaffolding appeared to help the students focus on the content of their writing, allowing them to understand the correct vocabulary and word order. Once these skills were mastered, the more detailed complexities of drawing Chinese characters could then be taught.

Sarah's Year 7 French class used their notebook computers to aid their writing. As Sarah was reading aloud her description of a 'monster,' the boys used their notebooks to either draw what they heard or to take notes. I observed the boys write two or three words as they heard them and then later, fill in the gaps and write complete sentences. Some boys drew with colour as they listened to Sarah describe the 'monster's' hair and eye colour; others used online dictionaries and their textbook to help them deduce the meaning of Sarah's verbal description. Peer collaboration was also used to help the students improve their writing skills; before Sarah checked their writing, each boy had to conference with at least one other student and proof-read the other's work. During this time, the boys referred to their on-line textbook and dictionary to ensure that the spelling, gender and word order were correct.

The students' enthusiasm when completing these writing tasks was of particular interest. They were engaged and excited as they wrote, demonstrating the way in which technology can be used effectively to enhance learning.

8.6 Affective strategies: Empathy in the LOTE Classroom

As the study progressed, the affective strategies that the participants possessed began to emerge. This "something extra" (Eyre et al., 2002, p. 160) that each teacher displayed consisted of three main factors: empathy, an awareness of popular culture and an ability to incorporate technology into each lesson. These three things seemed to motivate and engage students and helped to create a warm and caring classroom environment.

During the classroom observations the importance of empathy in the classroom became very apparent. Empathy is the ability to identify with the feelings, thoughts and attitudes of others, and whether intentional or otherwise, in the lessons I observed, all teachers were able to recognise the difficulties their students faced when learning a LOTE and understood the value of conveying this to their students. Arnold (2005) defines this ability as “empathic intelligence”. According to Arnold, empathic intelligence consists of the ability to show enthusiasm and expertise, as well as the capacity to engage others. She believes that the most effective teachers are those who display empathic intelligence, stating:

learning is effective when educators are attuned to their own thinking and feeling processes, are able to imagine how others might be thinking and feeling, and use their sensitivity and imagination to create purposeful and energizing learning experiences. Enacted in a climate of care, these skills are all part of professional expertise and have the potential to transform both relating and learning.” (p.12)

This ability to understand the students’ point of view and appreciate their thoughts and feelings allows educators to adapt their lessons in order to minimize their students’ anxiety; it also helps students to realise that their experiences are a normal part of learning (Grossman, 2004).

In the lessons I observed, great care was taken to foster an environment of care and respect. This, in turn, seemed to enhance learning, as the focus was not only on the content of the lesson but also on how the students felt during the lesson. It seems that empathy plays a significant part in the LOTE teachers’ ability to create a safe and gentle learning environment. Empathy seems to be an important attribute in the classroom, as not only does it enable the teacher to engage effectively with students, it also allows them to judge the students’ intellectual and emotional needs and gauge the right amount of challenges to set them (Arnold, 2005).

Arnold (2010) presents a model where the “empathic intelligent” educator should possess the following characteristics:

- Enthusiasm
- Engagement
- Expertise
- Intelligent caring

According to Arnold, the teacher’s enthusiasm signals to the student that the subject is, in fact, worthy of their time and energy; enthusiasm can be a positive affirmation to the students as it signals to them that their effort is worthwhile. The teacher also needs to possess a repertoire of strategies to help engage the students and meet their individual needs. Students need to engage with the subject in order to believe that their effort is meaningful and to feel that the investment that they make in the subject will ultimately be beneficial. The teacher also needs to be an expert in their field, not only so they can model best practices to their students but also so they are able to tolerate the students’ mistakes. And finally, they should show intelligent caring, where they are able to “identify the right balance between dependency and independence” (Arnold, 2010, p. 601).

All six of the participants in my study demonstrated this knack for conveying empathy. For example, Anna and Richard, both native speakers of the target language, showed humour when relating their own stories of arriving in Australia and making mistakes with their English speaking skills (Urios-Aparisi & Wagner, 2011). Sarah and Alison, for whom the LOTE was their second language, were able to empathise with their students as they too were once LOTE secondary students and were able to share their own stories of the challenges they encountered and could pass on tips that helped them to eventually master the language (Hattie, 2012). Tom and Jan demonstrated boundless enthusiasm, trying a range of activities and incorporating technology into their lesson in order to enthuse and engage their students. All six participants were evidently experts in their field with a deep understanding of both the language and culture of the country. And finally, each participant showed a willingness to try different strategies until they came across the one that resonated with their students. This “intelligent caring” that Arnold defines seemed to underpin each participant’s lessons, with their primary concern being not that the students would master the language at school but that they would feel

confident and comfortable learning to do so. Thus, they tried various strategies in an effort to strike the right balance between support and autonomy in their classroom.

8.7 The Role of Popular Culture in the LOTE Classroom:

One interesting aspect of the classroom observations was the role that popular culture plays in the LOTE lessons. All of the participants drew on popular culture to enhance their teaching, which they believed helped to motivate and engage their students. During the in-depth interviews, Anna, the Italian teacher, discussed the value of popular culture as a learning tool and used the popularity of the *Twilight* films and books, as well as comic strips and magazines to engage her students when reading Italian texts. However, it was not until the classroom observation phase of the data collection that I was able to see directly the role that popular culture can play in the LOTE classroom. Jan, for example, used film stars such as Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt as topics for classroom oral practice as well as referencing magazine articles and television programs such as *Masterchef*.

Evans (2005) asserts that education, “does not take place in a vacuum but includes wider social, cultural, historical and political contexts” (p. 9) While Lankshear and Knobel (2003) point out that children of the 21st century have changed from previous generations and need to be catered for accordingly. Often educators feel that popular culture has no place in the classroom and furthermore, that its incorporation into the curriculum would be frowned upon (Lambirth, 2003; Marsh, 2003). Certainly, at various times throughout the study, each participant commented on the goal-driven nature of their teaching. Strong VCE results were expected by each school and the teachers were aware that their students needed to be adequately prepared for VCE examinations; it was also clear that this training and preparation started in the junior years of secondary school. Yet, they managed to ensure that their lessons were topical and interesting while still adhering to the expectations of the school. Tom and Richard did not seem to possess a strong knowledge of popular culture, particularly Richard, who was teaching in an all girls’ school; however, they acknowledged the interest that popular culture held for their students. Richard, for example, allowed his students to choose film stars or musicians for a research project and Tom allowed his Year 7

students to use photographs of athletes and celebrities when they were required to draw and label the body parts they had recently learned.

Evans (2005) states that as educators, we need to be aware of the new and different worlds that children are experiencing, worlds that reflect their social practices and cultures in their day to day life. She goes on to say that educators need to bridge the gap between the “many dynamic constantly changing worlds in which they live” (p. 10) and the older, more static world of adults. She explains:

To do this we need to find out about, show interest in, and appreciate children’s popular culture interests, their technological expertise, indeed their cultural capital, are valued in an attempt to make school...more meaningful for them.” (p. 10)

According to Weaver (2005) popular culture helps us to understand the ideas, identities and learning habits of young people; the characters featured in popular culture, through books, films, music and television often represent the hopes, dreams and fears of the students we are teaching. Despite this, the value of popular culture in education is often overlooked (Brabazon, 2007; Strinati, 2004). Brabazon (2007) points out that throughout the history of universities and formal education, popular culture has been “intentionally and actively excluded” (p.132) which she suggests serves to disenfranchise students from their own social frameworks and literacies. She says:

Popular culture circulates ideas to a wide audience...Teachers often work with high culture rather than popular culture. The aim of good teaching...is to deny and decentre the easy and assumed division of art and pop...If a discussion about the role and purpose of popular culture in education is not made, then our classrooms become museums. Teachers become guides through the dusty relics of texts and ideas.” (p.132)

The LOTE teachers who participated in my study seemed to understand the impact of popular culture and readily embraced it in an effort to present students with contemporary images with which they could identify. This, in turn, helped to increase their motivation and interest in the subject.

Certainly, all of the participants acknowledge the value of using technology, such as iPads and YouTube, to help motivate and engage students in their learning; this seemed to be a conscious and deliberate teaching decision. However, the use of popular culture

did not appear to be made with such awareness, rather, it seemed to be something that the participants stumbled upon that “worked.” Perhaps the value of popular culture needs to be promoted as a valuable teaching and learning tool. Weaver (2005) points out, popular culture enables students to make meaning and sense of the world around them and often demonstrates issues and problems that we see in real life. Falk (1993) asserts:

It is not the ability of the educator to impart skills which will determine the outcome in the learning situation, but the ability of the educator to relate the learning to the learners’ changing perception of literacy and how the learners can take charge of its use in newly constructed life picture which they should start to own as a result of the interaction. (p. 236)

Some teachers seemed more aware of popular culture, perhaps due to their own interests and experiences. Jan, for example, made reference to current television programs and magazine stories as well as YouTube clips. This awareness helped her to connect with her students’ interests and allowed her to incorporate topical issues in her lessons.

The perceived role of popular culture in the LOTE classroom was particularly interesting, since all six participants in my study taught at independent schools, where there is often a heightened awareness of parental wishes and an emphasis on students participating in tertiary education. If popular culture was thought to have insignificant educational value, it certainly was not evident in this study, because each participant was working towards preparing their students for VCE LOTE and in recent years had achieved excellent VCE results. This study did not examine the role of popular culture in the LOTE classroom beyond the participants in this study but certainly, within the boundaries of this project, popular culture was regarded as a valuable and worthwhile teaching tool.

8.8 Summary

The classroom observations demonstrate that a wide range of Language Learning Strategies appear to be understood and implemented by the students. Using Oxford's (1990) classification scheme, a range of both direct and indirect strategies were seen throughout the lessons observed. These strategies seem to increase in range and complexity as the students progress through secondary school. The junior classes tended to use more co-operative learning and peer collaboration and the strategies were often teacher-led and directed and quite simple in nature. Cognitive, memory and compensation strategies were readily used, such as looking for key words, using the context to understand meaning and reading for gist. These strategies were introduced in Year 7 and reinforced and practised through the secondary school years. While language competency is important, there is also a focus on helping the students gain confidence and to develop a sense of resilience as their LOTE skills develop.

Jan's senior students seemed very independent in class; they rarely asked the teacher for assistance and possessed a wide range of direct and indirect strategies that they appeared confident and capable of using. In these classes, the LOTE teacher acted more as a facilitator, guiding the students and assisting where necessary. This use of scaffolding, which gradually decreased as the students' skills and ability increased seemed to be a vital part of the LOTE classroom and an important factor in the students' LOTE success.

A variety of direct and indirect strategies was taught and used in the classes that I observed. These strategies covered the four skills of language – listening, speaking, reading and writing. Of interest was the role of affective strategies in the LOTE classroom. In all of the lessons I observed, the LOTE teacher had created a classroom environment where the students felt comfortable and appeared engaged and motivated as they completed a range of language activities. Furthermore, the activities presented to the students were topical and interesting, incorporating materials that were relevant to the students' own lives, such as popular culture references, as well as incorporating technology into the lessons. Although these are not Language Learning Strategies, these elements helped to engage and motivate the students, which in turn appeared to make LOTE learning meaningful and enjoyable.

Once again, it must be kept in mind that the findings from this study are specific and particular, dealing with a very small sample of students and teachers. Indeed, the interpretations I drew as a result of the classroom observations cannot be applied to the wider secondary school LOTE population. Instead, it is hoped that, while acknowledging the limitations of this study, my research may stimulate further investigation into the area of Language Learning Strategies. In the next chapter I will synthesise the data from the questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations and present a profile of an effective teacher. In Chapter Nine I will answer the research questions. I will then conclude my inquiry and present the implications of my study for further research.

Chapter Nine

Profile of an Effective Teacher

9.1 Introduction

As my study progressed, common characteristics and similarities amongst the research participants began to surface. Although very different in terms of experience and background, they shared similar attitudes and values towards LOTE teaching. In this section I will present and discuss these common features. My study focused on the types of Language Learning Strategies that were taught in the classroom and used by the students. However, as my study progressed, other ideas began to take shape as I examined the participants' interview responses more closely and observed them in the classroom, teaching strategy use and interacting with, and engaging their students. This information helped to form a more solid picture of what makes an effective LOTE teacher. While Language Learning Strategies were indeed an important part of effective teaching and learning, other, more intangible qualities began to appear. The following section examines these qualities in detail and highlights the complex role of the LOTE teacher. It seems that the ability to teach strategy use is just a small aspect of what it means to be an effective LOTE teacher.

9.2 Characteristics of an effective LOTE Teacher

I began this study with the idea that the ability to use Language Learning Strategies could help students achieve greater expertise and autonomy in the LOTE classroom. Of course, it would be overly simplistic to assume that the possession of a range of strategies would lead to success when learning a LOTE; however, I believed that if students were aware of Language Learning Strategies and knew specifically when and how to use them, it would help them to approach a range of tasks with greater ease and confidence. Certainly, a body of previous research supports this notion (Chamot, 2012; Harley, 1986; Graham, 2002; Macaro, 2006; Wingat, 2004; Wright & Brown, 2006).

I was interested in the way in which LOTE teachers taught Language Learning Strategies to their students and their own experiences and observations regarding the way students use strategies and their perceived effectiveness. I hoped that this information would provide valuable insight into how LOTE teachers approached teaching Language Learning Strategies.

My study highlighted how and when Language Learning Strategies are used in the classroom. The questionnaire and in-depth interview results showed that each participant had a strong knowledge and understanding of what language learning strategies are, how they can help learners and how to teach their students which strategies to use, depending on the task. The participants taught their students both direct and indirect strategies, outlined in Oxford's (1990) classification scheme (see Chapter 2, p. 35). These strategies included memory strategies, such as teaching the students rhymes to help recall vocabulary; cognitive strategies, such as breaking down words into smaller chunks to ensure accurate pronunciation; compensation strategies, such as using the context of a text to guess the meaning; and metacognitive strategies, such as grouping vocabulary by colour-coding with highlighters.

My study also showed the important role of affective and social strategies. The teachers often used humour and anecdotes to help create a sense of ease in the classroom, and they regularly used co-operative learning activities in peer-groups to enable students to foster students' strengths and to create a warm, relaxed learning environment.

Most significantly, my study showed the importance of the LOTE teachers and the role they play in creating a productive and engaging classroom environment. Although students benefitted from the ability to recognise and use Language Learning Strategies, it also seems that the teachers themselves were the crucial factor in helping students to develop their language skills and to foster positive attitudes towards their LOTE studies.

There is no guarantee that an awareness of Language Learning Strategies will prompt students to employ them but it seems that they might be more motivated and more willing to try if there is a strong rapport with the teacher. There is a substantial body of research that links students' motivation directly to their relationship with the teacher (Clark & Trafford, 1995; Dornyei 2001; Freeman and Richards, 1996; Rowe, 2003). In a subject such as LOTE, where there is perhaps a heavier reliance on the teacher than in many other subjects, this teacher-student relationship is especially important (Carr,

2003; Jones & Jones, 2001) This motivation can fluctuate depending on the students' rapport with the teacher and can, in turn, affect students' attitudes towards the subject (Clark & Trafford, 1995). Rowe (2003) demonstrates the significance of the relationship that the teachers establish with their students when he says:

There are strong empirical grounds for believing that teachers can and *do* make a difference and that consistent high-quality teaching...*can* and *does* deliver dramatic improvements in student learning. (p. 25)

In an early study of classroom research, Allwright and Bailey (1991) further highlight the value of a strong teacher-student relationship in the LOTE classroom when they say:

If you ask people about the languages they have learned, then you are likely to arouse memories of particular teachers – perhaps of the teacher who first captured their enthusiasm, or of the teacher who effectively killed it off...Although some teachers may infect practically all their learners with their own enthusiasm, other teachers may succeed in ruining the experience for practically all theirs. (p.160)

Several other studies have found that students' expectations and achievements are greatly influenced by the teacher (Dornyei, 2001; Rowe, 2003). Freeman and Richards (1996) suggest that when teachers have respect for their students, this helps to develop a positive learning environment and can influence student motivation.

While my study began with the idea of further exploring the value of Language Learning Strategies, as my research continued, it became apparent that there are a range of inter-relating factors that influence students' ability to identify and use Language Learning Strategies, and that the classroom LOTE teacher plays a vital role in how this occurs. This idea has important implications for teaching, since the way that the student relates to their teacher may affect their overall outcomes in the subject. For this reason, this next section explores the characteristics of an effective LOTE teacher, based on the data I collected. According to the well-established classification systems regarding Language Learning Strategies and the categories my research was based on (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990), these characteristics would be classified as "socio-affective" or "affective" strategies. I believe that in order to fully understand the complexities and diversity found in the LOTE classroom, this category needs to be further explored.

9.3 Affective Strategies

The teachers who participated in my study were a diverse group, yet they displayed similar attitudes towards their students. The following section identifies the common affective strategies that were revealed in the data collection; they will then be examined in more detail. Each participant in my study possessed:

- A desire to create a warm, safe classroom environment.
- An ability to show empathy.
- An ability to show humour.
- An ability to tap into the students' interests.
- A willingness to share personal stories.
- An understanding of students' individual needs and preferred learning styles.
- Access to technology.
- A willingness to use a range of supplementary teaching materials.
- An ability to model a variety of Language Learning Strategies, allowing students to find those that suit them.
- A willingness to focus on the process of language acquisition rather than the outcome.

A desire to create a warm, safe classroom environment.

This element was crucial as it provided the platform for a productive learning environment. Each teacher expressed the desire that their students feel comfortable when learning a LOTE. Physically, the classrooms where they taught were inviting; they were clean and bright with interesting posters and students' work displayed. The tables and chairs were set up so students were close together and able to work in small groups. Often, the chairs and tables were arranged in a horse-shoe shape or grouped together in sets of four. This varied depending on the year level and classroom, but the classroom was never set up in the traditional manner of long rows in front of the board. In the smaller classes, particularly the senior classes, the teacher sat with the students, not in front of the class.

The teacher displayed a warm manner greeting students individually as they entered the room, either standing in the doorway or walking around the room as the roll was

marked. The teacher ensured that each student was individually addressed, sometimes in the target language or in English asking simple questions about their day, previous homework and so on. Within the first ten minutes of the lesson, each student had been personally acknowledged.

Each lesson began in a positive way; in the senior classes there would be a brief discussion of previous work and any difficulties that arose; with the younger students, the lesson began by briefly re-capping the previous lesson, through a short language game or a brief chat. The classes never began by launching straight into the planned work.

An ability to show empathy

Each teacher was able to empathise with their students and showed an understanding of the challenges faced when learning a LOTE. They tried to abate possible feelings of anxiety by creating non-confronting tasks such as co-operative learning activities. The students often worked in pairs, small groups or as a whole class. Each task was discussed and ideas were raised about how to tackle the task before students began. The set tasks were often quite brief so students did not feel overwhelmed. The teacher constantly moved around the class, checking on students' progress and offering assistance.

It seemed that the students' well-being was of paramount importance. Each participant often spoke about individual students with great care and compassion, showing a tolerance of the difficulties they faced in the classroom. The teachers provided suitable scaffolding and support when presenting an activity to the class, allowing those students who required more assistance, an opportunity to receive it without feeling inadequate. Often tasks were open-ended, allowing students the chance to work at their own pace and ability. The students had plenty of support, through the use of computers, access to the internet and the chance to discuss the work with a partner. In short, the teachers used available supplementary materials to ensure that the students felt calm and in control of their learning environment.

An ability to show humour

The teachers approached each task with good humour. Sometimes, pronunciation in the LOTE was exaggerated to create humour, to help the students to feel less self-conscious when speaking; sometimes the situations created for oral practice were deliberately silly, such as the Year 12 German students who performed an imaginary dialogue between celebrities Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt and Jennifer Anniston. Sarah, the French teacher, finished a unit of work by teaching her students the Can-Can. In the junior classes, the teachers would find humorous similarities between the LOTE and English to help students remember vocabulary, such as pointing out Chinese characters that looked like real-life objects. These observations do not suggest that tasks were not treated seriously, but rather, they highlighted the fact that if an opportunity to be light-hearted presented itself, it was taken. The teachers seemed willing to acknowledge that the tasks the students completed often did not relate to their real life, and could also be quite difficult, so if they could find a way to make the tasks more enjoyable through the use of humour, they did (Urius-Aparisi & Wagner, 2011).

Often the students would laugh at themselves if they made an error, such as the Year 12 German student in Jan's class, who, when unsure of the German word for *recipe book* when performing a role play, simply said the English word with a German accent, which created much laughter when he finished. The teachers too, shared funny stories of cultural differences and the language errors they made as students. Richard, for example, told me about how he often mispronounced English words or used them incorrectly in a sentence and the fun his students had pointing out his mistakes. He was willing to be the object of their humour if it helped them to see that everyone – even experienced teachers - make mistakes.

An ability to tap into the students' interests

The teachers showed an understanding of the students' interests and their likes and dislikes. They seemed to have an awareness of the music the students were listening to, the television programs and films they were watching and the books and magazines they were reading. This knowledge of popular culture and their willingness to bring it into the classroom and use it as a teaching tool helped them to create lessons that were relevant and appealing. Anna, the Italian teacher, working in an all-girls' school, often

took articles from a popular magazine the girls read and translated them into Italian to create engaging reading comprehension tasks. Jan, in her Year 12 German class, led a discussion about the television program *Masterchef*. These examples highlighted the importance of providing stimulating and relevant materials to help engage the students. In some cases, the participants were quite young, such as Sarah, the French teacher and Alison, the Indonesian teacher, so they could easily relate to the interests of their students. However, more mature, experienced teachers, such as Jan and Anna, still possessed an ability to tap into popular culture and incorporate it into their lessons in an effort to enthuse and engage their students. They readily embraced change and were happy to deviate from the standard textbook or set curriculum in order to incorporate modern materials into their lessons.

A willingness to share personal stories

The teachers presented themselves as real people, often sharing stories of their own successes and failures. Sarah (French) and Alison (Indonesian) shared stories of the difficulties they encountered as students learning a LOTE and strategies they used to help them cope in their secondary school years, particularly study techniques and ways to quell their anxiety.

Anna (Italian) shared stories about her apprehension when first arriving in Australia and the language mistakes she made. She also spoke to her students about her early life in Italy and the cultural differences she encountered in Australia. She humorously described her confusion over common foods found in Australia, such as vegemite.

Richard (German) and Tom (Chinese) both told humorous stories about their strong native accents and their attempts to pronounce words with an Australian accent in order to make themselves understood. They shared stories about their experiences when shopping or speaking on the telephone and their failed attempts to convey their meaning. Each teacher presented themselves as someone the students could identify with; like their students, they had also faced challenges but managed to overcome them.

An understanding of students' individual needs and preferred learning styles.

The participants knew their students very well. They seemed to understand their strengths and weaknesses and were willing to adapt their lessons to suit individual students. For example, Alison, the Indonesian teacher, spoke about how her Year 12 students found writing extended pieces very difficult and explained the various strategies she used to help them gain confidence and develop this skill. At one stage, the class worked on writing an essay as a whole group, constructing paragraphs together, sentence by sentence, until they felt confident working in small groups, then pairs and then finally, on their own. This scaffolding demonstrated an understanding of, and willingness to meet, her students' needs. This is supported by the literature and Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory of the ZPD (see Chapter 2, p. 21) which asserts that children actively develop new cognitive abilities through collaboration with teachers and other children.

Sarah (French) understood the difficulties her students faced when completing speaking tasks, and ensured that her junior students were not required to speak individually until they felt comfortable. Often the speaking tasks she devised consisted of whole-class tasks, small group work or pair work. Like Alison, she reduced the level of scaffolding she provided as the students increased their speaking skills and confidence. She understood the intensity and demands of the LOTE class and consequently, adapted her lessons to suit her students' level of language ability. For example, she often grouped the more confident and capable students together to ensure they were being challenged and working at their own pace when completing tasks, while on other occasions she paired a weaker student with a more able one to help the capable student revise their knowledge by explaining it to a peer and to allow the less able student to learn from the other (Bandura, 1986).

This knowledge of individual students was not dependent on the class size. Jan, for example, demonstrated a deep understanding of her Year 12 class, where there were only four students enrolled and equally her Year 8 class, which consisted of 22 students. It seems that a willingness to know the students on a deeper level is achievable if the desire to do so is present. The amount of face-to-face teaching time and class size can certainly produce challenges for the LOTE teacher but, in the case of these participants,

did not prevent them from fostering an understanding of, and rapport with, their students.

Access to technology

Each teacher ensured that their students had access to technology every lesson. Richard, Anna and Sarah's students each had their own notebook computer, while Alison, Jan and Tom's students either had lessons scheduled in a computer laboratory or had a class set of notebook computers in a trolley at the back of the room. Tom's Year 7 students each had their own iPad. Internet access allowed students to complete a range of listening, speaking, reading and writing activities that were contemporary, relevant and engaging. The teachers regularly drew on popular sources, such as YouTube, GoogleMaps, films, television and radio programs to show the LOTE being used in real-life settings. The students regularly made PowerPoint presentations, and used Publisher to produce brochures and digital cameras for projects, to name a few. Anna, the Italian teacher, also described how she used Skype to allow her students to converse with her brother in Italy.

The students also had subscriptions to language websites, such as *Language Perfect*. Each of the participants taught at an independent school, which perhaps influenced the availability of facilities and teaching materials the teachers could access and it must be noted that their experiences may not be indicative of all Victorian secondary school LOTE programs.

A willingness to use a range of supplementary teaching materials.

Each participant ensured that their lessons were interesting and varied. While each student, no matter the year level, was required to purchase a set textbook, the participants heavily supplemented this with their own materials, ranging from pop songs to board games. Some activities were devised entirely by the teacher, such as Alison writing a newspaper report about endangered species to supplement the topic covered in the textbook, while other tasks were adapted to suit the needs of the students, such as Anna using well-known Italian folk tales for reading comprehension tasks. Each

teacher understood that there is no such thing as a uniform approach to teaching a LOTE and were constantly searching for new and interesting materials to support the curriculum, ensuring that their lessons were current and up-dated regularly.

The teachers acknowledged that these supplementary materials were often “hit and miss” affairs and it was both difficult and time consuming trying to find appropriate materials to complement the set textbook. Anna described how she spent “hours” finding a suitable Italian comic strip for her students, photocopying and cutting it into individual frames and placing them in envelopes for her students to read and put in the correct order. She described the success of the activity but also lamented how it only took the students a short amount of time to complete it. Even though it was a worthwhile task, she found it hard to justify the amount of preparation time required.

The participants also reported varying degrees of success when completing these supplementary tasks. For example, each participant had at one stage embarked on a pen pal project, established with a sister school in the target country. Some teachers, such as Richard, reported that his students found the project beneficial, whereas others, such as Tom, found it to have very little value as the students did not possess the language skills to have any meaningful exchanges. He said, “Once they get past writing about family and school they run out of ideas.”

Often teachers feel compelled to use the set text; there is a pressure to meet common curriculum standards and to ensure that the cost of purchasing a textbook is justified through its regular use, but some evidence suggests that a set text may not necessarily enhance students’ language acquisition (Dam & Legenhausen, 1996). LOTE teachers often refer to the fact that the topics in the text are not covered in sufficient depth and detail and that the style of the text and cultural references can quickly become dated. In my study, each participant felt that the text should be supplemented with modern, authentic materials but were also highly aware of the time constraints they faced as these extra materials were almost always self-produced. They spoke about the amount of preparation time required to create additional materials and also the pressure they felt to complete the set curriculum within a limited time period. Nevertheless, each participant was willing to try new activities in order to engage and motivate their students. Despite the amount of time it took and the risk that the activity could be

completed in just a few minutes or even fall flat, each participant possessed the enthusiasm and imagination to try new things, and importantly, to risk trying something again, even if their earlier efforts had failed. This optimism and enthusiasm seemed to be an important factor in enabling the participants to deliver interesting and relevant LOTE lessons.

An ability to model a variety of Language Learning Strategies, allowing students to find one that suits them.

Each participant possessed a range of teaching strategies and showed a willingness to model a variety of different strategies until students found one that suited them. They explained the strategy, demonstrated how it could be used and allowed their students time to practise it. If a student still found the strategy difficult, they would then introduce a new strategy and repeat the process. They recognised that students possessed different learning styles and preferences and were willing to adapt their lessons to suit the individual needs of their students. Jan, for example, in her Year 8 German class, discovered a group of boys who often relied on their memory to help them complete tasks. She taught them some memory strategies, such as mnemonics, and how to colour code their class notes to help them remember the correct word order when writing. She also played accumulative language games to help them further develop their memory skills. Tom, in his Year 8 Chinese class, discovered a student who preferred rote learning and so taught him the specific order of the Chinese character strokes to help him learn in his preferred manner. The rest of the class did not use this technique but Tom was willing to allow individual students to learn in a way that best suited them.

A willingness to focus on the process of language acquisition rather than the outcome.

Each participant regularly reinforced the idea that second language acquisition takes time and patience, and for this reason, tended to focus on the process of learning a language, rather than the outcome. Richard, in his Year 9 German class, actually celebrated his students' errors, congratulating them for taking a risk and trying new vocabulary, reassuring them that each mistake meant that they were improving their

skills and learning. Jan, when giving her Year 8 students a vocabulary test, assured them that she was assessing the progression of their skills. The students were tested more than once, over the space of several lessons to gauge the progress they had made and how many more words they could recognise since the last time. The emphasis was on how much they had improved, not the grade they achieved. This idea was repeated in Tom's Year 7 Chinese class, where vocabulary was revised through games and songs rather than a formal test.

Alison, the Indonesian teacher, described how her Year 9 students set up "stations" around the classroom where small groups performed a role-play they had written. Each group moved from one station to the next, watching other groups' performances and then completed an assessment check list. This informal peer assessment helped the students gain confidence and experience and develop their listening and speaking skills without the pressure of a formal assessment.

9.4 Jan: A "Telling" Case

Mitchell (1984) raises the idea of a "telling" case where the circumstances surrounding one participant in a case study can be used to illustrate the issues and ideas examined within the study. Rather than searching for a "typical" case, Mitchell suggests that greater insights may be gained by using one participant as a "telling" case in order to link the issues examined in the study to a wider context. With this in mind, by using the ideas and thoughts raised by Jan during the study, it may be possible to learn more about the Language Learning Strategies used by LOTE teachers. The views raised by Jan, particularly during the classroom observations, may provide greater insight into our understanding of Language Learning Strategies and how they are taught and used in the classroom.

While I began this project with the idea of exploring the way in which LOTE teachers teach strategy use in their classroom and the way that they see their students applying them to tasks, quite early on I realised that the dynamics of the LOTE classroom were complex and connected to a range of factors. Language Learning Strategies are indeed an important part of the LOTE classroom. However, equally important are the LOTE teachers themselves and the multifaceted role that they play in the students' learning.

During the data collection phase of this project, one participant, Jan, the German teacher, with more than 20 years' teaching experience, stood out and, consequently, became a particular focus of my study.

When completing her questionnaire, Jan provided thorough, insightful answers and demonstrated that she was not only teaching strategy use in her classes, she was also exploring various other ways to enhance her students' learning. During our interview this was highlighted when she discussed her students' strategy use and the way that she regularly trialed new ideas. However, it was not until she invited me into her classroom to observe her lessons that something harder to define became clear; perhaps the term "teacher presence" is the most apt description, although Eyre, Coates, Fitzpatrick, Higgins, McClure, Wilson & Chamberlain (2002) define it as "something extra" (p. 160). Although Jan's passion and desire to improve her teaching methods were apparent, other techniques also seemed to play an important role in her ability to help her students improve their LOTE skills. Affective strategies, such as humour and empathy were evident during her lessons, as well as an ability to engage the students through praise and encouragement and her warm manner (Hattie, 2012; Urios-Aparisi & Wagner, 2011). All of the participants displayed similar characteristics in their interviews and questionnaires and this ability to empathise with, and engage students, was particularly evident during the classroom observations. By examining Jan in more detail, greater insights may be gained into the complex role of the LOTE teacher.

9.4.1 Jan's background and teaching experience

When I first met Jan, she was working at a large independent co-educational school, which for the purpose of this study has been given the pseudonym, Bay View College. She had been teaching for over 20 years and had experience working in both government and non-government schools. Before Bay View College, Jan had spent six years teaching at a small independent girls' secondary school; prior to that she taught at a large co-educational government school.

Jan had taught German at Bay View College for almost ten years. It was at this school that my research took place. The school is well-established, with a long and prestigious history. The school boasts a large student population; at the time of the study there were

over 1000 students enrolled in the school ranging from three year old children in the Early Learning Centre through to Year 12. From Year 7 onwards, Bayview College offers two Asian languages and two European languages. Due to timetabling restrictions, students may not study more than one language at a time.

Although many students began their education at Bay View College in the pre-preparatory or preparatory years, the school's greatest student intake was during Year 7. Because of its highly regarded reputation in the community, the school had a student waiting list and many students travelled from neighbouring suburbs in order to attend. The implication of this situation is that the students began Year 7 with quite a fragmented LOTE history. Some students studied German in Bay View College's main feeder primary schools, but the majority of incoming Year 7 students had already been exposed to a range of LOTEs, including Indonesian, Chinese and Italian. Several students had studied more than one language due to changes to the curriculum during their primary years or simply because of teacher availability.

It was necessary for Jan to keep in mind her students' LOTE backgrounds, as their past experiences affected both their skills and attitudes when learning German. In Victoria, it is common practice for students to begin their LOTE studies in primary school. The rationale behind this system is that students will have greater exposure to the LOTE and consequently, greater opportunity to master it. However, this policy has not translated into improved retention rates in secondary school (DET, 2006). A large body of research shows that previous LOTE experiences may be deleterious and can often result in negative attitudes before the students even begin secondary school (Bolster et al., 2004; Farhady, 1982; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Lightbown, 2001). Like many secondary school LOTE teachers, Jan found that her students often began Year 7 with negative primary school experiences that could influence their attitudes towards learning German

Jan felt fortunate to be working at Bay View College. In addition to the set textbook that the students used, she had access to ample resources, such as a well-stocked library, a range of teaching materials and additional resources and ready access to computers and other technology, such as films and on-line language games and activities. There were designated language classrooms and Jan felt well-supported by the school; during the

school year she was able to attend several relevant and beneficial professional development conferences.

Bay View College was an International Baccalaureate secondary school and although LOTE was compulsory until the end of Year 9, students were encouraged to continue their LOTE studies until at least the end of Year 10. Throughout Years 7 to 9 LOTE was offered three times per week while in Year 10 the lessons increased to four sessions per week; the classes were 50 minutes in duration.

In addition to this, the LOTE department had a generous budget, so Jan was able to plan a range of interesting activities for her students, such as visiting a German restaurant, an excursion to an annual language film festival and bringing performers into the school, such as a German puppet show. Jan believed that it was these conditions that allowed her to deliver a German course that was relevant, challenging and engaging.

Jan was quietly spoken and thoughtful during our interview. She chose her words carefully but needed very little prompting when answering; indeed, often our conversations easily strayed from my set interview questions as she spoke about her ideas and teaching practices. During our in-depth interview, there was nothing particularly exceptional about Jan; her appearance was professional: neat and understated. However, in the classroom, when interacting with her students, it was almost like flicking a switch; she became animated and passionate, and this enthusiasm seemed to infect her students. It seemed that her confidence in the classroom enabled her to try new activities; she didn't seem afraid of failing; if an activity fell short of her expectations, she simply accepted it and moved on. After our interview and classroom observations, I made a point of emailing her, firstly to thank her for her time and often to clarify something that she had said or something I had observed in the classroom; during these emails she often mentioned a new idea that she was going to try or a way to improve a learning task. She gave the impression that she was always planning, and reflecting; she seemed willing to try new ideas and was always looking ahead.

9.5 A glimpse inside Jan's classroom

In both her questionnaire and interview, Jan mentioned the importance of getting to know her students. She believed that by doing so, she would be able to establish a connection with them and as a result, would be better able to adapt her lessons to suit

her students' interests and abilities. She strongly believed that a knowledge and understanding of her students formed a solid foundation which would allow meaningful learning to take place. Jan spoke about volunteering for school activities that would allow such interactions to occur; she mentioned her participation in extra-curricular activities like the school play and her on-going role in the school's pastoral care program. She also spoke about making the most of incidental opportunities to interact with her students as they arose, such as using yard duty as a chance to watch and interact with her students in the playground.

This willingness to meet students where they were at was shown in her questionnaire where she wrote, "different language learning strategies will appeal to different students." Jan made a point of knowing her students' individual learning styles and preferences in order to help them use strategies effectively. For example, in her questionnaire, she wrote about a small group of Year 8 boys who "tend to rely on – sometimes inaccurate – recall or guess." In our interview, I raised this comment with her and she elaborated, describing how she taught these somewhat reluctant learners memory training skills; she also taught them how to infer meaning using clues from a piece of text. She believed that while these boys should be able to recognise and use a range of Language Learning Strategies, a good place to begin was by building on what they were already doing. This would help to build confidence and would help them to be more open to new strategies as if they were able to refine and successfully use some strategies, they might be more willing to try new ones. She found that the more success her students had with using Language Learning Strategies, the more willing they were to persevere and try new things.

To further demonstrate, Jan pointed out the differences she discovered in the way that her students preferred to learn new vocabulary. She explained that vocabulary building was crucial as, in her experience, "the acquisition of vocabulary seems to be the main determinant of success." To help her students develop this important skill, Jan was willing to experiment with a range of strategies. In her Year 8 class, she discovered that a group of girls were, "more adept at writing out and covering strategies" whereas the boys in the same class, "liked on-line practising, using games and quizzes." Jan spent time in class teaching her students the "look, cover, say, write, check" method for memorizing vocabulary. The students practised writing out new vocabulary and colour-coded them according to groups, such as nouns and verbs; Jan also gave her students the

chance to practise vocabulary building exercises using on-line games and exercises. Jan believed that it was important to introduce her students to both strategies and then allow them the freedom to use whichever worked best for them. As long as they were willing to try both, she did not mind if they expressed a preference for one strategy over the other. This flexibility and tolerance created benefits that were two-fold. Firstly, it showed an understanding of individual differences and a willingness to adapt her lessons to suit different learning styles; secondly, it created a warm, supportive classroom environment, as students felt that they had a voice in the class, that they were working *with* their teacher and they had control over their learning. This incident also demonstrated Jan's willingness to embrace technology-assisted learning, rather than insisting that her students only used more traditional vocabulary building methods.

Jan also spoke about a group of highly capable and motivated Year 9 girls who were "interested in how language works, the structure and formation of words." She felt that this interest played an important part in their ability to master German and consequently, tried to incorporate elements of linguistics into her lessons; she believed that by showing her students the rules and patterns that emerged in the language, it would help to enhance their understanding of grammatical structures. These examples demonstrate that Jan clearly believed that strategy use was beneficial to all students, regardless of their ability. She had the ability to identify the students' interests and strengths and was able to use this to support and develop their existing skills and interests.

One of the challenges Jan faced at Bay View College was the relatively large class sizes, particularly in the junior secondary school years. Jan believed that Language Learning Strategies, "are not taught in isolation, they are an integral part of teaching" but went on to note that there is, "not enough time in class" to devote to strategy teaching and furthermore, "groups are often too large." To counteract this problem she often divided the class into small groups; she found that peer group collaboration was a useful strategy as the students all brought their own strengths to the group and also, it allowed her the time to sit with each group and work more closely with them (Chamot, 2013). Once again this incident demonstrates Jan's flexibility and adaptability. As all secondary school teachers know, the classroom can be a highly unpredictable place and

Jan's ability to embrace change allowed her to consistently deliver productive and meaningful LOTE lessons, regardless of her circumstances.

An interesting aspect of Jan's teaching style was that she always took the time to navigate her students through the lesson. At the beginning of each class, she would inform the students about the tasks they would be completing that day; she would then explain the purpose of each task and how it linked to the topic they were studying; she explained the way that it built on their previous lessons and how it would prepare them for up-coming lessons. She would accompany this explanation with brief notes or signposts on the board. This entire exercise took no more than four or five minutes. At the end of each lesson she would briefly recapitulate what the students had done during the lesson before setting homework. The class constantly had a clear idea of what they were going to do, how they were going to do it and why it was important. I noticed that Jan did this no matter what class she was teaching – Year 8 or Year 12. This sense of purpose seemed to keep the students engaged and invested in the lesson and they had a clear idea of the greater scheme; it seemed to make their learning more purposeful (Barlow, Frick, Barker & Phelps, 2014; Borich, 2014).

Jan believed that this practice developed good habits in the students as not only did it settle the class and help them to focus on the lesson, it enabled them to consolidate the skills and strategies they had already knew and allowed them to see how these strategies could be applied to different tasks. She explained, "I keep reminding them of the same things...so they'll know what to do, whether it's in exam conditions or just in class..." She went on to say, "most strategies become tools that students need for success at VCE language studies." This strategy training seemed to be reinforced and repeated until it almost became second nature to the students.

9.6 Confidence, Humour and Empathy in the Classroom

One common feature of Jan's lessons was her emphasis on building confidence, particularly with her junior students. The classroom tasks that she set encouraged the students to develop and improve their LOTE skills rather than focusing on the outcome of the activity. In the classes I observed, Jan regularly informed her students that the set task did not count towards their overall grade. This appeared to help the students relax

and not feel overly anxious if they made a mistake. During a Year 8 vocabulary test that I observed, Jan told her students:

This is a chance for you to show me what you know. Don't worry if you get it wrong, that helps me to see where we need more work.

During this test, Jan encouraged the students to employ the strategies she had taught them in class, reminding them of the patterns in the beginnings and endings of words and the connections between German and English. As a result, Jan created a classroom atmosphere that was peaceful and encouraging. Clearly, the focus was on praising the students for what they knew rather than creating an environment where failure was feared. This focus on the process rather than the outcome seemed to be an effective way of creating a warm, caring classroom environment (Lopez, 2012; Reeve, 2006).

Jan also demonstrated great empathy for her students. She was aware of the students' feelings and knew that the LOTE classroom is, for many students, quite a stressful environment. She did whatever she could to relieve the students of negative feelings and anxiety by creating a classroom atmosphere that was non-confronting. This was demonstrated many times throughout the classroom observations. She would often ask indirect, open-ended questions, rather than singling out a particular student. For example, when discussing a reading passage with her Year 10 students, she posed the question: "What do you think that means?" The students were then able to offer suggestions, each building on the previous answer until a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the text was established. She later instructed her Year 10 students to "keep it simple" when answering verbal questions, allowing them to focus on accuracy, using familiar vocabulary and sentence structures to help relieve anxiety and allow them to work on composing a correct response. On another occasion, she gently coaxed the students towards examining the passage in greater detail, telling them, in English, "You get the feeling that..." and alternating between German and English, she went on to briefly discuss the atmosphere of the passage using the clues in the text. This suggestion helped to initiate more speculation about the passage as each student offered a suggestion about what they thought was happening. If a student was struggling to add detail, Jan called on another student for a response and then returned to the previous student who was then able to offer an answer after having it modelled for him. She mostly spoke in German but often added extra detail in English, to ensure that each student understood the meaning. These examples offer an insight into how an

empathetic, non-confronting classroom is established, through small, regular doses of positive reinforcement.

Jan often showed her sense of humour in the classroom by teasing and joking with her students, sharing funny stories and gently laughing at the language mistakes made. When I commented on this, she suggested that it is impossible to teach teenagers without possessing a sense of humour. She also seemed to possess a high level of tolerance for “typical” teenage behavior, such as her admission that her Year 7 boys often used their German dictionaries to, “look up the naughty words.” Rather than being upset about this, she acknowledged that this curiosity was to be expected and once they had got it out of the way they could then settle down and learn how to use a dictionary correctly.

When her Year 8 students were completing a quiz using the computer she joked with the students who seemed to consistently get the same words wrong and made up simple rhymes to help them remember the vocabulary; she also encouraged them to exaggerate the pronunciation of the words to help them remember it. In one lesson, she gave a Year 8 boy a prize for finally getting past his previous score after being stuck there for several lessons. The class cheered when he achieved this milestone and the boy raised his arms in victory. These small incidents demonstrate how humour and tolerance is constantly woven throughout the lesson, helping to create a warm, caring environment (Urios-Aparisi & Wagner, 2011).

Jan also possessed an understanding of popular culture and was able to incorporate the students’ interests into her lessons. An example of this was seen when her Year 8 students were completing various vocabulary building games and quizzes on the computer. One of the tasks required the students to make up a crossword or word search puzzle based on the topic of ‘sport.’ One boy claimed he did not play sport but Jan reminded him of his interest in motor racing and discussed how this, too, was considered a sport. She helped him compile a list of useful words associated with his hobby of go-kart racing and his interest in motor racing. Although Jan was not an expert in motor racing, she used her knowledge of well-known drivers and racing tracks to help him begin his vocabulary list. Her knowledge of the student’s interests outside of school and her flexibility within the lesson allowed the boy to successfully complete the task.

As mentioned earlier, Jan had access to computers every lesson and used them as often as possible. She felt they were a valuable tool, particularly in the junior secondary years where students often found writing tasks frustrating due to their limited language skills. She felt that computers encouraged reluctant writers, particularly boys, to become more motivated to write extended pieces (Macaro, 2003; Warschauer & Meskill, 2000). She explained that Year 7 and 8 boys often saw writing tasks as tedious and consequently, tended to write the bare minimum; however, if they were allowed to type on the computer, they seemed more engaged as they did not have to concentrate as much on correct spelling and neat hand writing and they appeared more willing to consult an on-line dictionary than their hard-copy dictionary. She also found that students who struggled with the presentation of their work were more likely to put more effort into computer-generated writing pieces as they were not limited by their own artistic skills. Jan's observations and classroom experiences are supported by the literature; Hawisher and Selfe (2007) state:

Students report positive attitudes toward writing and word processing after working with computers; student writers often exhibit finished products that have fewer mechanical errors than those written with traditional tools; and many writers produce longer texts with word processing than with traditional methods. (p. 79)

Jan was very aware of the limitations of the prescribed set textbook - the younger students in particular often found its over-use tedious - but she also acknowledged how time consuming it was to generate supplementary materials. Like the other participants, she expressed the need for relevant, meaningful and modern materials but was also restricted by the pressures of getting through the set curriculum, especially in the senior years. Even though she felt she should be doing more, she still tried to incorporate a range of supplementary materials in her lessons, such as pop songs, films and television programs and YouTube clips.

This understanding of her students, particularly their strengths and weaknesses, helped her to deliver lessons that met their individual learning preferences and ensured that they were engaged in the lesson. She regularly shared successful strategies, either that she had used herself as a student or those she observed her other students using in an effort to help them overcome difficulties. This was seen during a Year 8 German class where the students had completed an on-line vocabulary building quiz. At the end of the task, Jan led a whole-class discussion, where the students talked about their

successes and failures and shared tips on how to best complete the tasks. For example, one girl, who achieved a very high score on the quiz, explained how she revised her class notes before beginning and Jan suggested that this was a useful strategy. The students also shared tips on how they remembered vocabulary, such as finding language connections between German and English and using visual clues, such as remembering the shape of the words. One boy suggested that he always remembered a particular word because he associated it with another student who always got it wrong. Once again, I witnessed humour being easily woven into the classroom lesson. This gentle teasing of the boy who consistently forgot the same word was taken in a good-natured way; it was evident that this could only be achieved if there was a strong rapport between Jan and her students and because Jan had created a warm and safe classroom environment. This strategy-sharing exercise seemed to help create a positive class atmosphere and gave the students the chance to learn from each other.

9.7 The Value of Reflection

As mentioned earlier, reflection played a key role in Jan's daily teaching practice. She encouraged her students to reflect on their strategy use, to share the strategies they had successfully used and to also think about and discuss the strategies that they did not find helpful and to experiment until they found something that did support them. This self-reflection meant that students were taking responsibility for their own learning; they were able to identify both positive and negative aspects of their strategy use and were able to then use this knowledge to help them with future learning tasks (Chamot, 2012).

Jan also constantly reflected on her own teaching practices; she was willing to try new ideas and she was interested in finding innovative ways to interest and motivate her students. Huttunen (1993) notes:

Learners need to make sense of what they encounter in class, and being active, responsible learners requires reflection. However, the teacher needs to reflect even more, since it is up to her to build learning environments that make meaningful learning possible. p. 128

It appears that this teacher and learner reflection enabled Jan to deliver lessons that were meaningful and engaging and allowed her students to find value in Language Learning Strategies (Chamot, 2012).

9.8 Summary

This study is based on Oxford's (1990) strategy classification scheme (see Chapter 2, p. 35) which categorized learning strategies into the following groups:

- direct strategies (memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies)
- indirect strategies (metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, social strategies)

The participants regularly taught their students how to use a range of direct and indirect strategies and ample class time was devoted to modelling and practising these strategies. In their questionnaires and in-depth interviews the participants reported the types of strategies they taught their students and the strategies they saw their students use; the classroom observation phase of the data collection brought these theories to life, allowing me to see exactly how strategies were taught and the way that students responded to, and engaged with, strategy use.

It was during the in-depth interviews and the classroom observations that I was able to synthesise the data and begin to build a picture of an effective teacher. Certainly, strategy use was an important factor but just as significant was the extra, often indefinable things that each teacher did.

Each participant possessed:

- A desire to create a warm, safe classroom environment.
- An ability to show empathy.
- An ability to show humour.
- An ability to tap into the students' interests.
- A willingness to share personal stories.
- An understanding of students' individual needs and preferred learning styles.
- Access to technology.
- A willingness to use a range of supplementary teaching materials.
- An ability to model a variety of Language Learning Strategies, allowing students to find one that suits them.
- A willingness to focus on the process of language acquisition rather than the outcome.

It is these attributes, combined with a strong knowledge of strategies and a desire to help students to become more confident and autonomous through the ability to use strategies, that complete the profile of an effective teacher. My study then focused more closely on Jan, who seemed to embody the traits listed above.

The combined data of Jan's questionnaire, in-depth interview and classroom observations demonstrates that she consistently modelled a range of strategies from Oxford's (1990) classification scheme; furthermore, her students were able to identify these strategies and apply them to a range of tasks.

Jan strongly believed that Language Learning Strategies are teachable and learnable; however, it is evident from observing her classes that an understanding of Language Learner Strategies alone is not enough to guarantee success when learning a LOTE (Dornyei, 2001; Griffiths, 2008; Macaro, 2003; Rubin, 2008). Although a working knowledge of these strategies provided her students with appropriate scaffolding to help them to achieve greater confidence and independence in the classroom, Jan has also developed a strong rapport with her students; this has resulted in a positive learning environment where students feel comfortable and are willing to risk trying new things. As the literature has demonstrated, a range of inter-relating factors are crucial in order to engage students and motivate them to put their understanding of Language Learning Strategies into place. Without motivation to learn, these Language Learning Strategies have little value (Bialstok, 1990; Graham, 2002; Wingat, 2004; Wright & Brown, 2006).

When reviewing the literature, three major factors seemed to influence students' motivation. It seems that learner success stems from the students' environment and that the students' environment is shaped by these three factors:

- The ability to work autonomously
- The role of the LOTE teacher
- The use of technology in the classroom.

The literature shows that it is the LOTE teacher who has the most significant impact on students' motivation and interest when learning a LOTE (Graham, 1997). Jan was clearly able to model a range of Language Learning Strategies and could guide her

students when applying them to various tasks; she was able to provide her students with an array of engaging technology-assisted activities. These factors helped to motivate her students and allowed them to work with greater confidence and autonomy. However, it seems that Jan's enthusiasm and deep understanding of her students was a crucial ingredient in her students' success.

Through talking to Jan, reading her ideas and opinions about Language Learning Strategies and observing her in action in the classroom, I was able to see directly how the theories posed about how Language Learning Strategies are taught and used in the classroom and the importance of "empathic intelligence".

Perhaps the key to the "something extra" that Jan seemed to possess lies in her comment about how helpful she found the questionnaire she completed during the data collection. She said the questionnaire made her think more deeply about her teaching practices and areas where she could perhaps improve. She decided to devise a questionnaire of her own to administer to her students in order to find out more about their own learning styles and strategy use. She believed that a deeper understanding of her students would help her to deliver even more effective lessons. This self-reflection, willingness to try new things and enthusiasm for her work seem to be important ingredients in creating a positive and productive learning environment. It is hoped that by examining Jan's teaching practices and beliefs in greater detail, a deeper understanding will be gained regarding how Language Learning Strategies are taught and used but also, perhaps just as importantly, the significant role the teacher plays in creating a safe and positive learning environment in which to practise these strategies.

Chapter Ten

Answering the Research Questions

10.1 Introduction

This study explored the role Language Learning Strategies play in Victorian secondary school LOTE classes. As a secondary school LOTE teacher, my inquiry originated from my own desire to better understand the types of strategies students use; my previous research into the attitudes of secondary school boys learning a LOTE (Church, 2006) highlighted that students who are motivated and competent in their LOTE studies tend to possess a range of Language Learning Strategies. It was this knowledge that led me to further explore the link between strategy use and confidence and competence when learning a LOTE. While my previous research focused on the attitudes and motivations of the students, the focus of the present study was the LOTE teachers themselves. By gaining a deeper understanding of the types of Language Learning Strategies secondary school LOTE teachers are teaching and the types of strategies their students are using, their knowledge and understanding of strategy use may be able to be used to help other LOTE teachers in their own classrooms. I embarked on this study with the following aims in mind:

1. To investigate the types of strategies LOTE teachers are implementing in their classrooms.
2. To examine the methods used to teach these strategies.
3. To explore the influence that strategy teaching has on students.

The investigation was based on Oxford's (1990) well-regarded classification taxonomy, which grouped Language Learning Strategies into two broad classes: direct and indirect strategies and then further divided them into six sub-categories as listed below:

Direct strategies include:

- memory strategies;
- cognitive strategies;
- compensation strategies.

- Indirect strategies include:
- metacognitive strategies;
- affective strategies;
- social strategies.

Oxford's classification scheme demonstrates the inter-connectedness of strategy use; that is, both direct and indirect strategies play a role in helping students achieve competency in the LOTE. These strategies support and complement each other and are not used in isolation.

My research highlighted that a range of Language Learning Strategies covering the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – are regularly and successfully taught by a range of secondary school LOTE teachers. Moreover, my study uncovered that guiding students towards confidence and competence in their LOTE studies is far more complex than simply teaching, practising and reinforcing strategies that cover these four language skills. My study showed that the content and delivery of the LOTE lessons are important. LOTE teachers appear to make their lessons relevant and meaningful by including elements of popular culture, while the use of technology helps to improve motivation and engagement in the subject.

The LOTE teachers themselves play an enormous role in the way students feel about, and approach, their language studies. Affective strategies and creating a learning environment that is supportive and relaxed are an important part of helping students to achieve language competency. Empathy, humour and tolerance appear to be vital characteristics in the LOTE teacher in order to create a warm and encouraging classroom. While Language Learning Strategies are an important part of the secondary school LOTE classroom, the way in which these strategies are taught is also important. The way students *feel* about what they learn appears to be just as important as *what* they learn.

My inquiry began with the over-arching question that frames the study:

What role does the teacher play in students' ability to use
Language Learning Strategies in the language classroom?

I then attempted to answer this question by exploring the following supporting questions:

- How do teachers implement Language Learning Strategies in the classroom?
- How do students use Language Learning Strategies?
- How can students benefit from the use of Language Learning Strategies?

My investigation focused on six secondary school LOTE teachers. Each participant taught at an independent secondary school in Victoria, Australia and showed an interest in how Language Learning Strategies can be used as a tool in order to enhance students' learning experiences.

The study was guided by the theory that confidence and competence when learning a LOTE may be improved if students are able to use Language Learning Strategies. If students can experience increased autonomy in the LOTE classroom through the ability to apply Language Learning Strategies to set tasks, then this may increase their success in the subject; the ability to use strategies may help them gain greater independence and equip them with the necessary skills to tackle more complex language tasks (Coleman & Klapper, 2005; Graham & Macaro, 2007; Macaro, 2006; Okada et al., 1996; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

The work of Vygotsky (1978) underpinned my study as I explored how LOTE teachers use Language Learning Strategies in their classrooms and the influence this might have on secondary school students learning a LOTE. Vygotsky believed that through collaboration and interaction with teachers and other children, children actively develop new cognitive skills. The use of Language Learning Strategies might provide appropriate scaffolding to LOTE students, enabling them to work within the zone of

proximal development (ZPD), thus allowing them to improve and strengthen their LOTE skills and gain greater autonomy in the classroom.

The participants in my study consisted of six secondary school LOTE teachers outlined in the table below:

Table 10.1 The Research Participants

	Richard	Anna	Sarah	Jan	Alison	Tom
LOTE	German	Italian	French	German	Indonesian	Chinese
Teaching Experience	10 years	20 years	2 years	20 years	9 years	7 years
Type of School	Girls Independent	Girls Independent	Boys Independent	Co-educational Independent	Co-educational Independent	Co-educational Independent
Year Level Taught	7-12	7-12	7-10	7-12	7-12	7-12

A questionnaire was administered to each participant in order to gain a broad understanding of their teaching experiences and the way that they incorporate Language Learning Strategies into their classes (see Appendix 1, p. 301). After examining the questionnaire it was clear that all six participants believed that Language Learning Strategies were an important part of the LOTE lesson. They each taught a range of direct and indirect strategies covering the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – and they felt that their students benefitted from being able to use strategies when tackling language tasks. Despite this, they also acknowledged the time and effort it takes to effectively teach strategy use and consequently, often found it challenging to fit strategy training into an already very busy curriculum.

The questionnaires revealed that the LOTE teachers introduced simple strategies in the junior secondary years and built on this foundation as students moved through secondary school, revising and practising known strategies and presenting new and more complex strategies as their students' abilities and knowledge increased. These strategies included those from Oxford's (1990) taxonomy, such as memory strategies, cognitive and compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, and affective and social strategies. These strategies were frequently used in conjunction with each other, as a means of supporting and enhancing learning.

The questionnaires also showed that the participants felt that a better understanding of students' preferred learning styles could help them to use certain strategies more effectively. Interestingly, the teachers identified listening and writing as areas that their students found difficult and also areas where they lacked strategies. The listening component of the 2012 VCE LOTE examination shows that French, German, Italian and Indonesian students under-performed in this area (VCAA, 2013a), perhaps demonstrating that this is an issue that might warrant further investigation. The literature shows that learners often experience difficulty mastering writing skills as it is a complex cognitive activity (Grabe & Stoller, 2009). The research also suggests that writing skills might be improved if combined with reading activities, as these skills are closely linked (Belcher & Hirvela, 2001; Grabe & Stoller, 2009; Graham, 2006; Shanahan, 2006). This point might be of use to the participants as they all possessed a wide bank of reading strategies that they taught their students and they also displayed a sense of confidence when teaching reading skills. This knowledge might help them to consider using reading skills and strategies to enhance their students' writing skills.

The second stage of the data collection included an in-depth interview (see Appendix 2, p. 309) with each participant and classroom observations with three of the participants. Ideally, I would have liked to observe all six participants; however, at the time of the data collection, it was an extremely busy period in the school year with the approach of VCE examinations and it was not convenient for some of the research participants. The classroom observations are outlined in the table below.

Table 10.2 Classroom observations

Language	Teacher	Year Level	Number of classes Observed
French	Sarah	Year 7	1
Chinese	Tom	Year 7	2
German	Jan	Year 8	1
German	Jan	Year 10/11	1
German	Jan	Year 12	1

The in-depth interviews showed that each participant possessed a wide range of direct and indirect strategies that they used in their classroom to help teach the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. A number of very specific memory, cognitive and compensation strategies were used to teach listening and reading skills but there seemed to be greater variety in the depth and breadth of strategies used to teach speaking and writing. The participants often taught metacognitive strategies such as planning and drafting to help develop writing skills and compensation, affective and social strategies to assist speaking skills.

The underlying reason why a wider variety of writing and speaking strategies was taught and used remains unclear. It might be that a productive skill, like writing, is more difficult to teach and learn; perhaps there is less available professional development for LOTE teachers in these areas; it might be that this group of LOTE teachers focused on the areas where their students needed more work. As mentioned earlier, listening is one area that has received more attention in recent years due to many VCE LOTE students under-performing in the listening component of the examination (VCAA, 2013a).

The in-depth interviews revealed the ambiguous nature of the term ‘Language Learning Strategy’. In their questionnaires each participant could clearly provide an accurate definition of Language Learning Strategies; however, during the interviews, what they described as a “strategy” was actually a task or activity used to reinforce and practise language skills. These activities were an integral part of teaching and learning a LOTE as they provided opportunities to strengthen and support the specific Language Learning Strategies introduced in class.

The role of affective strategies, the value of technology and popular culture also became apparent during the in-depth interviews and even more so, during the classroom observations, demonstrating the vibrant and dynamic nature of the LOTE classroom. While specific Language Learning Strategies were relatively easy to identify, it was the “something extra” (Eyre et al., 2002, p.160) that each teacher seemed to possess that was more difficult to define and classify. The data highlight that it is not the topic introduced in class that the students are enthused about, but rather, what is significant is the way that the topic is *taught* and the way that the students *feel* when they are in the

LOTE classroom. This ability to engage and motivate students seems to be the “something extra” that these participants possessed.

This highlighted the complex nature of LOTE teaching, as helping students to achieve competence in a second language is clearly more than simply teaching and practising a range of Language Learning Strategies. It also involves helping students to develop resilience, confidence and motivation by employing a range of tactics, including: showing empathy and humour; demonstrating tolerance; showing insight into what appeals to young people, by possessing an awareness of, and appreciation for, the role popular culture and technology plays in young peoples’ lives.

Motivation and autonomy are inextricably linked. Students will feel more motivated about their LOTE studies if they are able to work autonomously but they will not be able to work autonomously unless they are motivated to do so (Benson, 2001). This is where Language Learning Strategies are important as they can help students to work with greater independence. The literature suggests that three major factors seemed to influence students’ motivation (Arnold, 2010; Benson, 2001; Nunan, 2010; Ushioda, 2008). These are:

- The ability to work autonomously
- The role of the LOTE teacher
- The use of technology in the classroom.

The participants were able to motivate and engage their students by teaching and practising strategy use, incorporating technology into their lessons, delivering interesting and relevant lessons and by establishing a classroom that is warm and caring. The in-depth interviews and classroom observations further revealed that each participant possessed the following characteristics:

- A desire to create a warm, safe classroom environment.
- An ability to show empathy.
- An ability to show humour.
- An ability to tap into the students’ interests.
- A willingness to share personal stories.
- An understanding of students’ individual needs and preferred learning styles.
- Access to technology.

- A willingness to use a range of supplementary teaching materials.
- An ability to model a variety of Language Learning Strategies, allowing students to find one that suits them.
- A willingness to focus on the process of language acquisition rather than the outcome.

As previously mentioned, it was evident that each participant had a broad understanding of the term ‘strategy’. While they each referred to the “strategies” they employed in the classroom, this definition encompassed more than viewing a strategy as a set of steps taken to help students achieve autonomy and confidence in the classroom (Oxford, 1990); this definition also included the activities the teachers used to engage and enthuse their students. The participants often referred to “strategies” as the successful tasks they had introduced in class, such as using films and magazines to reinforce vocabulary, role-plays and whole class discussions to help students practise their speaking skills.

10.2 What types of Language Learning Strategies do LOTE students use and how do they use them?

The types of Language Learning Strategies used and the way that students used them seemed to vary. It appeared to depend on a number of factors, such as the age of the student, their ability in the LOTE and their motivation and attitude towards the subject.

For example, when I observed one of Jan’s combined Year Ten and Eleven German classes, the students effectively used a range of direct and indirect strategies and I was surprised at the level of independence they displayed. Jan felt that this was due to a number of factors. Firstly, the subject was an elective, so she believed that at this level, the students were highly motivated, organised and keen to do well in the subject. She also believed that by this stage in their education, the students had at least four years of using strategies and experimenting to find which ones they preferred. She felt that students who tended to continue LOTE in the post-compulsory years tended to be capable and independent learners and this may have contributed to their competence and willingness to use a variety of strategies in the classroom.

Jan pointed out that her younger students in Year 7 and 8 generally possessed only a few strategies, and their strategy use was quite sporadic. Those students who were able to draw on a range of strategies, tended to do so out of their own interest rather than as a result of classroom practice. For example, Jan mentioned a student who used metacognitive and cognitive strategies; she made up word lists and colour-coded her notes to help her remember sentence structures. These were not strategies that Jan had spent class time teaching but something that the student herself felt motivated to do. However, Jan noted the value of this task and asked this student to share her techniques with the rest of the class. Jan has since noticed some other students using these strategies, particularly as at the time of our interview, end of year examinations were imminent and students seemed more willing to try different techniques to assist them with their examination preparation. This suggests that strategy training alone is not enough; students need a tangible reason to actually use the strategies (Gu, 2003; Rubin, 2008; Oxford, 2003).

Jan's assertion that students tended to use strategies that worked for them and would try new strategies as the need arose was further reinforced when she described some of her other junior classes. Jan explained that some boys in her Year Eight classes tended to have good memories and would rely on this ability when completing written tasks, rather than implementing specific writing strategies that she had taught them. She felt that they would start to use strategies more frequently as German became more complex and demanding and required more sophisticated learning methods, rather than simply using direct strategies such as memorising vocabulary and sentence structures.

These incidents highlight the fact that strategy use is varied and complex; it can depend on a number of factors, such as the age, ability and attitude of the individual student (Griffiths, 2008). It is difficult to determine exactly how students use strategies because there are so many different ways that strategies can be applied to classroom tasks but it does seem clear that in order for strategy use to be effective, the student must first have a need to use the strategy; the student must also be able to see the value of the particular strategy.

A common strategy that I witnessed in all of the classes I observed was peer collaboration. Even in the junior classes, students were observed working together to complete reading comprehension tasks and writing tasks. Across all year levels students were observed using social strategies such as working in pairs or small groups, pooling their knowledge, using cognitive and compensation strategies such as skimming and scanning the textbook and taking a guess. In the senior classes, such as Jan's Year 10 German class, these strategies were deliberate and carefully applied; students were observed working their way through each strategy before trying a new one.

In the junior classes, such as Tom's Year 7 Chinese class, this peer collaboration seemed less controlled and slightly more haphazard. For example, rather than working together to answer a set question on a worksheet, a student would simply ask another student for their answer in exchange for them supplying one of their answers. Furthermore, when students were seen taking a guess when writing an answer, it seemed less of a careful calculation using all available information but more of an arbitrary guess. Whether this was due to a lack of experience or simply a lack of maturity, despite their lack of sophistication, these exchanges demonstrated the beginning of strategy use and seemed to be polished and refined as students developed their LOTE skills.

The way that students used strategies seemed related to the amount of time and effort that the teachers devoted to the particular strategy (Cohen & Macaro, 2007). As previously mentioned, listening skills seem to be important in the secondary school classroom and the strategies that the students used were teacher led and often completed as a whole class activity. For example, all six participants drew on similar strategies before beginning a listening task. With their students, they pre-read the comprehension questions to ascertain what they might hear in the conversation; as a whole class they discussed clues to listen for, such as the number of speakers, the gender of the speakers and the setting; the students were told how many times they would hear the audio and were instructed to jot down notes as they listened. This focus on developing learners' listening skills may be in response to the recent under-performance of VCE LOTE students in the listening component of the examination (VCAA, 2013a). Certainly Richard and Anna mentioned that their Year 12 students tend to perform poorly in the listening section and consequently, this is an area that they both try to focus on across

all year levels. The participants also believed there were few relevant listening sources that met their students' needs. Often the audio that accompanied the set textbook was deemed too easy, which led to boredom, or too difficult, which led to disengagement. This meant that the participants had to generate their own suitable listening materials which was often time consuming.

Of particular interest was the LOTE teachers' perception of the way in which writing strategies were taught and used in their classrooms and how this differed from my own observations, perhaps showing the complex nature of developing writing skills (Grabe & Stoller, 2009). To further explain, during the in-depth interviews the participants mentioned that, at times, they did not feel that they devoted enough time to teaching writing strategies and also, that their students did not possess, or effectively use, a wide range of writing strategies. Yet, in the classes I observed, writing strategies were certainly being implemented effectively. I saw students using strategies such as planning and drafting their work, collaborating with their peers, using their dictionary and checking through their class notes, writing down key words and ideas and adding detail later. They also brainstormed ideas for their writing as a whole class, jotted their notes and ideas using just two or three words rather than trying to write whole sentences; the students also modelled their sentences on those demonstrated by the teacher on the board.

When I later showed the participants the notes I took during my observations, they often expressed surprise at the range of writing strategies used. It is unclear why there appeared to be a gap between what the teacher believed happens in the classroom and what actually occurs. Perhaps, the lesson is so busy that there is no time to carefully observe what their students are actually doing or maybe, during our in-depth interviews, some of the writing strategies taught and used were simply overlooked. Whatever the reason, it was evident that a range of strategies were being used by students, and although I observed only a small sample of lessons, these writing strategies were being used correctly and with purpose.

1. What role does the teacher play in students' ability to use Language Learning Strategies?

The LOTE teacher plays a vital role in the way that students understand and use Language Learning Strategies. The teacher is largely responsible for introducing students to an array of Language Learning Strategies, showing them how to use the strategies and helping them to recognise which strategies to use in different situations. Strategies are taught, revised and practised in one form or another every lesson.

The teachers also helped the students understand the benefits of being able to apply strategy use by sharing their own language learning stories, such as what they had found helpful, what hindered their learning and giving the students ample opportunity to practise various strategies.

Sometimes strategies were taught in a very clear and precise manner, such as specifically teaching the students rules to help them remember the correct word order; at other times, the strategies were more subtle, such as reminding the students of previous lessons when a particular strategy was used to complete a task, verbally reinforcing correct dictionary use or modelling a particular grammatical point on the board. Other strategies that the teachers taught their students included brainstorming ideas before beginning a writing task and taking notes while listening to a CD.

My study confirmed the crucial role the LOTE teacher plays in creating a positive classroom environment where students feel comfortable to not only apply known strategies, but to also take a risk and try something different and share it with the class. This was particularly apparent during my classroom observations. In all of the lessons that I observed, the teachers consistently praised the students for their efforts, even if they made a mistake. This is not to infer that the teacher did not correct errors or set high expectations for the students, but rather, it seemed to be accepted that mistakes were inevitable and there appeared to be a focus on what the student did correctly and how they could improve their areas of weakness (Cohen & Macaro, 2007). Attention was paid to helping the students build a body of knowledge and assessing their progress over a period of time. This reinforced the accumulative nature of LOTE learning and helped students to accept their errors.

It seems that less academic tasks, such as games, songs and rhymes are all legitimate forms of strategy use. This was evident in Tom's Year 7 Chinese class where he introduced rhymes to help students remember the correct stroke order of Chinese characters; it was also seen through the "circle work" that Jan used with her Year 8 students to encourage them to speak in a casual, non-intimidating environment.

In the junior classes, small games and competitions were woven into the lessons. For example, in the Year 7 Chinese class, after completing a writing task on body parts, there was a game of 'Simon says' to reinforce this vocabulary. Before beginning the lesson and settling into their main task, the Year 7 Chinese students played a verbal, accumulative-type game to reinforce the vocabulary introduced in the previous lessons. In the lessons I observed, these games did not appear to be seen as a reward for completing the "real" work but were simply a part of the language learning process. The students certainly seemed to consider these tasks as fun and perhaps did not understand that they were, in fact, learning through these activities. Evidently, these games contributed towards creating a warm classroom environment.

Time constraints certainly affected the amount of time teachers devoted to strategy use. Each participant expressed the dismay and frustration they often felt due to the lack of face-to-face teaching time (Carr, 2003; LoBianco & Slaughter, 2009). This was less of a concern in the upper secondary years, where students studied fewer subjects and had more time to devote to LOTE; however, in the crucial junior secondary years, a common complaint amongst the participants was feeling torn between the need to complete the set curriculum and being able to devote enough time to teaching and practising strategy use. Anna seemed to voice concerns of all participants when she explained that there was a great deal of pressure to teach and assess the curriculum tasks when she really believed that the emphasis should be on developing students' *language skills*. From my own teaching experience, I can certainly empathise with this pressure to complete the required assessment tasks within each semester. Although this issue was not a focus of my present study, I suspect that this would be a common frustration amongst many LOTE teachers. Perhaps if strategy use is to be effectively taught in schools, the LOTE curriculum - particularly in the junior secondary years - should be reviewed so that the focus is on mastering skills rather than simply completing a set number of activities.

One of the outstanding features of the study, and certainly an aspect that was unexpected, was the important role that empathy played in the classroom. Each participant demonstrated great empathy for their students and ensured that the classroom was warm, supportive and safe. This “empathic intelligence” (Arnold, 2005, p. 12) consisted of the ability to show enthusiasm and expertise and to engage the students in each lesson. Using a range of both direct and indirect strategies based on Oxford’s 1990 classification scheme, the teachers were able to strike the right balance between dependency and independence (Arnold, 2010) reinforcing Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, where students are able to work within the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

Affective strategies were regularly used by the participants; this was demonstrated when they shared personal stories of their LOTE learning experiences. They often used humour to demonstrate that errors are a natural part of learning a LOTE and should be embraced and seen as a learning tool.

2. How do teachers implement Language Learning Strategies in the classroom?

Strategies are first introduced in the junior secondary years and cover each of the four language skills. The teachers begin with very straight forward strategies, such as teaching the students the basic formula of, “look, cover, say, write, check” when showing them how to memorise vocabulary. As students gain skill and knowledge, more complex strategies are introduced, such as showing them how to skim and scan a piece of text or to plan and draft a piece of writing.

The LOTE teachers in the present research include Language Learning Strategies in every LOTE lesson. Sometimes this is through re-capping a grammatical point that was introduced the previous lesson, revising vocabulary through a language game or through the LOTE teacher sharing a story of mistakes they made as a student as a way of reinforcing a grammar rule.

Strategies are used as a type of scaffolding, helping students to gain confidence and independence in the LOTE classroom (Benson, 2001; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Miller, 2007). It seems that in the early years the LOTE teacher provides a lot of support to the students, but as they gradually increase their level of knowledge and

understanding of the target language, the students rely less on the LOTE teacher and are able to effectively use strategies on their own.

Technology is included in every lesson to enhance students' motivation and support the skills introduced in class. Technology seems to promote autonomous learning and is an effective tool as it helps to engage and enthuse students, particularly when completing tasks that students traditionally find difficult, such as extended writing activities (Hawisher & Selfe, 2007; Kohn, 2009; Miller, 2007; Nunan, 2010).

An interesting point that arose during the data collection phase was the assumptions that teachers often make about their students' understanding of strategy use. Both Tom and Sarah, for example, spoke about how they mistakenly assumed that their junior students already knew how correctly to use a LOTE dictionary. Tom was taken aback when his Year 8 Chinese students struggled to use a dictionary as he assumed that they had been taught this skill in Year 7. Sarah, too, spoke of her surprise when her Year 7 French students were unable to use a dictionary effectively. Both teachers rectified the situation by spending time teaching and practising dictionary skills. As a result, Sarah stated that she would always assume that her students did not already possess certain strategies. She noted how taking the time to teach strategies helped her students in subsequent years:

I just thought they would know how to use a dictionary...so I didn't spend any time teaching them these skills. But then, later on, I suddenly realised, oh, they're not getting this, they don't know how to do this...we've spent time in class, working on their dictionary skills...once they have these skills, it helps them when they have to do more complex tasks. They know how a dictionary works, and not just how to look up definitions...

Tom also spoke of the benefits of strategy training, as once his students were taught to correctly use a dictionary, they were able to apply these skills to other tasks:

I see that quite a few of them like to use a dictionary to explore the new words and to help them to put these words into the sentence structures...or drills, or patterns that we just went through, which is amazing to see.

One of the key ingredients in helping students to develop their strategy use seemed to be the need to create a safe learning environment. Time and again the participants demonstrated their empathy and concern for their students. Their lesson plans often centred on ensuring that the students felt relaxed enough to take risks, ask questions and embrace mistakes. They achieved this by organising tasks that involved group work and guiding their students through strategy use. It was further reinforced through the teacher showing an understanding of their individual students and their learning styles; by sharing their own learning experiences and by using humour to create a relaxed environment (Urios-Aparisi & Wagner, 2011).

3. How do students use Language Learning Strategies?

One of the most challenging aspects of the data collection, particularly during the classroom observations, was trying to determine exactly what the students were doing - if, and how, they used Language Learning Strategies.

During the in-depth interviews, the teachers often remarked that they had taught a particular strategy but it was not until I actually observed the students using it, that I could be sure that the strategies were understood and considered useful. It was only when the students discussed with their peers what they were doing that their strategy use became clear. An example of this was during the combined Year Ten and Eleven German class that I observed, where the students were completing a reading comprehension task. They used think aloud strategies and appeared to read for gist, rather than trying to understand the entire text. This was demonstrated when, while working in a small group, a conversation between two Year 10 girls was observed. Below is a sample of some of their comments (see Appendix 4, p. 318):

Student A: Remember, it's the same thing that we did when we read that letter.

(using prior knowledge)

Student B: What does that mean again?...I'm just going to say...

(estimating, taking a guess from the context)

Student A: In the box down here (points to a cartoon on the page with captions) it says...so maybe we could say....”

(using clues from the text)

Social strategies, such as peer collaboration, are an important strategy as the ability to pool knowledge and think aloud helps the students to work through problems.

In the senior classes, students possess a range of strategies and appear willing to try a few strategies until they are able to solve the problem. Moreover, they possess a sense of confidence that strategies will help them and do not appear to panic if one strategy does not work; they simply move on to another strategy until they find one that suits the task.

The study also showed that not all students embrace Language Learning Strategies. Jan (German), Tom (Chinese) and Sarah (French) all mentioned that some of their students saw little value in using strategies. In all of the examples they gave, it was the junior boys who were less inclined to use Language Learning Strategies.

Jan pointed out that her Year 7 and 8 boys were wary about using strategies and instead, relied on their memory to help them with tasks. She felt that this attitude could be useful as they were willing to “have a go” even if they were not completely sure of the task. However, it was also a drawback as they need a wide bank of strategies to help them to cope with more challenging tasks as they moved through secondary school. Consequently, she believed that it was necessary to introduce students to a variety of strategies in the lower secondary years so that over time they would become more skilled at choosing appropriate strategies to suit the set tasks.

Sarah and Tom echoed these thoughts. Tom suggested that boys could be helped if teachers understood more about their preferred learning styles and the types of strategies that might suit them. Although my study did not focus on preferred learning styles, it is worth considering that a deeper understanding of students’ learning styles might help teachers to meet the students’ needs and enable them to introduce the students to Language Learning Strategies that suit their learning style (Chamot, 2012; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Gu, 2003; McDonough, 1995; Oxford, 1994).

Underpinning all of this, is motivation (Ushioda, 2008). Students must be motivated to use Language Learning Strategies; they must be able to see the benefit of strategy use and they need to be willing to try different strategies until they find one that suits the task. It seems that this motivation to use strategies sometimes comes from the students themselves, as Jan discovered with her students who, without prompting, colour-coded their class notes; however, more often than not, it is the LOTE teacher who motivates the students to try different strategies and to see strategy use as a useful tool. This appears to be achieved in a variety of ways: firstly, by engaging the students in interesting and meaningful tasks; secondly, by providing students with ample opportunities to use these strategies and ensuring that they are accessible and achievable – in short, that the strategies work. And finally, by creating a classroom environment that is warm and caring, where mistakes are accepted and handled with humour and compassion. It seems that empathy is a key ingredient in enabling students to successfully use Language Learning Strategies (Arnold, 2010).

4. How can students benefit from the use of Language Learning Strategies?

It seems that Language Learning Strategies can benefit students as they provide scaffolding which allows them to complete language tasks with greater autonomy, capability and confidence. This is supported by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) of the ZPD which asserts that children actively develop new cognitive abilities through collaboration with teachers and other children.

However, possessing a bank of strategies will not necessarily guarantee LOTE success. Students need to know when and how to apply certain strategies to particular tasks (Rubin, 2008). Although I witnessed a number of strategies being used by the students, it was not clear if they were systematically working through a range of strategies or if they were applying them through trial and error, until they successfully completed the task.

This study was based on Oxford's (1990) classification scheme which grouped Language Learning Strategies into two categories: direct and indirect strategies; it then

broke them into further groups, the direct strategies comprised memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies. The indirect strategies consisted of metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. The study showed that students regularly used both direct and indirect strategies and were regularly taught these strategies by their teachers and given the opportunity to practise them.

Certainly, there were some tasks where clear strategies were being used, such as Jan's combined Year 10 and 11 German class – peer collaboration, taking a guess, using the context of the text and prior knowledge were all apparent strategies used when the students were completing a reading comprehension task. Again, in Jan's Year 12 German class, during a role play activity, strategies were used, such as circumlocution, taking a guess and looking through class notes and jotting down some useful words and phrases before beginning the speaking task. This combination of cognitive, metacognitive, compensation strategies and social strategies demonstrate how strategy use is interconnected; strategies are not used in isolation but rather, both direct and indirect strategies play a part in supporting students learning.

During the observation phase of the data collection, there were also occasions where it was impossible to try to guess the types of strategies students were using, such as when Jan's Year 11 students were completing a listening comprehension task using a CD and then answering the set of comprehension questions from the textbook. Prior to beginning the task, Jan discussed what the dialogue might be about, using the text questions as a guide. The discussion involved suggesting that the students listen for key vocabulary, that they draw on known vocabulary, take a guess, and listen for gist. Although I was watching the students complete this task, it was impossible to ascertain the types of strategies they were using. Although my study indeed provided some insight into how students use Language Learning Strategies, it is difficult to determine exactly when and how students use strategies; however, the study did show that LOTE teachers teach specific strategies for specific situations. Whether or not students always apply this knowledge to their language learning cannot be fully known without speaking to them.

10.3 Summary

The results of this study suggest that Language Learning Strategies do have an important place in the LOTE classroom. When introduced at an early age, and regularly practised, Language Learning Strategies can enhance learning as they allow students to complete tasks independently of the teacher with skill and confidence. Language Learning Strategies cannot be used in isolation; strategies are interconnected and when used together, can complement and enhance learning.

However, strategies alone cannot guarantee confidence and competence when learning a LOTE (Rubin, 2008). Other important factors play a part in helping students to develop their LOTE skills. Classroom activities that engage and interest students are also of value, even though they may not help develop greater autonomy in the classroom. In order for students to effectively use Language Learning Strategies, they must first be motivated to do so. Three major factors seem to influence students' motivation. These are:

- Learner autonomy in the classroom
- The role of the teacher and the students' perceived rapport with them
- The use of technology in the classroom.

Furthermore, the role of the teacher is crucial to the way in which students engage with learning a LOTE. As discussed in Chapter 9 (see p. 215), effective LOTE teachers seem to possess the following common traits:

- A desire to create a warm, safe classroom environment.
- An ability to show empathy.
- An ability to show humour.
- An ability to tap into the students' interests.
- A willingness to share personal stories.
- An understanding of students' individual needs and preferred learning styles.
- Access to technology.
- A willingness to use a range of supplementary teaching materials.
- An ability to model a variety of Language Learning Strategies, allowing students to find one that suits them.
- A willingness to focus on the process of language acquisition rather than the outcome.

These characteristics, this “something extra” is just as valuable as the ability to teach students how to successfully use Language Learning Strategies. In the next chapter I will conclude my inquiry and present the implications of my research.

Chapter Eleven

Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

This study explored the role that Language Learning Strategies play in the secondary school LOTE classroom. My purpose when embarking on this research was to examine how a small group of LOTE teachers perceive and teach Language Learning Strategies. I began this study with the following aims:

- To investigate the types of strategies LOTE teachers are implementing in their classrooms.
- To examine the methods used to teach these strategies.
- To explore the effect that strategy teaching has on students.

The over-arching research question that framed the study is:

**What role does the teacher play in students' ability to use
Language Learning Strategies in the language classroom?**

I then attempted to answer this question is by exploring the following supporting questions:

- How do teachers implement Language Learning Strategies in the classroom?
- How do students appear to use Language Learning Strategies?
- How might students benefit from the use of Language Learning Strategies?

This study was conducted from the perspective of secondary school LOTE teachers. It is my belief that real educational change begins with the classroom teacher; it is hoped that by learning more about how a small group of LOTE teachers teach strategy use and the role strategy use has within their classrooms, other LOTE educators may gain

greater insights into how to better teach Language Learning Strategies and how to impart to their students the potential benefits of strategy use. A deeper understanding of how to teach and use strategies could help secondary school LOTE teachers to better meet the needs of their students.

This study contributes to our knowledge of Language Learning Strategies as it shows that they have the potential to play an important part in the LOTE classroom, and might help students to approach learning tasks with greater confidence and skill. However, learning a LOTE is a complex process and other, inter-connected and important factors also need to be considered. An understanding of Language Learning Strategies alone is not enough; at the heart of successful strategy use is motivation. Students must first feel motivated and engaged in the subject in order to want to become more autonomous and learn more about the benefits of strategy use.

Autonomy and the desire to use strategies can be encouraged by creating a stimulating and engaging classroom; the use of technology can help to create meaningful and dynamic lessons and lastly, motivation can be enhanced through the LOTE teachers themselves. A teacher who is empathetic, humorous, knowledgeable and flexible is important if students are to successfully engage with strategy use.

11.2 Recommendations

Based on the results of my study the following recommendations should be considered:

1. Language Learning Strategies should be introduced in the junior secondary years and practised regularly. As students move through secondary school, more complex strategies should be introduced, while known strategies need to be regularly revised and practised. The teacher needs to model these strategies and clearly explain not only how to use each strategy but also why these strategies are useful. This sense of purpose will help students better understand the benefits of strategy use. Strategies need to be regularly re-visited; it is not enough to assume that students already understand specific strategies, no matter how simple they may be.

2. There is a clear lack of continuity between primary and secondary school language programs across government schools in Victoria. Primary school LOTE programs often face many challenges, including inadequate timetabling, a lack of suitably qualified teachers and a lack of continuity of language learning within a school (see Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth, 2005). Recent statistics show that there has been a steady decline in the number of government primary schools providing languages programs along with a decline in student enrolments. The number of government schools providing a languages program declined from 82.9% in 2006 to 60.1% in 2012. Concurrently, the number of students enrolled in a Languages program at the primary level declined from 79.5% in 2006 to 55.5% in 2012 (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013a).

In the present study the participants taught in secondary schools where there were strong primary school language programs; all but one of the participants taught in a school where the primary school and secondary school formed part of the same campus, thus ensuring greater continuity between primary and secondary school languages programs. This stronger connection between primary and secondary school LOTE might contribute to students' displaying greater commitment to learning a LOTE beyond the compulsory years.

3. Scaffolding can help students to develop confidence and gradually build autonomy. Scaffolding can take place in a number of ways, such as modifying tasks to suit students' level of ability and gradually increasing the complexity of the tasks as their skills develop. Peer group collaboration, whole class activities and pair work all help to create a sense of ease and warmth in the classroom and help students to gradually rely less on the teacher as their skills develop. All strategies are potentially useful, despite their apparent simplicity; sharing strategies can help students to feel more confident to try new techniques and this helps to create a co-operative learning environment. Strategy use varies in its complexity. Simple strategies, such as memorisation techniques, pre-reading strategies and dictionary skills can be taught in primary school and practised and reinforced in the lower secondary school years in order strengthen these skills

and help students to view strategy use as an inherent part of learning a LOTE (Chamot, 2011).

4. Technology plays an important role in language classrooms as it promotes autonomy and can motivate learners. Moreover, it helps teachers to create a learning environment that is interactive and collaborative. Technology should not be used to merely supplement lessons; in a blended curriculum, technology should be incorporated into every lesson. Technologies such as multimedia, the internet and interactive computer programs, where students can work at their own pace, can help teachers to provide dynamic and diverse classrooms. However, it must also be kept in mind that many teachers lack access to adequate technology and resources; teachers can only utilize the technology that is available to them. Also, technology is developing at such a rapid pace that it is often difficult for LOTE teachers and schools to keep up with these changes. Teachers might find themselves limited by an “IT gulf” (Bateson & Daniels, 2012, p.144) where they are first or second generation computer users and their learners are third generation (Miller, 2007). This gap might be closed through greater access to Professional Development; this could help LOTE teachers to improve their understanding of how technology can be used in the classroom. The literature shows that technology is changing at a rapid pace and it is often difficult for teachers to keep up with these developments. Professional Development aimed specifically at blending interactive technology into the classroom could help teachers to develop a more autonomous classroom.
5. To help them learn more about strategy training, LOTE teachers also need access to Professional Development; this would also provide them with useful opportunities to share ideas and materials and establish networks with other LOTE teachers (Barlow, et al., 2014; Borich, 2014). Professional Development aimed at developing writing skills and strategies, and listening and speaking skills, would be particularly beneficial as these are areas that have been identified as areas where students tend to underperform (VCAA, 2013a). The teachers in the present study belonged to teaching networks and these can be valuable forums in which ideas are shared; each participant subscribed to at least one language teachers’ journal and regularly attended language teaching

conferences. They also belonged to language teachers' associations. The participants regularly met with their primary teaching peers to exchange information. Other, informal professional development regularly took place within the teacher's own school; here, lesson ideas and materials are shared and discussed, proving to be a valuable exercise.

6. The study showed that very experienced teachers, such as Jan and Anna were more willing to trial new approaches and seemed more prepared to take risks in the classroom. Despite being established teachers, they were not set in their ways and this seemed to improve their classroom teaching practices.

Often, less experienced teachers tend to focus on planning and implementing their lessons, and do not have the time to devote to developing their teaching skills. Certainly, this was my own experience as a beginning teacher and it is something that I have witnessed now as an experienced teacher, watching new teachers enter the profession. Younger teachers might benefit from a mentoring system, where they have the opportunity to observe experienced teachers in the classroom; this might help them to expand their understanding and knowledge of how strategy use can be implemented in the classroom. In my own school, there is a strong mentoring system, where an established teacher counsels and guides a beginning teacher as part of their formal teaching duties; however, this system takes place for one year. From my own experience, it was not until my third year as a teacher that I felt more accomplished and confident in my abilities. Perhaps these mentoring systems should be extended for up to two years. It would also be useful if teachers had more time to plan and develop their lessons as this is very time consuming.

7. Pre-service teachers would benefit from strategy training; they need to gain a greater understanding of the different types of strategies relating to the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. They also need to understand how to teach the types of strategies that students can use prior to beginning a task, during the task and after the task. For example, when completing a writing task, students could be taught writing strategies that include brainstorming ideas, planning, drafting and editing. An awareness of

how to teach these strategies would help trainee teachers to have a deeper understanding of how to promote learner autonomy and how to successfully meet all students' needs, regardless of their skills and abilities.

Teachers who are in the early stages of their careers, such as Kate and Sarah were not taught a great deal about strategies in their teacher training course; instead their understanding of strategies seemed to stem from their own experiences as language students at secondary school and university. While their experiences cannot be generalised to all beginning teachers, it might be worth considering the benefits of including greater attention to strategy teaching in university courses.

8. As discussed in Chapter 6 (see p.149) there is a distinction between classroom strategies and classroom “activities”. The participants incorporated a range of stimulating and interesting classroom activities into their lessons in order to reinforce and practise language skills. These classroom activities played an important part in strengthening and supporting strategy instruction. They were beneficial as they helped to generate students' interest in the subject, thus promoting positive feelings towards learning a LOTE.

The classroom activities were extremely time-consuming to plan and prepare and required imagination and flair to create. It was also often quite costly to buy necessary materials. The participants found that while the set classroom textbook was useful, it alone was not enough to deliver a balanced and full curriculum; it needed to be supplemented with a range of other tasks. Teachers would benefit from having more time to create and develop suitable teaching materials.

9. Popular culture is important in the LOTE classroom as it engages students and helps make their learning more relevant and meaningful. LOTE teachers would benefit from familiarising themselves with the books, films and music that their students are interested in; this can help them to provide lessons that are enjoyable and interesting, thus improving motivation and engagement in the subject. The participants often spoke about the difficulty in accessing relevant

and interesting authentic materials; this is where the internet can be used to great advantage as materials are widely available, easily accessible, authentic and interesting. It appears that social media can also play a valuable role in the classroom as it instantly engages students and allows them to use the LOTE in authentic situations.

10. VCE students tend to underperform in the listening and speaking components of the Year 12 examination. VCAA (2013a) noted the poor oral performances of students from French, Indonesian, Italian and German, particularly their inability to engage in reciprocal, free-flowing conversations. The reasons for this underperformance are unclear; teachers might spend more class time focusing on the written component of the examination as it is worth a greater percentage of the overall grade than the oral examination component. In 2013 the oral component of the French, Indonesian, German and Chinese Second Language VCE Units 3/4 examinations was worth 12.5% while the written component was worth 37.5% (VCAA, 2013a). This might influence what teachers teach and how they teach it. High-stakes assessment procedures often lead to a trade-off (Skehan, 2009). Students prepare for the oral examination via rote-learning set phrases and vocabulary; fluency and accuracy are prioritised at the expense of complexity of speech, with a tendency to use avoidance strategies (de Saint Leger & Storch, 2013).

A greater focus on developing listening and speaking skills and a deeper awareness of strategy use might benefit senior students, who might benefit from learning and practising a wider range of listening and speaking strategies in the junior years. These strategies could include: listening for key words; taking notes; learning clarification phrases and unanalysed chunks, such as hesitation devices, fillers and conjunctions. These strategies should be regularly practised and more complex strategies, such as circumlocution, should be introduced as students move into the senior secondary years (see Chapter 8).

11. There seemed to be great diversity in the depth and breadth of the types of writing strategies taught by the participants and used by the students. The literature suggests that reading and writing skills are connected.

The participants appeared competent and confident when teaching reading strategies but less confident teaching writing strategies. This might be a result of the ‘washback effect’ (Djuric, 2008; Chambers, G, 2013) where the focus on developing reading strategies is at the expense of developing writing strategies. According to VCAA (2013a) VCE students demonstrated poor dictionary skills, indicating that perhaps teachers need to devote more class time to teaching this strategy in order to help strengthen students’ writing skills (Grabe & Stoller, 2009). LOTE teachers might benefit from Professional Development in order to learn more about how to teach reading and writing strategies together (see Chapter 7).

11.3 Implications of the Research

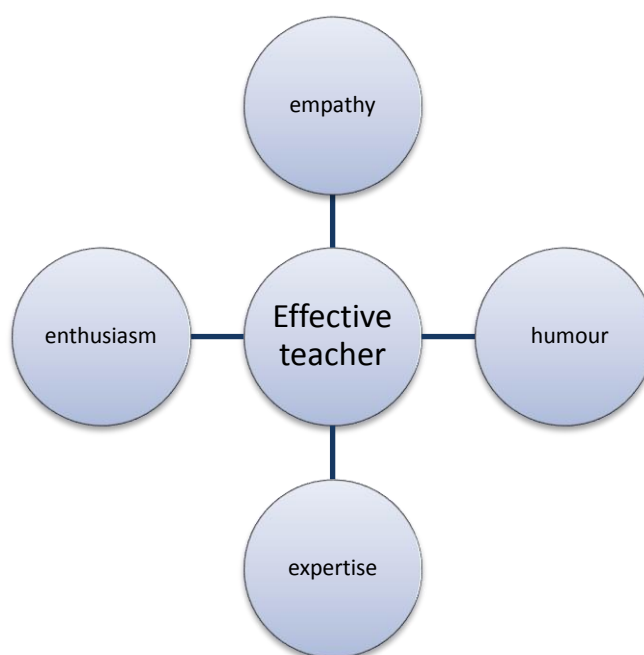
The teacher is largely the reason why students feel motivated in the LOTE classroom. Effective LOTE teachers possess empathy, enthusiasm, expertise and humour. These teachers have a strong rapport with their students and they understand students’ interests, strengths and weaknesses. Effective teachers display empathy for their students; this care and respect allows them to create a warm, safe learning environment where students feel comfortable to make mistakes and experiment with new strategies. Effective teachers are knowledgeable and willing to trial innovative activities and technologies in order to enthuse and engage their students; moreover, they have an understanding of popular culture and are willing to draw on this to enhance their teaching practices. They acknowledge that learning involves risk taking and they encourage their students to learn from their mistakes and to see the humour in their errors (Urios-Aparisi & Wagner, 2011).

This “something extra” (Eyre et al., 2002, p.160) helped the participants to engage their students and promote interest and enthusiasm for the subject. The participants were willing to share something of their own experiences, as both teachers and learners, and this helped their students to identify with them.

Finally, teacher reflection is important. Effective LOTE teachers regularly review their teaching practices and constantly search for new, inspiring materials to use in their lessons. They are willing to trial new materials and activities; they regularly include

popular culture and technology into their lessons and appear willing to take risks, accepting that not all activities will be successful. The diagram below summarises the common characteristics of effective teachers:

Diagram 11.1 Characteristics of Effective Teachers



11.4 Limitations of the Study

This study provided insight into how Language Learning Strategies are taught and used in the LOTE classroom. It is hoped that the findings of this study might lead to a greater understanding of the important role the LOTE teacher plays in helping students engage with strategy use in particular and languages in general.

The in-depth interviews and the classroom observations provided useful insights into how Language Learning Strategies are taught and used in secondary school LOTE classrooms in Victoria. However, it must be kept in mind that the views and ideas expressed in this study were those of a relatively small group of secondary school LOTE teachers and students. While these insights can provide a deeper understanding of the way in which teachers introduce and implement Language Learning Strategies, they should not be generalised to the wider LOTE teaching community. This too, applies to the students observed in the LOTE classrooms. While they were observed

using a range of Language Learning Strategies in a productive and positive way, this is not to suggest that these types of strategies are used in the same way across all secondary school LOTE classrooms.

There are further limitations to what can be achieved in this study; all six participants taught in independent secondary schools; this lack of participant diversity limited the scope of the study. The study was also limited by time constraints; I would have liked more opportunities to observe the participants in the classroom, however, I was mindful of encroaching on their busy schedules and therefore, was limited in the number of classroom observations I completed. Another factor to consider is the rapid rate at which technology is advancing; a key finding of this study is the important role that technology plays in the LOTE classroom. However, some of the practices that the participants used may not be as innovative now as when I first embarked on the study.

Rather than using these results to make broad generalisations, it is hoped that the knowledge gained from this study may be used as a catalyst for further research into how Language Learning strategies can be used to support secondary school LOTE students and how teachers can engage and motivate their students.

11.5 Conclusion

I began my inquiry with the intention of investigating how Language Learning Strategies are taught and used in the secondary school LOTE classroom. I believed that by examining in detail exactly what LOTE teachers were doing in their classroom regarding strategy teaching, I might gain a greater understanding of what practices are successful and beneficial to the students. It was hoped that this knowledge could be shared with other LOTE teachers in order to improve our teaching practices.

My motivation for this thesis stemmed from my own experiences; in my early years as a secondary school Indonesian teacher, I had very little formal training in strategy use, other than what I had learned as a secondary school student and later, as a university undergraduate. My teacher training course did not focus on strategy training; however, I found that I learned some useful strategies while on teaching rounds, when I had the opportunity to observe and talk to other language teachers.

My understanding of strategy use and its subsequent benefits was quite vague; the way in which I taught strategies, such as pre-reading techniques and memorisation strategies was based on what I had found useful as a student and decided to share with my students. If my students seemed to connect with a particular strategy, I continued to teach it, refining it as I became more experienced, while other strategies were taught a few times and then abandoned. This trial-and-error approach was somewhat haphazard; at the time I was unaware of the importance of other elements, such as understanding students' individual learning styles and preferences. Once again, through classroom experience, I also learned about other crucial factors, such as the value in creating a warm, caring learning environment. Like many other teachers, through experimentation, learning from successes and failures, I eventually worked out how to best meet my students' needs. As is demonstrated from the research participants in this study, it is an on-going process.

The opportunity to observe other teachers' classes and to talk to them about their successes, ideas, experiments and failures was an invaluable experience. For secondary school teachers, the day to day running of lessons in a school is all-consuming. Tasks such as preparing and teaching classes, providing feedback, completing various duties and co-curricular obligations often make it impossible to actually reflect on what we do in the class and why we do it. Listening to the types of strategies and activities the LOTE teachers include in their lessons, and seeing for myself the way that the students successfully used strategies made me review my own teaching practices. The study helped me to recognise the value of popular culture as a legitimate teaching tool and to understand that technology is pervasive and should no longer play a supporting role in the classroom, but should be used to enhance learning experiences. On a personal level, this is an area that I would like to further explore in order to improve my own teaching practices.

The study highlighted the impact students' learning styles can have on their learning outcomes. Jan was highly aware of her students' individual interests and learning preferences and believed that an awareness of this helped her to better meet their needs. After many conversations with Jan and through observing her in the classroom, I can see the benefits of having a strong knowledge and understanding of one's students. In future, I would consider surveying my students at the beginning of the school year in order to gain a greater understanding of their learning preferences and interests, rather

than simply waiting for these insights to emerge as the school year progressed. This would avoid the 'hit and miss' nature of some lessons and could perhaps help me to engage and motivate students on a more consistent basis.

In her interview, Jan noted the benefits of teacher reflection and felt that the questionnaire she completed helped to clarify her teaching practices and strategy use. Consequently, she planned to design a questionnaire for her own students to help them reflect on their learning experiences and to help her to gain a better understanding of their thoughts and needs. This is something that I feel would be useful in my own classes. This study was worthwhile as it led to participants examining their own classroom practices in an effort to improve the quality of their teaching. It must also be noted that teachers often do not have the time to reflect on their lessons due to the busyness of their daily schedule. This is perhaps an area that needs to be addressed.

As an Indonesian teacher I have noticed that students often struggle when required to complete extended writing tasks, while they tend to master reading skills more quickly and easily. This study highlighted the benefits of using technology to help encourage reluctant writers and how the combination of reading and writing activities might help to improve students' writing skills. It also showed the importance of all strategies, regardless of their apparent simplicity; teachers cannot teach a strategy in the junior years and then assume that the students 'know' it. Strategy instruction is on-going. For example, it would be worthwhile to introduce strategies, such as dictionary skills, in the junior years and to continue to practise and reinforce dictionary use through to the senior years

The study also highlights the invaluable role of the LOTE teacher; highly effective teachers, such as Jan and Anna, possessed similar traits: in the classroom they were outgoing, passionate and knowledgeable about their subject. They were both native speakers but had lived most of their lives in Australia; this seemed to give them a unique perspective as their first-hand knowledge of the language and culture reinforced their expertise, while their understanding of Australian culture enabled them to relate easily to their students. They drew on humour and their own experiences as language learners to create a rapport with their students.

Effective LOTE teachers were willing to take risks with their classes and try new and often innovative activities. They had cultivated a deep understanding and knowledge of their students' strengths, weaknesses and preferred learning styles. Regardless of teaching materials, strategy use and access to technology, without a caring, empathic teacher, who has a strong rapport with their students, students will be unlikely to feel motivated and engaged in the subject.

This study was conducted from the teachers' perspective and focussed on how strategies are taught in the LOTE classroom. Further research into the students' perspective would shed more light on the role of strategy use in the LOTE classroom and its potential benefits.

In conclusion, this study is timely in light of the continuing trend of low LOTE enrolments in government secondary school across Victoria. It is hoped that the results of this study will make a contribution to the complex issue of students disengaging from secondary school LOTE programs. The findings of this study are relevant to current secondary school LOTE teachers and pre-service teachers. However, the issue of the continual gradual decline of students learning a LOTE is more complex than the scope of this thesis. This study may lead to further research into the important role of the LOTE teacher and the value of strategy training.

In an increasingly multilingual world, there are many benefits of learning a LOTE. Second language learning can increase employment opportunities and helps foster an awareness of other cultures and people. It can help students to develop an understanding of the diverse world in which they live. The Victorian government clearly values LOTE and consistently supports the teaching of languages in schools across the state; indeed, many English speaking countries have similar languages policies. Certainly, progress has been made over the past few decades; however, there is still a large gap between government policy and the reality of secondary school LOTE classrooms. The findings of this study may make a contribution towards closing this gap.

The small group of LOTE teachers who participated in this study have shown us how it is possible to motivate and engage students while simultaneously encouraging autonomy. In order to change the way that students participate in their language studies, and to promote greater involvement in secondary school LOTE programs it is important that we listen to what these teachers are telling us.

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Appendix 1



MONASH University

Education

The role of learning strategies when learning a language other than English

PART A

Please fill in or tick as appropriate.

1. Name (confidential)
2. Age group ☐ 20-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50+
3. Country of birth ☐ Australia ☐ Other (please name)
4. If other, when did you arrive in Australia?
5. Native language
6. Other language/s known.....
7. Languages qualified to teach.....

8. LOTE/s now teaching		
9. LOTE level/s teaching		

10. Total years of teaching experience
11. Number of years teaching a LOTE
12. What do you understand by the term 'language learning strategies'?

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PART B

1. Please tick where appropriate.

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
a. Learning strategies are steps that students take to enhance learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Learning strategies are important because the more awareness students have of what they are doing, the more effective their learning will be.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Learning strategies help students achieve independence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Strategy teaching can improve students' confidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. In your own LOTE classes do you see students using learning strategies? Please tick.

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Tick which learning strategies you think your students use.

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
a. Dictionary use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Peer collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Ask teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Check class notes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Identify key information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Look at title and make inferences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Examine illustrations in text	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Use orthographic information (i.e. capitalization)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Recognise type of text	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other strategies (please explain)

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4. How important do you think it is that students can apply the following strategies when completing tasks? Please tick the number which most applies to you.

	1: Not at all important	2: Fairly Important	3: Important	4: Very important
	1	2	3	4
a. Dictionary use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Peer collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Ask teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Check class notes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Identify key information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Look at title and make inferences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Examine illustrations in text	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Use orthographic information (i.e. capitalization)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Recognise type of text	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. In your own classes do you teach your students any of the following? Please tick as many as applicable.

Writing

- ☐ Dictionary skills
- ☐ Plan, draft and revise writing
- ☐ Use pre-prepared phrases

Reading

- ☐ Read title and make inferences from it
- ☐ Examine illustrations
- ☐ Read comprehension questions before reading text
- ☐ Use background knowledge
- ☐ Guess meaning through context
- ☐ Recognise the type of text
- ☐ Skip inessential words
- ☐ Identify key information

Listening

- ☐ Guess unfamiliar words/phrases
- ☐ Infer the meaning of words/phrases from context
- ☐ Use background information
- ☐ Anticipate/predict speech
- ☐ Identify key information

Speaking

- ☐ Appeal for assistance
- ☐ Phrases to 'buy time' (hesitation and filler devices)
- ☐ Learn set phrases (requesting, apologising, refusing)

- ☐ Circumlocution (describing the word instead of using the appropriate word)
- ☐ Approximation (use similar word to convey meaning)
- ☐ Prior preparation
- ☐ Avoidance (avoid speaking about topics unfamiliar with, move conversation to topic of choice)
- ☐ Other (please specify).....

6. How important do you think it is to learn about the following? Please tick the number which applies to you.

1: Not at all important
2: Fairly important
3: Important
4: Very important

	1	2	3	4
a. Dictionary skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Peer collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Check class notes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Infer the meaning from the context	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Examine illustrations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Memory skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Identify key words	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Prediction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Learn stock phrases	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Which learning strategies do you find students lack? (listening, speaking, reading, writing)

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8. What strategies do you think students would benefit from knowing how to do?

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9. Do you believe strategy training is useful? Please explain.

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10. Is there anything that prevents you from devoting class time to strategy instruction?

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11. Do you think more able LOTE students possess a different range of learner strategies from less able students? Please explain.

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12. Have you noticed any differences in the way boys and girls use strategies in the classroom?

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13. Please tick the number corresponding to how well you agree with each of the statements below:

1: Strongly disagree
2: Disagree
3: Agree
4: Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4
a. My students are aware of the value of learning strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I have spent time teaching my students to look for key words/phrases when reading.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. My students brainstorm before beginning writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I have spent time teaching my students to plan and draft their writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I have spent time teaching my students to use a dictionary correctly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I have spent time teaching my students how to recognise grammatical categories in a piece of text .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. I have spent time teaching my students how to make requests in the LOTE.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. My students have been taught to guess a word if they are unsure of its meaning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. My students have been taught how to ask for a question to be repeated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. My students have been taught to examine illustrations before reading a text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. I have spent time teaching my students how to check their writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. My students have been taught how to identify text types (newspaper, dialogue, letter).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. My students have been taught to guess the meaning of a conversation when unsure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Are there any other comments you would like to make about learning strategies?

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Thank you for your co-operation.

Appendix 2

The role of learning strategies when learning a language other than English

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe a learning strategy?
2. What sorts of strategies do you see your students use in the classroom?
3. How do the students know about these particular strategies?
4. Do you see students using specific strategies in each of the 4 language skills – listening, speaking, reading, writing?
5. In which language skills do you think they lack strategies?
6. What, if any strategies, have you taught students?
7. In your experience, do boys and girls tend to use different strategies?
8. Are there any strategies that boys tend to use?
9. Are there any strategies that girls tend to use?
10. Do you think that more able students have a greater range of strategies or use strategies differently?
11. What do you notice the poor students do differently from the more able students?
12. Is strategy instruction useful? In what ways?
13. What factors prevent you from devoting more class time to strategy instruction?
14. How would you like to see strategy instruction incorporated into the LOTE classroom?

Appendix 3

Interview Extracts

Interviewer italicized

Interview 1: Anna

What strategies have you found to work well in your classes?

I do a lot of things and I can't say that there's just one thing that works well. I experiment. And finally, next year will be the first year that I don't have to worry about studying, so it will be so much easier and I'll be able to try out even more of my ideas. For example, I supervise the choir for the Christmas Carols and already I've suggested that we should do an Italian song next year. So as soon as I have time, I really like to be able to start thinking and planning what to do. I want to see what topics they do in other subjects to see if we can cross over, not just with Italian but with French as well. With languages I think it's very important that we link our subjects wherever possible and look at ways that we can do this. It's important to link to the cultural component with History and Geography and even cooking.

The problem I find is that here there's just so much focus on grammar, grammar, grammar and I find that a lot of the teachers here in Australia aren't really trained in a way that enables them to teach the language communicatively. Because I'm a native speaker, I can do that...

What do you think is the most helpful for the students out of all these things you've mentioned?

I think being a native speaker is really helpful for the students, particularly if you teach at senior levels. But it really depends on how you go about teaching the language. I think what is important is how much of the language you actually use in class and how much language you expose the students to. When I first started teaching I thought that I would just speak in Italian all the time, but it's not that easy, especially with the Year 7s and 8s.

I've learnt a lot this year and I really think I need to change a lot in terms of the way I go about teaching, particularly Year 7. One idea I had is to use Excel. I created a dictionary and it's divided into chapters and there's a little word box that you can use

and the students can create their own dictionary, like a data base. I think this is something that will really help the students because they can put a little comment in, conjugate the verbs, they can write little sentences.

Another thing that I've done is, I've asked the kids what they are actually doing, how they learn the language. So what I've done is to create a bank of strategies with them. They had to write how much time they devote to studying, what sorts of things they do when they study, what they think their strengths are, what are their weaknesses, how do they learn best. And every one of them handed in a couple of pages, so I had a lot of information about them and I put it all together. At this school, they all have laptops, so I projected this information up on the screen and we went through it together. Some of the kids use 'Quizlet', so they can create their own flashcards, there's so much material there and some of the kids find it very good, because it's like a game.

Also, what I noticed is we don't actually ask the kids to start writing little sentences from early on. Because learning a second language is new to them, they just expect everything that they learn can be transferred to English. They don't think in the second language, they think in English, but if we get them to start writing from where they are right now, using what they know, focusing on basic things and descriptions: colours, adjectives, family, linking to what they know, what their interests are, like sport. We need to start from where their interests are, because that's all we have. For example, they like 'Twilight.' Good! OK. Let's do a review or summary of 'Twilight' in the language. Already they know the story, they know the characters, so they can easily understand. It's something that they're interested in, they're enthusiastic so I try to tap into that and meet them where they're at. For example, I did a description. I did a description of Robert Pattinson in Italian. There were 7 famous celebrities in a quiz. It was a game and the kids were divided into groups and they had to read the descriptions and try to guess who the celebrity was.

I do a lot of things like, I'll find a comic in Italian and I'll re-type it and cut it into strips and mix it up and they need to put it into order. And I always ask questions, paraphrase to try to help them...

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Interview 2: Richard

In your questionnaire, you mentioned that there is often an emphasis in the LOTE classroom on games and having fun and your frustration with this. Can you explain a little more about that?

I often find that games and fun are important but I sometimes feel that it's mistaken as a learning strategy. For example, whenever I go to a German conference for language teachers or attend meetings for the Association of German Teachers it's always about fun, fun, fun and sometimes when I present what I do in class, it's different from what other teachers are doing. I sometimes feel that yes, it's nice, it's great, it's fun, but what do the students actually learn from doing that activity, is sometimes what I'm missing. As long as it's fun, it's fine but when you really look at what happens, what they're doing in class, do they really learn from the activity. 'Fun' itself is not a learning strategy.

Do you use different strategies for different year levels?

To a certain extent, yes. For example, things like, looking at the title before completing a reading task, is a more basic strategy and I'd explain this to the younger classes. But I try to start early with my strategy teaching so they know what to do from the beginning.

How do you go about introducing your strategy teaching?

I try to do it in context, as something comes up. I wouldn't introduce a strategy unless it related to what we were doing in class and the situation. I find too that if I introduce a strategy that the girls have found to work really well, then they're more willing to try more strategies, because they know that it can help them, that they work. For example, I'll say to the girls: Here, look! In just a couple of minutes, by using this strategy you were able to learn the rule for all these words and you were able to work out all the plural endings on your own. And you were able to work out the genders on your own. People often think that the genders in the German language are random but quite often you are able to work out the meaning

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Interview 3: Sarah

When you were doing your teacher training were you taught anything about strategy training?

Yes. There was a really big focus on this at uni. They kept telling us that for most students, this is their first and only experience with learning another language. We were told that most students don't have access to other languages at home so they don't have the knowledge of language in the way that kids from a bilingual family might. They need to be taught how to learn, how a language functions. And so we spent a lot of time learning how to teach particular tasks. Like, when you give students a reading passage, to read for gist, rather than trying to translate word for word. To just get an overall feel for what it is about, and then to break it down and look for more detail. You know, things like that. But the thing is, I don't know if this is just a boy thing, but reading for gist never works in my classes! They want to translate! They love to translate word for word! I don't know why, maybe they like following a formula or pattern, I don't know, but it's really hard to get them to just talk about what they think the passage might be about.

So what sort of things do you try to do to help them read for meaning?

Well, we look for key words and we also look for words that we already know. We highlight words that we don't know but are recurring, ones that they think might be important. I also make sure that not every single individual person is looking up the same unfamiliar words. I get them to work with a partner, to pool their knowledge. So I say to them, you look up these three words, and you look up the next three and then come together and share what you know. These are the sorts of strategies that we use, really, all the time.

We also do things like look at the heading and pictures. They're good at identifying the type of text it is – you know, a letter or email or something like that. We really read a lot of different types of texts – newspaper articles, stories, the blurb from a DVD cover. I'm also an English teacher so I see a lot of the boys using their knowledge from English in French. We read a lot of different types of texts in English so they know the format, what a certain type of text looks like, so this seems to help them in French. Even with the younger boys, the primary school boys, even they know how to identify a text type.

They really bring that strategy to the class, themselves, it's not something that I've specifically taught them.

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Interview 4: Alison

What sorts of strategies do you see your students using in the classroom?

Well, they ask each other for help. They'll talk about the task before they begin and work together in groups or pairs. They'll use their dictionaries if they don't know a word or they might look through the text to help them with the right word order or maybe look through their notes to find similar examples.

And I use ICT a lot, we use Quizlet. So I get the picture and they've got to match it up with the correct vocab and so the boys just love doing that. And they've started to improve in building their vocab. Because the boys don't go, well, no-one really, goes home and learns vocab. So this way is really effective. Like, I made one on 'Food' for my Year 9s a few days ago, because that's our new topic. I give them the new topic before the term ends and so, I put 50 food pictures and you know, they just go through them. And they can learn 50!

But in the classroom, the most I would say, is like, learn these 10 words for homework or something. But there, in the labs, it's interesting, it's quick and they've got all these games to motivate them. So, that's a really good way I've found to help them build vocab.

And then, they've got other strategies, like referring to the back of the book for unknown vocab and useful phrases but pretty much ICT and group work are strategies that I've recently been using that work really well.

How do the students know how to use strategies? Do you teach them specific strategies?

Well, I usually explain to them on the board the way to do something. I explain the strategy first. But sometimes, someone in the class will come up with a good idea. Like, they have a good way to remember vocab and so we share strategies. We talk about what works well for them and that helps.

What sort of listening strategies do you teach them?

Well, for listening, they panic a lot when they hear the audio. They're like, (gasps) I couldn't hear anything! It was too fast! So I say: Don't worry. You can listen to it as many times as you need to. So they don't keep interrupting in the middle of it, because some will get it straight away and they need to be able to listen to it without others interrupting. So, then I just play it and, depending how short it is, stop it and let them, you know, have a break in between.

But say, for Year 7, it's usually quite short, just short little bits of text. So, usually I would stop it and repeat it if they're confused. So basically, I just run through it until the last person has got it, as many times as it takes. And I do things to help them prepare before they start. We'll look at the questions first, so they know what to listen for. I ask them to guess what the conversation might be about. But the main thing is that they don't panic. Helping them to be calm and confident. Just relax and you'll hear it. And that usually works well.

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Interview 5: Jan

Your questionnaire was very detailed. I wanted to thank you for putting so much thought into your responses.

It was actually very helpful for me. It's funny, really, because filling out the questionnaire made me stop and think about what I do in my classes. It really made me look at what I do well and areas where I need to do more.

I've found that strategy teaching is really quite a bit of trial and error. I like to experiment and try new things. It's kind of an evolving thing. Like, on your

questionnaire, you mentioned dictionary use. And this is an area that I used to think wasn't important in the initial years because everything is in the text book and I thought, they don't really need a dictionary, they've got their text book. But then I found that boys really love using their dictionary. And of course, at first they look up the naughty words, which is good! They're using the dictionary and showing an interest! That's a normal part of learning LOTE but then, they go beyond that, and they can see how being able to use a dictionary properly can help them.

So I started to devise little games where they used their dictionaries. So I'd do things like put them in groups and they'd have to look up words. Things like, giving them a word for each letter of the alphabet and they had to look up the meaning, things like that. And it worked really well because, firstly, they enjoyed it and it got them using their dictionary correctly and familiarised them with it. And not just boys, both boys and girls enjoyed it and it got them asking questions. You know, what does this mean and asking about some of the jargon in the dictionary. So that's something that I've really only started doing recently and I'd like to keep doing more little things like that.

Actually, I didn't teach Year 7s last year but this year I am and I was prompted to do something by the fact that the boys always had their dictionaries with them. And I thought, oh, this is great! I never had to remind them to bring them to class so I wanted to make the most of this. I should use them more. And I've often thought to myself, they need much more dictionary training because by the time they get to Year 11 they are often still struggling with how to use them properly.

Interview 6: Tom

What sorts of strategies do you see your students use?

They will use their dictionaries if they don't understand a word and I will also let them work together to help one another. I feel that I have seen both of these strategies being used a lot. In my Year 8 Chinese class, for example, I see that quite a few of them like to use a dictionary to explore the new words and to help them to put these words into the sentence structures...or drills, or patterns that we just went through , which is amazing to see.

Have you taught them how to use these strategies, like, how to use a dictionary correctly?

Actually, I haven't spent time with them, going through, using the dictionary. I assume that they will know how to use a dictionary, either they've learnt it by themselves or with previous teachers.

What sorts of listening strategies do they use?

Actually, for a listening task, I'll allow them, say 1 or 2 minutes to pre-read all of the questions, just to get the nature of the type of task. Maybe have a bit of guessing, anticipation, they will see what type, what kind of listening material they will encounter before we start. And for Year 7 and Year 8 I normally just play the CD once because at this level it is quite easy. But at VCE level, however, we normally play it twice. Normally, I will ask the students to try to grasp the key words and then extend it from the key words.

What sorts of reading strategies do they use?

Well, reading, with my Year 8s, we have just introduced reading and they can find this a bit frustrating because they feel that it is more demanding rather than just reading a short piece and it is all nice. So they normally link the reading with the pictures and sometimes they might say: Oh, I think I get lost! So, I ask them to try to locate the words that we have learnt and to go from there. Try to put that into the context and then they have a guess. Sometimes they will work together and this can be helpful. I believe that in the language learning process, when the learners are finding it frustrating, they turn to and some get help from their peers. The older children, they are able to identify the type of text they are reading and this can be helpful because they know what key words they might find.

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Appendix 4

Classroom Observation Extract

19/4/2013

Combined Year 10/11 German class

17 students: 10 girls, 7 boys

Duration of lesson: 60 minutes

During the first 15 minutes of the lesson, there is combined oral practice. The students are then broken into 2 groups to work on separate tasks. The Year 10 students work on one side of the room, the Year 11 students are on the other. The teacher initially works with the Year 11 students, then after about 15 minutes, she moves across the room to work with the Year 10s.

There are 6 students in the Year 10 class: 4 girls, 2 boys.

The 4 female Year 10 students sit facing each other at 2 tables pushed together. Each student has their own textbook and dictionary:

Student A

Student B

Student C

Student D

Student A: O.K. so we have to do these questions. (Points and reads aloud the first question in German). So...we have to write about her day...umm, her routine (She reads a section of the passage aloud in German. She appears to only read the first paragraph). Student B listens and reads along from the text; she underlines words/phrases in pencil as she reads.

Student B: (Reads first question aloud again). Umm (pause) that's easy, I think we can just say...(speaks in German).

Student A: What does that mean again? (points to a word in the text) Is that what she does before school? (pause) I'm just going to say...(speaks in German)

Students A and B write down the answer and move on to the next question. Student A uses the dictionary in the back of her textbook to check unknown vocabulary.

Student C and Student D are sitting at the same table and are working individually. Student C uses different coloured highlighters to highlight various words/phrases from the passage as she reads; she appears to skim and scan the text.

Student A (to Student C): Hey, what did you put for question 2?

Student C: I just said (gives response in German)

All 4 students work silently for approximately 10 minutes. They all refer to the dictionary at the back of their textbook at least once.

Student A (to Student B): Have you done [question] 4 yet?

Student B: No, I don't really get it. Are we supposed to write it like a diary?

Student A: You can, if you want...I think you just have to use first person [tense]. Just say something like (speaks in German) Remember, it's the same thing that we did when we read that letter.

Student B: Oh, yeah.

Students A and B continue working. The teacher has been moving around the class, assisting students; she stops at the table and speaks in German to all 4 students.

Student B: Frau...(asks a question in German and points to her work).

Student A stops writing and listens to teacher's explanation.

Teacher: (Responds in German; checks Student B's exercise book). Remember last year when we looked at conjunctions? What kind of conjunction is this? Do you think it's a coordinating conjunction?

Student B: Oh. Yeah, OK...umm...I'm right. I know what to do now. Thanks. (repeats thank-you in German).

The teacher walks around table, checking each student's work. There is a brief exchange in German with each student. The teacher appears to be clarifying their understanding/asking if they have any problems. After 2-3 minutes, the teacher walks away.

Student A: (attempting to answer question 5) What about tomorrow? (scans passage) She goes to work but it says (reads aloud from text in German)...umm...for not more than 6 hours? Is that right? (pause) What's (speaks in German)? Could it mean between something and 6 hours?

Student B: She works between 1 and 6 hours?

Student C: Maybe *no more* than 6 hours.

Student D: (stops writing to listen to conversation) Yeah, that's what I put.

Student B: But does that make sense? That doesn't make sense. Wouldn't she know exactly how long she works for? Why would she work for *no more than 6 hours*?

Student C: Because...when I go to work, I know my shift won't last more than, like, 4 hours but sometimes, you know...you have to stay back a bit or if it's quiet, they let you go early.

Student D: Mmm (nods) Yeah, same.

Student B: But is it a part-time job? Does it say she works part-time?

Student C: Well, it says she's 17 and she goes to school, so...it must be...

Student B: I'm going to say *approximately* 6 hours.

Students work silently for 10 minutes, occasionally referring to their dictionaries.

Student B: What did you put for [question] 8?

Student A: You just have to say what you do after school.

Student B: But how detailed do we have to be? Are we meant to write, like, a paragraph?

Student A: Umm...In the box down here (points to a cartoon on the page with captions) it says (reads aloud in German) so maybe we could just say the times and then what we do. Like a list. Like, 4 o'clock, get home from school, play with the dog. 4.30, start homework. 6 o'clock, eat dinner...

Student B: Get home from school, eat, do homework, eat, watch T.V eat...(laughs).

Students work silently for approximately 5 minutes. The teacher calls the students to attention in German. They verbally correct their answers from the reading comprehension task. Each student takes a turn answering in German. The teacher tells the students to take out their homework diaries; she verbally sets homework in German and then writes it on the board in German.

Reflections made during and after classroom observations:

- Strategies observed by Year 10s during reading comprehension task: worked together as a group, pooled knowledge; look through notes, back of book; consult book dictionary/electronic dictionary.
- Year 10 students often used approximations when reading passage and answering comprehension questions: "I'm just going to say...." Often paraphrased text, put into own words, rather than word for word translation.
- Observed reading the question first and then trying to locate the information in the passage, looking for similar sentence structures, patterns; skimming and scanning.
- Other clues, information on page used. E.g. cartoon at bottom of page with caption was read and then the phrase was repeated and used in the written answer.
- When trying to understand a phrase, it was broken down into smaller word groupings, translated and then put back into the context of the passage.
- Reading for gist, rather than trying to understand every word.
- Using prior knowledge: "Remember, it's the same way we did when we read that letter, you know..."
- Breaking up task into smaller, more manageable sections. 2 students worked on one paragraph, 2 on the other, then re-grouped and shared information.
- Year 10 students never once asked the teacher for help! Worked very independently. Only asked when the teacher came over and offered assistance.
- Teacher never sat down. Constantly talked through the entire lesson, in LOTE and then in English to clarify. Worked very closely to students, stood just centimetres away from them. Very intimate classroom environment.
- Year 10s often collaborated in pairs: 'What does that mean again?' Approximations: 'I'm just going to say....'
- Year 10s break down sentences into chunks. Work out known vocabulary first, then take a guess, using the context of passage.
- Use clues in text: pictures, questions at end of passage, vocab box at end of text: 'In the box down here it says....so maybe we could say....'

- Year 10s use base words as clues to unknown vocabulary, past knowledge: ‘Remember last year when we....’
- Often build on knowledge; one student makes a guess, another builds on it, changes it slightly.
- When teacher guiding year 10s often encourages them to look for patterns when reading/writing sentences.
- Translate in word groupings, not word for word.
- Teacher regularly checks on Year 10s, clarifies any difficulties. Teacher encourages them to read for gist, not to try to understand every word.
- As working on reading text and answering questions, one student asks another student: ‘How can those 2 words mean the same thing? They sound so different!’
- Students seem confident in their ability and are able to play around with words/phrases until it feels right. E.g trying to decipher colloquial phrases: ‘not more than 6 hours or could it mean between something and 6 hours?’
- Girls worked very well collaboratively; highlighted unknown vocab during reading; highlight word groupings when trying to understand passage.
- Teacher provided verbal hints in English to help guide them towards correct answer: ‘Remember last year when we looked at conjunctions? What kind of conjunction is this? Do you think it’s a coordinating conjunction?’
- Teacher gives a lot of verbal praise. Purpose of task explained before beginning task. E.g why it is necessary /useful to use a particular phrase (role of colloquial language, ability to use conjunctions, such a ‘rather’)
- Students able to work independently while teacher working with Year 11s. If unsure of word/phrase used electronic dictionary, book dictionary, back of text, class notes, peer collaboration. Never asked teacher for assistance, only when teacher came over and offered. Is it because teacher is too busy with Year 11s and they know they will get their turn later in lesson? Is this a taught behaviour or are they genuinely independent? Read for gist, then go back and look for detail, fill in gaps.
- When translating passage, make approximations, don’t worry about complete accuracy, word for word translation. Often take a guess using context of passage: “I made a guess that it was...” “Could it be that...?”

- Teacher points out the repetition of dialogues, looking for repetition to aid writing/comprehension.
- When completing reading comprehension task, students tend to work on their own, then re-group, pool knowledge, fill in gaps in translation.
- Clear sense of what to do if they come across unknown vocabulary/material.

Floor Plan of Classroom

