LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

OF OLDER SOMALI AND OROMO ENGLISH LEARNERS

by

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"Englishi haad, I'm oldie, olde. You young. You can learn. I'm olde. Englishi haad," said 69-year-old Hoban when I told her I understood her difficulty of learning English as I also learned English as a second language. Hoban is not the only one thinking that learning a new language at the older age is difficult. 60-year-old Marian also said that she was having difficulty learning English while her grandson learned English so easily. "3 years old, watch cartoon and speak English. He's young. His brain is fresh. I'm old." Are they right? Is the saying "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" applied to language learning, too? Do Hoban and Marian have no hope? What follows is a story about when I realized how successful older adults can be in learning.

One day, I was helping a math class in an adult school. The teacher asked me to help a student. The student was a Somali lady in her sixties, and her English level was about high beginning. She had joined the class several weeks before, but could not keep up with the class as she could not memorize the multiplication tables. When the teacher told her that she would have a tutor that day, she was so happy and was determined to learn multiplication. She repeated that she needed help and she wanted to study multiplication step by step. I explained to her that multiplication was just a repeated addition, and showed how to get multiplication facts for two by adding two numbers. She was good at addition and the explanation seemed helpful. Then, I thought we could move

to multiplication facts for three. However, she refused to move on. She insisted that she repeat multiplication of twos. We repeated two times one to two times nine for the next thirty minutes. After the class, she asked me to come and help her again. Actually I was not planning to, but I could not resist her repeated requests: “You come help me, I learn. No help I don’t know.” In the end, I had five tutoring sessions with her until I could not make it any more. Later, I heard from the teacher that she did a great job on the math test and exceeded the expectation. This experience showed me how older learners can be aware of their ability to learn and the most suitable way of learning for themselves. In her case, she knew that she could not store a lot of information at a time and repetition was really important. In addition, she had a great social strategy of asking for help. Her example showed how older adults can understand their learning process and use learning strategies successfully.

Unfortunately, not all of the older adults are successful in learning especially when they have time constraints. When one of the adult schools I volunteered at enacted a policy expelling students who did not show progress in two years, many of the students who were expelled or about to be expelled were older language learners. Older students seemed to have a hard time memorizing vocabulary, guessing meaning from the context and especially keeping regular attendance. Health issues contributed to a big part of their learning difficulty. They often missed classes to see a doctor and also complained the words on the board and handouts were too small.

These experiences with older language learners led to the present research on learning strategies of older adults. This chapter introduces the context of this research

project and the issues associated with older adult language learners. In addition, the concept of language learning strategies (LLSs) and the significance of studying LLS will be discussed. Finally, I will present research questions in this study.

The Context

In May 2010, I began to teach a preliterate class in an adult English literacy program. The objectives of the class were to help students be familiar with the written language system, recognize the alphabetic-phonetic correspondence, understand the sequence of numbers, and learn basic life skills and civics concepts such as introducing oneself and buying groceries. I had three Somali female students who were over sixty. None of them had previous formal education and two of them could not read Somali at all. One of them could read some of the Somali words slowly but obviously not fluently. They had been attending the class from two months to two years and were learning the letter R when I joined.

The first day of class, I began the lesson by saying “Good afternoon.” I was expecting them to reply “Good afternoon” or at least repeat after me if they did not know the meaning of the expression. Instead they said “Habeen wanaagsan,” which I later found out meant “Good afternoon” in Somali. Then, they tried to teach me the word. I had a feeling that it would not be an easy day. The objectives of the day were to teach six English words beginning with the letter S and the correspondence of capital and lower case letters. First, I showed them six pictures of “snake”, “salt”, “Satan”, “school”, “sick” and “sleep”. I read the words and asked them to repeat after me. Instead, they said a

Somali word matching the picture and tried to teach me the Somali word. I had to compromise. I learned the Somali words and then asked them to say those in English. They finally began to repeat some English words.

The challenges of teaching the Somali older language learners were not limited to their tendency to speak Somali whether the listener understands or not. They had a hard time following basic classroom routines such as finding a necessary handout among other school materials, finding a certain page in the book, and paying attention to the teacher. They often expressed that the print in the book was too small, the classroom was too cold, and they had headaches or stomachaches. They sometimes missed the class for one month because they were sick. I wanted to help them. I wanted to learn what was hindering their learning and how to support their language learning. That's what motivated this research. In the next section, the definition of older adult language learners and the issues they have will be discussed.

Older Adult Language Learners

There has not been an agreed definition of older adult language learners in the second language acquisition field yet. Joiner (1981) cited Macoy (1956), who suggested ten developmental stages in adulthood, to classify adults who are older than 55 years as an old group. The developmental task of that age group is to prepare for retirement and retire from work. However, 55 years or older has not been a consistent standard in studies on older language learners. In Homstad's article, older language learners meant adults older than 40 (1987). Dick, McEvoy-Jamil, and Woodall (1984) described older language

learners as “adult language learners aged 50 and older.” The participants of Hubenthal’s study (2004) were in their 60s and 70s.

On the other hand, Lems (1989) has suggested that older learners be defined not by the person’s age but by the characteristics of the learner such as “how long he or she has been away from a learning environment, whether formal or informal” (p.71). Grognet (1997) also pointed out that each culture has different expectations of how long one will work: Americans until age 65, Southeast Asians until their early 50s and Africans until they die. This implies each culture has different expectations and concepts of aging. In summary, previous studies on older adult language learners did not agree on the age to define older adults. However, older learners can be defined by their social and educational status such as retirement and the time away from a learning environment. The age to be considered as an older adult will vary depending on the culture and context. In this study, the participants’ age ranged from 56 to 81. All of them were considered as elderly members in their community.

In this paper, older adult language learners (OALLs) and older language learners are used interchangeably while older English learners (OAELs) specifically indicates older adults who learn English as a second language. While OALLs include OAELs as a sub group, OALLs who speak English as a first language and learn another language as a foreign language may have different characteristics from OAELs who are learning English as a second language. For example, Joiner (1981) mentioned that the majority of older adults who were taking a foreign language course in a college setting already had a fair amount of education, high school education or higher. On the other hand, OAELs are

from a wider variety of backgrounds. Some of them may have college or higher education. Others, including 75% of the participants of this study, may not have had any formal education before. As few studies have been done with OAELs, the literature review in this paper includes research on both OALLs and OAELs.

While OALLs have advantages in learning with their life experience and learning strategies from previous education, OALLs meet the challenges of the physical, psychological and social issues related to learning. First, many OALLs, though not all, have health issues. Especially visual and hearing impairments seem inevitable as the learners get older even though overall health condition of each older adult varies (Grognet, 1997; Joiner, 1981; Lems, 1989). This can affect language learning of older language learners negatively as it hinders language input through visual aids or listening. Second, OALLs may experience affective barriers such as depression (Grognet, 1997), fear of failure (Joiner, 1981), and doubts in the ability to learn a new language (Grognet, 1997; Schleppegrell, 1987). Third, cultural differences in education can hinder OALLs' effective language learning (Dick et al., 1984; Grognet, 1997). While the strongly established social cultural identity of OALLs can motivate the learners and give them better control over their own language learning, OALLs may find it challenging to adjust to different teaching styles and educational expectations in a new cultural setting.

Even though OALLs experience psychological, physical and social difficulties (Dick et al., 1984; Grognet, 1997; Hubenthal, 2004; Joiner, 1981; Lems, 1989; Schleppegrell, 1987), there is no research proving older adults can not succeed in second language learning (Grognet, 1997; Joiner, 1981). Von Elek and Oskarsson (1973) found

no significant difference in learning grammar between younger (under 25) and older (over 41) adults. In addition, there are studies indicating that older adults can be successful language learners through adjustments in the learning environment, positive attitudes toward their learning, and use of effective teaching methods (Homstad, 1987; Joiner 1981; Schleppegrell, 1987; Zdenek 1986 as cited in Wagner 1992). In addition, research on language learning strategies seems to suggest another possible solution to enhance older learners' second language acquisition.

Language Learning Strategies

While many people struggle with learning a second language, it seems there are a few people who are more talented and more successful in language learning. Those language learners may be considered to be born with better language ability. However, Rubin (1975) pointed that all people were very successful learners of their first language and suggested that "if we knew more about what the successful learners did, we might be able to teach these strategies to poorer learners to enhance their success record" (p.42). Rubin defined strategies as "any set of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval and use of information, that is, what learners do to learn and do to regulate their learning" (Wenden & Rubin, 1987, p.19). Since then, research has identified language learning strategies (LLSs) second language learners use, classified the strategies and developed language learning strategy instruction models (Chamot, 2005; Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; Oxford & Crookall, 1989).

According to Chamot (2005), there are two main reasons to study language learning strategies (LLS). First, we can understand the metacognitive, cognitive, social and affective processes in language learning by studying LLSs used by second language learners. Second, language teachers can teach LLSs to less successful language learners and help them to be better language learners. Literature confirms that strategy instruction provides benefits such as "increased motivation, improved language performance, greater autonomy and self-reliance, and ability to continue learning after the language class is over" (Oxford, 1996, p.229).

I believe that the teachability of language learning strategies and the known benefits of strategy instruction have the potential to support older language learners. First of all, strategy instruction can motivate older language learners. Schleppegrell (1987) ranked doubt about the learning ability of older adults as the biggest obstacle in language learning of older adults. Older language learners might believe they are too old to learn a new language (Grognet, 1997). They may find their short term memory and reaction speed decline as they get older (Glass, 1996; Joiner, 1981). Jennings & Darwin (2003) also found that older adults whose ages ranged from 69 to 93 years were more likely to attribute memory function to uncontrollable factors such as age and health compared to young adults, ages 18 to 20 years. However, older adults who attributed their learning ability to controllable factors such as motivation, mental activity and strategy use showed better performance on the memory tasks than those who did not (Jennings & Darwin, 2003). Strategy instruction can help the older adults to be aware that they can control their memory function and language learning by employing learning strategies. In

addition, older language learners will be encouraged by the fact that they are already using LLSs other successful language learners use and they can learn the LLSs to improve their language learning (Oxford, 1996).

Second, strategy instruction can lead OALLs to be more successful language learners (Chamot 2005; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). Souchay & Isingrini (2004) found that older adults (age range 56-96) were less successful in monitoring their learning compared to younger adults (age range 20-31), and it influenced the poor performance of recall. Strategy instruction on metacognitive strategies will support older language learners to plan, arrange, monitor and evaluate their own learning (Chamot 2005; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990), so that they have more control over their learning (Jennings & Darwin, 2003; Souchay & Isingrini, 2004). Research also indicated that older adults (over 55) used memory strategies less often than young adults (McDougall, 1995), and memory strategy training could improve memory performance of older adults (age range 69-93) (Best, Davis, & Hamlett, 1992). In addition, social and affective strategies seem to be useful to lower the affective barriers, which older language learners may experience due to the cultural difference, depression (Grognet, 1997), fear of failure (Joiner, 1981) and frustration.

Research Questions

Previous research shows that older adults have different physical, social, and psychological learning issues from younger adults (Dick et al., 1984; Grognet, 1997; Hubenthal, 2004; Joiner, 1981; Lems, 1989; Schleppegrell, 1987) and use fewer

metacognitive and memory strategies (McDougall,1995; Souchay & Isingrini 2004). Research on language learning strategies suggests strategy instruction can support them to learn language learning strategies and to become more successful language learners (Best, Hamlett, & Davis, 1992; Chamot 2005; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990).

Through this study, I want to answer the following two questions.

1) What kind of language learning strategies are older Somali and Oromo students currently using in the beginning level English class?

2) How will the strategy instruction influence their use of LLS?

I believe this study will enhance understanding of learning strategies that older Somali and Oromo language learners use, and help me and other adult ESL educators to teach them useful learning strategies to support their English learning.

Chapter Overviews

In Chapter One, I introduced the issues older language learners experience and established the significance of studying learning strategies of older language learners. The context of the study was briefly introduced as were the challenges I met teaching older Somali English learners. In Chapter Two, I provide a review of the literature relevant to older language learners and language learning strategies. Chapter Three includes a description of the research design and methodology used in this study. Chapter Four presents the results of the study. Chapter Five includes the reflection on the data collected. I also discuss the limitations of the study, implications in the ESL classrooms and further research suggestions for older language learners' strategy learning and use.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the previous chapter, I described the issues older language learners experience and the challenges I met as I was teaching Somali OAELs. I also suggested language learning strategy instruction could be a way to enhance the second language learning of OALLs. In this study, I want to find out what kind of language learning strategies (LLSs) older Somali and Oromo English language learners use in the beginning level English classroom and also how strategy instruction influences their learning strategy use.

This chapter presents a review of the literature on older language learners and language learning strategies. The first part of this chapter will include discussion on the learning ability of older adults, issues related to second language acquisition of OALLs, and strengths of OALLs. The second section will provide information on Somali and Oromo older language learners such as Somali and Oromo culture and illiteracy of Somali/ Oromo OAELs. The third part will first define language learning strategies, describe the classification of strategies, and discuss vocabulary learning strategies. Then, strategy instruction models will be presented and compared. Finally, the gap between previous research and the current need to understand OAELs will be addressed.

Older Adult Language Learners

It seems like a widely accepted belief that younger learners are better at second language acquisition than older language learners. Neurolinguistic research seems to support this belief by suggesting language learning ability declines after puberty when the lateralization of the brain is completed (Homstad, 1987; Lenneberg, 1967). The studies on the brain changes in aging are not favorable for OALLs, either. It was found that the volume of the brain reduced throughout adulthood, and the frontal lobe of the older adults was not activated as fully as that of younger adults when completing certain tasks (Buckner, Head, & Lustig, 2006). Foreign language educators in college reported that older language learners who were older than 40 had difficulty with oral skills (Homstad, 1987). Even when a language learner who began language learning as an adult achieves fluent control of the target language, it seems difficult to cast off the foreign accent (Brown, 2007).

However, previous age-related studies revealed that adults also have advantages over children in second language learning. First, adults are superior to children in higher order linguistic processes such as grammatical reasoning and semantic relations (Brown, 2007; Schleppegrell, 1987). In addition, adults actually proceed faster than children in the early stage of syntactic and morphological development (Homstad, 1987; Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979). While research and anecdotal evidence supported that acquiring a native-like accent after puberty is very exceptional, Brown (2007) pointed that pronunciation of a language is only one criterion of language acquisition. In the end, the goal of language learning is communication, which can be perfectly accomplished as

long as the pronunciation is intelligible even with foreign accents. Here the real question is if older adults can learn a second language and if they learn a language in the same way as younger adults. Another question related to Somali and Oromo OALLs is if, with their low literacy and limited prior formal education, they share the advantages of adults over children.

Age and Learning Ability

According to Cattell (1963, 1971) and Horn (1982), there are two types of intelligence which are associated with different learning abilities: fluid and crystallized intelligence. Fluid intelligence involves an ability to perceive complex relations, use short-term memory and engage in reasoning. Fluid intelligence peaks at adolescence and gradually declines during adulthood (Cattell, 1987; Horn, 1982). This implies that activities requiring rote memorization, verbal reasoning, inductive reasoning and analogy may not be the best options for older language learners (Joiner, 1981). On the other hand, crystallized intelligence is influenced by education and experience, and increases throughout adulthood (Cattell, 1987; Horn, 1982). The learning abilities related to crystallized intelligence include vocabulary knowledge, practical reasoning, mathematical reasoning, and the individual's ability to extract information from the environment (Fry, 1992). The theory of fluid and crystallized intelligence implies that language learners have stable learning power throughout adulthood as the increase of crystallized intelligence compensates for the decrease of fluid intelligence. However, adult educators need to keep in mind that older language learners might approach

language tasks in different ways from younger adults with the different proportion of fluid to crystallized intelligence (Joiner, 1981).

Reaction speed and memory capacity are also important factors of OALLs' learning ability. Literature on older learners reported the general reduction in reaction speed and short term memory capacity of older adults (Fry, 1992; Joiner, 1981). This slowed reaction can greatly affect older adults' performance on a timed test, which does not necessarily represent learning ability. Studies have shown that the difference in performance on learning tasks between younger and older adults was noticeably reduced when the time factor was removed (Fry, 1992; Joiner, 1981). The relationship between memory and learning has been studied to have a better understanding of older adults' learning ability. Traditionally, memory is divided into three kinds: sensory, short-term memory, and long term memory (Fry, 1992). Among those, short term memory loss is often mentioned as a concern for older adults' learning ability. However, recent research introduced the concept of working memory and suggested actually short term storage capacity does not decline with age (Fry, 1992; Van Gerven, Paas, Van Merrienboer, & Schmidt, 2000). While short-term memory is simply defined as the ability to store a certain amount of information for a short period of time, working memory capacity refers to the ability to store information temporarily while processing the other information simultaneously. Working memory capacity shows a gradual decrease as an adult gets older. As the working memory contributes to performance in multiple cognitive tasks, it leads to a reduction in the total memory capacity and a decline in the older adults' ability to perform on tasks requiring multiple operations. Van Gerven et al. (2000) suggested

that teachers design the class in a way to restrict the cognitive load of working memory to a minimum and stimulate the learner to construct schemata by transferring the information to long term memory. Even though aging can cause slower processing and memory capacity loss, it does not indicate that older adults do not have a cognitive ability to learn a language, but they may need more time, meaningful input and more repetition than younger language learners (Hubenthal, 2004, Schleppegrell, 1987).

Physical issues of OALLs

Health issues such as chronic disease can affect the language learning of older adults. Arthritis may affect physical mobility or make it difficult to sit for a long time (Becker, 2000). A surgery can keep the student from attending class for several weeks. Medications can interfere with attention (Hubenthal, 2004). Even though an older adult remains healthy, visual and hearing impairment increase with age (Joiner, 1981; Thonn, 2008).

Considering the heavy role of written words and visuals in second language acquisition, vision changes can frustrate older adults who are trying to learn a second language. Fortunately, many vision problems can be easily solved with the use of prescribed glasses and proper lighting (Joiner, 1981). Teachers can also support older adults by providing simplified materials with bigger prints and arranging seats closer to the board (Dick et al., 1984).

The sensitivity to sounds decreases as people age. For example, the ability to hear up to 15,000 Hz at age 30 drops to 12,000 Hz by 50. This change may not affect our daily

life or language learning as the range of normal speech is between 250 Hz and 8000 Hz. However, once the hearing ability drops to 8000 Hz, that person may not be able to hear certain sounds with high frequency such as the fricatives in 6000 Hz (Thonn, 2008). About twelve percent of the population between the ages of 45 and 64 have hearing loss, and the percentage of people who have hearing deficits increases to fifty when people are over 85 (Thonn, 2008). As older adults lose the ability to sense sound waves, they may not hear higher frequency sounds or may not be able to discriminate sounds. This change in hearing can affect the language learning of older adults as it delays the input process and, as a consequence, production. Background noise or shift of sound level can also interfere with older adults' hearing. To supplement the hearing impairment in a language classroom, educators who teach older adult language learners are recommended to speak loudly, slowly and distinctively, use visual clues such as gestures and pictures, eliminate interfering noises, and seat older adults at close distance from the source of sound (Joiner, 1981, Thonn, 2008).

Affective barriers and social factors

Schleppegrell argued that doubts are the biggest obstacle in older adults' language learning (1987). Not only the learners but also teachers often seem to believe that older adults can not learn a new language. These negative attitudes and assumptions discourage older adults and prevent them from creating learning opportunities and taking a risk to try new expressions. Delahay and Ehrich (2008) also found that the older adults in their study did not consider themselves as good learners and lacked confidence in their

learning ability. Krashen's affective filter hypothesis is often cited to explain the negative impact of anxiety and low self-esteem on language acquisition (Homstad, 1987; Lems, 1989). Older learners who tend to have higher affective filters can be easily embarrassed by the mistakes they make in a classroom. Educators need to lower the affective filter by assuring older adults' learning power and providing opportunities for them to experience successful learning.

Social factors are distinct from affective issues, but they often interact with each other very closely. For example, older refugees might lose the authority as their children or grandchildren become the negotiators for the family in a new country (Farid & McMahan, 2004). This role reversal can lead to low self-esteem and depression. In addition, older adults have established their social identity and have cultural expectations of teacher-student relationship or teaching methods (Dick et al., 1984; Lems, 1989). This established identity may lead them to be independent and self-controlled learners. However, different cultural beliefs and lifestyle in a new circumstance may hinder their learning. For example, an older man who has believed learning to be listening to the lecture quietly may not feel comfortable when he is expected to share his ideas and talk with his partner in class.

Strengths of OALLs

While it seems that older adults have physical and social disadvantages in language learning compared to their younger counterparts, they also have strengths as a language learner. First of all, OALLs tend to be more independent, self-directed and

willing to work (Joiner, 1981). They set their own goal as a language learner and work hard to achieve that goal. As Sternberg (1998) pointed, motivation is the driving force to realize any potential cognitive ability. Older adults are ready to use their full ability. A second strength of OALLs is that they can use the learning strategies they learned either from previous education or from their life experience. While the education background of OALLs varies from college or higher degree to no previous formal education, older adults have succeeded learning new information and solving problems in their life. Reimer's study (2008) with low literacy ESL learners showed that even adults with little or no prior formal education were using a number of language learning strategies effectively. OALLs' third strength is their ability to associate their existing knowledge with new information (Dick et al., 1984). Associating new language input with their rich life experience helps the input to be more meaningful and it also compensates for OALLs' weakness in working memory. This can be related to the gradual increase of crystallized intelligence throughout life including older adulthood as crystallized intelligence involves an ability to apply previously acquired information and use existing cognitive skills (Cattell, 1987; Horn, 1982).

While this section describing older adult language learners dealt with general aspects of OALLs, it is important to remember that OALLs are from a variety of backgrounds, and individuals have their own strengths and weakness as a language learner. In the following section, I'll discuss more specifically about Somali and Oromo OAELs.

Somali and Oromo OAELs

It is widely known that culture affects language learners' strategy choice and use. Oxford (1996) asserted that strategy assessment and instruction were also influenced by the cultural background of the language learners. Therefore, understanding Somali and Oromo culture and their educational background will help to predict or understand the LLS use of Somali and Oromo OAELs. In addition, while Somali and Oromo older ELLs share most of the cognitive affective factors of OALLs, they are in a unique situation, which is different from that of older language learners who are taking a foreign language course in college (Joiner, 1981) or a training program in Peace Corps (Lems, 1989). Most Somalis and Oromos came to the United States as refugees. They did not choose to learn English voluntarily, but they had to escape their country because of the war or political oppression. They still suffer from the memory of the war and lost family members (Farid & McMahan, 2004). Research showed that many refugees have had multiple traumatic experiences including torture, and have psychological problems such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorders (Robertson et al., 2006). The findings also suggested that older women with less formal education reported higher levels of trauma and were less likely to speak English. In this section, a brief description of Somali and Oromo culture as well as the illiteracy of Somali Oromo OAELs will be presented to understand Somali and Oromo OAELs better and also to explore a better approach to strategy assessment and instruction for them.

Somali culture

Islam is tightly woven into Somali culture. The most valued deeds in Somali culture are contributing to the society, keeping harmony and preserving Islamic belief and practice (Farid & McMahan, 2004). Somalis value hospitality, charity and communal support. To Somalis, collective identity is very important. A man's good deeds may not represent himself and his immediate family, but also his ancestors. The extended family takes care of children and each other. Older adults are respected and old parents are often taken care of by their adult children.

Somali culture also keeps a trace of nomadic life. For example, Somalis highly value speech ability (Putman & Noor, 1993). A man who has a talent as a poet and orator is socially respected. As pride is also an important value in Somali culture, an ability to use language to save oneself from embarrassing situations is essential. History is conveyed from parents to children through songs and stories. Even though Somalis did not have a writing system, they had strategies to memorize and retrieve information. Farid and McMahan (2004) expressed concern about the fact that that Somalis lost listening and memorization skills with the adoption of an alphabetic system.

Oromo history and culture

The Oromo are an ethnic group who live mostly in Ethiopia and neighbor countries such as Kenya and Somalia. They share a language called Afaan Oromoo. Oromos had had their own country called Oromiya and developed democratic system until they were conquered by Ethiopia in the late nineteenth century. Even though the

Oromo makes up the largest population (40%) of Ethiopia, Oromos have been marginalized politically, linguistically and economically (Gow, 2002; Hussein, 2008). The last Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie I announced Amharic as an official language of Ethiopia and forced Oromos to learn Amharic. He even banned and destroyed Oromo literature in order to degrade Oromo culture and assimilate the Oromo. Since then, the social and political discrimination against Oromos have continued, and many Oromos left their country for a better life.

Oromos who left Ethiopia settled in North America, Europe, and Australia as well as neighboring countries such as Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan. In the United States, the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul are called the Oromo capital in America with about 12,000 Oromo residents (Getabun, 2007). This can be explained by the connection between the Lutheran church and Oromo Christians who account for about 40 percent of the Oromo. In addition, the large Somali community in the Twin Cities, who are mostly Muslims, also attract Oromo Muslims who represent another 40 % of the population. Both Christian and Muslim Oromos value social responsibilities and respect the elder. Knowledge of history, bravery and hard working are admired. Cultural values are often expressed by songs, stories, poem and proverbs. (Getabun, 2007).

Illiteracy of Somali and Oromo older ELLs.

Many of the Somali older adults have low or no literacy in Somali while some of them may be familiar with the Arabic script. This can be explained by the fact that Somalis have had the oral tradition and there was not a written form of Somali until 1972

(Farid & McMahan, 2004). Before that, only a very small number of educated people or religious leaders were literate in Arabic. In 1972, the Somali government adopted a national script based on the Roman alphabet and began a nation-wide literacy campaign. In 1975, a government report indicated that five percent of literacy rate increased to fifty five percent. However, the government collapsed in 1991 and the civil war ongoing until today destroyed most of the Somali schools (Putman & Noor, 1993). Recent UNICEF statistics (2005-2009) reported that the primary school attendance ratio for school-age male children was twenty five percent, and that of female children was twenty one percent.

Even though Oromo has had its own written system, the ethnic discrimination in Ethiopia and poverty did not allow many Oromos to acquire literacy. Education is mandatory from age 7 to 11 in Ethiopia, but it is not forced by law (Flaitz, 2006). The literacy rate of Ethiopia is 62% for male youth (15-24) and 39% for female youth (15-24) (UNICEF, 2004-2008). Oromos are assumed to have much lower percentage of literacy than that (Flaitz, 2006). Oromo parents may be reluctant to send their children to a school with a couple of reasons. First of all, school education has been a tool for a government to degrade Oromo culture and language. Learning about Oromo history and values was banned, and Oromo speaking students were discriminated against. It is possible that Oromo parents have refused the education (Hussein, 2008). Second, many Oromos live in rural areas, and farming is their main industry. Parents may choose to have extra help from the child rather than spend time and effort to bring them to a school.

The effect of illiteracy on second language acquisition

Studies showed that the low rate of literacy and lack of previous formal education can slow down second language acquisition (Bigelow, Delmas, Hansen & Tarone, 2006; Castro-Caldas, Reis & Guerreiro, 1997; Young-Scholten & Strom, 2005). In Young-Scholten and Strom's study (2005), Somali and Vietnamese ESL students with different lengths of previous school education were compared. As both Somali and Vietnamese written languages are based on Roman alphabet, Young-Scholten and Strom expected the first language reading skills would transfer to English. As expected, the participants who had reading skills in their first language showed higher reading skills compared to illiterate participants who had a similar level of morpho-syntactic development in English. The unexpected result was that one participant with non-alphabetic literacy (Chinese) also demonstrated higher reading skills than illiterate participants. The authors predicted that the participant with Chinese literacy would show a similar pattern with illiterate participants as she was not familiar with the Roman alphabet. However, the results showed that she could transfer her reading skills to English even though her phonemic awareness was limited compared to that of other participants with Roman alphabet literacy.

The influence of literacy was not limited to the L2 reading skills. Castro-Caldas et al. reported that illiterate subjects showed poor performance in tasks requiring phonological awareness and morphological analysis of words (1997). They asked 24 illiterate participants and 17 participants to repeat 48 words: 24 high frequency words and 24 non-words. In the study, the illiterate participants performed poorly for the repetition

of non-words and also showed a tendency to transform the non-words to words which had a meaning. The result of the study revealed that the illiterate participants have a poor ability to analyze the phonological input and have a tendency to process the meaning of a word rather than the form. This lack of phonemic awareness can lead to poor performance of wording decoding, and affect the reading comprehension (Young-Scholten & Strom, 2005).

Bigelow et al. found a relationship between literacy and processing of oral recasts in second language acquisition (2006). Eight Somali adolescents and young adults who were learning English as a second language participated in Bigelow et al.'s study. All of the participants had lower level of literacy compared to their grade level, but they were grouped into low literacy and moderate literacy. The participants were prompted to ask questions in English, using two similar pictures with small differences and a sequence of drawings describing a story. When the participants asked a grammatically incorrect question, the researchers recasted the question in a correct form, and asked the participants to repeat the correct form. The results of study showed that the moderate literate group performed significantly better in their tasks of recalling the recasts than the low literate group did. This finding suggests that English learners with no or low literacy may use oral corrective feedback less effectively compared to literate English learners.

Low literacy also has correlation with non-linguistic aspects of learning such as memory and recognizing two-dimensional figures (Ardila, Rosselli & Rosas, 1989; Reis, Guerreiro, & Castro-Caldas, 1994). Ardila et al. (1989) found significant difference in the memory performance between illiterate and educated literate participants. The memory

tests included basic information, digit retention (repeating a sequence of numbers), memory curve (number of presentations necessary to learn 10 words), delayed verbal recall of 10 words, sentence repetition, logical memory (reproduction of a short story read to the participants), delayed logical memory, immediate recall of the Rey-Osterrieth complex figure (reproducing a complicated line drawing), immediate reproduction of a cube, visuospatial memory, and sequential memory. In addition, Reis et al. (1994) found that the illiterate group presented more errors in tasks involving two dimensional drawings while there was no significant difference in naming real objects between literate and illiterate groups. Considering beginning level language learners often depend on pictures to understand a story or the meaning of a new word, the poor capacity for understanding two dimensional visuals can be a disadvantage in language learning.

These studies suggest that Somali and Oromo OAELs who have not had previous formal education and reading skills may face bigger challenges than educated literate OAELs do.

Language Learning Strategies

According to Oxford (1990), language learning strategies are “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations (p.8)”. She also assured that LLSs contribute to communicative competence and can be taught. If use of LLSs can make learning more successful and pleasant, and can be learned, research on LLSs can be a key to improve less successful language learners’ performance on language tasks. In this

section, the definition and characteristics of LLS, classification of LLS, and vocabulary learning strategies will be discussed.

Definition and characteristics of LLS

The effort to identify the learning strategies good language learners use and the difference in strategy use between more and less effective learners has continued since the 1970s. Even though there is not a generally accepted definition of LLS, most researchers seem to agree that: 1) LLSs involve both mental or behavioral activities and are therefore not always observable; 2) language learners often choose and use LLSs intentionally and consciously even though some of the strategies may be used automatically and habitually after repeated practice and use; 3) use of LLSs enhances the learning process and the development of proficiency in the target language; 4) LLSs increase learners' autonomy and self-regulation; 5) LLSs can be taught; and 6) LLS are influenced by a variety of factors such as learning tasks, language proficiency, cultural background, age, gender and learning style (Chamot, 2005; Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Takač, 2008; Wenden & Rubin, 1987). Table 2.1 contains definitions of learning strategies or language learning strategies in literature.

Classification of LLS

There have been numerous classification systems of LLS and the debate has continued. Rubin (1981), one of the earliest researchers in LLS, identified eight LLSs and classified them into learning strategies, communication strategies, and social strategies

depending on whether they contribute to language learning directly or indirectly. Learning strategies were considered to contribute directly to language learning and included verifying understanding of the target language, guessing the meaning and speaker's intention, reasoning deductively, practicing, memorizing and monitoring. On the other hand, communication strategies in Rubin's classification were said to be less directly related to language learning and were used by language learners to remain in and continue conversation despite their limited linguistic knowledge. Rubin (1981) believed that language learners may use social strategies to create opportunities to practice the target language but use of social strategies would not contribute to learning by themselves.

Table 2.1

Definitions of language learning strategies

Source	Definition
Rubin (1987)	Any set of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval and use of information (after O'Malley et al., 1983; and Brown et al., 1983), that is, what learners do to learn and do to regulate their learning
Wenden (1987)	The term refers to language behaviors learners engage in to learn and regulate the learning of L2, to what learners know about the strategies they use (i.e., strategic knowledge), and to what learner know about aspects of L2 learning.
Oxford (1990)	Specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations.

Cohen (1998)	Processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of a L2, through the storage, recall and application of information about that language.
Chamot (2005)	Procedures that facilitate a learning task.
Brown (2007)	The moment-by-moment techniques that we employ to solve problems posed by second language input and output

The term “communication strategy” has been defined in different ways by researchers. However, the distinction between learning strategies and language use strategies, which often include communication strategies seems to be widely accepted (Brown, 2007; Cohen, 1998; O’Malley and Chamot, 1990). Whereas learning strategies are used to enhance language acquisition by improving the knowledge and understanding of a target language, language use strategies are considered to be used to accomplish communication goals using the knowledge a language learner already has (Cohen, 1998; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990). Learning strategies have been categorized into metacognitive, cognitive, and socioaffective strategies (Brown, 2007; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990). Language use strategies include strategies for retrieving existing knowledge, rehearsing language structures, covering oneself to create the impression of language control, compensating for missing knowledge, and avoiding unfamiliar topics or complex structures (Brown, 2007; Cohen, 1998).

On the other hand, Hsiao and Oxford (2002) questioned if it is possible to separate language learning strategies from language use strategies as language learning and use often occur simultaneously and also use of a target language often provides

desirable language learning situations. They suggested that it would be rather a matter of emphasis as language learning and language use are not identical. Without separating learning strategies from use strategies, Oxford suggests a six factor classification: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, social strategies and affective strategies (1990).

Table 2.2 compares the LLS classification of Wenden & Rubin (1987), O'Malley & Chamot (1990), Cohen (1998) and Oxford (1990). Wenden & Rubin (1987) kept Rubin's original classification of learning strategies, social strategies, and communication strategies. O'Malley & Chamot (1990) included socioaffective strategies as learning strategies and distinguished production strategies from communication strategies. Cohen (1998) classified LLSs only as learning strategies and use strategies. Oxford (1990) classified 6 categories of LLSs, but did not divide them into sub groups. As mentioned above, she questioned distinguishing learning strategies from language use strategies as they often happen simultaneously.

In 2002, Hsiao and Oxford conducted a study to compare Oxford's classification with O'Malley and Chamot's system. 534 freshmen in college in Taiwan participated and completed a questionnaire about their language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). Each item in the questionnaire represented a learning strategy, and the mutual relationship of the variables was tested by using confirmatory factor analysis. The findings of this study supported 1) affective strategies are distinct from social strategies, 2) O'Malley and Chamot's cognitive strategies can be subdivided into memory, cognitive and compensation dimensions and finally 3) Oxford's six factor classification is more

consistent with the data than O'Malley and Chamot's three factor classification theory. Therefore, this current study chose Oxford's model as a classification model to identify and classify the older language learners' LLS. Appendix A includes details of Oxford's model.

Table 2.2

Comparison of Classification Systems

Wenden & Rubin (1987)	O'Malley & Chamot (1990)	Cohen (1998)	Oxford (1990)
I. Learning Strategies	**I. Learning Strategies**	**I. Learning Strategies**	**Language Learning Strategies**
- Metacognitive	- Metacognitive	- Metacognitive	- Metacognitive
- Cognitive	- Cognitive	- Cognitive	- Cognitive
II. Social Strategies	- Socioaffective	- Social	- Social
III. Communication Strategies	**II. Production Strategies**	- Affective	- Affective
	III. Communication Strategies	**II. Use Strategies**	- Memory
		- Retrieval	- Compensation
		- Rehearsal	
		- Cover	
		- Communication	

(Brown, 2007; Cohen, 1998; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wenden & Rubin, 1987)

Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) have been studied from two perspectives. First, many of the general LLSs are related to or can be used in learning vocabulary. For example, a language learner can plan and evaluate one's vocabulary learning by using metacognitive strategies, and analyze and practice new words by using cognitive strategies. Actually, most of the memory strategies in Oxford's classification are directly related to vocabulary learning such as grouping new words into meaningful units and using auditory or visual links to remember a new word (Oxford, 1990). On the other hand, there are studies which focus particularly on strategy use in vocabulary learning. These studies identify and classify VLSs, and explore the effectiveness of individual strategy in vocabulary learning (Schmitt, 1997; Takač, 2008). Schmitt (1997) suggested a typology of VLSs based on previous research and his study of VLSs used by ELLs in Japan. He identified 58 VLSs and classified them into five categories: Determination, Social, Memory, Cognitive, and Metacognitive strategies. This classification is closely related to Oxford's taxonomy. Then, Schmitt added the determination category for strategies used for learners to discover the meaning of a new word without involving other people. For example, finding the meaning of a word by analyzing affixes and roots or guessing the meaning from the textual context were considered as determination strategies. Appendix B includes the list of VLSs and their type suggested by Schmitt (1997).

LLS Instruction

As mentioned above, researchers on LLSs agree that LLSs enhance second language learning, and can be taught and learned (Chamot, 2005; Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Takač, 2008; Wenden & Rubin, 1987). Here, the effectiveness of LLS instruction and two frameworks of LLS instruction are presented: Oxford's eight step model and O'Malley and Chamot's Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA).

The effectiveness of language learning strategies instruction

Previous research on LLSs revealed that LLS instruction can improve language learners' performance on language tasks as well as increasing the motivation and self-directness (Chamot, 2005; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, Oxford, Crookall, Cohen, Lavine, Nyikos, & Sutter, 1990). In 1990, O'Malley and Chamot conducted a study of the effectiveness of strategy instruction. The participants were 75 high school students at the intermediate level of English proficiency. They were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups, and received instruction on three types of language tasks: vocabulary learning with ten item word lists, listening tasks with a five minute lecture on an academic topic, and speaking tasks of two minute presentations on a familiar topic. The experimental group received LLS instruction for 50 minutes daily for eight days. The pre- and post-test results showed that the oral presentation of the students in the experimental group were significantly more intelligible and organized. A significant difference in listening comprehension between the two groups was also found when the texts were

interesting and not too difficult to the students. The use of vocabulary learning strategies in the experimental group increased after the LLS instruction, but VLSs were effective only for the students who were convinced that VLSs were useful. The results of this study support that ELLs can improve their language performance through LLS instruction especially when the materials are appropriate for the level of the students and the students perceive LLSs as useful.

The next study was conducted in France with 198 college students who learned English as a foreign language (Oxford et al., 1990). The students had very limited access to English and viewed the mandatory English class as a waste of time. The researcher who was an English teacher of the college gave LLS instruction by using simulations and games. After each activity, the class had a time to discuss language learning issues and LLSs related to the activity. The quantitative and qualitative data collected from the students showed that the participants became more motivated, involved and self-directed after the LLS instruction.

Reimer's study (2008) and Iverson's study (2005) confirmed that even students with beginning level English proficiency can benefit from LLS instruction. In Reimer's study, the participants were ESL adults who had low literacy in their first language and no or little prior formal education. First, Reimer observed the class and interviewed the participants to find out the participants' LLS use. Then, she provided 7 LLS instruction sessions with help from a higher level ESL student as an interpreter. The results of her study showed that the participants were using a number of LLSs effectively and benefitted from the LLS instruction focusing on metacognitive, compensation, and social

strategies. In Iverson's study (2005), the participants were high school students with low English proficiency. Her concern was that she could not get help from an interpreter during the LLS instruction as the participants were from different language backgrounds. However, the findings of the study suggested that various teaching strategies could help the LLS instruction be more accessible and usable for low-proficiency ESL students and the students could benefit from the LLS instructions conducted in English.

Oxford's LLS instruction framework

Oxford (1990) emphasized that LLS instruction should focus on not only teaching language learning strategies but also dealing with learners' belief about language learning, the benefits of LLS and their responsibility in learning. In addition, LLS instructors are recommended to expand their knowledge of LLS and reconsider their attitudes about teacher-learner roles since LLS instruction is also about increasing learners' autonomy and responsibility. Oxford advocates explicit integrated long-term LLS instruction (Oxford, Crookall, Cohen, Lavine, Nyikos, & Sutter, 1990). In Oxford's eight step model, the first five steps involve planning and preparation, and the last three steps are related to conducting, evaluating and revising LLS instruction. Following are the eight steps (Oxford, 1990, p.204).

Step 1. Determine the learners' needs and the time available.

Step 2. Select strategies well.

Step 3. Consider integration of strategy training.

Step 4. Consider motivational issues.

Step 5. Prepare materials and activities.

Step 6. Conduct completely informed training.

Step 7. Evaluate the strategy training.

Step 8. Revise the strategy training.

Step 1 is a stage to set the scene and explore learners' attitudes, expectations, and current strategies (Oxford et al., 1990). Learner's age and proficiency will be considered to assess their needs. In addition, the purpose for language learning, previous language learning experience, and cultural expectation about language learning are explored and discussed. Learners are also encouraged to express their feelings and beliefs about language learning or learning in general. The learners' current LLS use is also assessed in this stage. Observations, interviews, students' journals, surveys and think-aloud procedures are common assessment techniques (Chamot, 2005; Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins, 1999; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Oxford, 1996).

Step 2 involves choosing LLS to teach based on the needs and characteristics of the learners identified in the first step. Oxford suggests selecting strategies relevant to the students' needs and cultural personal characteristics, useful for most learners, and transferable to different kinds of learning tasks. Interweaving different categories of

strategies, that is, teaching more than one of memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies are also recommended.

In step 3, teachers consider integrating LLS with regular language classes. Integrated LLS instruction is supposed to provide more immediate applicability and better understanding how strategies can be used in a context.

In step 4, the ways to motivate learners are considered. An external reward system such as grades or verbal praise for use of new LLS can be used. Demonstrating and explaining the benefits of LLS can increase the learners' interest in LLS. Students might have a chance to choose learning activities to use and learning strategies to learn. Cultural and ethnic difference should be considered. A teacher might need to show understanding of different cultures and justify the teaching methods and techniques.

This is also a stage to focus on affective issues addressed in the first stage such as negative beliefs about their learning ability and anxiety. Relaxation exercise, use of laughter and a journal expressing feeling can be considered (Oxford et al., 1990).

Step 5 is preparing materials and activities to be used in class to teach LLSs. This can include handouts, pictures, realia and even a handbook. Students can also contribute to the preparation and collection of materials. Oxford emphasizes developing interesting and meaningful activities.

In step 6, teachers conduct completely informed training. Oxford (1990) uses the term "completely informed training" to emphasize that instructors should explicitly and completely inform the learners of the benefits of LLSs and how to use LLSs in different situations (p. 207). Students have opportunities to practice LLSs in several language tasks

and evaluate the success of LLS use. The following sequence is suggested (Oxford et al., 1990, p. 209).

1) Ask learners to do a language activity without giving any instruction on the target strategy.
2) Have them describe the strategies they used to the task, and give positive attention to any useful strategies and self-directed attitudes they mention.
3) Suggest and demonstrate other helpful LLSs, mentioning the benefits of the strategy.
4) Allow learners plenty of time to practice the new strategies on a language task which is the same or similar to the one presented in the first step.
5) Show how the strategies can be transferred to other tasks.
6) Provide practice using the strategies with new tasks.
7) Help students understand how to evaluate the success of their strategy.

The success of LLS instruction is evaluated in step 7, and then it is revised in step 8. Students' comments on the class and instructor's observation of the class and students' LLS use during and after the instruction often provide useful information to evaluate the LLS instruction. Criteria for LLS instruction evaluation can include improvement on a given language task, general skill improvement, transfer of strategies to different tasks, promoted students' autonomy, and positive attitudes toward students' learning ability (Oxford et al., 1990). The instruction will be revised based on the evaluation and the sequence begins from step 1 again.

O’Malley & Chamot’s CALLA

While Oxford’s model is focused on teaching LLSs, O’Malley & Chamot’s CALLA includes three components in its design: content area topics, language development activities and LLS instruction (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990). This model was designed to promote the academic language skills of ELLs or English-dominant bilinguals in elementary and secondary schools who have developed social communicative skills but not academic language skills yet. CALLA is a lesson plan framework roughly corresponding Oxford’s step 6, completely informed training. CALLA lesson is divided into five phases: preparation, presentation, practice, evaluation and expansion activities. Table 2.3 compares Oxford’s model with CALLA.

Table 2.3

Comparison of Completely informed training vs CALLA

Completely informed training	CALLA
1) Ask learners to do a language activity without giving any instruction on the target strategy. 2) Have them describe the strategies they used to the task, and give positive attention to any useful strategies and self-directed attitudes they mention.	• Preparation: Identifying students' prior knowledge about the concepts in the contents of main subjects and their current use of specific strategies
3) Suggest and demonstrate other helpful LLSs, mentioning the benefits of the strategy.	• Presentation: Presenting new information on the subject and demonstrating the useful learning strategy
4) Allow learners plenty of time to practice the new strategies on a language task which is same or similar to the one presented in the first step .	• Practice: Providing activities to practice the strategy with regular class activities of moderate difficulty
5) Show how the strategies can be transferred to other tasks. 6) Provide practice using the strategies with new tasks.	• Expansion: Providing opportunities for students to extend understanding of contents to real world problems and to applying the strategies into new situations and learning tasks
7) Help students understand how to evaluate the success of their strategy.	• Evaluation: Having students evaluate their use of the learning strategy and understanding of the contents

(Chamot, 1990; Chamot et al. 1999; Oxford, 1990; Oxford et al., 1990)

Conclusion

The literature on older language learners indicates that OALLs have learning ability and strengths as a language leaner, but there are cognitive, physical and affective issues interfering with second language learning. However, there have been few studies in the English as a second language field to embrace OAELs and enhance their learning. On the other hand, research on language learning strategies has identified strategies used by language learners to improve their knowledge and competency in a target language and suggests that strategy instruction can have positive impact on second language acquisition. While comprehensive studies have been conducted on LLSs across the world, many of them were focused on intermediate college or secondary students (Chamot, 2005; Oxford, Crookall, Cohen, Lavine, Nyikos, & Sutter, 1990; Oxford, 1996) with little study of low proficiency OAELs' LLS. Through this study, I aim to identify LLS use among Somali and Oromo OAELs in the beginning level English classroom, and examine the influence of strategy instruction on the strategy use of the participants. In the following chapter, the context of study, research paradigm and data collection methods will be discussed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study is designed in the qualitative research paradigm to 1) identify the language learning strategies older Somali and Oromo learners use at the beginning level of English and 2) find the influence of learning strategy instruction on their use of learning strategies. The method and data collection instruments are adapted from those in Reimer's study (2008).

This study had three phases. In the first phase, I sought to identify the learning strategies the participants are currently using through observation of the whole class and individual interviews. In the next phase, students had learning strategy instruction for seven sessions. The LLS instructions were based on the LLS assessment in the first phase and followed Oxford's eight step model discussed in the literature review. In the final phase, I observed the students' language learning strategy use and interviewed the students again. The goal of this phase was to compare the participants' LLS use before and after the LLS instruction and examine the influence of LLS instruction. Some of the interviews and observations were videotaped with the participants' consent.

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter describes the methodologies used in this study. First, the rationale and description of the research paradigm is presented. Second, the context of the study

and participants are described. Third, three data collection techniques are discussed and instruments for each technique are attached. Finally, data analysis methods and ethics of research are stated.

Qualitative Classroom-based Research Paradigm

Qualitative research can be defined by its descriptive aspect (Mackey & Gass, 2005). First, the aim of qualitative research is to provide natural detailed descriptions rather than statistical data. Second, qualitative research often studies participants in their natural settings instead of a controlled laboratory, thus enhancing understanding of what is happening in the context. Third, the purpose of qualitative research is to understand and interpret the phenomenon under study with potential for generating hypotheses.

The characteristics of qualitative research suit the purpose of this current research: to enhance understanding of LLS older ELLs use and the impact of LLS instruction. The aim of this study is not to generalize the findings but to establish a hypothesis to support the ELLs in a given context: specifically four Somali and three Oromo English learners in my class.

This study is also classroom-based research. The participants are the students who attend the same class, and the data were collected in a classroom not in a controlled laboratory. This will reveal the language learning strategies the participants use in a natural classroom situation, and also how the LLS use in class changes after LLS instruction. While classroom research may not provide a tightly controlled environment such as randomly assigned participants and a control group, classroom based research has

enhanced the understanding of second language learning and teaching in a wide range of classroom contexts (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

Data Collection

Location/Setting

This research took place in an ESL adult school in an urban setting, a part of a non-profit literacy training program for Somali adults. The program is based on Christianity, and its mission is sharing Christianity through literacy and friendship. The majority of the students are Somalis with small population from other East African countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan. The school has three levels of classes and holds classes three nights a week. As all of the teachers are volunteers, each class has different teachers for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights. For example, I am a beginning level Tuesday teacher, and there are two other teachers for Wednesday and Thursday classes. The school has a six-week class and one-week-vacation schedule all year around except during Ramadan as most of the students are Muslims.

As mentioned above, the school where this study was conducted has three levels of classes. The Level 1 class is mainly to introduce the written language system both in English and students' native language. Numbers 1-50 and basic money concepts are also introduced. The Level 2 class focuses on topics related to everyday life such as jobs and shopping. In the Level 2 class, students are expected to build oral proficiency using simple phrases and fabricated expressions. They also have more practice on phonics, identifying corresponding sound/ letter combinations. The curriculum in the Level 3 class

emphasizes grammar along with sentence-level conversations on familiar topics. During the time of this study, most of the students in Level 3 were pretty confident in reading out the words, but their vocabulary level was still low. Their oral proficiency level varied from a beginner who had a hard time understanding basic instruction to low intermediate who successfully completed communication in familiar topics. The school does not use any standardized test to evaluate the students' English proficiency, but use the objectives of each level as a guide to decide whether to move up a student to a next level or not. The students in the Level 2 and 3 classes participated in this study.

Each class is two hours long. During the first hour, the teachers give instructions. Then, the students, teachers and tutors have tea time for about ten minutes. This is a break between two hours and also social time. After the tea time, tutors are assigned for each student. Depending on the number of tutors and students attending the night, each tutor works with two or three students at a time. During the tutor time, the students review the learned materials and have a chance to speak with native speakers and individualized practice.

Participants

Fourteen Somali students and two Oromo students participated in this study. The participants' age ranged from 56 to 81. While there is no agreed-upon definition for older adults, they were socially accepted as elderly members in their Somali or Oromo community. Even the youngest participant had grandchildren and all the participants were

retired from their work except two participants who had a part time job in a community center. One of them was 60 years old and the other one was 76.

According to the participants' self-reports, five out of sixteen participants were fluent in reading their first language. Other participants reported that they had low or no literacy in their native language. Interestingly, a few of them claimed that they could read the Koran slowly even though they admitted that it did not mean they could read Arabic. It is possible that they memorized some of the verses or chapters of the Koran as religion is an important part of their life. There were four students who had formal education before they came to the United States. One went to school for three months, two for one year and one student for five years.

Table 3.1 summarizes the information of the students including the length they stayed in the United States, the length they attended the current school, other education in the United States, and whether they can speak another language other than their native language and English. Some of the participants did not remember how long they had been attending the current school as it had been so long, at least longer than a year. As the school did not have the attendance information older than a year, it was recorded as "No info" in Table 3.1.

Role of the Researcher

I taught the Level 2 class on Tuesday nights and Level 3 classes on Wednesdays during this research even though I usually teach the Level 1 class. As each class has three teachers who teach different nights a week, the role of the researcher changed depending

on the day I collected the data. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, I was both the teacher and observer. On Thursday nights, however, I was an observer but not a teacher.

Table 3.1

Data of participants

#	Class level	Gender	Age	L1	Length in USA	Length in current school	Formal education in home country	Other education in USA	Literacy in L1 or L2	L2 or L3 other than English
1	Level 3	F	56	Somali	6 years	3 months	None	4 years	Fluent Somali, Low Arabic	Low Arabic
2	Level 3	M	66	Somali	6 years	5 months	1 year	4 years	Fluent Somali	None
3	Level 3	F	69	Somali	12 years	5 years	None	1 year	Fluent Somali, Fluent Arabic	Fluent Arabic, Low Swahili
4	Level 3	F	72	Somali	8 years	1 year	5 years	2 years	Fluent Somali reading but low writing, Low Arabic	Low Italian
5	Level 2	F	58	Somali	5 years	5 months	None	1 year	None	None
6	Level 2	F	59	Somali	4 years	1 year	3 months	8 months	Fluent Somali, Low Arabic	Low Swahili
7	Level 2	F	60	Somali	10 years	8 months	None	1 month	Low Somali	Low Oromo

#	Class level	Gender	Age	L1	Length in USA	Length in current school	Formal education in home country	Other education in USA	Literacy in L1 or L2	L2 or L3 other than English
8	Level 2	F	62	Oromo	5 years	No Info	None	None	None	Fluent Somali, Intermediate Amharic
9	Level 2	F	65	Somali	12 years	3 months	None	None	None	None
10	Level 2	M	70	Oromo	7 years	No Info	None	None	None	None
11	Level 2	M	70	Somali	7 years	1 month	None	1 year	None	None
12	Level 2	M	72	Somali	4 years	No Info	None	1 month	Read the Koran but low Arabic	None
13	Level 2	M	76	Somali	5 years	No info	1 year	None	Low Somali	None
14	Level 2	F	76	Somali	6 years	No Info	None	3 months	None	Fluent Swahili, Low Arabic
15	Level 2	F	77	Somali	6 years	No Info	None	1 year	None	None
16	Level 2	F	81	Somali	10 years	3 years	None	None	None	None

Data Collection Techniques

Observation

The method of observation has been used to provide intuitive insights of strategy use (Rubin, 1975), identify observable LLSs such as asking for clarification and cooperating with peers (Oxford, 1990), and also to get the researcher and the participants accustomed with the study situation (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Reimer, 2008). In addition, observation offers a chance to study students' behavior in the presence of contextual variables (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Finally, observation records can cast objective perspectives to LLS research, which heavily depends on a learner's self-report. Considering the fact that language learners are not always aware of their LLS use, this can be a huge benefit.

However, the observation technique has two drawbacks. First, not all of the learning strategies are observable (Cohen & Scott, 1996; Oxford, 1990). As LLSs involve both mental and behavioral activities, observing the students' behavior does not provide a full understanding of LLS. To compensate for this shortcoming, this study supplements observation records with interviews. Second, the presence of an observer or a recording method such as a video camera can cause changes in students' behavior (Cohen & Scott, 1996; Mackey & Gass, 2005). The unique situation of team-teaching in the current study left little space for students to feel the intrusion of a stranger because the observer was one of their teachers. Students sometime signaled to get some help from the researcher, but understood the researcher was there to observe and not to teach or help. However, there were some students who felt uncomfortable with a video camera, so the camera was

used only when all the participants felt comfortable with it. Field notes were used as a main recording method.

I observed the class three times: before the LLS instructions, right after the LLS instructions and three weeks after the last LLS instruction. The pre-instruction observations were conducted for three sessions on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights, each of which had a different teacher. As each teacher has a different teaching style, observing LLS use each night revealed various LLSs the participants used. In addition, I took an advantage of having two perspectives both as a participant observer and objective observer. On the nights when I taught the class, I could observe the class as a participant observer with more insights. Other nights when other teachers taught the class, I could focus on observation with more objectivity since I did not get involved in the classroom activities. The post-instruction observations were conducted on Thursday nights when I was not teaching the class and focused on the strategies taught in class. Each observation was recorded using the observation sheets.

The observation sheet (Appendix C) has a table with four columns: tasks, teacher's action, students' action and extra notes. I filled in this sheet either after the class on my teaching nights or during the class on other nights. The first column indicates the task or stage of the class. The second column describes the content of the task, more specific instruction or the teacher's actions. Students' reaction and response and possible explanation of the behavior in the context were written in the third column. The last column was used for any extra notes or my thoughts.

Based on the observation sheet, I identified learning strategies observed in the class and filled in the LLS classification sheet: whole class observation (Appendix D). It

has six rows with six different categories of language learning strategies: memory strategies, metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, social strategies and affective strategies, based on Oxford's classification (1990).

Interview

As mentioned above, the major drawback of the observational method is that only some of the language learning strategies are observable and others are mental activities which a researcher can not recognize by observation (Cohen & Scott, 1996; Oxford, 1990; Takač, 2008). Interviews provided the inside perspectives of LLS use and helped to identify unobservable LLSs as well as LLSs used outside of the classroom.

There were pre-LLS instruction interviews and post-LLS instruction interviews. Nine students participated in both pre- and post- interviews, and three students were interviewed only after the LLS instruction. All interviews were conducted with the aid of an interpreter. The pre-LLS instruction interviews consisted of two parts, interview I-A: Demographic information (Appendix E) and interview I-B: LLS use (Appendix F). Through the interview I-A: Demographic information (Appendix E), the basic factual information of the participants was collected such as age, length of time in the United States, previous former education and literacy in their native language. The questions in the interview I-B: LLS use (Appendix F) included the reason to study English, self-report on strategy use in English learning and English use outside of the classroom. The interview questions are adapted from Reimer's instrument (2008).

After the seven sessions of strategy instruction, once a week for seven weeks, the participants had the interview II: Reflection (Appendix G, Appendix H) with the aid of an

interpreter. The interview II reflected the students' attitudes toward and use of language learning strategies. The interview II questions asked if the participant thought each learning strategy covered in the class was useful and if they were actually using it. The interview questions for level 2 (Appendix G) and those for level 3 (Appendix H) were slightly different as they covered different learning strategies in their class.

Data Analysis

This study was designed to answer 1) what kinds of LLSs older Somali and Oromo ELLs are currently using and 2) how LLS instruction will influence the participants' use of LLS. First, the class observations were analyzed to identify observable LLSs by using the observation sheet (Appendix C) and LLS classification sheet: whole class observation (Appendix D). The observation sheet provided descriptive information on students' response to each learning task. Then, the researcher identified and classified the observed LLSs in the LLS classification sheet based on Oxford's six factor classification (Hsaio & Oxford, 2002; Oxford, 1990). While it was not always 100% clear which category fits the best for a certain behavior, I tried to match the participants' behavior with one of the examples in Oxford's LLS classification (Appendix A). Detailed examples in Oxfords' work (1990) were also used as a guide. An attempt to tally the number of a certain strategy use was not made as the whole class observation made it difficult to track each student's strategy use especially when a video camera was not used.

Second, the analysis of individual interviews revealed unobservable LLSs as well as use of LLSs outside of the classroom. Interview I-A provided information on prior

formal education, language learning experience and level of literacy. These questions established the participants' background, which may explain choice of certain LLS use. Interview I-B was designed to extract LLSs through the participants' self report on general use of LLS (Chamot, 2005; Cohen & Scott, 1996). Interview II reflected the participants' attitudes of language learning strategies and revealed whether the LLS instruction influence on the use of LLSs.

Third, the data collected after the LLS instructions showed the influence of LLS instructions by examining the participants' attitudes toward the LLSs taught in LLS instructions and whether they were actually using the LLSs through observations and interviews. The participants' response after the LLS instruction was compared with their response before the LLS instruction.

In order to establish reliability, I used methodological triangulation in data collection and analysis. First, I collected the data using both observations and interviews. The observations provided objective information on the participants' behavior in a given classroom situation. In the meantime, the interviews provided the participants' subjective insights on their LLS use as well as the use of LLS outside of the classroom. Second, the data collection involved group observation and individual interviews. While the observations of the whole class were focused on gathering a wide range of information of the entire group, the individual interviews revealed personal difference in LLS use. Third, the data were recorded by two methods: field notes and videotaping. There were some cases when I could not use a video camera as some of the participants did not want it. However, some interviews and observations were videotaped to clarify the field notes.

Ethics

This study employed the following precautions in order to protect the participants' rights.

1. The Human Subjects Research form was submitted, reviewed and approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee of Hamline University before implementing any research.
2. The administration of the school was informed of the research questions, theoretical background, methods, description of treatment and specification of time demands. This research began to proceed after the permission administration of the school was granted.
3. Voluntary participation was assured. The participants could withdraw the participation any time.
4. An interpreter was present for the participants with low proficiency of English to interpret the content of the informed consent letter. The participants had a chance to ask any questions.
5. All participants signed an informed consent to participate in the study.
6. All of the information collected is confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Conclusion

This methods chapter has presented the qualitative research paradigm, the context and participants of the study, and data collection techniques to identify and compare LLSs the participants use before and after the LLS instruction. The procedure of

observation and interviews and the analysis of collected data were described. The reliability and validity of research were assured by using triangulation: class observations, and individual interviews using different types of records. Oxford's six category classification was used to identify the LLSs older ELLs used in a classroom. Finally, ethics to protect the right of the participants were discussed. In next chapter, the result of research will be described.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This study was designed to identify the LLSs Somali and Oromo older adults use and find the influence of LLS instruction on their English learning. It involved fourteen Somali speakers and two Oromo speakers who enrolled in a nonprofit adult ESL school. All of the participants were considered as older language learners and their age ranged from 56 to 81. Their English proficiency varied from low beginner to intermediate. They were in the Level 2 and Level 3 classes according their English level. In this study, three observations and two interviews were conducted as the study proceeded. First, the researcher observed the classes for a week and interviewed the students about their demographic information and language learning strategy use. Second, learning strategy instruction was given once a week over seven weeks. Third, the researcher interviewed the students again on the learning strategy use and observed the class once right after the last learning strategy instruction and again three weeks after the last LLS instruction. Through the first observation and interviews, I sought to answer what kind of language learning strategies older Somali and Oromo students are currently using in English classes. After giving the language learning strategy instructions, I found out how the strategy instructions have influenced the participants' use of LLS through the observations and interviews.

Current LLS Use of Somali Oromo Older Adult Language Learners

To identify the language learning strategies the participants are using to learn English, I observed the Level 2 and 3 classes three times for a week. Then, I interviewed six students from the Level 2 class and three students from the Level 3 class.

Observation I

As the participants were in two different classes, the observations were conducted for two weeks; three times a week for each class. During the week I observed the class, the Level 2 class worked on job vocabulary, job advertisements and words with /ŋk/ sound. There were about eight students a night. The Level 3 class was covering subject/object pronouns and weather maps. There were about seven students a night.

Table 4.1 summarizes the LLSs observed in the Level 2 and Level 3 classes. The LLSs are categorized according to Oxford's classification (1990). It turned out that there was not a noticeable difference in LLS use in the two different levels of classes even though the Level 3 students used LLSs more frequently. In Table 4.1, I underlined the LLSs which were used by one class but not by the other class. Not all the students used the following learning strategies. The described LLSs include all of the LLSs observed in class.

Table 4.1

Observed Language Learning Strategies

Level 2 class	Level 3 class
Memory Strategies	
• Associating new English words to one's personal experience • Reviewing previously learned materials before the class • Using imagery • Employing action and sounds	• Associating new English words to one's personal experience • Reviewing previously learned materials before the class
Cognitive Strategies	
• Using routine formulas and patterns such as "How are you?" • Practicing naturally • Formally practicing sound and written system • Repeating after the teacher • Reading aloud words repetitively • Taking notes • Using resources such as handouts, and books • Translating	• Using routine formulas and patterns such as "How are you?" • Practicing naturally • Formally practicing sounds and written system • Repeating after the teacher • Reading aloud words repetitively • Taking notes • Using resources such as handouts, and books • Comparing English pronouns with Somali pronouns • Analyzing tense morphemes in a verb • Using the title of a weather map to tell what the map is about

Compensation Strategies	
• Guessing intelligently using the context, observing the other students' behavior and using the general world knowledge to receive the messages • Switching to the mother tongue • Simplifying words and sentences • Using gesture • Asking questions to a peer instead of the teacher • Getting help from a peer to receive and convey messages	• Guessing intelligently using the context, observing the other students' behavior and using the general world knowledge to receive the messages • Switching to the mother tongue • Simplifying words and sentences • Using gesture • Asking questions to a peer instead of the teacher • Getting help from a peer to receive and convey messages
Metacognitive Strategies	
• Paying attention • Organizing the materials and the environment • Controlling the environment	• Paying attention • Organizing the materials and the environment • Controlling the environment • Purposeful listening and reading • Self-monitoring
Affective Strategies	
• Taking risks wisely • Making positive comments • Encouraging oneself • Laughter	• Taking risks wisely • Sharing feelings with a peer, a teacher or a tutor
Social Strategies	
• Cooperating with peers • Asking for verification and clarification • Empathizing with others' thoughts and feelings • Saying "Thank you."	• Cooperating with peers • Asking for verification and clarification • Emphasizing with others' thoughts and feelings • Saying "Thank you."

Memory Strategies. The participants in both the Level 2 and Level 3 class used the associating strategy frequently and meaningfully. For example, when Level 2 students

learned about different job vocabulary such as a *maintenance worker* or a *receptionist*, the students mentioned the places they saw people with that job; Target, Cub Foods, and a school for a maintenance worker, and a front desk, a dentist office and a hotel for a receptionist. In the level 3 class, the students learned different names of cities as they read weather maps. Then, a student shared their experience in that city. “It was the first city in America.”

The students in both classes also reviewed the materials they learned in previous classes. The students in Level 2 took out the vocabulary handouts they used in the previous class and kept reading the words aloud before the beginning of class. They often worked with another student who sat next them to read the words they did not know. The students in Level 3 also read through the handouts and weather maps before the class, but they were more independent and silent. The participants in both classes also reviewed the materials they just learned before the beginning of the tutor time while the teachers were giving directions to the tutors. Unfortunately, later interviews revealed that the reviewing was not structured and did not continue outside of the classroom. It will be discussed in detail later in interview section.

The difference in memory strategy use of the Level 2 and 3 participants was the use of imagery, action, and sounds. The students in Level 2 used these memory strategies as they learned new vocabulary while it was not observed in the Level 3 class. The Level 2 students liked activities matching pictures with proper words or vice versa. They also used gestures and sounds to learn new words. For example, they made a money-counting gesture for a bank, pointed their heads for the verb *think* and made donkey sounds when they learned the word *donkey*. These actions and sounds often lead to another strategy,

laughing, as the students felt confident using the actions and making the sounds and thought those were funny.

Cognitive Strategies. All the participants were pretty confident using the routine formula, “How are you?” A couple of times, students said “How are you?” and answered “Fine. Thank you.” even before I asked them back “How are you?” However, most of the times, they used “How are you?” very naturally and genuinely. They also recognized and used unanalyzed patterns such as “He is _____”, “She is _____”, and “Today is _____” Unfortunately the formulas and patterns the participants could use naturally were not diverse, and they missed out on lots of chances to practice English naturally especially during the tea time and tutor time. During the tea time, the students usually hung out with other students and spoke their first language. During the tutor time, they were more focused on completing the activities in their handouts and seemed to consider chatting with the tutor as a waste of time.

Every Thursday, the Thursday teacher in Level 2 taught words with consonant clusters such as ‘nk’ sound. The students learned that letter n and letter k made /ŋk/ sound together and practiced reading the words with /nk/ sound such as *bank, blank*, and *donkey*. Through these activities, they formally practiced with sound and writing systems in English and learned the strategy of sounding out the words. The students in Level 3 did not have a day for phonetic practice, but had a routine of reading out the names of letters and sounds the letter makes at the beginning of Tuesday class. This routine provided the students with formal practice of the sounds and writing system of English. Other than these lessons given by the teachers, the participants mainly used repetition to practice pronunciation and reading words. Whenever a teacher said a new word or expression, the

students repeated after the teacher. When the students want to learn a new word, they would read aloud the word repetitively, and some students would write them multiple times.

All of the participants had notebooks and took notes regularly. Sometimes they even asked the teacher to give them a minute to write down the words on the board. However, the notes were not organized. Only few students recorded dates for the notes. Many students even skipped the pages in the notebook and later filled in the blank pages with other notes. It seemed that they took notes more for writing practice than keeping the record of the lessons. The participants used books and handouts rather than their notes as resources. Especially when the teacher asked review questions either at the beginning of the class for previously learned material or at the end of the class to review the material they learned the day, the students often checked their books or handouts to answer the questions. The participants also used pictures and visual cues to understand the message. For example, the Level 3 students used the picture on a weather map to understand the meaning of *partly cloudy*. However, most participants had a hard time using a table or a chart as a resource.

While the students in the Level 2 and 3 classes used a lot of similar strategies, the differences were also observed. The students in the Level 2 class frequently used translating. They often said corresponding Somali or Oromo words when they learned a new English word. It was inevitable especially when the students were not sure or did not agree what the new word meant. When the meaning of a new word was not clear, the students discussed it among themselves in their mother tongue, asked a couple of questions to the teacher and finally moved on when they agreed what it meant in their

language. This kind of discussion is also a social strategy as they work together to get a clear meaning of a new word.

In the meanwhile, the students in the Level 3 class used more analyzing strategies. As they learned subject/object pronouns, they analyzed the function of a word in a sentence and changed it to an appropriate pronoun. For example, when a sentence "Rahma gave bread to the students." was given, the students could analyze that *Rahma* was the subject in the sentence and Rahma was a woman, so they changed it to *she*. A student also tried to compare the English pronouns to Somali pronouns. I could not understand the discussion as it was discussed in Somali, but the student had better success choosing the right form after he announced corresponding Somali pronouns for *I* and *me*. The Level 3 students also showed analysis of grammar parts. For example, a student analyzed *thanked* as *thank+ed* identifying it as a past tense of *thank*. The final difference in cognitive strategy use involves skimming and scanning. Unlike the Level 2 students who read all the words on the page, the Level 3 students could use a title of a weather map to identify what the map was about and find specific information from a passage.

Compensation Strategies. There was no difference found in compensation strategy use among the participants in the Level 2 and 3 classes. All the participants used strategies to intelligently guess the meaning of incoming English messages. This strategy was commonly used especially when the teacher was giving the directions or instructions. The students used the context, other students' behavior and their general world knowledge to understand the teacher. For example, when the Level 2 students were asked to take notes of the words on the board, some students did not understand the direction. Then, they saw other students were taking out their notebooks, and understood what they

were asked to do. It was also observed that some students were using the first letter of a word to guess its meaning. For instance, a student saw the words *maintenance worker* and read it as *money*. When the participants could not understand the message using these strategies, they often switched to their mother tongue. There were many occasions when the participants began discussion in Somali and the teacher had to wait until they agreed on something. In many cases, those discussions helped the students who had lower English proficiency to understand the lesson. However, their conclusion was not always correct. In addition, some students had a tendency to ask questions to a peer in their native language instead of asking it to a teacher, which lead to less practice in speaking English.

The participants used compensation strategies not only to comprehend English input but also to produce English. They used simplified phrases and gestures. The Level 2 students often used one or two words and gestures to convey the message. For example, they just said, “Teacher,” and showed a page on a book or their notebook instead of saying “Is this the right page?” “I finished the notes. Would you check it?” or “I need help for this activity.” The Level 3 students used more words but not a complete sentence in most of cases. When they were working on taking notes for a phone message, a student asked, “Area Code where?” Considering the participants’ low English proficiency, these simplified phrases were enhancing their communication and encouraging them to participate in class. One time a student, whose oral proficiency was lower in the class and who did not speak up in class that often, was asked what her job was in Somalia. She said, “Cut, camel, money, cashier” and made a killing motion. Those were only four words, but she was so proud of the fact that she completed that language task.

Metacognitive Strategies. The participants did a great job paying attention to a language learning task in class. They did not bring up a topic which was not related to the class unless it was a situation in which they had to leave the class urgently or they needed help to pick up another student. They were ready with necessary materials before the class and reviewed the previous lesson while the teacher was preparing for the class or giving the directions to the tutors. However, the students sometimes talked to each other while the teacher was giving directions or teaching. Even though I could not understand Somali or Oromo, I could assume that they were asking or answering questions related to the class from non-verbal cues such as pointing the book or handouts. They did not consider this inappropriate as they were still discussing the class topic. The students took phone calls once in a while, but the phone call was not long most of the times.

The participants were also good at organizing their materials and the environment. They usually brought the handouts, notebooks and pencils. They were also ready to begin the class with the right equipment before the class. Controlling the environment was another strength the participants had. They asked the teacher to open or close the door to have a comfortable setting for studying, asked their classmates to be quiet when they could not hear the teacher, and asked a tutor to sit between two students when he was helping two students at the same time.

Two metacognitive strategies observed only in the Level 3 class were purposeful listening/reading and self-monitoring. The students in the Level 3 class could identify the purpose of a language task and skim or scan according to the purpose. They also showed an ability to monitor one's understanding and made an effort to improve it. For example,

the students asked to review the lesson after they learned about pronouns. They said that they somewhat understood it but did not feel confident to use the pronouns.

Affective Strategies. There were differences in use of affective strategies for individual participants. While some students did not speak much during the whole class, some students took risks wisely by guessing what a picture represented, making a choice between two possible answers, and asking question with simple phrases. The students in Level 2 showed a tendency to make positive comments, encourage oneself, and laugh a lot. The students repetitively said, “Good teacher”, “Good class”, and “Good student.” They also laughed for small things like actions and sounds the teachers made to explain something. On the other hand, the Level 3 students tended to use a strategy of sharing their feelings with someone else. They said, “This is really difficult” or “I am confused.” to a teacher or a tutor. This led a teacher or a tutor to understand the students’ difficulty and to encourage them.

Social Strategies. Use of the social strategies was the strongest strength of the participants. First, they continuously worked with other students to read aloud words or complete a language activity. The more fluent students often helped other students to understand the directions and communicate with a teacher. Second, the participants frequently asked questions to a native speaker for clarification and verification. They double-checked the meaning of a word by giving an example or gesturing, asked a teacher to write the word or the sentence he or she just said, and asked a teacher to check their work. Third, the participants empathized with others’ thoughts and feelings. One day a teacher was explaining the meaning of benefits in a job advertisement. The students did not grasp the meaning at first. Then, the teacher set a role play. He was a boss and a

student was an employee. The employee broke his leg but did not get any money from the boss because he did not have benefits. The students felt sorry and upset for him and understood the meaning of benefits. Finally, most of the participants often said, “Thank you” to teachers and tutors. It seemed that they understood “Thank you” was the magic word to get more help.

Interview I-B

Six students in Level 2 and three students in Level 3 participated in the interview I-B: LLS Use before the LLS instructions (Appendix F). There were five categories of questions and each category had follow up questions.

Question 1. Question 1 was about the reason why the participants studied English and what kind of tasks the participants wanted to do with more fluent English. The participants named communication with Americans or other English speakers as their primary motivation to learn English. The participants said, “I want to talk to Americans,” “Everybody speaks English,” “I live in America,” and “I am an American citizen.” Then, they specified that they wanted to go shopping, explain their symptoms in a clinic, and call 911 as the tasks they hoped to do with more fluent English. Only two out of nine participants were currently working in a community center, a part time job which did not require English to complete the task. When they were asked if they wanted to get a job in the future, only one participant answered yes.

Question 2. Current LLS use was asked in question 2, and it had six follow-up questions from each category of Oxford’s classification (1990). Table 4.2 summarizes the interview results. The data in column Level 2 and Level 3 represent the number of

participants who answered “Yes” to the given question. When a participant answered “Sometimes”, it was considered as “Yes.” Some of the questions do not show the data as they were not yes-no questions. Details are described in the following section.

Table 4.2

Interview results

LLS Category	Questions	Number of participants who answered Yes		
		Level 2 (out of 6)	Level 3 (out of 3)	Total (out of 9)
Memory Strategies	2. 1. What do you do to remember words and new ideas in English?			
	➢ Do you use images to remember new words?	2	1	3
	➢ Do you review your English lessons?	2	3	5
Cognitive Strategies	2. 2. What do you do to practice English?			
	➢ Do you try to watch TV in English and understand?	4	2	6
	➢ Do you say the new words out loud to practice them?	6	3	9
Compensation Strategies	2. 3. What do you do when you don't understand something in English?			
	➢ Do you try to guess the meaning?	1	0	1
	➢ Do you draw a picture to explain?	0	0	0
Metacognitive Strategies	2. 4. Do you think about how you are learning English?			
	➢ Do you plan and prepare to study English?	2	1	3
	➢ Do you check your understanding as you study English?	2	2	4
Social Strategies	2.5. Do you ask other people to help you learn English?	5	3	8
	➢ Do you ask other students to translate when you don't understand?	5	2	7
	➢ Do you try to practice English with other students in class?	1	2	3
Affective Strategies	2. 6. Do you feel nervous when you have to speak English? What do you do?	5	1	6
	➢ Do you talk to other people about how you feel about learning English?	2	1	3
	➢ Do you try to relax when you feel nervous speaking?	3	1	4

Question 2.1 was about the use of memory strategies, more specifically use of the images and review. Only two out of nine participants answered that they used images to memorize new words in English. One of the participants commented that she did not use images or pictures because she could not understand the pictures. It had been discussed among the teachers who work at the school site that some students had a hard time understanding the pictures. It was especially true when the pictures are simplified as in case of some clip arts or when the pictures have too much information in black and white. Reis et al. (1994) also pointed that the illiterate participants in their study made more errors in tasks dealing with two dimensional drawings compared to the literate group.

All of the Level 3 students answered that they reviewed the material at home. They said they repetitively read or wrote the words or sentences they learned the day at home. On the other hand, only one third of the Level 2 students said that they reviewed the material at home. When the other students were asked why they did not review the lessons at home, they named no help as a number one reason. Most of them lived alone in their apartment away from their children who may be more fluent in English. They simply did not have anyone to read the words they did not know and did not find a reason to study English at home.

Question 2.2 focused on the use of practice among the cognitive strategies. All nine participants said that they read aloud new English words to practice them and two said they also wrote the words to practice them. Then they were asked if they watched TV to practice English. One participant in Level 3 reported that she watched TV news every day for thirty minutes. Another Level 3 student said she watched TV news sometimes when she was not busy. The other Level 3 student said he did not watch TV

because he did not have one. Instead, he listened to a citizenship Q & A CD once in a while. Four out of six Level 2 participants reported that they watched TV: two everyday and two sometimes. Only one of them watched a cartoon and understood it. The others said that they did not understand what they were watching on TV.

Question 2.3 asked about the use of compensation strategies. When the participants were asked what they would do when they did not understand something in English, four participants answered that they would ask help from someone who can speak better English such as their children or an interpreter. Three participants said that they would ask the person they are speaking with to slow down and repeat what he or she said. One answered they would use gestures and one said that she would just leave the situation and avoid the conversation.

In Question 2.4, the participants were asked whether they thought about how they learned English and if they planned or prepared to study English. The participants' responses were either "No" or unrelated to the question such as "English is good" or "I like English." Only one student mentioned that her Arabic was good when she spoke it a lot, but she was forgetting it as she did not speak it.

Question 2.5 was about the use of social strategies, especially cooperating with peers. Seven out of nine participants answered that they asked other students to translate the teacher's directions or instructions if they did not understand it. However, only three participants said that they had help from or practiced English with other students in class. It was somewhat contradictory with the fact that the participants were observed to work together to review the material before or during class. It seemed that the participants considered practicing English as speaking English and they spoke Somali with other

students most of the time. When they were asked why they did not practice English with their classmates, they responded that their classmates' English level was as low as theirs, so it did not help them and they would rather practice English with a teacher or a tutor.

Through Question 2.6, the participants were asked if they felt nervous when they spoke English and what they would do in that case. Among the three Level 3 participants, only one person said she felt nervous when she spoke English or did not understand something in English. She also said that she would tell herself to calm down and share her feelings with her teacher when she felt nervous. The other two participants said that they did not feel nervous or worry about it because they would understand it the next day and they also could ask a teacher or a tutor for help. Unlike the Level 3 students, five out of six Level 2 students responded that they felt nervous and confused when they spoke English or did not understand the class. Two of them said that they would try it again. Two of them said they would share their feelings with their teacher. One of them said that she would give it up. The only Level 2 student who claimed he did not feel nervous in any case said that he did not worry because he could try it again until he felt more confident.

Question 3 & 4. Question 3 and 4 were designed to find out the use of English outside of the classroom. The participants' responses revealed that they had little chance to communicate with English speakers, and they often had interpreters in situations requiring English proficiency. As most of them lived alone, they spent a big part of the day doing the house chores such as cleaning and cooking. Other activities included seeing a doctor, attending a community meeting with the neighbors from different language backgrounds, and having a visit from a social worker, who could not speak Somali. In

those cases which the participants needed English, they had interpreters. There were only two participants who spoke English outside of the school the day of the interview. One went to another adult school in the morning to learn English. One went shopping and bought her medicine in English.

When the participants were asked if they spoke English outside of the classroom, two participants answered that they did not use English at all outside of the classroom. Others said that they made a small talk such as “How are you?” or “Where are you from.” Only two out of nine participants reported that they usually went shopping for themselves. Other participants said that their children or social workers bought food for them.

Question 5. The final question was a more direct approach to ask what kind of learning strategies the participants would use to learn given vocabulary. The list of vocabulary was chosen based on the lessons they were having. They just learned the vocabulary but did not have enough chances to practice them in class yet. When the vocabulary was given with pictures, the first response of all participants was trying to read aloud the words (Cognitive strategy). Three participants sorted out the vocabulary into two groups: a group with words they felt confident to read and another group with difficult words (Metacognitive strategy). Other participants kept trying to read a word until they finally gave up after several trials or they were given help to read those words. They were really frustrated when they could not read the words. However, only a few students asked for help when they had difficulty reading the words. They might have considered the task as a kind of a test. When the participants were asked how they would learn those words, all of them answered reading those words aloud repetitively as a primary strategy (Cognitive strategy, Memory strategy). Four of them said they would

write the words to memorize them (Cognitive strategy, Memory strategy). When they were asked if they would use pictures to study the words, only two of them answered yes (Memory strategy).

Language Learning Strategy Instruction

Each class was given seven sessions of LLS instructions two hours a day, once a week for seven weeks. The strategies were chosen either to expand the LLSs the participants were already using or to increase the opportunities to practice English outside of the classroom. While the most of the LLSs taught in the Level 2 and Level 3 classes were similar, there were a couple of LLSs taught only in the Level 2 class or only in the Level 3 class. Following are the brief descriptions of the LLS instructions given to the participants.

Introduction to language learning strategies

This lesson was designed mainly to introduce the concept of language learning strategies and encourage the students to think about their behavior in class in the perspective of LLS. I paraphrased Oxford's definition of LLS, "Specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (1990, p.8), to "actions that help you to learn English" After I explained the meaning of LLS, I drew a comparison chart with two columns on the board: helpful or not helpful (Appendix J). Then, I showed pictures describing the students' behaviors in class such as taking notes or LLSs I was planning to teach such as inviting tutors to home. I also added a couple of pictures describing

undesirable actions such as sleeping in class or talking to each other while the teacher was teaching. As I showed each picture, the students decided if it was helpful or not and discussed why. Even though it was a pretty simple activity, it helped the students to be aware of the fact that there are helpful and not helpful actions they can take. In addition, the word *helpful* became foundation to discuss the effectiveness of new LLSs in the following LLS instructions.

Inviting tutors to home

The interview revealed that the participants had no or little opportunities to communicate with native English speakers outside the classroom. In addition, it was observed that the students spent the tea time talking among themselves in their mother tongue rather than speaking to tutors who were willing to have a conversation with the students. Since the participants identified "Talking to Americans" as their main goal of learning English and some Level 2 participants named 'no help' as their number one reason why they could not review at home, inviting tutors or other Americans to home seemed a proper task to encourage the students to seek more opportunities to practice English naturally. In addition, the tutors in the school site were willing to spare their time to build relationships with the students as the program's mission was sharing Christianity through literacy and friendship. At the beginning of the lesson, I asked the students why they studied English. They said that they wanted to speak English and talk to Americans. I asked them how they could achieve the goal. The students seemed puzzled at first, and then answered "Come to school every day." I wrote down "inviting tutors to home" on a board, and then explained what inviting and tutors meant. The students discussed if it was

a helpful action or not and why. When the students agreed that it would be helpful to invite tutors to home, I wrote down a sample dialogue to invite a person and make an appointment. The students practiced the dialogue for the rest of the class as a group and then with a partner and filled out an information card (Appendix K) to exchange with their guest. In the following weeks, we reviewed the invitation dialogue, and I helped the students to actually invite tutors or teachers to their house during the tea time. When a student had a guest to their place, they shared their experience with the class. Having a tutor or teacher as a guest was an exciting experience for them. However, not all of the students were successful in inviting a tutor. Sometimes they were just simply too afraid of initiating the conversation. In some cases, the tutors considered the invitation as a dialogue practice rather than a real conversation so did not come to the students' place.

Organized note-taking

During the observations, all of the participants had notebooks and took notes. However, the notes were not organized. They had no date and they were not written in an orderly manner. The students sometimes took notes from the middle of the page and then wrote something else at the top of the page. They sometimes skipped several pages or took notes from the back page. To introduce the topic, I showed an organized note and an unorganized note to the students, and asked them which one would be helpful. While most of the students were not sure which one was more effective, a couple of students chose an organized note and explained why. As a group, we discussed the benefits of having organized notes and I showed a model. I recommended that they write down the date and also take notes from top to bottom rather than beginning from the middle of the

page. I also showed that a notebook had front and back and asked them to take notes from the front and move on the back. The students agreed that that would be helpful to find a note from the previous day. During the following weeks, I reminded them of the strategy whenever the students took notes.

Structured review

While five out of nine participants said they reviewed the lessons at home, it seemed that the review was not structured. In addition, the other half of the participants responded that they did not review at all. Therefore, I decided to encourage the students to review the material regularly and structurally. At the beginning of the lesson, I showed pictures with the vocabulary from the previous class. When I asked them to read each word and tell me the meaning of it, a couple of students completed the task more successfully than the others. I asked the students why those were more successful. The students had a couple of minutes to think about it. Then, I asked the successful students if they reviewed the vocabulary at home. They answered they studied the new words every day. I asked them how they studied the words. Both of them answered that they read and wrote the words repetitively. I emphasized that they studied the words they learned the very night and again next day. I also added that they could mark a word they did not know, and ask about it the next day. Then, I modeled how to use the notes and handouts to review. I also gave them a blank calendar of the month to plan and record their review. Following weeks, I gave them more chances to practice reviewing and also asked the tutors to check the students' review calendar and answer the questions the students had.

Planning and seeking opportunities to practice English

These LLSs were taught both in the Level 2 and Level 3 classes. However, it was simplified in the Level 2 class. In the Level 2 class, planning meant just setting time to review the material. I especially emphasized that they should keep studying English on the days when they did not have classes. We talked about how they forgot the words over the weekend and they could not remember the words they learned on Thursday when they came to school next Tuesday. I also suggested other ways to practice English such as inviting American friends, watching the cartoons and speaking English with their grandchildren. After the lesson, I checked their review calendar weekly and gave verbal feedback on how they were doing. In the Level 3 class, the students made more specific plans to practice English. Using the same calendar given for structured review, they wrote down how they would study English or how they will make a chance to speak English. For example, some students wrote down reading an English book for 30 minutes for one day and watching TV news for 30 minutes for another day. The students had a few chances to speak English during the week such as going to a bank or seeing a doctor. However, they usually had an interpreter or someone to help them. I encouraged them to speak English in those cases. Following weeks, tutors weekly checked the students' review calendar and helped them to make a plan for the following week.

Emotional strategies while taking a test

This was one LLS taught only in the Level 3 class. In the sixth week of LLS instruction, the Level 3 students had a chapter test and the other teachers suggested teaching emotional strategies to cope with a test situation. They found that the students

were so nervous about the last test that they had a hard time focusing on the test. Even though only one participant out of three answered she felt nervous when she spoke English during interview I-B, there were other students who did not participate in the interview and a test could be different from just speaking English. To introduce the emotional strategies, the students shared how they felt during the last test. Some said they were fine, and some said they were really nervous. I extracted a couple of emotional strategies from the students such as telling oneself that it would be fine and breathing deeply. Then, I suggested a couple of strategies such as sharing their feelings with others and using a tense-and-relax technique. The class reviewed the emotional LLSs a day before the test, and the other teachers who administrated the test reported that the students were pretty calm this time.

Use of pictures, actions and sounds to memorize a new word

These LLSs were taught only in the Level 2 class. Some of the participants were already using pictures, actions and sounds to learn a new word prior to LLS instruction. However, the participants did not recognize them as language learning strategies. Seven out of nine participants answered they would not use pictures to learn the vocabulary in interview I-B. To show the advantage of using pictures, actions, and sounds to learn a new word, I wrote a list of new words for the next lesson on the board. Then, I modeled drawing a picture, making a gesture, and making a related sound for the first word. The students noticed how the pictures, actions and sounds could be helpful to remember the word. Then, they helped me to come up with pictures, actions and sounds for the rest of the words.

Cooperating with peers

This LLS was taught only in the Level 2 class. All the participants were already working with their classmates to review the class material or complete a task. However, it was often one-way. For example, a student with slightly higher English proficiency would read the words and the other one would just listen. Even when two students were equally contributing as they read the words, there was not much of interaction between two students. It was simply reading aloud the words. To enhance the interaction between partners, I modeled them to take turns asking "What is this?" and answering "This is _____." Then, the students had a chance to review the vocabulary from the previous class using the new phrases.

Review and reflection of LLS instructions

The last class of LLS instruction the students and I reviewed the LLSs we learned during the LLS instruction. Then, I drew the LLS comparison chart (Appendix J) with two columns, helpful versus not helpful on the board again. As I was showing pictures describing the LLSs covered in class, the students responded if they were helpful or not and why. I encouraged them to continue using those LLSs and explained there would be follow-up observations and interviews.

The Influence of LLS Instructions

Interview II

Interview II was conducted the following week of the last LLS instruction. Eight students from the Level 2 class and four students from the Level 3 class participated in the interview. As the Level 2 and 3 classes had slightly different LLS instructions, there were two types of interview questions (Appendix G, Appendix H). The purpose of interview II was to find out the participants' attitudes toward the LLSs taught in class and whether they have been using those.

First, the interviews revealed that the participants began to recognize the effectiveness of their actions in terms of LLS. Before the LLS instruction, only one participant answered that she thought about how she was learning English. After the LLS instruction, eleven out of twelve participants answered that they were sometimes thinking about what actions are helpful or not helpful to learn English; one answered she always thought about that.

Second, it was also revealed the LLS instruction influenced the participants' attitudes toward the LLSs. When the participants were asked if they thought each language learning strategy dealt with in class was helpful, ten out of twelve participants responded that all those LLSs were helpful to learn a new word or improve their English. Especially the Level 2 participants showed a dramatic change of attitudes toward using pictures. In interview I-B only two of six participants answered they would use pictures to study new English words. After the LLS instruction, seven out of eight participants considered using pictures, sounds, and actions as a useful strategy.

Third, LLS instruction influenced the participants' LLS use. The interview results showed that the percentage of participants who were using the LLSs covered in LLS instruction increased. For example, the number of students who reviewed the material at home increased from five out of nine to eleven out of twelve. The number of students who planned to study also increased from three out of nine to twelve out of twelve. However, not all the changes were that drastic. It turned out that inviting tutors or Americans was the toughest strategy to use especially for the Level 2 students. Six out of eight Level 2 participants answered they never invited tutors or Americans to home. Table 4.3 and 4.4 summarized the participants' responses on LLS use after the seven-week LLS instructions.

Table 4.3

Post LLS instruction interview results with Level 2 participants

Question	Never	Sometimes	Always
Do you think about what actions are helpful or not helpful to learn English?	0	7	1
Do you write it down when you learn a new word?	1	2	5
Do you read your notes at home?	1	2	5
Do you make a plan to study English?	0	3	5
Do you study English every day?	0	4	4
Do you invite tutors or Americans to home?	6	2	0
Do you use pictures, actions, and sounds to learn a new word?	0	6	2
Do you work with a partner to learn a new word?	2	5	1

Table 4.4

Post LLS instruction interview result with Level 3 participants

Question	Never	Sometimes	Always
Do you think about what actions are helpful or not helpful to learn English?	0	4	0
Do you write it down when you learn a new word?	0	2	2
Do you read your notes at home?	0	1	3
Do you make a plan to study English?	0	1	3
Do you study English every day?	0	2	2
Do you invite tutors or Americans to home?	1	3	0

Observation II & III

Observation II was made the week following the last LLS instruction, and then observation III was conducted three weeks after observation II. As the purpose of observation II and II was to find out the influence of LLS instructions, the observations were focused on the observable LLSs taught in class rather than all behaviors observed. Table 4.5 summarizes the different use of observable LLSs in class.

Table 4.5

Comparison of LLSs use before and after LLS instruction

Before the LLS instruction	After the LLS instruction
Level 2 participants	
Working together to review materials and read aloud the words (Cognitive strategy + Social strategy)	Working together to review materials and read aloud the words using the phrases such as "What is this?" "This is _____." (Cognitive strategy + Social strategy)
Taking unorganized notes (Cognitive strategy)	Taking notes from top to bottom (Cognitive strategy + Metacognitive strategy)
Paying attention in class with occasional side talks (Metacognitive strategy)	Paying attention in class + Asking other students who are talking to be quiet (Metacognitive strategy)
Level 3 participants	
No conversation with English speaking tutors or teachers during the tea time	Small talk or asking questions to tutors or teachers during the tea time

Level 2 participants. It was observed that the participants were using new strategies or phrases they learned during LLS instructions on top of the LLSs they had been using before that. For example, the participants had been working together to review the materials or read aloud the words. Now, they were using the tips they learned in class such as taking turns asking "What is this?" By doing so, a more fluent student could give a chance to a less fluent student to read a word instead of reading all the words for his or her partner.

In addition, the participants began to take notes in an orderly manner. Most participants took notes from the top and moved down. About half of the participants

wrote down the dates for the day. Unfortunately, they still had a hard time using a notebook from the front page. They still skipped pages or wrote from the back of the notebook. However, they must somehow have found the note for the day later considering seven of eight participants said they read their notes at home during the interview II.

One noticeable change was the students' response to the people who were answering the phone or talking in class. The students had been good at paying attention in class even before the LLS instruction except occasional side talks or group discussion in Somali, and there was no separate lesson for that. However, the participants had a chance to discuss talking in class or answering the phone at the beginning of LLS instructions. Then, it was observed that the participants were asking each other to be quiet and pay attention to the class when the teacher was giving an instruction. It seemed the participants became more conscious of not distracting each other in class. There was no apparent difference between observation II and III, which indicates that the participants retained and continued to use LLSs they learned in class even three weeks after the last LLS instruction.

Level 3 participants. The LLSs taught in the Level 3 class were not observable in class except taking notes. Unfortunately, the lessons did not require any note-taking while the participants were observed. However, it was observed that the Level 3 participants were having more conversations with tutors or teachers during the tea time. The students made small talk or asked questions about what they just learned in class.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the results of my data. The LLSs Somali and Oromo older adult language learners were using prior to LLS instruction were identified through observations and interviews. Then, the influence of LLS instruction on the participants' attitudes toward LLSs and use of LLSs taught during the LLS instruction were examined through observations and interviews after the LLS instruction. In next chapter, I will discuss the major findings, limitations, implications and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This current research was designed to answer two questions: 1) What kind of language learning strategies are older Somali and Oromo students currently using in the beginning level English class? 2) How will the strategy instruction influence their use of LLS? In this chapter, I will discuss the major findings of this study, limitations, implications and suggestions for further research.

Major Findings

Language Learning Strategies used by Somali/Oromo OAELs

The results of this research revealed that Somali and Oromo older adults use various language learning strategies as they learn English. This confirms Reimer's finding (2008) that adult English learners with low or no literacy and limited prior formal education use a number of LLSs effectively and successfully. The LLSs that the participants used included associating new English words to one's personal experience, reviewing the material, reading aloud the new words repetitively, discussing questions in their first language, controlling the environment to make it more suitable for learning, asking for help, cooperating with others and so on. This was a pleasant surprise for me who observed few LLSs in the Level 1 class prior to this research. It seemed that the participants in the Level 2 and 3 classes either learned new LLSs in school or they could express themselves with higher English proficiency. There was no apparent difference in

the kinds of LLSs used by the Level 2 students and the Level 3 students. However, it was observed the participants in the Level 3 class used LLSs more frequently and more effectively.

The two most commonly used LLSs were repetition and social strategies. When I gave the participants a list of vocabulary and asked them how they would study it, nine out of nine participants answered they would read those again and again. When I asked what else they could do, seven participants looked puzzled and answered they would read the words again and again until they could remember the words. The other two participants answered they would write the words again and again. It was also observed that the participants were reading aloud the words or sentences in their handouts and notes before the class. Use of social strategies was one of the strengths the participants had. They worked together to review the material, asked questions to each other, and discussed unclear meaning of a new word or teacher's direction. They also asked teachers and tutors to verify their understanding and help them. However, most of the interactions among the participants were in their first language, and they often chose their classmates instead of the teacher when they needed help.

One of the LLSs Somali and Oromo OAELs used effectively was association. As Dick et al. (1984) pointed out, using the general background information and associating already existing knowledge with new information are strengths of OAELs. With their rich life experience the participants could associate a new word with their personal experience. For example, the Level 2 students could give a list of places where they saw a maintenance worker when they learned the phrase *a maintenance worker*. A Level 3 student shared a story when she first came to America when she learned to read *Houston*.

I remember even the Level 1 students tried to explain how dangerous a tank was when they learned the word *tank*. Having a story to tell is a great advantage for language learning as it provides an opportunity to produce English. In addition, associating can make a new word more meaningful.

The participants also demonstrated their strength of being proactive for their needs and beliefs. They were not hesitant to ask a teacher to open or close the door to get a more comfortable temperature. When the prints on the board were too small, they asked the teacher to write it bigger. One student even asked me to use the blackboard from top-left corner. They asked for more review when they did not feel confident with the material. They even assigned a seat for a tutor who was about to work with two students at the same time. While these seem demanding, these requests help the teachers to understand the students' needs and make the environment more suitable for them. In addition, this finding shows that illiterate or low literate OAELs can be as self-directed and willing as educated adult OALLs (Joiner, 1981).

The influence of LLS instruction

The observations and interviews after the LLS instruction showed that the LLS instructions had positive influences on the participants' attitudes toward the new LLSs they learned in class. In addition, most of the participants reported that they were using the LLSs taught in LLS instructions sometimes or always. The only exception was inviting tutors or Americans to their homes. Only five out of twelve participants answered they sometimes invited tutors or Americans. It is interesting to note that the participants in Reimer's study (2008) also used the strategy of speaking English outside

of the class least frequently compared to other LLSs taught in class. However, unlike Reimer's participants who thought the strategy to speak English outside of the classroom least helpful, most participants in current study answered that invitation was a helpful strategy. Considering Level 2 students had a harder time using this strategy, it seems that the participants' low English proficiency or lack of confidence hindered inviting a native English speaker to their homes.

Here, I want to share a story about one of my Level 2 students. After we had the inviting-tutor lesson, I encouraged every student to go to the tea room and invite someone to their house. Asha was too shy and unconfident to ask any one, so I told her she could invite me over. I helped her through the conversation, made an appointment and then visited her house the weekend. She prepared some food and I helped her to review her notes and handouts. We had a great time and I encouraged her to review the materials or study English every day. A couple of weeks later, I asked her if she was reviewing the materials at home. She answered, "You come my home. You help. Now I read every day." I was so happy to know that my visit encouraged her so much. Then, I did not see her for a month during the Ramadan. When I met her after a month, she asked me, "You, my home?" I did not understand what she was trying to say at first. Then, I realized that she was trying to invite me again. I could not make it that time, but I was glad to see that she remembered and used the invitation strategy even after the long break.

The findings of this study confirm the teachability of language learning strategies (Chamot, 2005; Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Takač, 2008; Wenden & Rubin, 1987). While some people believe that it is hard to change older adults' beliefs and habits, the current study showed that the participants' attitudes toward

using pictures drastically changed after LLS instruction. In addition, more participants began to plan to study, review materials at home, and use organized notes. I believe that discussion of the LLS at the beginning of each lesson and following repetitive practices were the key. Through the discussion, the participants had a chance to share their ideas and think about the benefits of certain LLS. As shown in the study of O'Malley and Chamot (1990), students improve their language performance when they perceive LLSs as useful. Then, the repetitive practices gave the participants chances to get used to new LLSs and apply those to new language tasks. This study found that Somali/Oromo older English learners can learn new LLSs and use them effectively through well-designed LLS instruction.

Limitations

Although this study fulfilled its purpose to identify LLSs used by Somali and Oromo OAELs and to find the influence of LLS on the use of LLS, there were limitations of this study. First, the number of the participants was relatively small to generalize the findings of this study to all Somali/Oromo OAELs. In addition, even though total of sixteen students participated in this study, I could interview only nine of them for the interview I-B and twelve of them for the interview II because of their irregular attendance and time constraints. Second, this study does not provide insight on long term effects of LLS instruction. Even though two observations, one right after the last lesson and the other one three weeks later, were made after LLS instruction, the attempt to see after-effect failed to serve as most of the LLSs taught in this study were unobservable. Third, this study was conducted in a unique situation where most of the students in the school

were Somali/Oromo OAELs. Somali/Oromo OAELs may use different kinds of LLSs when there are more younger-adult English learners or other language speakers in class, which is the case in most adult ESL settings. OAELs may feel less confident when there are younger adults in class especially if they believe that the younger adults are the better learners. Further research on OAELs' behavior in classes with younger adults needs to be done.

Implications

The findings of the current study led to the following four implications for educators of Somali/Oromo OAELs. First, it is important for the educators to understand the students' educational background. In this study, only 25% of the participants had formal education in their own country, 31% of them could read their first language fluently, and 19% of them reported that they could fluently speak a language other than their mother tongue. With this information, it is not surprising that the majority of the participants were having a hard time taking organized notes. However, we have a tendency to assume that the students are familiar with common classroom routine. Educators need to remember each student has different learning experience and use a different set of LLSs.

Secondly, educators should not forget the benefits of LLSs the students are already using. Expanding something already existing is always easier than building something completely new. Even though I expected the participants with low literacy and limited prior formal education to use a limited number of LLSs, the organized observations and interviews revealed that the students were using numerous LLSs

effectively. Educators can make organized observations to identify existing LLSs and encourage the students to use them more frequently and efficiently. For example, reminding the students of the benefits of using a picture strategy will lead them to use pictures more often when they learned new English words. In addition, the students can have confidence in themselves when they realize that they are already using LLSs to enhance English learning.

Thirdly, LLSs need to be explicitly taught from the beginning level of English class. While it seems that the students naturally acquired some of the LLSs in school, researchers on LLSs agree that teaching LLSs explicitly is more efficient than just implying them (Chamot, 2005). For example, the participants of this study learned to take notes by observing others or just following the teacher's direction. However, they did not use the notes efficiently even after studying several years in the school. If the students learned how to take notes in an orderly manner from the beginning level, they could have used them to review and ask questions to a more fluent English speaker such as their neighbor or their children. In addition, explicit LLS instruction raises the awareness of LLS use. Through discussing more effective ways to complete a language task and the benefits of LLSs, the students understand how they learn English, become aware of their LLS use and eventually begin to use the LLSs in their learning. In this study, even the participants with low English proficiency succeeded using new LLSs. If it is possible to teach LLSs to beginning level students, which it is, OAELs can use the benefits of LLSs as early as possible.

Finally, educators need to encourage older adult English learners to seek opportunities to practice English outside of the classroom. While younger adults have

immediate need to communicate in English such as buying food and getting a job, older adults usually have someone else to take care of those needs. Most of the participants of this study reported that their children or a social worker bought food for them, they did not need a job, and they had an interpreter when they went to see a doctor or go to a bank. When there is no need to speak English, older adults need to make an effort to find a chance to practice English. Teachers can help OAELs by teaching compensation strategies, having them make a plan to practice English, having them write a short journal of speaking English and giving positive feedback to them when they share their experience of speaking English outside of the classroom. A field trip to a grocery store or a library can also create the chances for OAELs to use English outside of the classroom.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study was only beginning to understand the language learning strategies of Somali/Oromo older adult language learners. There are more things to be studied about Somali/Oromo OAELs' LLS use and how to teach LLSs more effectively to enhance their English learning. First of all, memory strategies need to be studied more extensively. While the participants demonstrated their strength of using association and reviewing as memory strategies, the repertoire was not diverse. It can be because the participants had difficulty understanding and describing their own learning process. It may simply mean that they need to learn different kinds of memory strategies.

Second, compensation strategies are another area which needs more attention. As mentioned above, older adults do not have many chances to practice English naturally. In this study, I taught the students to invite tutors or Americans to make an opportunity to

speak English. Even though most of the students agreed that it would be beneficial to them, only half of them succeed completing the task. Considering especially the Level 2 students had low success rate, it is possible that their low English proficiency hindered them. It would be interesting to see how teaching compensation strategies will influence the students' communication with native English speakers. Will it increase the number of occasions to speak native English speakers? If so, what kind of compensation strategies would be useful to initiate and continue the conversation?

Finally, this study needs to be repeated in different settings to confirm and expand the findings. As mentioned early in the limitation section, the number of participants in this study was not enough to generalize the findings to all Somali/Oromo OAELs. Further studies with more participants may identify more LLSs. In addition, this study included only beginning level of students. Students with higher English proficiency may have better understanding of how they learn English and share other LLSs I could not find in this study.

Conclusion

Language learners use different language learning strategies depending on their educational background, personality and cultural beliefs. Somali/Oromo older adults in this study may not have previous formal education, may not know how to write their first language and may not have previous successful L2 learning experience as many other English learners do. However, they showed that they were already using a number of LLSs successfully and effectively. In addition, they were willing to learn new LLSs and began to use them in and out of the classroom.

This study changed my view on Somali/Oromo OAELs from struggling older adults with few LLSs to language learners who use a variety of LLSs effectively and continue learning new LLSs. After the data collection of current study, I began to teach a note-taking strategy to the Level 1 students, who were still working on letters and greetings in English. With very limited communication, it is a very slow process. However, I look forward to seeing them taking an organized note and reviewing the note in the near future.

The findings of this study were shared with ESL educators through Somali Adult Literacy Training, and a proposal to present it at the Minnesota ESL, Bilingual and Migrant Education Conference is in the process.

APPENDIX A: LLS CLASSIFICATION (Oxford, 1990)

I. Memory Strategies
   A. Creating mental linkage
      1. Grouping
      2. Associating/elaborating
      3. Placing new words into a context

   B. Applying images and sounds
      1. Using imagery
      2. Semantic mapping
      3. Using keywords
      4. Representing sounds in memory

   C. Reviewing well
      1. Structured reviewing

   D. Employing action
      1. Using physical response or sensation
      2. Using mechanical techniques

II. Cognitive Strategies
   A. Practicing
      1. Repeating
      2. Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems
      3. Recognizing and using formulas and patterns
      4. Recombining
      5. Practicing naturalistically

   B. Receiving and sending messages
      1. Getting the idea quickly
      2. Using resources for receiving and sending messages

   C. Analyzing and reasoning
      1. Reasoning deductively
      2. Analyzing expressions
      3. Analyzing contrastively (across languages)
      4. Translating
      5. Transferring

D. Creating structure for input and output
   1. Taking notes
   2. Summarizing
   3. Highlighting

III. Compensation Strategies
A. Guessing intelligently
   1. Using linguistic clues
   2. Using other clues

B. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing
   1. Switching to the mother tongue
   2. Getting help
   3. Using mime or gesture
   4. Avoiding communication partially or totally
   5. Selecting the topic
   6. Adjusting or approximating the message
   7. Coining words
   8. Using a circumlocution or synonym

IV. Metacognitive Strategies
A. Centering your learning
   1. Overviewing and linking with already known material
   2. Paying attention
   3. Delaying speech production to focus on listening

B. Arranging and planning your learning
   1. Finding out about language learning
   2. Organizing
   3. Setting goals and objectives
   4. Identifying the purpose of a language task
   5. Planning for a language task
   6. Seeking practice opportunities

C. Evaluating your learning
   1. Self-monitoring
   2. Self-evaluating

V. Affective Strategies
A. Lowering your anxiety
   1. Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing or meditation
   2. Using music
   3. Using laughter

B. Encouraging yourself
   1. Making positive statements

2. Taking risks wisely
3. Rewarding yourself

C. Taking your emotional temperature
1. Listening to your body
2. Using a checklist
3. Writing a language learning diary
4. Discussing your feelings with someone else

VI. Social Strategies
A. Asking questions
1. Asking for clarification or verification
2. Asking for correction

B. Cooperating with others
1. Cooperating with peers
2. Cooperating with proficient users of the new language

C. Empathizing with others
1. Developing cultural understanding
2. Becoming aware of other’s thoughts and feelings

APPENDIX B: TAXONOMY OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGY

(Schmitt, 1997, p.207-208)

Strategy Type	Description of a strategy
Determination Strategies	• Analyze part of speech • Analyze affixes of roots • Check for L1 cognate • Analyze any available pictures and gestures • Guess from textual context • Bilingual dictionary • Monolingual dictionary • Word lists • Flash cards
Social Strategies	• Ask teacher for an L1 translation • Ask teacher for paraphrase or synonym of new word • Ask teacher for a sentence including the new word • Ask classmates for meaning • Discover new meaning through group work activity • Study and practice meaning in a group • Teacher checks students' flash cards or word lists for accuracy • Interact with native speakers

Memory Strategies	• Study word with a pictorial representation of its meaning • Image word's meaning • Connect word to a personal experience • Associate the word with its coordinates • Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms • Use semantic maps • Use 'scales' for gradable adjectives • Peg Method • Loci Method • Group words together to study them • Group words together spatially on a page • Use new words in sentences • Group words together within a storyline • Study the spelling of a word • Study the sound of a word • Say new word aloud when studying • Image word form • Underline initial letter of the word • Configuration • Use Keyword Method • Affixes and roots (remembering) • Part of speech (remembering) • Paraphrase the word's meaning • Use cognates in study • Learn the words of an idiom together • Use physical action when learning a word • Use semantic feature grids
Cognitive Strategies	• Verbal repetition • Written repetition • Word lists • Flash cards • Take notes in class • Use the vocabulary section in your textbook • Listen to tape of word lists • Put English labels on physical objects • Keep a vocabulary notebook
Metacognitive Strategies	• Use English-language media (songs, movies, newscasts, etc) • Testing oneself with word tests • Use spaced word practice • Skip or pass new word • Continue to study word over time

APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION SHEET (adapted from Reimer, 2008)

Date :

Topic:

Objectives: SWBAT

-
-
-
-

Students:
Tutors:

Task	Teacher's action	Students' action	

APPENDIX D: LLS CLASSIFICATION SHEET: WHOLE CLASS OBSERVATION

Date:

Topic:

Memory Strategies	
Cognitive Strategies	
Compensation Strategies	
Metacognitive Strategies	
Affective Strategies	
Social Strategies	

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS I-A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your name?
2. How do you spell your name?
3. How old are you?
4. When did you come to America?

(When did you begin to study in this program?) – attendance sheet

(How many classes did you attend so far?) – attendance sheet

5. Did you have any formal education in Somalia/Ethiopia?

   Did you have any other education in USA?

6. Do you know how to read in Somali/Oromo or in any other language?

   > If so, how fluent do you think you are?

7. Do you speak any other language?

   > If so, how fluent are you?

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS I-B: LLS USE (adapted from Reimer, 2008)

1. Why do you want to study English?

   > What do you want to do in English?

2. What do you do to improve your English?

   2. 1. What do you do to remember words and new ideas in English?
   > Do you use images to remember new words?
   > Do you review your English lessons?
   2. 2. What do you do to practice English?
   > Do you try to watch TV in English and understand?
   > Do you say the new words out loud to practice them?
   2. 3. What do you do when you don't understand something in English?
   > Do you try to guess the meaning?
   > Do you draw a picture to explain?
   2. 4. Do you think about how you are learning English?
   > Do you plan and prepare to study English?
   > Do you check your understanding as you study English?
   2.5. Do you ask other people to help you learn English?
   > Do you ask other students to translate when you don't understand?
   > Do you try to practice English with other students in class?
   2. 6. Do you feel nervous when you have to speak English? What do you do?
   > Do you talk to other people about how you feel about learning English?
   > Do you try to relax when you feel nervous speaking?

3. What do you do during the day?

   > Do you spend time with friends and relatives?
   > Do you do house chores?

4. Do you speak English outside of the classroom?

   > Who buys food for you?

5. What would you do to learn the following words?

Level 2: a bank teller, a receptionist, a maintenance worker, a nurse's aide, a cashier, assembly workers (given with pictures)
Level 3: a house, an apartment, a living room, a bedroom, a kitchen, a bathroom, a laundry room, an elevator, a second floor, a ground floor (given with pictures)

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS II-A. LEVEL 2

(adapted from Reimer, 2008)

1. Do you think about what actions are helpful or not helpful to learn English?
   Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
2. Do you think taking notes is helpful when you learn a new word?
3. Do you write it down when you learn a new word?
   Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
4. Do you read your notes at home?
   Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
5. Do you think planning to study English is helpful?
6. Do you make a plan to study English?
   Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
7. Do you think studying English everyday is helpful?
8. Do you study English everyday?
   Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
9. If you answered sometimes or always, how do you study English at home?

10. Do you think inviting tutors or Americans to home is helpful to learn English?
11. Do you invite tutors or Americans to home?
    Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
12. Do you think using pictures, actions and sounds to learn a new word is helpful?
13. Do you use pictures, actions, and sounds to learn a new word?
    Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
14. Do you think working with partners is helpful to learn a new word?
15. Do you work with a partner to learn a new word?
    Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
16. What would you do to learn following three words?
    < Home appliances, accessories, sweater > (given with pictures)

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS II-B. LEVEL 3

(adapted from Reimer, 2008)

1. Do you think about what actions are helpful or not helpful to learn English?
   Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
2. Do you think taking notes is helpful when you learn a new word?
3. Do you write it down when you learn a new word?
   Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
4. Do you read your notes at home?
   Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
5. Do you think planning to study English is helpful?
6. Do you make a plan to study English?
   Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
7. Do you think studying English every day is helpful?
8. Do you study English every day?
   Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
9. If you answered sometimes or always, how do you study English at home?

10. Do you think inviting tutors or Americans to home is helpful to learn English?
11. Do you invite tutors or Americans to home?
    Never 1, Sometimes 2, Always 3
12. Do you feel nervous before a test?
13. What do you do to feel relaxed before a test?

14. What would you do to learn following three words?
    < technology, estimate, maintenance > (given without pictures)

APPENDIX I: LLS CLASSIFICATION SHEET: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Name:

	Interview I. Date:	Interview II. Date:
Memory Strategies		
Cognitive Strategies		
Compensation Strategies		
Metacognitive Strategies		
Affective Strategies		
Social Strategies		

APPENDIX J: LLS COMPARISON CHART

Language Learning Strategies

Helpful	Not helpful

APPENDIX K: INVITATION INFORMATION CARD

My Information	Guest Information
Name: Address: Phone number: Date: Time:	Name: Phone number: Date: Time:

My Information	Guest Information
Name: Address: Phone number: Date: Time:	Name: Phone number: Date: Time:

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