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REFORMING LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING: STRATEGIC LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT THROUGH THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO

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To Palela, in memoriam.

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation of strategic learning as an evaluation and assessment system to improve the quality of language learning and teaching by encouraging students' autonomous learning ability. With conferencing and the European Language Portfolio as strategic, classroom-based, assessment tools, action research will aim at examining the effects of the system on various components of the concept "learning to learn".

Results obtained are indicative of positive effects in the classes in which research was undertaken; yet more research needs to be conducted for conclusiveness. The teacher's leadership role in reforming language teaching and learning is brought to the fore as a key element towards quality in language education.

RESUMEN

El propósito principal de este estudio es analizar la implantación del aprendizaje estratégico como un sistema de evaluación para la mejora de la calidad de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de lenguas, fomentando la habilidad de los estudiantes para el aprendizaje autónomo. Con tutorías y el Portfolio Europeo de las Lenguas como herramientas estratégicas de evaluación basadas en el aula, esta investigación acción tendrá por objeto examinar los efectos del sistema sobre varios componentes del concepto "aprender a aprender".

Los resultados obtenidos indican efectos positivos en las clases en las que se desarrolló la investigación acción. No obstante, es necesario llevar a cabo más investigación para llegar a conclusiones. El papel de liderazgo del docente para reformar la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de lenguas se subraya como un elemento clave para la calidad de la educación en el campo de la enseñanza de lenguas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. JUSTIFYING ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL INTEREST OF THE TOPIC	2
2.1. Improving teaching and learning.....	2
2.2. Enhancing quality of language education	3
2.3. The need to focus on strategic competence.....	4
3. OBJECTIVES	5
4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	6
4.1. “Learning to learn” as a Key and a General Competence.....	6
4.1.1. Self-study as a Methodological Approach	7
4.1.2. Partnerships for Learning	7
4.2. Strategic learning.....	8
4.2.1. ELT as a service: The application of business management and marketing models to the administration of educational programs.	9
4.2.2. Strategic Learning as a transformational system for organizations.....	10
4.2.3. Successful learning.....	11
4.2.4. Strategic Learning Skills, Self-regulated Learning, and Learning Strategies	11
4.3. “Learning to learn” at EOI’s	12
4.4. Evaluation and Assessment at EOI’s.....	13
4.5. The European Language Portfolio (ELP).....	14
5. METHODOLOGY	17
5.1. The research paradigm	17
5.1.1. Classroom based research	17
5.1.2. Action research to implement, monitor, and evaluate an innovative approach.....	17
5.1.3. The EOI teacher as a Reflective Practitioner	18
5.2 The research tools.....	19
5.2.1. Conference Sheets	19
5.2.2. End of the Year Questionnaire	20
5.3 Data analysis and interpretation	21
6. STUDY	23
6.1. Data collection	23
6.1.1. Setbacks collecting data	25
6.2. Educational context.....	26
6.2.1. Institution general description: Teaching English at EOI	26

6.2.2. Group profile	27
6.2.3. Informants	28
7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	29
7.1. Quantitative data	29
7.1.1. Internal Consistency	29
7.1.2. Descriptive Statistics	29
7.1.2.1. Section 1: Awareness of the language learning process and level of development of strategic competence.	30
7.1.2.2. Section 2: Motivation	31
7.1.2.3. Section 3: Planning.....	32
7.1.2.4. Section 4: Assessment, Self-assessment, and Self-improvement.....	33
7.1.2.5.. Section 5: Overall Satisfaction	34
7.2. Qualitative data	34
7.3. Overall analysis	35
8. CONCLUSIONS	37
8.1. Can strategic learning be applied as an innovative evaluation and assessment system at EOI level?	38
8.2. Is the ELP an effective educational tool for strategic learning at EOI?	39
8.3. Can strategic learning through conferencing and the ELP enhance language learning?.....	39
8.4. What are the effects of the experience on students' strategic competence?.....	40
8.5. A proposal for policy reform.....	40
8.6. Teachers as leaders in instructional reform.....	41
9. REFERENCES.....	43
APPENDICES.....	1
APPENDIX 1: Action Research Plan	2
APPENDIX 2: Cycle of Inquiry.....	3
APPENDIX 3: Learning Contract.....	4
APPENDIX 4: Conference Sheet #1.....	5
APPENDIX 5: Conference Sheet #2.....	6
APPENDIX 6: Questionnaire.....	8
APPENDIX 7: Rationale for questionnaire development	14
APPENDIX 8: How to become a more effective learner	15
APPENDIX 9: My language background	16
APPENDIX 10: A letter to your teacher	17
APPENDIX 11 Strategic learning: grammar	19
APPENDIX 12 Learning contract 1	20

APPENDIX 13: Con Sheet #2 (filled out by student).....	21
APPENDIX 14: Learning contract 2.....	23
APPENDIX 15: The learner's profile	24
APPENDIX 16: Reliability tests	25
APPENDIX 17: Sex and age.....	27
APPENDIX 18: Frequency of conferences and level of English proficiency.....	28
APPENDIX 19: Qualitative results (Strong Areas)	29
APPENDIX 20: Qualitative results (Areas of growth)	31
APPENDIX 21: Baumfield questions	32

1. INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of education and training seems to be in every politician's agenda; yet Spanish public language schools (EOI's) in *Comunidad de Madrid* (CAM) have suffered major financial cuts since 2011, as well as an ongoing loss of leadership in the foreign language teaching scene, especially in the case of English. Unmotivated EOI teachers are seeing how student ratios and enrolment fees increase, while investment in EOIs and their teachers is limited. The quality of EOI teaching is, consequently, being affected.

This classroom-based, action research has been conducted as a personal, major project for professional development. It aims at increasing the quality of EOI language (English) teaching and learning, by promoting the EOI teacher as a Reflective Practitioner who, it will be argued, has a key leadership role in improving instructional practices.

This Research Project (RP, hereafter) seeks to implement, monitor, and evaluate an innovative approach to synchronize assessment and evaluation practices at EOI's with the realities of learning and acquisition. The innovative approach consists of an evaluation and assessment system (strategic learning) for which the European Language Portfolio (ELP) will be used as a reforming tool. Within this system framework, conferencing will be used alongside the ELP as classroom based assessment tools. This system is based on the development of the "learning to learn" key competence, and following Oxford's taxonomy (1990:18-21), it will be argued it may be considered itself an indirect, metacognitive learning strategy.

The evaluation and assessment approach adopted in this study is student-centered, and requires a bilateral, teacher-student commitment to use data systematically for continuous improvement by using collective, evaluative thinking to interpret data and establish decision-making processes. As a result, student voices will be pivotal towards successful learning.

2. JUSTIFYING ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL INTEREST OF THE TOPIC

2.1. Improving teaching and learning

I worked as a school teacher in the Elementary and in Secondary Education in the USA for eight years. I was there trained in the use of portfolios as assessment tools to reflect on students' progress. Besides using them to gather student work, I used them to record and gather performance data. The latter actions were especially empowered in the last school where I worked, an underperforming school that went through school reform. As part of the school reform bible, strategic learning was implemented as a systematic system aiming at school turnaround.

Despite the enormous effort made by all staff members, and the challenges the experience involved, I realized how beneficial some aspects of strategic learning can be, and wondered if I could apply strategic learning to other educational settings. As an EOI English teacher, I was curious to see if strategic learning could help improve the quality of teaching and learning at EOI's.

Another conclusion I drew from my experience in California is that the school turnaround goal was based on an excessive use of quantitative data to assess student performance, hence ignoring qualitative student data, relevant to the educational decision-making process. School reform involved a performance management system that in my opinion, stood in conflict with many other important educational aspects¹.

Consequently, it became a research interest to analyze what would happen if strategic learning was used in an EOI educational setting as a mixed data system in which qualitative data were pivotal to analyze student learning. In other words, analyzing the effect of strategic learning at EOI by prioritizing the listening and interpreting of students' voice over the statistical analysis of figures will serve as a springboard for undertaking this research.

The particular way the European Language Portfolio (ELP) has been created allows for the implementation of strategic learning in the terms explained above. In addition, considering EOI student profile (see 6.2.2.), these learners are able to express aspects and concerns about their learning, even if some guidance is needed. As a result, this Research Project (RP) is an opportunity to test if strategic learning, through the use of the ELP, can have a positive effect on language students at EOI level.

¹ According to Hughes (2007:6), Bottery (2006) and Forrester (2005) consider aspects such as equity and caring in conflict with the movement towards performance management in instructional settings.

2.2. Enhancing quality of language education

The European Commission (EC) has recently pointed out that “the need for policies and systems aimed at ensuring and enhancing the quality of education has been widely acknowledged at European level” (Eurydice, 2015:7). This is also true for language education, empowered since the CEFR was issued in 2001, due to different projects aimed at fostering quality of language education². As a result, Spanish legislation, highly influenced by European trends, has addressed quality in language education both at national and local level³.

Nevertheless, in regard attainment recognition, the CNN Foresight Think Tank (2010:6) highlights that despite the improvement experienced in European language learning thanks to the framework provided by the CEFR, “current language assessment and evaluation practices are frequently out of synchrony with the realities of learning and acquisition”. The aforementioned important disparity and the call for quality in the field of language learning and teaching are the underlying ideas that ground the need for this study.

In order to synchronize assessment and evaluation practices at EOI’s with the realities of learning and acquisition, this study will follow the Think Tank Recommended Action (2010:6) to “further develop and implement languages evaluation and assessment systems (...)”, by designing and implementing an innovative, classroom-based evaluation and assessment system for English language instruction and learning at EOI’s based on the development of student strategic competence.

In an effort to initiate contributions to improve the quality of the Spanish foreign language education at EOI’s, this research study intends to determine if strategic learning through the ELP could be a valid evaluation and assessment system to improve the quality of English language teaching at EOI’s. While not generalizable beyond the specific context and features of this study, the conclusions drawn from this action research may serve as an initial reference to other language teachers in similar contexts who want to take a leadership role in improving instructional practices.

² Particularly interesting in this regard are many projects led by The European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), which consider quality a topic of interest. In fact, a joint educational action with the European Commission on “Innovative methodologies and assessment in language learning” (ECML, 2015a) resulted on an initiative addressing the promotion of quality assurance in language education: “Relating language examinations to the common European reference levels of language proficiency: promoting quality assurance in education and facilitating mobility” (RELANG).

³ Since *Ley Orgánica 1/1990 de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo* (LOGSE) quality of education has been an ongoing concern that has even resulted in naming our most recent national educational law, *Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la mejora de la calidad educativa* (LOMCE). Language education is, therefore, also affected by quality qualifiers.

Furthermore, this evidence-based study could be of potential interest for those involved in language education policies.

2.3. The need to focus on strategic competence

Implementing an evaluation and assessment system based on strategic learning requires the active involvement of the student in the analysis and assessment of his/her own learning process and skills. As a result, the development of the student's strategic competence will be paramount to the successful implementation of strategic learning through the ELP as an evaluation and assessment system.

Despite the inclusion of strategic competence as a curricular content at EOI (CAM, 2008a: 247-252), and in EOI course syllabuses, there is no empirical evidence that sustains either that it has effectively been incorporated into teaching and learning practices at EOI, or that the ELP is an effective tool in terms of fostering language learning at EOI level⁴. Consequently, the results of this study might shed some light on an area that has received very little attention.

⁴ See the history of the ELP in the CAM in Section 4

3. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study aims at implementing strategic learning as an evaluation and assessment system by using the European Language Portfolio (ELP) as a reforming tool. Within this system framework, conferencing will be used alongside the ELP as classroom based assessment tools.

The effects of strategic learning through conferencing and the ELP on student learning will be analyzed in terms of student autonomous learning ability, acquired by the development of strategic competence, as defined by local provisions in this regard⁵. In particular, the analysis will focus on the effect on the level of development of strategic competence and the awareness of the language learning process (CAM, 2008a: Sections 3 and 2.1), motivation (Section 2.2), planning (Section 2.3), and assessment, self-assessment, and self-improvement (Section 2.8).

According to the above, the specific research questions for this study will be the following:

- a) Can strategic learning be applied as an innovative evaluation and assessment system at EOI level?
- b) Is the ELP an effective educational tool for strategic learning at EOI?
- c) Can strategic learning through conferencing and the ELP enhance language learning?
- d) What are the effects of the experience on students' strategic competence?

In the event of positive findings, proposals for future research will be developed alongside tentative research-based suggestions for changes in language teaching practice and educational policy. Furthermore, this research project intends to promote the key role of teacher leadership in improving instructional practices.

⁵ "Development of strategic competence (Towards autonomous learning)" (CAM, 2008a:247).

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. “Learning to learn” as a Key and a General Competence.

European political developments have placed “learning to learn”, one of the basic skills for success in the knowledge society (Hoskins & Fredriksson, 2008:5), as a political priority within the Lisbon 2010 Education and Training process (Hoskins & Fredriksson, 2008:7).

The CEFR (2001:131) considers that to become “a fully competent user of a language” students must acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to carry out tasks, activities and processes that satisfy the learner’s needs in a particular setting. Thus, learners will have to acquire a series of competences and abilities specified in the CEFR. General competences are among them, and include declarative knowledge (*savoir*), skills and know-how (*savoir-faire*), personality traits, attitudes, etc. (*savoir-être*), or ability to learn (CEFR, 2001: 135).

The CEFR (2001:135) also encourages the teaching /learning objectives “in terms of the development of the learner’s general competence” and highlights the role of these objectives towards the establishment or reinforcement of a plurilingual and pluricultural competence. When establishing learning objectives, traditional language teaching practice was steered by declarative knowledge (*savoir*), yet the CEFR brings procedural knowledge to the spotlight.

The ability to learn (*savoir-apprendre*) is one of the general competences the learner needs to draw upon when learning a second or foreign language: “the ability to observe and participate in new experiences and to incorporate new knowledge into existing knowledge, modifying the latter when necessary” (CEFR, 2001:106). Furthermore, “learning to learn” has been identified as a Key Competence (Hoskins & Fredriksson, 2008: 14-15)⁶, a transversal competence that is necessary for an individual to be employable and socially included (Hoskins & Fredriksson, 2008:12).

Students’ study skills include many abilities to learn. Among others, the CEFR, refers to the ability to use available materials for independent learning, to use and organize materials for self-directed learning, the awareness of one’s own strengths and weaknesses as a learner, the ability to identify one’s own needs and goals, and the ability to organize one’s own strategies and procedures to pursue these goals, in accordance with one’s own characteristics and resources (CEFR, 2001:107-108). In short, these study skills should be considered learning strategies.

⁶ According to Hoskins & Fredriksson, (2008:11), “Key competences are those competences which are quintessential necessary throughout the life for continuing employment and be included within the every-day life activities including those of civil society and decision making.”

Even though learning strategies are considered one important part of the concept *learning to learn*; yet other parts are motivation, curiosity, self-esteem and the ability to use certain learning strategies more or less well (Hoskins & Fredriksson, 2008:24).

4.1.1. *Self-study as a Methodological Approach*

Among the methodological general approaches for modern language teaching and learning, the CEFR includes self-study⁷. Learners are expected to learn a second or foreign language in one or more ways, but learning “autodidactically, by (guided) self-study, pursuing negotiated self-directed objectives⁸ and using available instructional media” (CEFR, 2001: 143).

The recognition of guidance in this approach implies the role of the teacher as an adviser or a coach who, as a professional language educator, can help the student in the development of his/her strategic competence. In order to establish self-directed learning objectives, a negotiation between the teacher and the student will be needed in which the teacher’s professional advice will be shared upon evaluation to help the student not only to determine his/her learning goals and to provide him/her with the appropriate available instructional media, but also to plan the activation or teaching/learning of strategies that, according to the student’s profile, will best suit his/her needs, and will eventually lead the student to achieve those goals⁹.

4.1.2. *Partnerships for Learning*

The role of the teacher, therefore, will be paramount, yet useless without the student’s cooperation and the support of educational authorities. There is no doubt that it will be imperative to create “partnerships for learning” (CEFR: 2001:140). Nevertheless, in this study, we will focus on the basic partnership for learning, the one that starts in the classroom, which will be based on a bilateral teacher-student agreement intended to enhance proactive learning on the part of the student, and avoid a prescriptive approach from the teacher, with a common goal of making English learning happen.

⁷ Self-study will be used alternatively in this study as a synonym for autonomous learning, or self-directed learning.

⁸ Dickinson (1987: 135) believes “successful self-instruction involves clear specification of needs in terms of achievable objectives”.

⁹ According to Graddol (2006:72), in a world where lock step education is ending, learning approaches which allow more personalized learning seem to be given way. These are trends that “stress further the need for learner autonomy and diversity of learning materials”.

Even though most learners “learn reactively, following the instructions and carrying out the activities prescribed for them by teachers and textbooks” (CEFR, 2001: 141), this learning partnership sets aim to actively engage learners in “taking initiatives to plan, structure and execute their own learning processes” (CEFR, 2001: 141); in other words, it calls for students to take responsibility for their learning.

As for teachers, the partnership implies monitoring student progress, and finding ways of recognizing, analyzing and overcoming student learning problems, as well as developing their learning abilities. This involves a clear understanding of learning processes, which may be an “unconscious product of experience” CEFR (2001:141). However, the CEFR (2001:141) also acknowledges the proper contribution to the partnership for learning from educational researchers and teacher trainers is an understanding of the learning processes based on “a clearly formulated product of theoretical reflection”¹⁰. Considering this, I believe the contribution of the EOI Teacher as a Reflective Practitioner will be an asset to the partnership for learning because it will entail both the teacher and the educational researcher contribution.

4.2. Strategic learning

There is an apparent growth of interest in the promotion of autonomy in language learning (Everhard, 2015:8), despite Little already suggested in 2009 that the development of learner autonomy should be a priority (2009:1). The CEFR (2001:141) asserts that “autonomous learning can be promoted if learning *to learn* is regarded as an integral part of language learning, so that learners become increasingly aware of the way they learn, the options open to them, and the options that best suit them”. How can we make this happen at EOI? I believe *learning to learn* can be approached through strategic learning as an integrative, evaluative and assessment system.

For the negotiation as a methodological approach mentioned above (see 1.1.) in a partnership for learning (see 1.2.) to take pace, it is necessary to establish a viable organizational framework for school settings that can integrate evaluation and evaluative thinking into collaborative decision-making. In this regard, strategic learning will be implemented at EOI level to provide a viable system in this RP. In order to understand strategic learning, it is necessary to introduce the idea of ELT as a service.

¹⁰ In my opinion, the minute-to-minute teacher decisions about classroom activities are influenced by assimilated theoretical reflection.

4.2.1. ELT as a service: The application of business management and marketing models to the administration of educational programs.

Walker (2000:3) asserts that “the application of business management and marketing models to the administration of educational programs (Barlow, 1994; Greenwood & Gaunt, 1994) has been a discernible trend in recent times”. To evidence how the idea of effectively transferring general management and administrative theory to an educational has gained wider acceptance in ELT circles he lists associations, newsletters, textbooks, or the gradual appearance of articles in ELT Journals “written from a management or quasi-management perspective”.

This is evident in Graddol’s influential idea that a global revolution in education has been triggered by world-wide trends that have caused educational systems to be in a state of rapid change, which requires “institutionalizing flexibility, creativity, and innovation, and the management skills required to generate and cope with constant change” (Graddol, 2006: 70). Furthermore, he claims (2006: 96-97) a “new orthodoxy” has emerged in English teaching, (...), “leading to a need for great flexibility in all aspects of ELT services”.

It is not incumbent upon this study to discuss the controversial idea of applying business management and marketing models to the administration of educational programs by which students and parents can be regarded “as customers or clients” (Walker, 2014:166). Whereas public teachers may express negative feelings and attitudes towards the concept of marketing (Oplatka, 2006:6, as cited in Walker, 2014: 165), others could take the opportunity to impose anti-humanistic paradigms upon the educational public sector, as an excuse to achieve quality of education¹¹.

Nevertheless, some positive aspects of these models can be adapted to an educational humanistic paradigm¹². Strategic learning, as an organizational tool to move from learning to action will be, therefore, attuned in this RP to ensure quality of education is aimed without disregarding education as a social (not business) objective and product, so as to not to forget we aim at educating citizens¹³.

¹¹ As far as this is concerned, De Puelles (2000:32-33) criticizes the educational authorities’ discourse in regards quality of education since “the neoliberal discourse towards total quality is in reality one of the preludes to a transformation of a society of citizens into a society of clients and consumers”.

¹² For example, management skills are instrumental to organize students’ data, or plan curricular differentiated lessons in heterogeneous contexts.

¹³ Management skills will be very useful when establishing strategic learning as an integral part of students’ learning at EOI. Leading students towards plausible goal setting or self-assessment also involves specific interpersonal skills that should come along the managerial ones.

4.2.2. Strategic Learning as a transformational system for organizations

Lynn (2012: 2) states strategic learning has been defined in many ways. As a concept, “strategic learning aims to generate learning in support of future strategic initiatives that will, in turn, foster knowledge asymmetries that can lead to differences in organizational performance” (Thomas, Watts Sussman & Henderson , 2001:331). For Lynn (2012:2), strategic learning is an intra-organizational ecological process that integrates learning and processes into organizations. As a practice, strategic learning is an approach of evaluators and organizations undertaking evaluation, a “tool for real time improvements as strategies are developed” (Patton, 2011).

As a concept and as a practice, “strategic learning is perhaps best brought together by action research, which solves a problem using a cyclical process that moves between the pursuit of change through action, and new understanding through research (Dick, 1999)” (Lynn, 2012: 2). This is the methodological approach this study will take (see 5.).

Lynn (2012: 2) highlights two core elements featuring most definitions of strategic learning. On the one hand, learning is present since the systematic use of data will be used for continuous improvement and for collective interpretation of new information. On the other hand, one must be strategic, so the collective interpretation of information will be applied to strategy design.

All in all, strategic learning implies creating a culture that emphasizes learning. The presence of an embedded and sustained learning culture is an organizational characteristic that is important in the long term, and will make strategic learning both easier and more productive (Williams, 2014:7). I believe this learning culture can be created in the classroom context, and transformational classroom practices will eventually affect larger educational organizational contexts.

The Center for Evaluation Innovation (2014) asserts that “strategic learning means using evaluation to help organizations or groups learn quickly from their work so they can learn from and adapt their strategies”. Furthermore, “it means integrating evaluation and evaluative thinking into strategic decision making and bringing timely data to the table for reflection and use”. Accordingly, I can apply strategic learning to the partnership for learning I have created in my classroom, “making evaluation a part of the intervention—embedding it so that it influences the process” (The Center for Evaluation Innovation, 2014). Although in agreement with this institution that strategic learning has tremendous potential, it is also important to remember that improving quality in language education does not only involve the analysis of quantitative data. As a result, differences in organizational performance (Thomas, Watts-Sussman & Henderson, 2001:331) resulted from

strategic learning will aim here at improving language learning quality gauged in terms of “successful learning” (Doyle, 2013: 246).

4.2.3. Successful learning

Doyle (2013) investigates “successful learning” in Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) settings through analyzing what makes learners want to learn and how they perceived the value of the processes and outcomes of learning. This latter idea regarding students’ perceptions about learning processes and outcomes is the one we want to adopt here as an equivalent for successful learning.

The innovative approach to evaluation and assessment shaped by strategic learning presented in this study will have an effect on student learning that is object of research. Successful or unsuccessful learning will be considered through students’ perceptions.

4.2.4. Strategic Learning Skills, Self-regulated Learning, and Learning Strategies

Nancy (2010) links strategic learning skills to metacognition, which is also in connection with self-regulated learning. Following Kormos & Csizér’s description of self-regulation (2013: 279), student self-regulation is a process in which students organize and manage their learning, including learners’ control over their thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and the learning environment. Self-regulation is manifested in practice “in the active monitoring and regulation of a number of different learning processes, e.g. the setting of, and orientation towards, learning goals; the strategies used to achieve goals; the management of resources; the effort exerted; reactions to external feedback; the products produced” (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006:199). It can be argued that self-regulated learning skills can be equaled to some self-study skills mentioned in the CEFR (2001: 107-108) required for self-directed learning, which were highlighted in 4.1.1.¹⁴

Having underlined that those study skills are learning strategies, an important part of the concept “learning to learn” (Hoskins & Frediksson, 2008:24), it is paramount to briefly identify strategic learning skills within the theoretical framework of learning strategies.

¹⁴ Eurydice (2002:16) highlights the importance drawn to “metacognitive competence”, and (Hoskins & Frediksson, 2008:14) claim Eurydice acknowledges several concepts currently discussed in many countries can be regarded as parts of “learning to learn.”

Above all, it is important to consider Moreneo's conceptual distinction between learning techniques and strategies: Techniques can be used in a mechanical (unconscious) way, and strategies are consciously and intentionally used (Moreneo, 1999: 11-12). Whereas Oxford (1990:8) regards learning strategies as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations", she defines language learning strategies as "actions taken by second and foreign language learners to control and improve their own learning", Oxford (1990: ix). Some metacognitive strategies included in this author's taxonomy (Oxford, 1990: 18-21) will be strategic skills (arranging and planning learning and learning evaluation).

4.3. "Learning to learn" at EOI's

The institution in which action research took place is a Spanish public language school, commonly known as EOI, in *Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid (CAM)*¹⁵. "Learning to learn" was addressed in EOI's in CAM as developing strategic competence when CAM issued its most recent provisions for curriculum design¹⁶. The group profile will lead us to focus on strategic competence for *Avanzado 2* (CAM, 2008a: 247-252), inspired in Van Ek & Trim (2001: 110-114), who had previously advocated for "learning to learn" to be incorporated into the *Vantage* objective "through the form and manner of presentation and practice of this content or, indeed, through the individual's experience of the language" (Van Ek & Trim, 2001:111). For these authors, "learning to learn" involved the objective of "stimulating student awareness of their learning process itself and increasing their learning potential" (Van Ek & Trim, 2001:110).

Disregarding learning strategies are just one part of "learning to learn", the CAM legislator presents strategic competence as an umbrella term under which communication strategies and strategies concerning the learning process find a place. Focusing on the second type of strategies (2008a: 249-251), it can be argued that CAM regards as learning strategies some parts of "learning to learn" that are not by European language policies (Hoskins & Frediksson, 2008:24), such as the consideration of the student's affective filter (motivation, anxiety, or frustration).

Keeping the above in mind, this RP will stick to legal Spanish mandates and will focus on the development of strategic competence, considering "strategies concerning the learning process" (CAM, 2008a: 249-251), that will take place when strategic learning is implemented as an

¹⁵ EOI's as educational institutions will be explained in detailed in Section 6.2.1.

¹⁶ The development of strategic competence is also addressed for CAM distance English language education (That's English). One of the purposes of the weekly non mandatory meetings with students the program encompasses is to "orientate students in techniques and strategies that facilitate English language learning, as well as anticipating possible difficulties students may encounter in order to help students overcome them." (2008c:20)

evaluation and assessment system by means of conferencing and the European Language Portfolio as classroom based assessment tools.

4.4.Evaluation and Assessment at EOI's

National regulations (RD 1629/2006: 472-473) define assessment criteria by evidencing ability of skills, whereas assessment characteristics and types are established by local provisions (CAM, 2008b). Up to five types of assessment are regarded, but only “diagnostic” and “progress assessments”, of formative nature, are intended to orientate students, considering the knowledge acquired, their difficulties, and the strategies that can help them enhance their learning (CAM, 2008b:30). Moreover, the teacher may use collected data to develop an intervention plan if necessary, taking into account student learning styles, identified in diagnostic assessments. Progress assessments will enable the teacher “to advise the student about self-assessment possibilities” (CAM, 2008b:31). Since a positive effect of self-assessment is that “...students take an active part as assessors of their own progress and their linguistic ability improvement” (Ducasse, 2004:[2]), self-assessment will be encouraged in different stages of the action research plan.

The legal CAM document refers to those five types of assessments with the word *evaluación*; yet in this project, they will be named assessments, since “evaluation” will be used here as a broad term “to measure the effectiveness of a particular educational route, approach, method or programme (...)” (Evergard, 2015:15), as well as the process of looking at all different factors that influence the learning process (Harris & McCann, 1994 in Lennon, n.d.).

Considering ELT as a service, assessment is one of the fundamental criteria against which quality can be assessed, one of the “key focus areas in any quality assurance system that seeks to assess the quality of language education provision” (Rossner, 2009:124). Since no legal provisions indicate formative assessment tools, in this RP two classroom based assessment tools will be implemented: student-teacher conferences, and the ELP.

EOI conferences are commonly known as *tutorías*, but they are formally called *horas de atención al alumnado*. Trullás Soler (2013:1-20) explored the use of conferences as a way to develop “learning to learn” in the German classroom, for which student portfolios were used to evidence progress, as well as a learning process assessment tool. A collaborative approach was also adopted since the student took assessment responsibilities (Trullás Soler , 2013:2); plus, the teacher would also provide students help as an expert (2013:4), and orientate the student (2013: 7). In this RP, conferences will also be used as assessment tools.

4.5. The European Language Portfolio (ELP)

The importance of the ELP deserves a different section. It is the CEFR companion piece (Little, 2009: 2); according to this author, it was conceived partly to foster learner autonomy (Council of Europe, 2006:9).

The ELP has three distinctive functions: it is a tool for Europe (political function) to promote plurilingualism through the development of intercultural awareness, and has an important pedagogical function that needs to be underlined: The ELP “is promoted as a viable tool to introduce and manage change, to clarify standards, to measure outcome and to foster quality” (Council of Europe, 2004:5). This idea is consistent with that of strategic learning as a system to introduce reform and learning enhancement. For this reason, it can be argued the ELP is a reforming tool that introduces learning innovation in the classroom.

Kohonen & Wethoff (1999: [28]) acknowledge two functions of portfolios, what in ELP terms can be named “the reporting function” and “the pedagogical function” (Kohonen & Wethoff. 1999: [28]) (see Table below). These authors distinguish two sub-functions: portfolios as instruments to elicit learning activities in the cognitive domain, and the metacognitive function, or activities that are thought to benefit “learning to learn” and learner autonomy, such as self-observation, and reflection on experience (Kohonen & Wethoff. 1999: [28]).

Table 4.1: Two functions of portfolios

Product-oriented	Process-oriented
• Reporting	• Pedagogical
• Assessment tool	• Learning tool
• Qualifying	• Motivating
• Certification	• Experiences
• Conclusive forcé	• Potential learning opportunity
• “Hard pages”	• “Soft pages”

Source: From Kohonen & Wethoff. 1999: [28])

In this study, we are interested in both functions of portfolios. The product-oriented will be represented by the PEL as an assessment tool, and a process-oriented function will be executed by the PEL as a learning tool that supports motivation, and fosters learner autonomy.

As regards the PEL pedagogical function, the PEL has three parts: the *Passport*, the *Biography* and the *Dossier*; however, Palacios (2006:167) believes the *Biography* is the most meaningful, useful component of the ELP, reflecting the “learning to learn” philosophy.

The Agency for European Educational Programmes started developing the ELP in Spain in 2003. A National Committee for the development of a European Language Portfolio (ELP) was established in Spain to develop the ELP, following the recommendations of the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe. The National Committee was informed by a team of specialists in language teaching and learning that were commissioned to design of an ELP for four age groups and different educational levels. The first three models were validated on November 7, 2003 by the Council of Europe and targeted students aged 3-7, 8-12 and 12-18 years. The latter was developed for Secondary and High School students. The model for adults was presented and validated in 2004 and is designed for students 16 years old and older (OAPPE, 2014)

CAM local provisions to regulate distance English language education (That’s English) implicitly acknowledged the PEL Passport since “didactic departments may consider students’ claimed language competence in their PEL” (CAM, 2008c:5).

Finally, Hughes (2007: 175) believes the ELP may be seen as an instrument that promotes “certain levels of organic quality improvement with inherent mechanisms in place to enhance intrinsic motivation, self-assessment and continued progress in foreign languages”; however, few teachers dare to engage in the use of ELP without specific training (Hasselgreen, Carlsen & Helness, 2004:4). Despite the difficulties, a few voluntary EOI teachers started the implementation of PEL at EOI’s in CAM as early as 2006-2007, yet the annual reports from the experiences at that time are not available at CAM. One of the most active schools experiencing the PEL has been EOI *San Sebastián de los Reyes*.

Even though there was some initial support from local authorities, the implementation of the PEL at EOI level does currently not seem to be encouraged since professional efforts towards the implementation of PEL are not rewarded¹⁷. The amount of EOI’s involved with the ELP has decreased, and it is currently limited to two EOI’s (*San Sebastián de los Reyes* and *Leganés*)¹⁸:

¹⁷ CAM does provide a statement to acknowledge the implementation of the PEL.

¹⁸ I am the only EOI teacher involved in the PEL project at my site.

Table 4.2: Implementation of PEL at EOI level in CAM since 2011-12

YEAR	ADULTS		
	EOI'S	Teachers	Students
2013-2014	2	43	3516
2012-2013	2	32	2321
2011-2012	3	23	300

Source: CAM (2015) Subdirección General de Formación del Profesorado. Dirección General de Mejora de la Calidad de la Enseñanza

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1. The research paradigm

A naturalistic paradigm has been chosen for this research project. In particular, a classroom based research approach has been selected so as to allow a Reflective EOI Practitioner to conduct action research, aiming at implementing, monitoring and evaluating an innovative approach¹⁹. Inductive research will be guided by an action research plan that will unfold in six stages (See Appendix 1).

5.1.1. Classroom based research

Considering the efficiency of evaluation techniques as a key topic for classroom research (Van Lier, 1988:27), it seems obvious to consider action research as an activity for practicing teachers (Wallace, 1998: 17). Additionally, action research is regarded as a pedagogical strategy that can cause change and improvement in teaching (Hughes, 2007: 229-230). Accordingly, this project expects to have a direct effect on students in the classroom at EOI level.

5.1.2. Action research to implement, monitor, and evaluate an innovative approach.

Noffke &Somekh (2005:89) point out that “action research directly addresses the problem of the division between theory and practice”. In this study, this division corresponds to the lack of synchronization between current language assessment and evaluation practices and the realities of learning and acquisition (CNN Foresight Think Tank, 2010:6), previously highlighted in 2.2., so as to justify this RP.

Accordingly, action research will be used to integrate the development of practice with the construction of research knowledge in a cyclical process (Noffke &Somekh, 2005:89) by setting up and implementing an evaluation and assessment system framework that integrates systematic data collection, analysis, and assessment within a cycle of inquiry (See Appendix 2). Following Johnson’s definition of action research, it will be “characterized by spiraling cycles of problem identification, systematic data collection, reflection, analysis, data-driven action taken, and, finally, problem redefinition” (Johnson, 1993: 1, as cited in Freebody, 2003:86).

¹⁹ Madrid (n.d.: Section 2.7) points out that there is a growing move in the ELT profession towards the naturalistic paradigm, “as evidenced by the increasing popularity of types of research such as action research (...)”

The integrative feature of action research (Martin Parrot, 1996:3) will make the implementation of strategic learning as an evaluation and assessment system possible by using classroom based assessment tools, such as the ELP and conferencing. Three cycles of conferences (CC, hereafter) will be established for student-teacher meetings, according to the research stages planned for this project, to which I referred above (Appendix 1).

Finally, considering the reasons Madrid (n.d.) lists to justify action research, it can be argued that action research will be undertaken in this study to monitor and evaluate the innovative approach to foreign language learning at EOI's proposed for this research project: strategic learning through the ELP, being the driving force to conduct action "an impetus for change/innovation through deepening the participants' understanding of social processes and developing strategies to bring about improvement" (Noffke & Somekh, 2005:91).

5.1.3. The EOI teacher as a Reflective Practitioner

Action research will provide the grounds for reflective teaching²⁰. In this study reflective teaching is rooted on the willingness of some language teachers at EOI to put everything to the test in order to make sure we continue to learn even as we teach, in line with Parrot's understanding of action research (1996:3). Furthermore, it intends to portray Schön's "Reflective Practitioner" (1983, 1987, 1990) and his influential concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983:49), as core attributes of expert professional practice (Noffke & Somekh, 2005: 90).

In the US setting, the latter ideas have even been adopted as a whole, as a teaching standard that shapes accomplished teachers in some educational areas, as it can be drawn from the teaching standard "Teacher as Learner and Reflective Practitioner", adopted by the US National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 2012: 77-79), an organization committed to basic reform in education²¹.

Adapting this teaching standard to the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in Spain, action research will lead me, as EOI teacher, to a continuous process of professional inquiry and reflection²², becoming an ideal channel to represent my vision of teaching

²⁰ Noffke & Somekh (2005:90) point out that action research is closely linked by many writers with the concept of "reflective practice". They also assert that action researchers necessarily engage in reflective practice.

²¹ In the European setting, teacher reflection is acknowledged in *The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (Newby e.al. 2007), which was subtitled as "a reflection tool for language teacher education"; however, European principles for teacher competences and qualifications (2009) do not mention teacher reflection. Instead, common principles vaguely refer to teachers as "highly qualified" (2009:2), whereas nothing specific is mentioned under key competences (2009:2-3), giving willing member states the opportunity to include teacher reflection as an indicator of quality teaching standards in their state policies.

²² Action research can be considered a sub-area of inquiry, which could also be non-data based (Wallace, 1998:15).

as a long-life learning process. Moreover, this research methodology will help me reinvigorate my practice by reflecting on my profession to ensure that I teach “with effectiveness and dignity” (NBPTS, 2010:72)²³

5.2 The research tools

Instruction will be driven by the data analysis resulted from a cycle of inquiry (see Appendix 2). The cycle of inquiry will ensure that assessment data is collected, analyzed, assessed, and recycled to drive and adapt customized instruction.

Open interviews will be needed when conferencing with students, as the best way to approach strategic learning collaboratively. For this reason, data has to be interpreted *in situ*²⁴. The conference outcome will be recorded in Conference Sheets (5.2.1.)²⁵.

5.2.1. Conference Sheets

Two conference sheets were created in support of teacher-student meetings to collect and interpret quantitative data in the first and the second cycles of inquiry.

The first conference sheet was designed to introduce and monitor the cyclical strategic learning framework in which the teacher is introduced as a professional adviser²⁶, a facilitator who provides learning tools according to their suitability to students’ learning needs, while the student takes responsibility of his/her language learning (See Appendix 3).

What is more, Conference Sheet #1 will be used as a tool to build up trust and rivet student interest since EOI students will receive individual attention. In this regard, specific previously selected “issues to tackle in the first meeting” will gather personal data relevant to monitor the student’s affective filter (point 3, and 7) and will depict teacher availability to help (5, 6) in hopes of enhancing student motivation.

In addition, Conference Sheet #1 will act as a checklist to ensure the teacher-researcher leads a metalinguistic interaction with the student, -including reflection, or discussion-, in order to

²³ In this regard, Wallace (1998:17) considers that developing teachers’ expertise by reflecting on their practice is natural and appropriate, and sees action research as a strategy for professional development (1998:4).

²⁴ To limit the extension of this RP, I decided not to tape record the interviews.

²⁵ Since English was the only language used in and out of class in the learning community we created, I decided to hold conferences in English and write all research and instructional tools in English too, in order to be consistent with the immersion teaching and learning environment I created.

²⁶ “Coaching” might be considered a more trendy term. Indeed, these conferences can be somewhat interpreted as “counselling sessions” in line with what Harris & McCann (1994: 87) propose for assessment discussion.

assess the student's level of development of strategic competence, or his-her awareness of the learning process. "Issues to tackle in the first meeting" will include reflection on learning styles and strategies to optimize learning preferences (1, 2), and reviewing and providing learning resources (4).

Finally, Conference Sheet #1 will serve as a catalyst to writing and signing a PEL Learning Contract (Council of Europe, 2011:22), as a physical evidence of collaborative commitment to student learning (see Appendix 4).

Nevertheless, the second conference sheet, in Appendix 5, brings self-assessment to focus, a way acknowledged by local regulations to assess strategic competence CAM (2008a: 252). Conference Sheet #2 will collect qualitative data by reviewing the student's learning contract signed in the first conference, combined with the analysis of quantitative records for the second trimester (practice test results). All in all, Conference Sheet #2 can be regarded as a progress questionnaire to make a global assessment of student progress (Harris & McCann, 1994:86), which opens up the door to another session of strategic planning.

The idea that self-assessments "can be systematically integrated into an overall assessment program" by looking back and reviewing students' own progress over a period of time (Harris & McCann, 1994:80) is consistent with the combined use of different kind of data for an evaluative analysis oriented towards goal setting through the ELP²⁷.

5.2.2. End of the Year Questionnaire

After completing the Third CC (Stage 4 in my Research Plan; see Appendix 1), students will complete The "End of the year questionnaire" (questionnaire, hereafter), which will aim at obtaining data to gauge the effects of the whole innovative system from the student's end since "the quality and nature of learning experiences have to be understood from the learner's perspective" Coyle (2013: 245). Consequently, students' answers to this research tool will be paramount to answer the research questions posed; hence, its results will be the sole object of analysis in this study.

The questionnaire will consist of five sets of questions distributed in "sections" (see Appendix 6). Sets of questions were developed around different constructs which correspond to

²⁷ Lennon's suggestion in terms of collecting and gathering data to evidence progress in a "folder of records" (Lennon, n.d.: Section 4.4.) can be represented by the way goal setting, learning reflection, or student commitment are recorded in the *Biography* and the *Dossier* in the ELP.

specific types of strategies described as adequate to develop strategic competence for *Avanzado 2* in Appendix 2 to the *Decreto 98/2008 (Consejo de Gobierno CAM, 2008a: 247-252)*.

Considering the strategies this RP addresses belong to the ones named “Strategies related to the Learning Process” by the legislator (CAM, 2008a: 249), the research constructs have been developed according to legal provisions. Appendix 7 shows the rationale followed for questionnaire development.

Quantitative data will be collected in Sections 1-5 around a statement that has been written to be understood by students. Section 5, with only one item, will also include two open-ended questions to collect qualitative data.

The innovative experience described in this study involves students meeting with their teacher to analyze quantitative or/and qualitative data, and using the ELP Biography and Dossier for strategic learning as a springboard for collaborative reflection and goal setting. If students are asked about this experience in a questionnaire, the questions needed to be posed so as to be easily understood. As a result, I decided to write a simple open-ended statement combining the meeting (conferencing) and the actions taken in its course (using the ELP as a tool): “Conferencing with my teacher and using the ELP has helped me...”, allowing students to choose between a 1-5 range to make the statement negative or positive depending on the scale number given. Additionally, language of the questionnaire was simplified to improve reading comprehension²⁸.

5.3 Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis will be performed according to the guidelines provided by Baumfield e.al. (2008: 101-116) who suggest reflection should be focused on the process of the research, as well as the content of the results, and provide specific questions to guide teacher’s reflection (2008: 101).

Quantitative data collected via the questionnaire will be transferred to a database in Excel, and later on processed, and deployed through IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 22), a statistical package for quantitative analysis²⁹. First of all, the Cronbach Alpha of blocks A, B, C, D will be first calculated to check for internal consistency. The mean score and the standard deviation will also be calculated. Tables produced will be used to gauge the effect of the implementation of the evaluation and assessment system at the end of the process.

²⁸ For instance, in “to be aware of my weak areas to be able to strengthen them” (Section 2, Question 4), “strengthen” was replaced by “build up on”.

²⁹ Despite Baumfield e.al. (2008: 109) consider Excel the best place to construct a database from the answers given to questionnaires because it is easier to use than statistical packages and produces graphs quickly and effectively, I opted for a more challenging and professional database constructor.

Collection of qualitative data will take place at each conference cycle (through Conference Sheets in the first two cycles of conferences, and through Section 5 of the End-of-the-year questionnaire, as shown in Appendix 7. The data provided from this latter will be tabled and categorized according to frequently used words by students.

6. STUDY

6.1. Data collection

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, the research action plan developed for this RP (see Appendix 1) unfolded in different stages of action in which various sorts of qualitative and quantitative data were collected and sometimes analyzed and interpreted *in situ* (reflection took place during student-teacher conferences, while collecting data).

The ELP was introduced as a physical folder with three sections, and each section proved itself valuable as long as students began to realize their purpose. It can be argued that students learned about the ELP “by discovery”.³⁰ Forms from different validated PEL’s to find about students’ language background, learning styles, experiences, or preferences were used to develop a *Biography*³¹ that was suitable for my students’ idiosyncrasy (See Appendices 8 and 9).

In order to establish a starting point in terms of assessment, in Stage 1 information was collected in relation to student proficiency. On the one hand, data corresponding to formal testing results from the previous school year were charted for orientation³². In addition, a diagnostic/entry test generated more recent data. Finally, I tried to use the “can do statements” provided by the course materials, but they proved useless³³, so I used the more simplified checklists for B2 level from the Swiss version of the ELP (Schneider & North, 2000), in Little & Perclová (2002: Appendix 2)³⁴. All in all, these three assessment resources as well as our PEL customized *Biography* served as a springboard for the implementation of strategic learning as an evaluation and assessment system in a First CC, held in December 2014.

Reading and listening skills were assessed through the Entry Test available for the course material, by Oxeden & Latham-Koenig (2010). Grammar and Vocabulary were also included in the Entry Test as independent language aspects to be assessed. Assessing speaking was carried out through ongoing informal observation during many activities included in the lesson plan for the first two weeks of school. Finally, I decided to design an activity for writing that would encourage written interaction in a relaxed manner thanks to the tone set up by the prompt. This would enable

³⁰ This can as well be interpreted as the foreign language teacher displaying her competence to teach students to learn by discovery (Madrid (2005:95).

³¹ Even though students started their *Passport*, I soon stopped this part of the ELP since it was not relevant for the purpose of this study.

³² Due to a confidentiality agreement with the EOI in which this RP was conducted, this information cannot be shown as an appendix.

³³ The course materials are designed to review framework level B2.2., and then cover C 1 level. It did not make sense to show students statements for self-assessment that for the majority were “cannot do statements”.

³⁴ These self-assessment checklists also include the possibility of turning “can do statements” into prioritized learning objectives. As Goullier (2006:78) puts it, ELP checklists also have the role of teaching pupils to set themselves language learning goals, an essential factor in the development of learning autonomy.

the researcher not only to obtain a piece of work to assess current students' writing ability but also gather personal data about them that could be included in the ELP *Biography* of each student involved in the RP as well as starting the *Dossier*. Thus, "A letter to your teacher" (See Appendix 10) became an unexpected extra ice-breaker at the beginning of the school year that prompted students to write a personal letter to their new teacher, who had previously set up an informal laid back tone that encouraged openness from the student's part. A supportive relationship was hence established to enable a "partnership for learning" (CEFR, 2001:141).

In Stage 2, strategic learning was introduced. Having identified grammar and vocabulary structures as general areas in need of growth³⁵, vocabulary and grammar data were pulled out of the diagnostic tests and addressed strategically in a special form created for this purpose (See Appendix 11). In this form, right answers were acknowledged and wrong answers were correlated with different Grammar and Vocabulary constructs created for strategic planning. For example, the informant in Appendix 11 missed Grammar Test questions Nr. 13, 15, and 23, which were dealing with the use of linkers. What is more, this informant also missed Nr. 12 and 24, leading to the conclusion that some curricular content from previous levels (the use of articles) had not been consolidated. As a result, improving the use of these two elements of the curricular content was targeted in this informant's conference as a learning goal, after a student-teacher semi-structured discussion led by a conference sheet to target specific aims and reflect on students' learning and commitment (see Appendix 3).

Gathering, analyzing, and recycling data to identify strengths and areas of growth, as well as to establish short/long term reachable, learning goals for students were, consequently, limited by the basis formal testing provided for strategic learning. However, this also intended to connect with students in the First CC by using something to which they were used (formal testing results), whereas a new approach to learning was implemented.

This grey boundary was clearly reflected in some learning contracts, introduced as conference tools, which included vague well-known words such as "revise grammar" that were, however, described in terms of direct and/or indirect learning strategies. To illustrate this, in the conference with the informant whose learning contract can be seen in Appendix 12, it was discussed how this student was lacking a solid grammar foundation that was impeding her fluent communication. The informant believed she had to review grammar from previous years. I agreed, and I respected her choice when selecting the best way to "review", yet she was advised (given an action strategy) to write two grammar structures to review on a sticky note on her desk, and then change the note and its two structures two weeks later so as not to feel overwhelmed. According to

³⁵ Speaking was another general area of concern identified by most of students; therefore, I decided to address that area strategically in the third trimester yet providing intense general instruction by prioritizing speaking reinforcement in my lesson planning.

Oxford (1990:18-21), this can be considered an indirect, metacognitive strategy to arrange, plan, and evaluate learning, as well as an affective strategy to reduce the informant's anxiety³⁶.

After evaluating students' reactions to conferencing and strategic learning, I considered the drawbacks I found in the First CC³⁷, which will be explained below, and made modifications for improvement. In the implementation of the Second CC (Stage 3 of the action research plan), action strategies were agreed by reviewing the learning contracts that had been signed in the First CC through self-assessment (see Appendix 13). After self-reflection on student commitment and successful learning, new performance data from formal testing³⁸ was brought to the student's attention, and strategic planning took place again by prioritizing students' skills in need of improvement (see Appendix 5, pg.2). Afterwards, action strategies were suggested and the ones both parties agreed on were added as new clauses to the learning contract (See Appendix 14).

Finally, the questionnaire was provided to students in two class dates; however, I had to set up a make-up day for a few students who did not come to class on those days, and two students reported data on the phone.

6.1.1. Setbacks collecting data

Sharing with my students my initial idea of holding our meetings during our student hours (*horas de atención al alumnado*), or after class hours did not have the effect I had expected. Two major drawbacks were identified as the reasons for this.

The most important setback was the lack of time. I had initially set up conferences for 10-15 minutes, as I used to do in the US with my students, but I did not consider the fact that my EOI students had never been exposed to personalized learning through a portfolio. As a consequence, the lack of awareness of why we were meeting with their portfolio on top of the table required a detailed explanation of the process I had not considered as conference time.

Furthermore, according to the classroom procedures I created at the beginning of the year, I conducted my conferences in English because that was the only language I had used to communicate with my students in class or out of class³⁹. Communication in English required a

³⁶ In other words, the teacher taught the student a strategy to monitor her affective filter.

³⁷ I jotted down some ideas after the First CC to make sure appropriate modifications were done to the Second CC.

³⁸ *Avanzado 2* students took a *Certificado* Exam Practice Test in March.

³⁹ As an extension of the English classroom, I created a virtual community via Edmodo in which a fluid communication in English took place. Building up this community also helped to develop a teacher-student special bond.

modification in my discourse that also took time, including paraphrasing, the explanation of specific words, or even providing the definition of some concepts such as “achievement”⁴⁰.

Secondly, I found I had no physical space to hold conferences with my students since the EOI where I work is located in a High School whose building is shared between both educational institutions. The EOI staff room lacked privacy for such meetings, and classrooms were available for only 15 minutes before EOI classes started on Tuesday and Thursday, and for 75 minutes on Monday and Wednesday, not providing many meeting opportunities to my Tue./Thu. students. Plus, meeting rooms at High School were not available for EOI teachers during non EOI times.

On the other hand, after school did not allow many appointments. Cleaning up the classroom, clearing my desk, putting away my laptop, or organizing paperwork took all the time left between the end of classes on Mo./Wed. (9:15 pm) and shutting down the building at 10:00 pm, or left barely an hour on Tue./Thu.

As a consequence of these two major drawbacks, data collection procedures had to be modified for the Second CC. If interviews with students required the teacher to lead and encourage self-reflection about learning while conferencing with the student, reflection was delegated to an easy to follow, student-centered form that could replace the teacher’s direct interaction (See Appendix 5). The quantitative data collected in the Entry Test was this time replaced by the one generated by a Practice *Certificado Avanzado* Exam.

6.2. Educational context

6.2.1. Institution general description: Teaching English at EOI

Spanish public language schools for non-compulsory education are known as *Escuela Oficial de Idiomas* (EOI’s). EOI’s are considered under “special” learning plans (*enseñanzas de régimen especial*)⁴¹ by Spanish educational provisions.

EOI basic educational policies are set through national guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport (*Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Deporte, MECD*)⁴²; yet Spanish Autonomous Communities, which have co-jurisdiction in education in the area within their

⁴⁰ A positive aspect of choosing the L2 as a language for conferencing is that the risk of excessive intrusion of a reflection process in L1 into modern language courses, pointed out by Goullier (2006:81), can be reduced.

⁴¹ We will resort to Spanish only when needed due to the technicality of the term. Also, we will use the names of legal texts in Spanish for practical purposes.

⁴² *Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la mejora de la calidad educativa*, LOMCE, (MECD, 2013) has introduced the most recent modifications to previous regulations in *Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación*, LOE, (MEC, 2006).

boundaries, are entitled to develop what is commonly known as “the basic norm”. As a result, course syllabuses in EOI’s will be based on curricula developed by Autonomous Communities.

The current EOI master plan for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the Autonomous Community of Madrid (*Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid, CAM*), where the action research for this Master’s final project was undertaken, establishes six school years of instruction to build the skills needed to achieve a B2 level, as described by the CEFR. This B2 level will be officially certified to those students who pass a summative, achievement test at the end of 6th year at EOI, what is known as *Avanzado 2*⁴³. Certification will grant students’ linguistic performance at “Vantage” level (CEFR, 2001:23)⁴⁴.

This teaching context is, therefore, highly influenced by the CEFR (2001) which adopts a student, task-oriented approach (CEFR, 2001: 9-16). The CEFR approach is reflected in national and local legislation regulating learning and teaching at EOI’s, including the specific Course Syllabus adopted by each EOI.

6.2.2. Group profile

The target group consists of mainly *Avanzado 2* students regularly attending evening English classes at EOI in a small town in northern Madrid. Three *Intermedio 1* students showed interest in the project and joined the informants.

The range in age of the target group is between 17 and 60. Most of them have or are in the process of obtaining a university degree, but we also find vocational learners and a few students with just compulsory education as educational background. The heterogeneity of EOI students, ongoing over 100 years (García Sevillano, 2011:n.p), is reflected in their various students’ learning needs.

⁴³ *Decreto 98/2008 de 18 de julio del Consejo de Gobierno por el que se establece el currículo de Nivel Avanzado de las enseñanzas de las EOI en la CAM* establishes the curriculum for the *Avanzado* Level at EOI in the CAM.

⁴⁴ This level is “described as *Limited Operational Proficiency* by Wilkins and *adequate response to situations normally encountered* by Trim” (CEFR, 2001:23).

6.2.3. Informants

The action research project was conducted with the classes of students I was assigned for the school year 2014-15; yet I gave students the freedom to attend teacher-student conferences, a *sine quanon* requirement for the ELP to be effective as an assessment tool⁴⁵. Consequently, a non probabilistic, convenience sample composed of 25 students who willingly participated in at least one cycle of conferences will be used in this study⁴⁶.

None of the informants had previously had any experience with conferencing, learning contracts, the ELP, or setting learning goals, according to their answers to the form in Appendix 15. A few reported to have self-corrected homework or class activities.

⁴⁵ Many EOI students are inconsistent in terms of attendance; others, claimed not to have much interest in trying alternative learning approaches.

⁴⁶ Even though a total of 32 students participated in the RP (29 from *Avanzado 2* classes, 3 from *Intermedio 1*), the questionnaire was filled out by only 22 *Avanzado 2* students, so the total of informants became 25.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results will be presented according to the nature of the data generated by the questionnaire, and they will be discussed within each section. A final section will focus on an overall analysis of results.

7.1. Quantitative data

With the goal of processing quantitative data collected in the questionnaire with the support provided by IBM SPSS Statistics, item sections were given a letter value (a, b, c, and d will correspond to Sections 1, 2, 3, and 4). Section 5 was not processed through SPSS since comparability of items was not possible⁴⁷.

7.1.1. Internal Consistency

In order to see the internal reliability of the data from blocks (a) to (d), the Cronbach Alpha was calculated with the following results (see Appendix 16 for complete tables): Block a - $\alpha=0.937$, Block b - $\alpha=0.935$, Block c - $\alpha=0.869$, and Block d - $\alpha=0.904$. This suggests we can have a relatively high degree of confidence in the internal consistency of the answers. Additionally, it can be inferred that data from Sections 1 and 2 have a slightly higher internal reliability than Section 4, and that Section 3 generated the data with less internal reliability.

7.1.2. Descriptive Statistics

Based on the data tabled in Appendices 17 and 18, a detailed informant profile of the sample can be drawn. Firstly, more female (64%) than male informants (36%) took part in the RP. The sample included informants from 24 to 60 years of age, but their average age was 40; therefore, the sample consists of adult students.

Most of the participants had a conference twice (a total of 13 students), whereas 7 took part in all three cycle of conferences set up for the RP. Five students attended only one conference. Even though it could be argued that overall results could be altered by this variable, I believe the effect of the implementation of strategic learning itself, as an innovative system based on the

⁴⁷ See Appendix 7 to associate questionnaire sections with the corresponding conceptual constructs.

integration of evaluation and evaluative, cooperative thinking into decision making, can be gauged in just one conference⁴⁸.

7.1.2.1. Section 1: Awareness of the language learning process and level of development of strategic competence.

The following chart shows the results obtained after processing the data from Section 1:

Table 7. 1: Mean scores from quantitative items.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
a1	25	2.0	5.0	3.760	3.8	.9695
a2	25	2.00	5.00	3.4800	3.5	.82260
a3	25	2.00	5.00	3.2800	3.3	.84261
a4	25	2.00	5.00	3.8000	3.8	.86603
a5	25	1.00	5.00	3.7600	3.8	.96954
a6	25	1.00	5.00	3.8400	3.8	1.06771
a7	25	1.00	5.00	3.6400	3.6	.95219
a8	25	2.00	5.00	3.8800	3.9	.97125
a9	25	1.00	5.00	3.4000	3.4	1.00000
a10	25	1.00	5.00	3.6000	3.6	1.11803
a11	25	1.00	5.00	3.6400	3.6	1.03602
a12	25	1.00	5.00	4.1600	4.2	.98658
a13	25	1.00	5.00	3.1600	3.2	1.10604
Valid N (listwise)	25					

The item with a highest mean (4.2) corresponds to identifying the learning areas students still need to work on, whereas the lowest score (3.2) refers to identifying why students are successful learners in some areas and not in others. Four items reflected the highest mean afterwards at 3.8 (items 1, 4, 6, 8).

Results in Section 1 may suggest that students have started to look into their own learning by personalizing it (3.8 mean score in item 1). They may have begun to make connections among their learning abilities, the strategies that they find useful for them and their performance. This idea may be reinforced by the high mean scores (3.8) found in data corresponding to items 4 (improving

⁴⁸ There are no doubts that further research as far as this is concerned may shed more light on the research goals.

the awareness of one's learning process), item 6 (defining learning preferences), and item 8 (trying new strategies students did not know before or had not tried before).

However, it may be argued that there are indicators in students' responses leading to believe that this development of awareness of their own learning process is combined with an emphasis on the negative variant of learning since students, by focusing more attention on what they cannot do versus what they can already do. This could explain why students had a harder time identifying why they are successful learners in some areas (item13, mean score of 3.2), or did not stand out in identifying achievements (item11, mean score of 3.6).

Particularly interesting is the high mean resulted in item 6 (3.8), which refers to defining learning preferences. Considering the majority of participants were *Avanzado 2* students, one could wonder why their learning preferences have not been defined yet, concluding, therefore, that probably not much prior instruction might have specifically addressed the development of strategic competence regarding the learning process, the kind of strategic competence targeted here (CAM, 2008a: 249). The fact that students reported the experience helped them to try new strategies they had not previously experienced (item 8) may support the ground for the aforementioned assumption since item 8 specifically regards awareness of the learning process (CAM, 2008a: 249).

Finally, the mean score for item 3 (3.3, with a s.d. of 0.84) could imply the system did not have a significant impact on the student's ability to better manage their learning time.

7.1.2.2. Section 2: Motivation

The following chart below displays data obtained from Section 2:

Table 7.2: Mean scores from quantitative items.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
b1	25	2.00	5.00	3.8000	3.8	1.00000
b2	25	1.00	5.00	3.7600	3.8	.96954
b3	25	1.00	5.00	2.9600	3.0	1.09848
b4	25	1.00	5.00	4.0800	4.0	.95394
b5	25	1.00	5.00	3.9200	4.0	1.15181
b6	25	2.00	5.00	3.4000	3.4	.86603
b7	25	1.00	5.00	3.3600	3.4	1.07548
b8	25	2.00	5.00	3.7600	3.8	1.05198
b9	25	1.00	5.00	3.7200	3.7	.97980
b10	25	2.00	5.00	3.7600	3.8	.83066
Valid N (listwise)	25					

High mean scores of 3.8 in items 1 (feel better about my English), 2 (value achieved goals and their benefits), 8 (increase motivation), and 10 (trust my ability to overcome difficulties) may suggest positive effects on student motivation.

The item with a highest mean (4.0) shows the system helped students understand that they need to be aware of their weak areas to be able to strengthen them. Due to the similar results obtained in Section 2, a closer look to responses in which the s.d. < 1 will shed light on more reliable data. Consequently, the s.d. score could indicate responses to items 6 (3.4 mean, 0.86 s.d.) and 10 (3.8 mean and 0.83 s.d.) may be more reliable than the rest, which points to “overcoming learning difficulties” (item 6) and “trusting my ability to overcome difficulties when learning English by trying and selecting new learning strategies” (item 10). This seems to support my previous interpretation about results in Section 1 in terms that students emphasize the negative variant of learning.

The lowest mean (3.0) indicates students level of anxiety is somewhat reduced by the system since the students’ s.d. is high (1.09). Students’ character and self-esteem might be factors affecting this result.

7.1.2.3. Section 3: Planning

Data in Section 3 chart below show an equal high student satisfaction (4.2) in items 2 (reflection on learning) and 3 (identifying learning needs), both pivotal aspects for a successful implementation of strategic learning. These results may suggest the basic grounds to implement strategic learning as an evaluation and assessment system were correctly established.

Table 7.3: Mean scores from quantitative items.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
c1	25	1.00	5.00	3.5600	3.6	1.00333
c2	25	1.00	5.00	4.1600	4.2	.85049
c3	25	1.00	5.00	4.1600	4.2	.98658
c4	25	1.00	5.00	3.5200	3.5	1.00499
c5	25	1.00	5.00	3.3600	3.4	1.03602
c6	25	2.00	5.00	3.2400	3.2	1.01160
c7	25	2.00	5.00	3.7200	3.7	.97980
c8	25	2.00	5.00	4.0800	4.1	.86217
c9	25	2.00	5.00	3.4000	3.4	.95743
Valid N (listwise)	25					

Students report to have improved the way they use available learning resources (item 7, mean of 3.7), yet it seems they prefer those online resources suggested by their teacher and/or used during the school year (item 8, mean of 4.1). Owing to this 0.4 difference, and a low s.d. of 0.86, it could be argued that previously selected online resources may tailor student learning better than printed material (the mean for item 9, addressing printed material, was 3.4).

As for the item with the lowest mean score (item 6, 3.2 mean), time seems to be a constant concern for students since the experience did not significantly affected the student’s ability to look for extra learning time and manage it better.

7.1.2.4. Section 4: Assessment, Self-assessment, and Self-improvement

Data collected regarding Section 4 has been processed in the chart below:

Table 7.4: Mean scores from quantitative items.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
d1	25	2.00	5.00	3.7200	3.7	1.02144
d2	25	1.00	5.00	3.2400	3.2	1.01160
d3	25	2.00	5.00	3.6000	3.6	.81650
d4	25	1.00	5.00	3.7200	3.7	1.10000
d5	25	2.00	5.00	3.8800	3.9	1.01325
d6	25	2.00	5.00	3.4800	3.5	1.08474
d7	25	2.00	5.00	3.7600	3.8	.92556
d8	25	1.00	5.00	3.7200	3.7	.93630
d9	25	1.00	5.00	3.6800	3.7	.98826
Valid N (listwise)	25					

Even though data collected in this section did not reach a mean score of (4) in any of the items, the highest mean score (3.9) was for item 5 (identifying areas in need of improvement and planning ahead of time to overcome upcoming learning difficulties). Contrary to what one could initially infer from that fact (the lowest effect of strategic learning is on assessment, self-assessment, and self-improvement), the highest mean score in item 5 may suggest a positive effect of strategic learning. This is due to the fact that students’ responses may imply they are consciously using the cycle of inquiry by which useful strategies (usefulness is regarded by item 7 with a mean score of 3.8) and other resources that can be assessed by students (3.7 mean score obtained in item 4, which deals with assessing helpful goal-oriented resources) are being selected as appropriate tools to help students achieve their learning goals.

Furthermore, the effect of the system on self-assessment also seems to be positive due to an above average mean score of 3.7 in item 1, and the same result on self-correction (item 8). Finally, like in Sections 1-3, time is again standing out since the lowest mean score obtained (3.2) refers to students' ability to self-assess their time-management skills (item 2).

7.1.2.5.. Section 5: Overall Satisfaction

The standard deviation in data from Section 5, displayed in the Table 7.5 below, indicates that data results in this section are within a reasonable range, which may imply reliability of the data

Table 7. 5: Descriptive Statistics (Section 5, Item 1). Mean scores and standard deviation.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
e1	25	2.00	5.00	4.0400	4.0	.84063
Valid N (listwise)	25					

7.2. Qualitative data

Data generated from the open questions in Section 5 is shown in Appendices 19 and 20. Firstly, strong points students listed on the questionnaire will be analyzed and discussed, followed by the areas of growth.

Above all, data show an extraordinary frequency in the use of words to refer to “awareness” (24 times in total). A detailed analysis of participants' word choice may suggest an increase awareness of the learning process because of the variety of awareness students highlighted as strong points: awareness or identification of learning strategies (7), difficulties (10), and awareness of skills (2), learning (3), or progress (2).

Additionally, the personalization of learning was significantly pointed out by students (13 times) as a positive aspect of the experience. Their words indicated they felt being valued, involved in the evaluation of their learning with their teacher, and in a more private environment favored by conferences.

What is more, 9 times students referred to the usefulness of the system implemented by using language at different registers (“the idea is great”, “fantastic for students” vs. “I’m convinced of the great potential of self-learning...”), which could lead to believe the experience has a similar

effect on students, regardless of their proficiency level. This feeling of usefulness (9), together with the use of the word motivation (2), progress (4), and effective learning (6), totaling (21), could be considered indicators of EOI students’ successful learning.

The most relevant area of growth is time. A total of 14 times students made reference to lack of time as the major drawback of the experience, whereas a few believed it took time (2), and others mentioned it needed an extra effort on the student’s part (7 times). In addition, students’ responses regarding the need to use conferencing and the ELP more systematically (10), are also in connection with the idea of time, for which more conferences would be needed within a continuum. In a sense, it could be claimed that time raises up to 33 times words of concern⁴⁹.

7.3. Overall analysis

Despite the inconsistency of students holding conferences (only 7 students had three), this variable does not affect the overall satisfaction of students (4.0) since from the mean obtained in all sections, it may be inferred that even just one conference had a positive effect on students:

Table 7. 6: Mean scores per section

Section 1		Section 2		Section 3		Section 4		Section 5	
3.65	3.7	3.65	3.7	3.69	3.7	3.65	3.7	4.04	4.0
3.67 (3.7)									

Considering the above mean scores, it can be suggested that the effect of strategic planning through conferencing and the ELP as an evaluation and assessment system is the same on all strategic competence constructs. Additionally, these data could be interpreted as if students were very satisfied with the experience (4.0) because they consider the effects of the experience are above average (3.7).

Comparing highest and lowest mean scores obtained from data resulted from Sections 1-4 of the questionnaire (see Chart 7.7 below), a high average in Sections 1 and 2 (4.2) can be underlined, closely followed by Section 2 (4.1), and then by Section 4 (3.9), which may be considered still high.

⁴⁹ Lack of student awareness about strategic competence as curricular content can also be inferred from informant 8 who believes the experience should be developed “even if that would take time from *regular* classes”.

Table 7. 7: Highest and lowest mean score obtained per section

	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Section 5
Highest mean	4.2	4.1	4.2	3.9	4.0
Lowest mean	3.2	3	3.2	3.2	

The fact that there is no mean score below 3 for any item in the whole questionnaire may imply students did not find any negative effect in the system implemented.

Considering students’ responses in all sections in terms of developing awareness, there seems to be indicators that may evidence a positive effect of strategic learning as a system to develop metacognitive strategies.

There are two interesting remarks that could be implied from qualitative data that are supported by quantitative data. The first one is related to student attitude. Considering the frequency students explicitly mentioned difficulties, either because the experience helped them to be aware or to identify them (10), or to overcome them (7), one should wonder why participants did not focus on their strengths.

While it could be claimed that the teacher might have balanced the conference towards students’ areas of growth, the cause of this orientation towards difficulties could also be found in a general attitude from Spanish students to focus only on the negative aspects of their learning (this is supported by quantitative data since students emphasized the negative variant of learning in Section 1, and focused on their difficulties in Section 2, as we discussed in 7.1.2.1 and 7.1.2.2.). This could be linked to traditional pedagogies inherited from the past and still very alive in many educational sites. Changing this attitude would require an important teacher training investment, as well as a training of students.

The second point to be mentioned is what I named “the teacher factor” (see Appendix 19). To what extent is the teacher factor an important variable to be considered when analyzing data? Would the results be very different if another teacher implemented strategic learning the same way I did? I believe further research in this direction could shed some light on this regard.

Finally, time seems to be a constant concern for students, and the experience did not significantly affect the student’s ability to better manage their learning time (Section 1; item 3, mean of 3.3), look for extra learning time and manage it better (Section 3; item 6, 3.2 mean), or self-assess their time-management skills (Section 4; item 2, 3.2 mean).

8. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions will be addressing the analysis of the research process first to later attempt to answer the research questions posed in this project.

The research process will be guided by key questions provided by Baumfield et al. (2008: 101) to explore it (See Appendix 21).

What went according to plan is that the majority of my students were very receptive towards the experience, and according to the results obtained, they appreciated the individualization of learning. The student-teacher collaboration worked very well even though no student had ever experienced anything similar; as a result, I feel solid learning partnerships were established. What is more, conferencing with students and analyzing them as individual learners was found very easy because the researcher was able to use all her resources gained through years of teaching training an experience. Having acquired solid social skills to build up trust and develop a sense of learning team with students was pivotal to make conferencing a positive experience.

When the project was presented at *Jornadas de Actualización para el Profesorado de EOI* in CAM, in March, 2015, the project was put together and the researcher felt more confident about it. Questions posed helped reinforcing its strong points, identifying its limitations and the researcher's , and helped confirm its potential regarding teaching and learning at EOI.

A difficulty found is that it was not considered that students needed to be trained in the process of talking about them and their learning. Walking students through the various processes involved in strategic learning took more time than initially planned. As the RP results show, students and their teacher needed more time to optimize the potential of strategic learning as an evaluation and assessment system. This flaw caused several changes to the initial research plan, yet the researcher was able to adapt to new situations, keeping in mind the research objectives.

An additional non expected difficulty encountered was the lack of space to meet with students. There was only a short meeting period between High School and EOI classes, and classrooms had to be cleaned in between. Even though the researcher intended to see her students out of class in the First CC, modifications had to be made in this regard.

Other problems were found when developing the questionnaire, owing to the duplication of items in different questionnaire sections. This drawback was caused by the translation of *Decreto 98/2008* into English. For example, "To overcome my learning difficulties" was duplicated in Section 2 (Motivation) and 3 (Planning), but it was finally left in Section 2 since its content was more meaningful to the construct of motivation rather than to planning. Furthermore, giving the

questionnaire was not easy since many students were absent in May. The questionnaire had to be administered in different sessions, affecting, therefore, its reliability as a research tool. A final difficulty that should be stressed is data analysis. A quick training in statistics would have helped screen data in a faster way to draw results easily.

As for predicted results, as expected, students appreciated the face-to-face time and attention to individualize their learning.

A surprising aspect found in the research process is not being able to easily recover any end-of-the-year report from other EOI teachers who had implemented the ELP before in CAM to which I could have access. Another surprising aspect that can be mentioned is that the process caused the researcher to generate new research ideas, such as considering this RP a task-based learning large-scale project which could be used to inspire the design of a syllabus oriented towards the development of strategic competence, something that could be explored in the future as an extension of this RP.

In the event of attempting to embark upon an action research project similar to that described above, it would, perhaps, be useful to focus firstly on a flexible framework at the beginning. Resourceful teachers can pull out all their resources when unable to stick to their plan, yet unexpected plan changes can produce major frustration. In addition, EOI teachers might consider reflection the way Dewey did in 1933, as a way “to emancipate us from merely impulsive and merely routine activity” since “it enables us to direct our activities with foresight and to plan according to ends-in-view or purposes of which we are aware, to act in deliberate and intentional fashion, to know what we are about when we act” (Dewey, 1933:17). This quote may turn to be the best motivational words to fight back adversity.

Aware of the limitations of this small-scale, highly contextualized study, it is possible to provide a number of tentative responses to the research questions posed in this RP. The EOI teacher as a Reflective Practitioner will be an aspect of this RP that will not be altered by validity or reliability of results drawn from collected data.

8.1. Can strategic learning be applied as an innovative evaluation and assessment system at EOI level?

Despite the difficulties mentioned in 8.1, quantitative and qualitative data suggest the basic grounds can be established for the implementation of strategic learning through conferencing and the ELP,

as an innovative evaluation and assessment system at EOI, obtaining a very good rapport from students.

Furthermore, identifying the limitations of implementing strategic learning can also be considered a positive effect of the RP since they will help determine what areas of the project can be improved, or in which other ways the approach could be explored.

Results indicate students might be consciously using the cycle of inquiry to use data to make decisions in terms of planning and achieving learning goals by selecting and planning an action to implement useful strategies and other goal-oriented resources as appropriate tools to help them achieve their learning goals.

8.2. Is the ELP an effective educational tool for strategic learning at EOI?

More research needs to be conducted to be able to affirm that the ELP is an effective innovative tool for strategic learning at EOI. What can be affirmed, however, is that the ELP Biography and Dossier allow the ELP to act as a classroom based assessment tool, being the ELP a platform in which data can be collected and analyzed (Biography), or evidenced by student collected work, kept in the Dossier. Moreover, it can also be asserted that strategic learning can use the ELP as a tool to collectively reflect on student learning, evaluating student performance, on the roots of the assessment of different criteria, such as student needs, learning styles, or preferences.

8.3. Can strategic learning through conferencing and the ELP enhance language learning?

EOI students' overall satisfaction with the experience suggested for this RP, coupled with high mean scores ratings for all sections embedded in the questionnaire suggest successful learning. It can be claimed that language learning is enhanced by the integration of evaluation and evaluative thinking into the decision-making process set up by strategic learning.

It can also be argued that strategic learning can be used as an evaluation and assessment system in which the PEL is a learning tool, and conferencing is a learning practice that both facilitate and enhance language learning. Consequently, taking into account the collaborative approach strategic learning has adopted in this study, it can be inferred that conferencing and the use of the PEL should be considered learning and teaching strategies. On the grounds of Oxford's definition of learning strategies (Oxford, 1990:8), they are specific actions taken by the learner and

the teacher to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations”. Furthermore, according to Oxford’s LS taxonomy (1990: 18-21), it can be claimed that strategic learning as an evaluation and assessment system is itself an indirect, metacognitive learning strategy that focuses on arranging and planning learning as well as on its evaluation.

8.4. What are the effects of the experience on students’ strategic competence?

Students’ voices seem to point towards positive effects in all strategic competence constructs analyzed in this study. The development of strategic competence, pivotal to foster autonomous learning, will be of great importance for the participants in this study since they will not be able to certify level C at EOI’s in CAM⁵⁰. It will make sense for students who cannot afford private language teaching to enhance their ability to continue their language learning independently. A well-trained, strategic competent student will take any language opportunity to optimize his/her language ability and eventually, will be able to self-learn, and reach Level C autonomously.

8.5. A proposal for policy reform

If a “new orthodoxy” has emerged in English teaching, in which, despite the provision of English learning is still varied, it is “leading to a need for great flexibility in all aspects of ELT services” Graddol (2006: 96-97), I strongly believe EOI teaching should be reformed towards greater flexibility, not just in terms of implementing innovative, alternative assessment tools like the ELP that may provide quality learning and teaching, but also in organizing curriculum, instruction, assessment, and enrollment.

Applying the alternative framework for school improvement set by Byrk et.al. (2010:46-47), a further step forward from this study could be to re-structure teaching and learning at EOI by reforming school organization and classroom instruction, so as the new organization and operation of schools would enhance students’ engagement with EOI’s and improve their learning outcome. This interesting idea may be elaborated elsewhere, yet an example can be provided on the grounds of this RP results.

Since lack of time has been identified as a major drawback for strategic learning, how could time be made available at EOI? There is no doubt specific lesson plans can target strategic

⁵⁰ CAM does not allow EOI’s to certify CEFR Level C.

competence, but is there a way we can ensure strategic competence is addressed in the classroom? I believe teaching in modules⁵¹ at EOI would better tailor learning and would give students the opportunity to experience different teacher styles. This learning “in chunks” would suit better learners’ needs and could create a framework for curriculum design in which specific skills or key competences could be prioritized, favoring independent skill certification⁵².

Teaching in modules would require a collaborative effort to unify procedures, databases, materials, and resources at EOI’s in CAM, but it would also foster mobility of students, a major need in EOI’s.

8.6. Teachers as leaders in instructional reform

The limitations of this study, due to the small, random sample analyzed in this RP, do not make results generalizable to other educational settings; yet it may encourage others to extend the sample and further research on strategic learning and the development of strategic competence through conferencing and the ELP in EOI settings.

In fact, this could be easily done if the positive effects of undertaking action research on teachers’ professional expertise were brought to attention. If like Wallace proposes (1998:4), this action research experience is considered a strategy for professional development, the line of research started in this study could be furthered in the CAM, under its plans for professional development.

The constraints this small-scale RP involves do not lessen its potential to encourage other EOI teachers in the CAM to get involved collaboratively in more longitudinal, empirical studies that could provide better evidence-based research findings. In the CAM setting, this could be possible through “working groups”, created for professional development⁵³. This group would be formed by 4-8 motivated EOI teachers who would choose not to remain “totally complacent since self-development will never take place without the perceived need of it” (Wallace, 1998:6)⁵⁴. Consequently, next school year I intend to deepen this line of action by creating a working group to undertake a longitudinal, larger-scale action research project in which more than one EOI’s implemented strategic learning through conferencing and the ELP as an innovative evaluation and assessment system.

⁵¹ Modules could be organized around trimesters, quarters, or semesters, and could be taught simultaneously with regular” classes.

⁵² This idea does not advocate to teaching skills or focus on key competences in isolation but to prioritize specific ones over the rest. The current project of *Real Decreto* developing LOMCE (2015) already considers certification of skills in isolation, and this might create an opportunity to make changes in curriculum design and organization of learning.

⁵³ The project proposal has to be accepted by CAM as well as satisfy CAM priority guidelines for professional development (CAM, 2014:5-6), yet this latter would not be difficult since the project could be included under “professional promotion: orientation, student-teacher meetings, and school organization” (CAM, 2014:6)

⁵⁴ This would be a good opportunity for EOI teachers to take the lead in improving instructional practices in the CAM.

Regardless of the limitation of this study pointed out above, undertaking research action has had a positive effect on the researcher's professional expertise, who regards the experience, like Wallace (1998:4), as a strategy for professional development. There should be agreement that teachers should not remain "totally complacent since self-development will never take place without the perceived need of it" Wallace (1998:6). On the contrary, "it is convenient that teachers introduce teaching innovations aiming at improve their practice, even if changes are small, or hardly noticeable" (Palacios Martínez, 2006: 169).

Hughes (2007:6) points out the need for teachers to accept the fundamental premises of quality models⁵⁵, "such as collaborative professional development, reflective practice, and openness to change." A major reform will be needed if quality of language education is really wanted, but the direction that reform will take will highly depend on the quality of foreign language education EOI's can offer. Without institutional support, it is imperative reform, as far as quality is concerned, is led by committed, proactive EOI teachers who bring about educational change through innovative practices. This attitude, part of the specific competences FL teachers should have (McLaren & Madrid, 2004) will improve the educational process and the social context in which teaching takes place (Madrid, 2005:96), in this RP context, teaching and learning English in CAM.

⁵⁵ The most common modalities are quality assurance and quality management.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Action Research Plan

STAGE 1 (Developing action strategies: reflecting while collecting data)

- Gathering information about the way the ELP was implemented at EOI level in the CAM.
- Gathering information about ELP's used at EOI's
- Assessing students (Entry Tests).

STAGE 2 (Implementation of action strategies)

- Using findings to develop a modified version of the ELP to match my students' needs.
- Selecting/developing a conference sheet/s to target specific aims and reflect evidence of students' commitment and reflection.
- Introducing strategic learning: gathering, analyzing, and recycling data to identify strengths and areas of growth, as well as to establish short/long term reachable, learning goals for students.
- Developing the First Conference Cycle (developing action strategies: reflecting while collecting data)
- Implementing conferences with students along with the use of the LEP to develop trust, strengthen motivation, discuss, and assess learning.
- Introducing learning contracts as conference tools.

STAGE 3

- Evaluating First Cycle of Conferences (log)
- Implementing a Second Cycle of Conferences. Reviewing previous data, collecting new data, reviewing contracts, and students' self-assessment (developing action strategies: reflecting while collecting data)

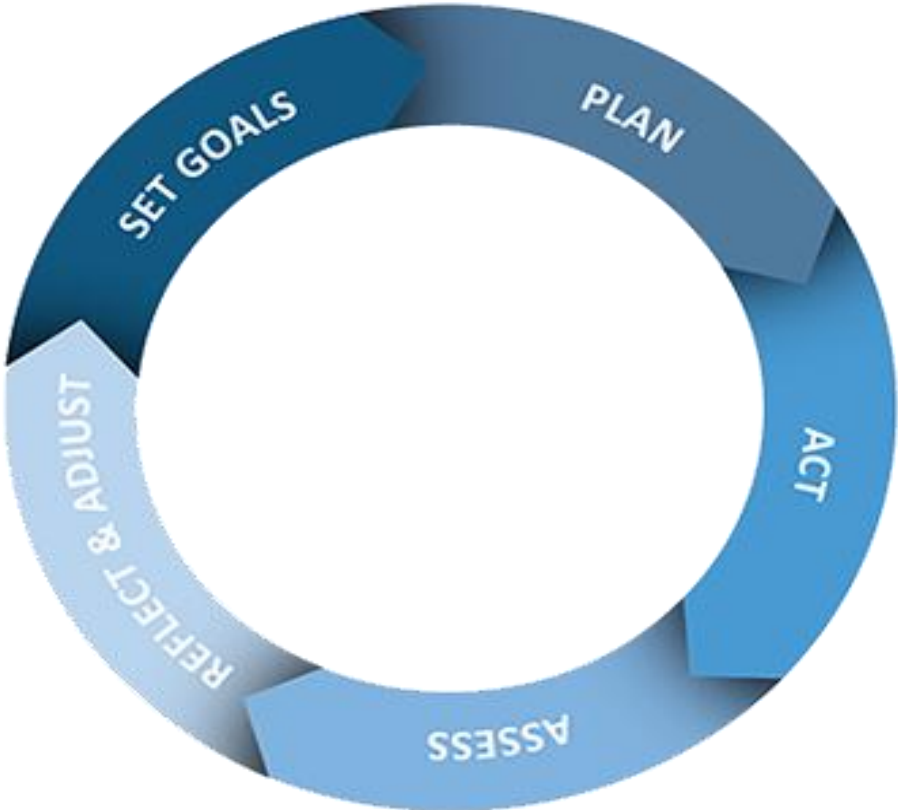
STAGE 4

- Evaluating the Second Cycle of Conferences (log)
- Implementing the Third Cycle of Conferences. Reviewing previous data, collecting new data, reviewing contracts, and students' self-assessment (developing action strategies: reflecting while collecting data)
- Developing an End of the Year Questionnaire to gather data.
- Developing valid assessment criteria.

STAGE 5

- Evaluating Third Cycle of Conferences (log)
- Gauging effects on successful learning..
- Drawing conclusions to ground the establishment of educational proposals to reform teaching and learning practices at EOI's

APPENDIX 2: Cycle of Inquiry



Source: Partners in School Innovation (2014). Results-Oriented Cycle of Inquiry (ROCI).

APPENDIX 3: Learning Contract

LEARNING CONTRACT

The learning contract records agreement between the teacher and me.

1	<hr/> <hr/>	Date <hr/>
---	-------------	---------------

2	<hr/> <hr/>	Date <hr/>
---	-------------	---------------

3	<hr/> <hr/>	Date <hr/>
---	-------------	---------------

4	<hr/> <hr/>	Date <hr/>
---	-------------	---------------

5	<hr/> <hr/>	Date <hr/>
---	-------------	---------------

6	<hr/> <hr/>	Date <hr/>
---	-------------	---------------

MILESTONE: Young adult /adult migrant (Ireland, Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Sweden)

This individual learning contract evolves during the process of learning. It is the result of **discovery**, **reflection** and the **development of greater awareness** on the part of the learner. As the learner gains more understanding of the process in which he/she is engaged, he/she takes more **responsibility** for his/her learning and enters into an ongoing agreement with the teacher.

Source: Council of Europe, (2011:22)

APPENDIX 4: Conference Sheet #1



ESCUELA OFICIAL DE IDIOMAS DE COLLADO VILLALBA

CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN,
JUVENTUD Y DEPORTE
Comunidad de Madrid

Conference Sheet: Discussion and Commitment TEACHER'S ADVICE AND LEARNING TOOLS

Teacher *C. España* Student's name: _____
Class: _____
Date: _____

Your teacher commits to facilitate language learning the best way she can. That is why she has developed the following list of learning tools that we may discuss in our conference, depending on their suitability to your learning needs. You will also commit to try and make good use of them in the upcoming weeks. They will be reviewed in our next conference.

1. ____ Reflecting about learning styles: how to empower language learning
2. ____ Reviewing "Ways of Studying" (ELP). Discussing new method/s to use in the upcoming weeks.
3. ____ Considering any personal circumstances that may affect learning: discussing ways of overcoming difficulties
4. ____ Analyzing REFERENCES:
 1. Available References in PRINT: List of references
 2. Available References ONLINE:
 - a. WEB sites:
 1. List of references to practice LISTENING, READING, VOCABULARY, and GRAMMAR
 2. References to learn about WRITING
 3. References to learn about CULTURE of English-speaking countries
 - b. Teacher sites
5. ____ Teacher's extra availability: The teacher will be available at the library every other Monday from 3:30pm to offer access to special references. Additionally, the teacher will be available through our virtual community in Edmodo.
6. ____ Upon request, the teacher will make copies of selected pages of those reference books that may not be checked out.
7. ____ Special considerations brought up by the student:

In Collado Villalba, on _____, 2014

The teacher:

The student:

Cristina España

APPENDIX 5: Conference Sheet #2



ESCUELA OFICIAL DE IDIOMAS DE COLLADO VILLALBA

CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN,
JUVENTUD Y DEPORTE
Comunidad de Madrid

Conference Sheet (Conf. # 2): Discussion and Commitment TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL ADVICE AND LEARNING TOOLS


Teacher **C. España**

Student's name: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

Section 1: Reviewing my **LEARNING CONTRACT** I feel...

I did ALL my part! 	I did almost everything. 	I did part of it! 	I could have done more... 	I did not do anything at all! 
---	---	--	---	--

REFLECTION

  because...

 what happened? (reasons):   

 From now on... (My INTENTIONS):



Section 2: Reviewing NEW WAYS OF LEARNING

What works for me: 😊

What does not work for me: 😞

Section 3 My NEXT STEPS

a. PREPARING FOR THE EXAM: New goals> new learning contract

Practice Exam (March):		Prioritizing skills:
Reading	25	
Listening	25	
Writing	25	
Speaking	25	

b. GENERAL ENGLISH LEARNING: New goals> new learning contract

In Collado Villalba, on, 2015

The teacher:

The student:

Cristina España

APPENDIX 6: Questionnaire



Teacher: C. España
Room: 10

Class: **Avanzado 2**
Groups: B, C, D

Date: May 18, 2015 (B,C)
May 19, 2015 (D)

END OF THE YEAR QUESTIONNAIRE

The aim of this questionnaire is to know your opinion about the innovations you have experienced this school year in English class.

DIRECTIONS:

Please rate each of the items according to the scale of 1 to 5 provided.

Thanks for your cooperation.

SECTION 1

Conferencing with my teacher and using the ELP has helped me ...

1.	To personalize my learning progress	1 2 3 4 5
2.	To become an autonomous learner by planning, developing an action plan, and monitoring my learning goals	1 2 3 4 5
3.	To better manage my learning time	1 2 3 4 5
4.	To improve my awareness of the learning process	1 2 3 4 5
5.	To improve my awareness learning styles	1 2 3 4 5
6.	To define my learning preferences	1 2 3 4 5
7.	To identify the strategies that work for me and use them more often	1 2 3 4 5
8.	To try new strategies I did not know about or had not tried before	1 2 3 4 5
9.	To understand my level of autonomy as a learner	1 2 3 4 5
10.	To understand why I am doing certain learning activities	1 2 3 4 5
11.	To identify my achievements	1 2 3 4 5
12.	To identify what learning areas I still need to work on	1 2 3 4 5
13.	To identify why I was a successful learner in some areas and not in others	1 2 3 4 5

SECTION 1

Conferencing with my teacher and using the ELP has helped me ...

1. To personalize my learning progress	1 2 3 4 5
2. To become an autonomous learner by planning, developing an action plan, and monitoring my learning goals	1 2 3 4 5
3. To better manage my learning time	1 2 3 4 5
4. To improve my awareness of the learning process	1 2 3 4 5
5. To improve my awareness learning styles	1 2 3 4 5
6. To define my learning preferences	1 2 3 4 5
7. To identify the strategies that work for me and use them more often	1 2 3 4 5
8. To try new strategies I did not know about or had not tried before	1 2 3 4 5
9. To understand my level of autonomy as a learner	1 2 3 4 5
10. To understand why I am doing certain learning activities	1 2 3 4 5
11. To identify my achievements	1 2 3 4 5
12. To identify what learning areas I still need to work on	1 2 3 4 5
13. To identify why I was a successful learner in some areas and not in others	1 2 3 4 5

SECTION 3**Conferencing with my teacher and using the ELP has helped me ...**

1.	To better plan my learning overall	1 2 3 4 5
2.	To reflect on my learning	1 2 3 4 5
3.	To identify my learning needs	1 2 3 4 5
4.	To turn my learning needs into achievable goals	1 2 3 4 5
5.	To improve the way I manage my learning time to achieve my learning goals	1 2 3 4 5
6.	To look for extra time for language learning and better manage it	1 2 3 4 5
7.	To improve the way I use available learning resources (any kind of printed material)	1 2 3 4 5
8.	To improve the way I use available <u>online</u> learning resources (any kind suggested by my teacher or/and used during the school year)	1 2 3 4 5
9.	To monitor my effort	1 2 3 4 5

SECTION 4**Conferencing with my teacher and using the ELP has helped me ..**

1.	To improve my ability to self-assess my learning	1 2 3 4 5
2.	To improve my ability to self-assess my time-management skills	1 2 3 4 5
3.	To be aware of my progress	1 2 3 4 5
4.	To assess the resources (including strategies) that helped me achieve my learning goals	1 2 3 4 5
5.	To identify areas in need of improvement and plan ahead learning strategies to overcome upcoming learning difficulties	1 2 3 4 5
6.	To monitor my errors by identifying and analyzing them first, and then establishing a strategic plan to correct them	1 2 3 4 5
7.	To analyze the strategies I am using to learn English and assess their usefulness	1 2 3 4 5
8.	To improve self-correction	1 2 3 4 5
9.	To assess to what extent I have acquired the new learning	1 2 3 4 5



SECTION 5

1. How would you rate the overall experience you had in English class with conferencing and the ELP? 1 2 3 4 5

2. In your opinion, what are the strong points of this experience.

3. In your opinion, what are the weak points of this experience.

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE
Thanks for your cooperation.



APPENDIX 7: Rationale for questionnaire development

Questionnaire Sections	Constructs	Strategies related to the Learning Process <i>Decreto 98/2008, CAM (2008a: 247-252)</i>
Section 1	Level of Development of Strategic Competence	Section 3 CAM (2008a: 251)
Section 2	Awareness of the Language Learning Process	Section 2.1. CAM (2008a: 249)
	Motivation	Section 2.2. CAM (2008a: 249-250)
Section 3	Planning	Section 2.3. CAM (2008a: 250)
Section 4	Assessment, Self-assessment, and Self-improvement	Section 2.8. CAM (2008a: 251)
Section 5	Overall satisfaction	N/A

APPENDIX 8: How to become a more effective learner

NAZD

Your language and cultural experiences

Tick the boxes for the approaches which best describe the learning style you feel most comfortable with.

<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to learn practical examples first and become aware of grammatical rules through using these.	<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to study the grammar first and build my own sentences until I feel I have a practical repertoire.
<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to be given the linguistic facts and then to work on these by myself until I feel confident that I can communicate with little risk of error.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I prefer an interactive approach to mastering new language, 'taking risks' in putting over meaning and learning from any resulting errors.

Choose three experiences which have helped you the most to learn English.

Experiences	Reason
1. Watching films and TV in English with subtitles in English.	
2. Helping my daughter to understand English grammar.	
3. Trying to understand a job application.	

How to become a more effective learner

Look at these ways of studying and learning. Tick ✓ the methods you currently use. Put an asterisk * next to methods you'd like to use in the future.

Ways of studying	
Ask your teacher questions when you don't understand.	✓
Keep a vocabulary notebook and write example sentences, phonetics, and translations in it.	✓
Write new words on a flash-card - English on one side, your language on the other. Learn three every day.	*
Put lists of English words on your bedroom wall - use headings, e.g. 'jobs', 'food'.	
Regularly ask yourself 'How would I say that in English?'	✓
Regularly review your vocabulary notebook and grammar notes.	✓
Review the grammar from the last lesson before the next lesson.	✓
Watch films and TV programmes in English.	✓
Listen to the radio / music in English.	✓
Read English graded readers.	✓
Read websites / magazines / newspapers in English.	✓
Practise English with other people via email or the Internet.	*
Keep a journal in English.	
Write something in English everyday - e.g. your response to a newspaper article, or web-story.	
Talk to other students in English outside of class.	*
Use your MultiROM to learn and revise.	✓
Buy a grammar practice book.	
Use an English-English dictionary.	✓
If possible, take a holiday in an English-speaking country.	**
Share your tips on how to study effectively with other people.	

* 1. - Subtitles in English help me to recognise words and sounds.
 2. - Because I have to understand grammar to be able to help her.
 3. - Because if I'm applying for a job I have to do it correctly.

© Oxford University Press New English File Advanced Language Portfolio 13

From: Oxeden & Latham-Koenig (2010). *New English File Advanced*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

APPENDIX 9: My language background

My language background

Name: _____

Mother tongue: Spanish

		Languages I can use and/or understand			
I've learned the language through (tick all that apply)	For example: Japanese	English	Italian		
using it with members of my family					
using it in the community					
formal education (e.g. language classes at school or work)		✓	✓		
travel	✓	✓	✓		
friendships/social contacts		✓	✓		
working life					
newspapers, magazines, books		✓	✓		
cinema, TV, radio	✓	✓			
Other (please list)					

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From: CILT (2007)

APPENDIX 10: A letter to your teacher

Avantado 2.

Teacher: *Cristina E.*
ELP Biography-Language background (modified)
Personal info + Learning experiences

A letter to your teacher

Please read the following letter and write a response to it in the space provided.

October 14, 2014

Dear student,

I am very happy to be your teacher this year. I love teaching, and I always do my best to help my students improve their English skills and other abilities, no matter how difficult they believe it is. I cannot wait to start working with all of you.

It is the beginning of the school year, and I would like to give you the opportunity to write a letter to tell me about you: what you currently do and what you did before, your interests, hobbies, etc. This way I will get to know you better 😊

You can also tell me about the reasons why you are learning English. Let me know how English is of use to you now, and /or how it could prove useful in the future.

I know learning English can be sometimes difficult (I've been there!), but I am sure there are some aspects you find more difficult than others. Could you please let me know which ones?

Finally, there are some ways that help us learn the language in a better and easier manner. Tell me what works for you, as well as what you do not like at all because you feel it does not help you. Additionally, you can explain some strategies that you observed in other teachers/classes that you loved and would like to see implemented in the classroom this year.

The information you provide will help me address your specific learning needs. I thank you in advance for your honesty and support.

Best,

Your teacher

Please respond to your teacher:

Dear Cristina,
I feel very happy to be your student this year. I like your classes and you make me a dynamic person during your classes.
I am from Zamora, but I spent my last ten years in Andalucía working as a teacher, but now I am working in Vilalba and I live in San Lorenzo de el Escorial.
I am a people-person and I don't like lose my time so I have always to be different things, for example going to gym, listening music, going to the theatre, I love

A letter to your teacher 1/2

Teacher: Cristina E.

ELP Biography-Language background (modified)

Personal info + Learning experiences

going to the theatre so that I use to go to the theatre ones a week.

The most that I like is traveling, every years I travel around the world, I have been in California twice, in México, Brazil, Indonesia, Morocco, in a lot of places in Europe...

I like to know diferents countries, diferent people it makes me feel free and empty of life

I am studying English as I need to improve my job and because as I told you I like travel so I would like to speak fluency English in order to communicate with other people.

Sometimes I feel frustrated when I tried to speak in English and I do not know how can I do.

Now, I realized that I forgot to tell you that I like read historical novels

I would like to use dynamic plays in the class with diferents classmates, I like listening music and also interactives activities.

I am a very organized person so I like to arrive to the class and check our homework and do the exercises following a line, I mean I would like to know what I am doing and what I am doing the next.

I hope I would help you and I am sure that this year would be a good year best.

your student.

SPEAKING

frustration

Reading.

Method.

Organization

APPENDIX 11 Strategic learning: grammar

Setting goals and thinking about learning																															
<p style="margin: 0;">3.</p> <p style="margin: 0;">October 2014</p>	<p style="margin: 0;">ENGLISH AT EOI</p>																														
<p>Diagnosis test Area : Grammar and <u>Vocabulary</u></p> <p>My results: <u>13</u> / <u>25</u> Percentage:</p>																															
<p>My analysis</p> <hr/>																															
<p>1. Questions I answered correctly : <u>1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 20, 22, 25</u></p>																															
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">2. Questions I did not feel sure about</th> <th style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">3. Why? Gr./Vocabulary Construct</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">Qs 4</td><td style="padding: 5px;"><u>"used to" in the past</u></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">Qs 5</td><td style="padding: 5px;"><u>present Do - does</u></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">Qs 6</td><td style="padding: 5px;"><u>ENO?</u></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">Qs 9</td><td style="padding: 5px;"><u>modal verbs</u></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">Qs 12</td><td style="padding: 5px;"><u>Articles</u></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">Qs 13</td><td style="padding: 5px;"><u>Linkers</u></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">Qs 15</td><td style="padding: 5px;"><u>Linkers</u></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">Qs 16</td><td style="padding: 5px;"><u>statements - Negative</u></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">Qs 19</td><td style="padding: 5px;"><u>Present Cont.</u></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">Qs 21</td><td style="padding: 5px;"><u>Relative Pr</u></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">Qs 23</td><td style="padding: 5px;"><u>Linkers</u></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">Qs 24</td><td style="padding: 5px;"><u>Articles</u></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>		2. Questions I did not feel sure about	3. Why? Gr./Vocabulary Construct	Qs 4	<u>"used to" in the past</u>	Qs 5	<u>present Do - does</u>	Qs 6	<u>ENO?</u>	Qs 9	<u>modal verbs</u>	Qs 12	<u>Articles</u>	Qs 13	<u>Linkers</u>	Qs 15	<u>Linkers</u>	Qs 16	<u>statements - Negative</u>	Qs 19	<u>Present Cont.</u>	Qs 21	<u>Relative Pr</u>	Qs 23	<u>Linkers</u>	Qs 24	<u>Articles</u>				
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<p style="text-align: center;">My plan: my next step forward</p> <p>☉ My next target</p> <p>.....</p>																															

APPENDIX 12 Learning contract 1



LEARNING CONTRACT

The learning contract records agreement between the teacher and me.

1	<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <p style="color: blue; font-size: 1.2em;">to finish</p> <p style="color: blue;">Loli (shd.)</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="color: blue;">Watch an hour ^{TV} episode # (1 x week)</p> <p style="color: blue;">posted → taking notes about grammar that I have to revise. A shdeeg note will</p> <p style="color: blue; font-size: 0.8em;">2 grammar structures to review will be posted on Loli's desk for 2 wk and then she'll change the gr. str. to work on</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 150px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Date</p> </div> </div>
2	<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <p style="color: blue;">29/10/19</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="color: blue;">I'll will checking listening skills</p> <p style="color: blue;">Teacher → see conference sheet</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 150px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Date</p> </div> </div>
3	<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 150px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Date</p> </div> </div>

APPENDIX 13: Con Sheet #2 (filled out by student)

Page 1









CONF #2


**Conference Sheet (Conf. # 2): Discussion and Commitment
TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL ADVICE AND LEARNING TOOLS**





Teacher **C. España** Student's name: _____
 Class: AV2D
 Date: 14/04/2015


Section 1: Reviewing my LEARNING CONTRACT I feel...

I did ALL my part! 	I did almost everything. 	I did part of it! 	I could have done more... 	I did not do anything at all! 
---	---	--	---	--

REFLECTION

 because... *I did all my homework. I have been seeing English TV series everyday at least 30'. I study grammar every week. However, I believe I need to do more because I have to pass my certificate exam this year.*

 What happened? (reasons):   
I don't have enough free time to do more than I do.

 From now on... (My INTENTIONS):
If I get my certificate this year I'll take private classes to improve my English, because I have to work more hours per day, and I don't want to lose my English skills, I want to improve my English every week.



Section 2: Reviewing NEW WAYS OF LEARNING

What works for me: 😊 *watching English TV episodes everyday.
A sticky note with vocabulary and grammar expressions*

What does not work for me: 😞 *learning by heart.*

Section 3 My NEXT STEPS

a. PREPARING FOR THE **EXAM**: New goals> new learning contract

Practice Exam (March):

Reading	18	25
Listening	13.5	25
Writing	14	25
Speaking	☹️	25

Prioritizing skills:

- ① Speaking
- ② Listening
- ③ Writing
- Reading

b. GENERAL ENGLISH LEARNING: New goals> new learning contract

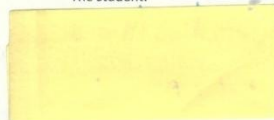
*I have to look for someone who can help me
prepare my speaking skills in a dynamic way.*

In Collado Villalba, on April, 2015

The teacher:

Cristina España

The student:



APPENDIX 14: Learning contract 2

LEARNING CONTRACT The learning contract records agreement between the teacher and me.		
Me →	1 - Create an opportunity to share <u>tips</u> on <u>how to study effectively</u> - Giving you advice on what books to read. - Introduce mind maps - More writing.	Date 18/12/2014 CB
You →	2 → Read leveled books. → Listening to book CD's. → Open minded for new ways of learning (i.e. mind maps)	Date 18/12/2014 CB
	3 → Review previous books to consolidate <u>BASIC</u> structures	Date _____
	Second conference	
Me →	4 I will make sure you participate in <u>speaking</u> <u>work</u> <u>books</u> so that you practice real-like exam questions	Date April 13, 2015 CB
	5 <u>Reading</u> → I will provide a plan for <u>improving</u> <u>rea.</u> <u>speaking</u> - Sticky notes - write 3 structures you want to use in class	Date _____
You →	6 Meet my teacher at the library in order to show me leveled books with vers.	Date _____

MILESTONE: Young adult /adult migrant (Ireland, Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Sweden)

This individual learning contract evolves during the process of learning. It is the result of **discovery, reflection** and the **development of greater awareness** on the part of the learner. As the learner gains more understanding of the process in which he/she is engaged, he/she takes more **responsibility** for his/her learning and enters into an ongoing agreement with the teacher.

APPENDIX 15: The learner's profile



EOI ESCUELA OFICIAL DE IDIOMAS DE COLLADO VILLALBA

CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN,
JUVENTUD Y DEPORTE
Comunidad de Madrid

DATA GATHERING

THE LEARNER'S PROFILE

Class: Avanzado 2: B, C, D

Date:

1. Have you ever had a conference with your EOI teacher before?
Yes
No
2. Have you ever signed a learning contract with your EOI teacher before?
Yes
No
3. Have you ever used the ELP before?
Yes
No
4. Have you ever had any experience as a student setting learning goals before?
Yes
No
5. Have you ever self-assessed before?
Yes.....How? _____
No

APPENDIX 16: Reliability tests

Block A (Questionnaire, Section 1)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	25	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	25	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.937	13

Block B (Questionnaire, Section 2)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	25	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	25	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.935	10

Block C (Questionnaire, Section 3)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	25	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	25	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.869	9

Block D (Questionnaire, Section 4)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	25	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	25	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.904	9

APPENDIX 17: Sex and age

Sex

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	9	36.0	36.0	36.0
	female	16	64.0	64.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Age

Age (Average= 40)	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 24	1	4.0	4.0	4.0
29	1	4.0	4.0	8.0
33	2	8.0	8.0	16.0
34	2	8.0	8.0	24.0
35	3	12.0	12.0	36.0
36	2	8.0	8.0	44.0
37	2	8.0	8.0	52.0
41	1	4.0	4.0	56.0
42	1	4.0	4.0	60.0
43	3	12.0	12.0	72.0
46	2	8.0	8.0	80.0
48	1	4.0	4.0	84.0
50	1	4.0	4.0	88.0
54	1	4.0	4.0	92.0
56	1	4.0	4.0	96.0
60	1	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	25	100.0	100.0	

APPENDIX 18: Frequency of conferences and level of English proficiency

Frequency of conferences

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	5	20.0	20.0	20.0
2	13	52.0	52.0	72.0
3	7	28.0	28.0	100.0
Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Proficiency English Level

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	22	88.0	88.0	88.0
2.00	3	12.0	12.0	100.0
Total	25	100.0	100.0	

APPENDIX 19: Qualitative results (Strong Areas)

STRONG AREAS

Key words used	Informants' detailed data ⁵⁶	Frequency
Personalized (learning)	<p>1 (<i>feedback from my teacher</i>)</p> <p>7, 8 (<i>learning process is customized according to personal needs</i>)</p> <p>12, 14 (<i>personalized evaluation</i>)</p> <p>23 (<i>seguimiento personal, nunca jamás había tenido una tutoría personalizada</i>)</p> <p>22 (<i>individualizing learner needs</i>)</p> <p>23 (<i>te valoran personalmente</i>)</p> <p>24 (<i>evaluar individualmente con mi tutor</i>)</p> <p>25</p> <p>2, 6 (<i>conferences = more privacy, better telling of problems</i>)</p> <p>7 (<i>conferences, privacy</i>)</p>	13
Learning Strategies (Awareness and Identification)	<p>2 (<i>Knowing What works for me and what doesn't</i>)</p> <p>3, 8 (<i>guidelines to learn more effectively</i>)</p> <p>11 (<i>técnicas para resolver dificultades</i>)</p> <p>14 (<i>new strategies</i>)</p> <p>16 (<i>a way of learning</i>)</p> <p>17 (<i>new techniques to study</i>)</p> <p>18 (<i>buscar la estrategia de aprendizaje adecuada</i>)</p> <p>22 (<i>individualizing...strategies better adapted for him/her to achieve goals</i>)</p>	7
The teacher factor	<p>8 (<i>This was the first time I saw a teacher really involved with her students. It made me try harder</i>)</p> <p>9 (<i>talking to her makes me feel more optimist about my learning, more relaxed</i>)</p> <p>14 (<i>positive reinforcement</i>)</p> <p>22 (<i>...combined with conferencing with a competent and motivated teacher</i>).</p>	4

⁵⁶ Informant number is shown in red. Their interlanguage has been respected.

Awareness of skills	3, 21 (<i>recursos de los que disponemos y habitualmente no usamos</i>)	2	
Awareness of learning	4, 10, 17	3	
Awareness of progress	4, 15 (<i>realistic awareness</i>)	2	
Reflection	4, 11 (<i>on learning difficulties and monitoring difficulties</i>) 18 (<i>me he dado cuenta...</i>) 23	4	
Awareness/identification of difficulties	5, 7, 11, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20 (<i>analysis, self-assessment</i>) 21, 24	10	
Overcoming difficulties	4, 5, 7, 11, 14, 18, 24	7	
Successful Learning	Progress	2 (<i>I learn</i>) 7, 14 (<i>improving strengths</i>) 15 (<i>mejorar nivel</i>)	4
	Effective Learning	8, 14, 16 (<i>manage and use my learning resources</i>), 18 (<i>me he dado cuenta...</i>), 20 (<i>learning resources</i>), 23 (<i>conseguir metas</i>)	6
	motivation	2	1
	Useful	2, 3, 7, 9 (<i>fantastic for students</i>) 10 (<i>absolutely positive, really worthy</i>) 19 (<i>the idea is great</i>) 21 (<i>me parece interesante la experiencia, ofrece grandes expectativas</i>) 22 (<i>I am convinced of the high potential of self-learning combined...see teacher factor</i>) 23 (<i>muy útil</i>)	9

APPENDIX 20: Qualitative results (Areas of growth)

AREAS OF GROWTH		
Key words used	Informants' detailed data	Frequency
Takes time	1, 22 (<i>should be linked to distance learning</i>)	2
Needs more time	2, 3, 4, 5 (<i>at least twice per trimester</i>) 6, 11 (<i>poco tiempo</i>) 10 (<i>a few more</i>) 12 (<i>falta de tiempo</i>) 13, 14 (<i>poco tiempo</i>) 15, 19 (<i>too many students for one teacher</i>) 23 (<i>hay que trabajarlo más</i>) 25	14
Needs student effort	4, 17, 18 (<i>sometimes it's difficult to put strategies into practice</i>) 22 (<i>extra work</i>), 3 (<i>time for applying strategies</i>) 23 (<i>hay que trabajarlo más</i>) 25	7
Needs more systematic use/continuity/more conferences needed	4, 5, 14 (<i>ELP must be also used in previous courses</i>) 15 (<i>proceso de concienciación largo, hay que trabajarlo más</i>) 16 (<i>more intensive use; more control of results</i>) 23 (<i>te esfuerzas más</i>) 5, 8 (<i>even if that would take time from regular classes</i>) 10, 23	10
No weak points	7, 17	2
More resources needed	9 (<i>to do whatever teachers need to do to teach us</i>)	1
Did not understand the point about strategies	20	1

APPENDIX 21: Baumfield et al.'s questions

What went according to plan?
What was easier?
What was more difficult?
What had you predicted?
What surprised you?
What other things would you tell someone?

Source: Prepared by oneself (From Baumfield et al., 2008: 101)