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AND EFL ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract

In this paper the author reviews language learning strategies and looks into their effect on EFL achievement, as measured by grades throughout high school and grades achieved on the English language matura exam. A study was conducted to provide insights into whether students with different approaches to preparation and learning strategies get different results on the matura exam. In the first part, an overview of language learning strategies and the key researchers and taxonomies is provided. The second part describes the aims, participants, the research procedure, the instruments used, and the results of the study. Although this study was mainly intended to look into the relationship between language learning strategies and EFL achievement, it raised additional questions that need to be researched further. The matura exam is a somewhat new part of the Croatian education system and needs to be viewed in relation to our school system and our students who have different learning styles, strategies, influences and habits than those in other cultures.

Keywords: language learning strategies, learning styles, the matura exam, EFL learners

Introduction

This paper gives an account of case studies exploring language learning strategies used by five students in their final year of high school. The studies were conducted to provide an overview on the differences between language learning strategies applied during secondary education and those applied during the preparation for the matura exam. First, an overview of language learning strategies will be provided. Next, the participants will be described, as well as the instruments used to collect data, and the procedure. The results will contain the five case studies and explain if and how the participants' language learning strategies changed in preparation for the matura exam. In addition, the relationship between language learning strategies and achievement in EFL classes will be discussed.

Learning Strategies

According to Oxford (1990), the word *strategy* ws derived from the ancient Greek term *strategia* which meant the generalship or the art of war. Strategies involved optimal management of troops, ships, aircrafts in a planned campaign etc. The term *strategy* implied planning, conscious manipulation and movement toward a goal. Oxford (1990) also listed a commonly used definition of learning strategies as "operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information." (p. 8) Oxford noted that learning strategies are "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations". (p. 8)

Oxford (1990) gave another definition of language learning strategies as steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. She claimed that strategies were important for language learning because they were essentially tools for developing communicative competence. Oxford

also noted that when appropriate language learning strategies were used, the result was improved proficiency and greater self-confidence.

Dörnyei (2005) approached this topic from a different perspective – he questioned whether learning strategies even exist and how to distinguish them from usual learning behavior. Weinstein, Husman, and Dierking (as cited in Dörneyi, 2005) offered three critical characteristics of strategic learning – *goal-oriented*, *intentionally invoked* and *effortful*. However, these are three key features of motivation, so strategic learning can be mistaken for motivated learning. Cohen (as cited in Dörneyi, 2005) spoke about *the element of choice*. Cohen argued that the fact that strategies were voluntarily employed by the learner was one of their essential features. Still, these were not accepted by Dörneyi as sufficient for the definition and distinction of learning strategies. Riding and Rayner (as cited in Dörneyi, 2005) argued that ”an activity becomes strategic when it is particularly appropriate for the individual learner, in contrast to general learning activities which a student may find helpful”. (p. 165) This means that strategic learning occured when students purposefully select and make an effort to use learning procedures that they find will help them learn more easily and effectively.

Ehrman, Leaver and Oxford (2003) came to an interesting conclusion that any strategy is best viewed as neutral until considered in context. It becomes useful if it (a) relates well to the L2 task at hand, (b) fits the student's learning style, and (c) that the strategy is employed effectively. (p. 315)

Medved Krajnović (2010) addressed the differences in classifying strategies. She claimed that the differences in taxonomies were a reflection of issues with determining strategies, which were a result of the psycho-emotional individuality of each learner. However, they are a key part of acquiring a language. (p. 81)

Dörnyei mentioned two different but well-known taxonomies of language learning strategies – one developed by Rebecca L. Oxford (1990) and the other by O'Malley and Chamot (1990).

Oxford's taxonomy was made up of two categories of strategies: *direct* and *indirect,* which were then each divided into three more subcategories, as shown in Figure 1 below.
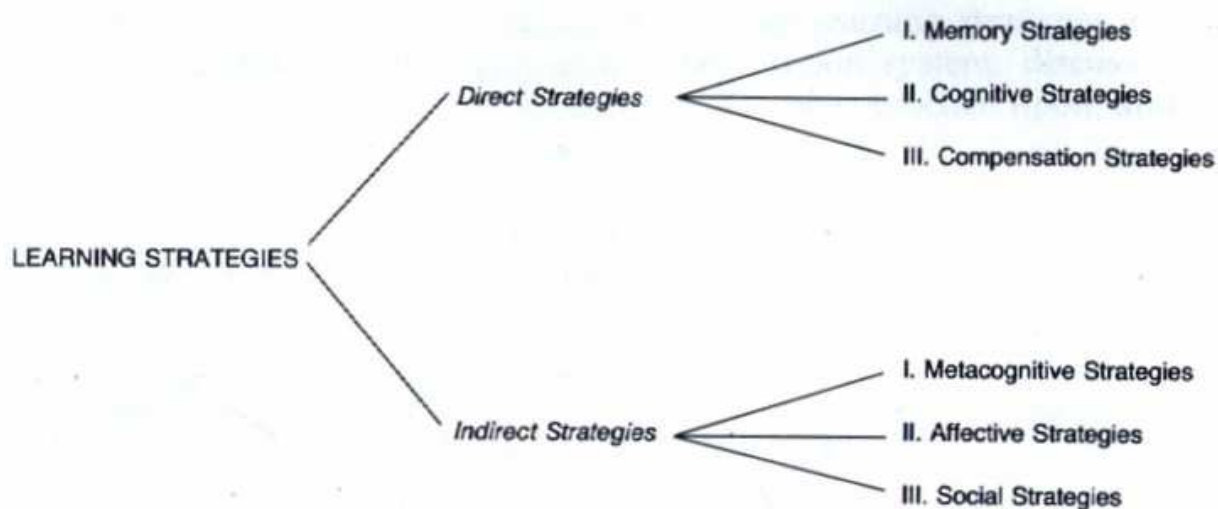

Figure 1. Diagram of the Strategy System: Overview. Reprinted from *Language Learning Strategies* (p. 16), by R. L. Oxford, 1990, Boston, Mass: Heinle&Heinle Publishers. Copyright 1990 by Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Oxford (1990) included memory, cognitive and compensation strategies in the category of direct strategies. In the indirect category, Oxford included metacognitive, affective and social strategies. A short overview of all six categories is provided below.

Memory strategies or *Remembering More Effectively* cover grouping; making associations; placing new words into a context to remember them; using imagery, sounds, sound-and-image combinations, actions etc. in order to remember new expressions; reviewing in a structured way; going back to review earlier material.
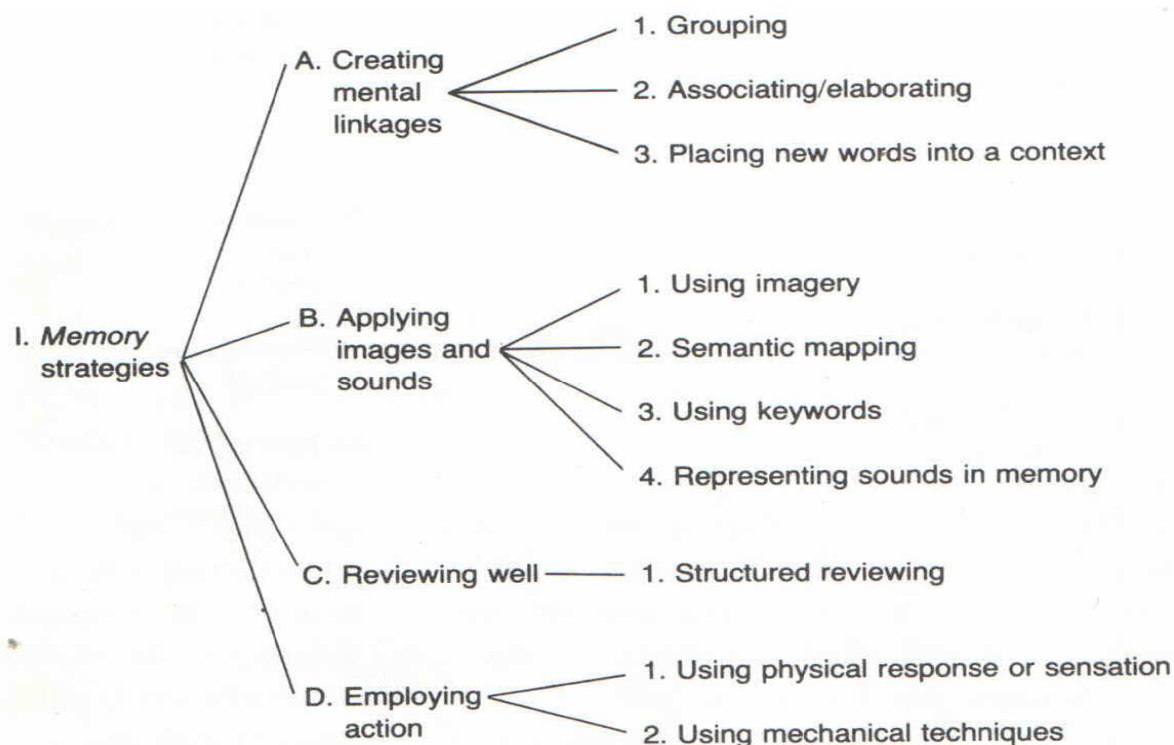
Figure 2. Diagram of the Strategy System Showing *Memory* Strategies. Reprinted from *Language Learning Strategies* (p. 18), by R. L. Oxford, 1990, Boston, Mass: Heinle&Heinle Publishers. Copyright 1990 by Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Cognitive strategies or *Using Your Mental Processes* cover repeating; practicing with sounds and writing systems; using formulas and patterns; recombining familiar items in new ways; practicing the new language in a variety of authentic situations involving the four skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing); skimming and scanning to get the idea quickly; using reference resources; taking notes; summarizing; reasoning deductively (applying general rules); analyzing expressions; analyzing contrastively via comparisons with another language; being cautious about word-for-word translating and direct transfers from another language; looking for language patterns; adjusting your understanding according to new information.
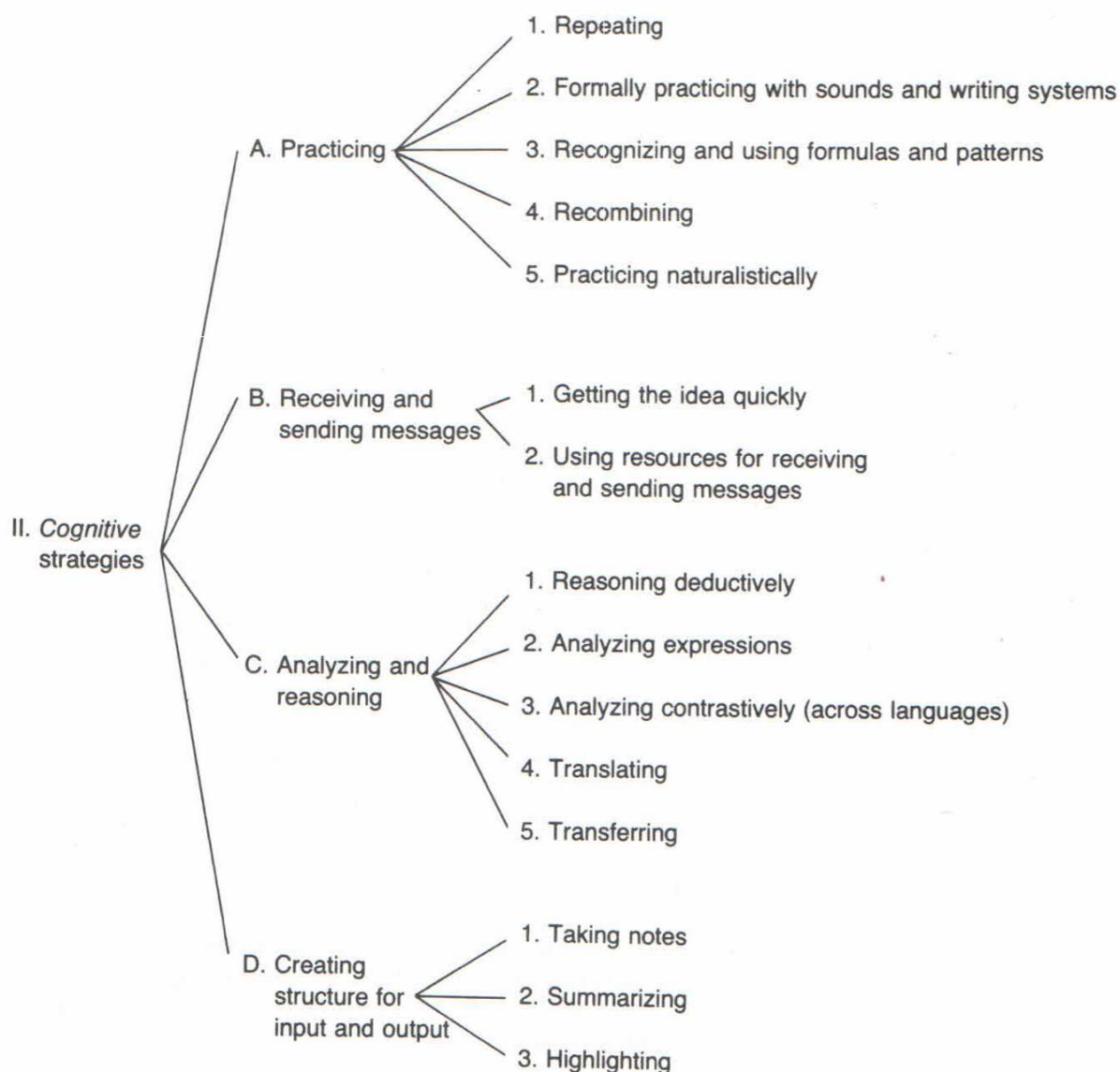
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                                    1. Repeating

                                    2. Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems

            A. Practicing           3. Recognizing and using formulas and patterns

                                    4. Recombining

                                    5. Practicing naturalistically


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


  II. Cognitive                     1. Reasoning deductively
      strategies
                                    2. Analyzing expressions

            C. Analyzing and        3. Analyzing contrastively (across languages)
               reasoning
                                    4. Translating

                                    5. Transferring


                                    1. Taking notes
            D. Creating
               structure for        2. Summarizing
               input and output
                                    3. Highlighting
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Figure 3. Diagram of the Strategy System Showing *Cognitive* Strategies. Reprinted

from *Language Learning Strategies* (p. 19), by R. L. Oxford, 1990, Boston, Mass:

Heinle&Heinle Publishers. Copyright 1990 by Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Compensation strategies or *Compensating for Missing Knowledge* cover using all possible

clues to guess the meaning of what is heard or read in the new language; trying to understand the

overall meaning and not necessarily every single word; finding ways to get the message across in

speaking and writing despite limited knowledge of the new language; for instance, using gestures,

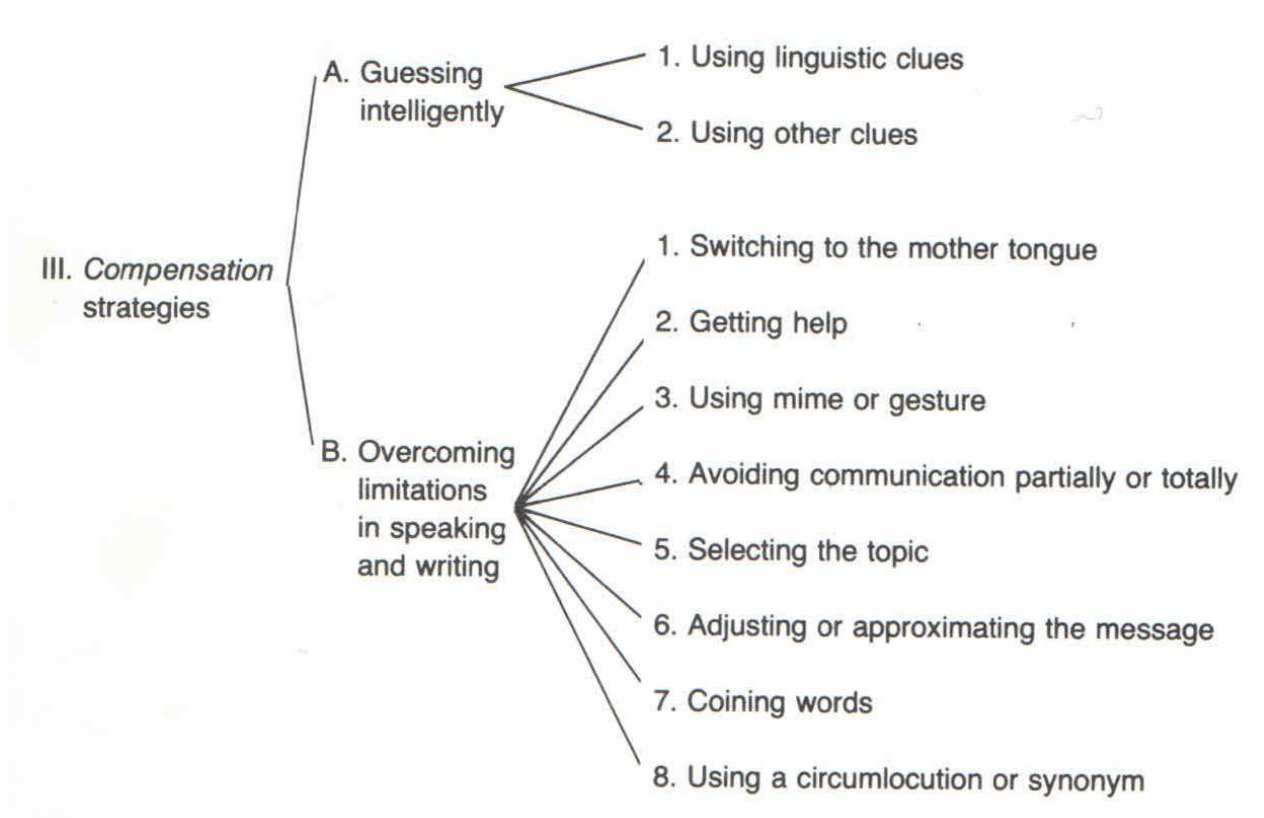switching to your own language momentarily, using a synonym or description, coining new words.

Figure 4. Diagram of the Strategy System Showing *Compensation* Strategies. Reprinted from *Language Learning Strategies* (p. 19), by R. L. Oxford, 1990, Boston, Mass: Heinle&Heinle Publishers. Copyright 1990 by Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Metacognitive strategies or *Organizing and Evaluating Your Learning* cover overviewing and linking with material you already know; deciding in general to pay attention; deciding to pay attention to specific details; finding out how language learning works; arranging to learn (schedule, environment, notebook); setting goals and objectives; identifying the purpose of a language task; planning for a language task; finding practice opportunities; noticing and learning from your errors; evaluating your progress.
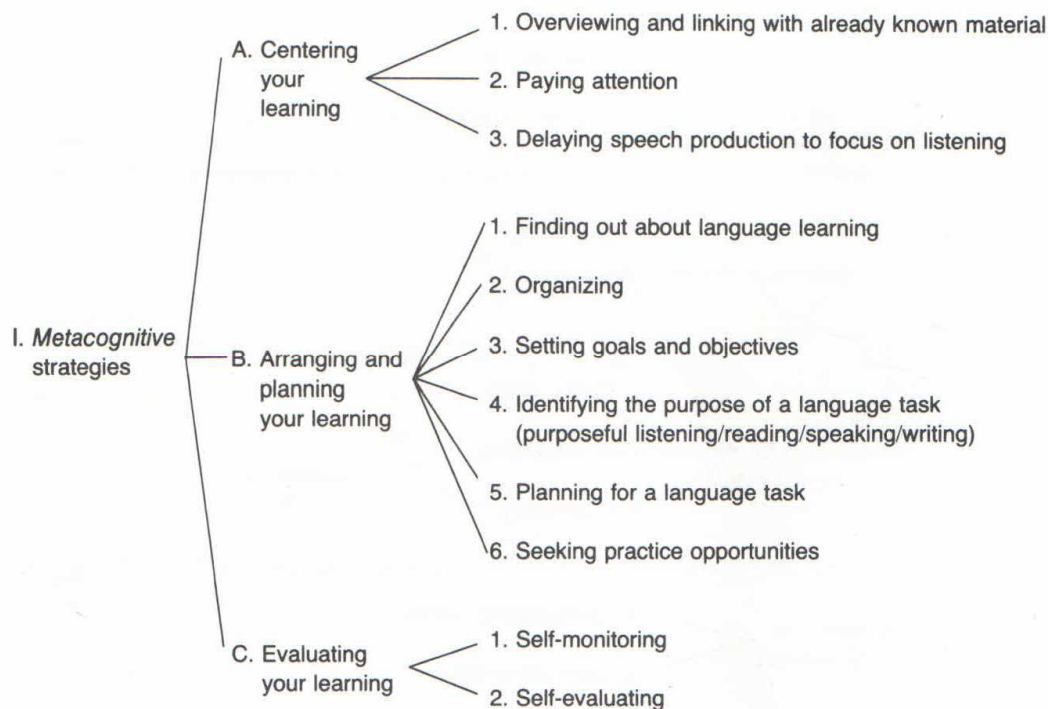
Figure 5. Diagram of the Strategy System Showing *Metacognitive* Strategies. Reprinted

from *Language Learning Strategies* (p. 20), by R. L. Oxford, 1990, Boston, Mass:

Heinle&Heinle Publishers. Copyright 1990 by Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Affective strategies or *Managing Your Emotions* cover lowering your anxiety; encouraging

yourself through positive statements; taking risks wisely; rewarding yourself; noting physical

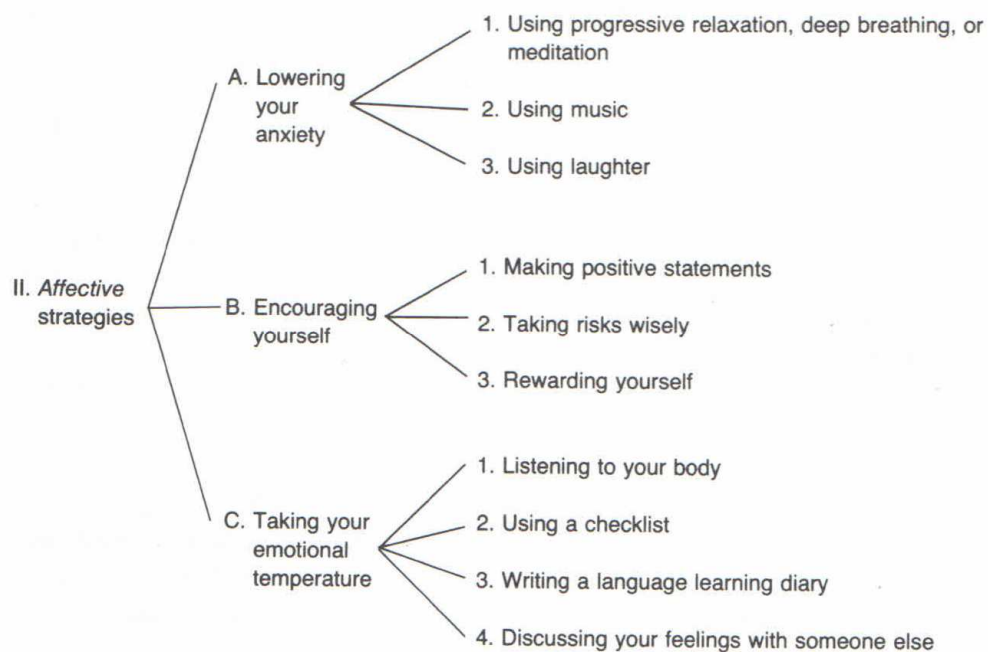stress; keeping a language learning diary; talking with someone about your feelings/attitudes.

Figure 6. Diagram of the Strategy System Showing *Affective* Strategies. Reprinted

from *Language Learning Strategies* (p. 21), by R. L. Oxford, 1990, Boston, Mass:

Heinle&Heinle Publishers. Copyright 1990 by Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Social strategies or *Learning with Others* cover asking questions for clarification or

verification; asking for correction; cooperating with peers; cooperating with proficient users of a

new language; developing cultural awareness; becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings.

(Oxford, 1990, p. 290)

Figure 7. Diagram of the Strategy System Showing *Social* Strategies. Reprinted

from *Language Learning Strategies* (p. 21), by R. L. Oxford, 1990, Boston, Mass:

Heinle&Heinle Publishers. Copyright 1990 by Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) taxonomy distinguished between three main classes of

strategies: *cognitive strategies*, *metacognitive strategies* and *social/affective strategies*. (p. 45) All

three classes have a counterpart in Oxford's taxonomy, as well as in Dörneyi's mentioned below.

Dörnyei (2005) presented a taxonomy in between. He suggested that the two taxonomies

mentioned above were highly compatible and, making three distinct changes, proposed the

following:

1. *Cognitive strategies* involving the manipulation or transformation of the learning

    materials/input (e.g., repetition, summarizing, using images)

2. *Metacognitive strategies*, involving higher-order strategies aimed at analyzing,

    monitoring, evaluating, planning, and organizing one's own learning process.

3. *Social strategies,* involving interpersonal behaviors aimed at increasing the amount

    of L2 communication and practice the learner undertakes (e.g., initiating interaction

    with native speakers, cooperating with peers)

4. *Affective strategies,* involving taking control of the emotional (affective) conditions

    and experiences that shape one's subjective involvement in learning. (p. 169)

Oxford (1990) concluded that "there is no complete agreement on exactly what strategies are; how

many strategies exist; how they should be defined, demarcated, and categorized; and whether it is-

or ever will be-possible to create a real scientifically validated hierarchy of strategies." (p. 17)

L2 learner autonomy is a vital part of this paper, as all learners in this day and age are taught

to take responsibility for learning. According to Oxford (2008), this means "deciding upon and

using *learning strategies and tactics* that are relevant to their tasks and goals". (p. 41) These strategies involve planning, evaluating and analyzing, all with the goal to better their language learning. Although Oxford, in the chapter cited above, dealt with learning usually without the involvement of a teacher, some of her claims can be applied for students preparing for the matura exam, such as the participants of the study described and discussed in this paper. Since a high school student in Croatia did not have a preparatory class for the matura exam as part of the national curriculum when this paper was written, students were expected to prepare on their own. Oxford (2008) stated that, unfortunately, learners' ability to make decisions in the learning process is not reality but an ideal. (p. 48) In terms of this study, this statement is quite important. As will be explained in detail later in the paper, the participants had to make choices regarding the matura exam on their own and that choice made a significant impact not only on their language learning, but their future as well. In the cases of our participants, the ideal would suggest the learners making an assessment of their knowledge and/or lack thereof, and focusing on the part of their knowledge and information they needed to succeed they found most problematic. The reality of the situation regarding our participants can be read in the *Results* section in greater detail. However, it is important to state that the participants did not make decisions based on an assessment of their language competence, but basically guessed what was best for them.

Aim of the present study

The aim of this study was to investigate the participants' use of learning strategies during and when preparing for their high school English classes and tests, as well as to find out how they approached preparations for their matura exam. Lastly, we hoped to look into the relationship between strategies used and EFL achievement of the participants.

Sample

The sample consisted of five students, three girls and two boys, finishing their senior year of high school. They were selected for administering three questionnaires and an interview on their learning strategies during their high school years and preparation for their matura exam. All participants attended a general-program secondary school and most continued their education at the university level while one decided to take a year off and then start university. They had all chosen to take English as the foreign language for their matura exam. Participant A decided to study sociology, Participant B chose the Faculty of Kinesiology and Participant C decided on attending the Faculty of Teacher Education majoring in the professional course for preschool teachers. Participant D chose a law program and Participant E decided to take a year to pursue his athletic career.

<center>Instruments</center>

Data was collected using four instruments:

1. A background questionnaire was used, originally developed for SILL by Rebecca Oxford (1990) and modified for speakers of other languages learning English, as seen in Appendix 1. This questionnaire was further modified to accommodate the specific requirements of this study. According to Oxford (1990), it provided additional information on student characteristics in order to help teachers, students and researchers understand the SILL results in context. (p. 281) The questionnaire comprised general questions: regarding name, age, first language, sex etc. It then required the participants to evaluate their knowledge of English, state whether they were satisfied with their language competence, and to compare it to others in their classes. Furthermore, it asked which part of the language would they like to improve, why, whether they enjoyed learning languages and why.

2. During the interview, the participants were asked questions about their preparation routines for tests in high school and then the matura exam.

The following questions were asked and altered depending on the participants' answers:

- Do you study for your written exams or is it enough to pay attention in class and do your homework? How much time do you spend studying?

- How do you study? Are there any special strategies or ways you prepare for written exams?

- Did studying for tests in high school differ from how you prepared for the matura exam?

- What presented the biggest problem when preparing for the English matura exam?

- Have you had this problem before? How did you tackle it? If not, what do you think changed and created the new problem?

- How did you decide on the right way of dealing with the problem?

- How did you search for a solution? (talking to parents, friends, browsing the internet, experience in learning other subjects…)

- Tell me something about things you thought of doing but eventually discarded.

- Why did you decide on this particular way of preparing/studying?

- In your opinion, what are the advantages of this type of learning?

- Are you happy with what you achieved? Do you think another way of preparing/studying would have resulted in better results?

- Are there any specific changes you noticed in your knowledge?

- Are you satisfied with the way you learned English?

- Are you happy with the results that the learning process provided?

The interview was recorded and the findings can be found below in the *Results* section.

3. SILL, or Strategy Inventory for Language Learning was developed by Rebecca Oxford in 1990. It was based on Oxford's strategy taxonomy described earlier. Dörnyei (2005) mentioned that SILL was the most often employed instrument for assessing language learning strategy use.

   The questionnaire, shown in Appendix 2, consisted of 80 items divided into 6 categories: (A) Remembering more effectively or memory strategies, (B) Using your mental processes or cognitive strategies, (C) Compensating for missing knowledge or compensation strategies, (D) Organizing and evaluating your learning or metacognitive strategies, (E) Managing your emotions or affective strategies and (F) Learning with others or social strategies.

   Scale scores were obtained by computing the average of the item scores within a scale. All items on the SILL have five possible answers: (1) Never or almost never true of me, (2) Usually not true of me, (3) Somewhat true of me, (4) Usually true of me and (5) Always or almost always true of me.

   The SILL focused on specific strategic behaviors and the scale descriptors indicated *frequencies* of strategy use. Since the items on SILL were used to ascertain behavioral patterns, total scores could not be predicted based on individual item scores. A high score on the SILL was achieved by a learner using as many different strategies as possible. However, this is in contradiction with strategy theory which clearly indicated that it was not necessarily the quantity but the quality of the employed strategies that was important. (Dörnyei, 2005, p.180-181)

   According to Oxford (1990), the overall average indicated how frequently language learning strategies were used. Each part of the SILL had its own average, which showed which groups of strategies the learner used the most. (p. 291)

Oxford (1990) divided a *high* average into two levels: *Always or almost always used* that range from 4.5 to 5.0; and *Generally used* which range from 3.5 to 4.4. A *medium* average implied strategies that were *Sometimes used* and range from 2.5 to 3.4. A *low* average was also divided into two levels: *Generally not used* which range from 1.5 to 2.4; and *Never or almost never used* which range from 1.0 to 1.4. (p. 291)

A *high* average would mean that a category of strategies was used most often, while a *low* average would mean that a category was used least often. The results would, therefore, show to the learners and teachers which categories were most and least used when learning a language and how every individual learner could best acquire a language as well as which aspects of learning the learner could improve.

4. The Learning Styles questionnaire, shown in Appendix 3, was designed by Andrew D. Cohen, Rebecca L. Oxford & Julie C. Chi (2002). According to the authors, the Learning Style Survey was created to indicate "the overall style preferences" of the learner (p. 15). The survey was made up of 11 parts. Completing the survey took about 30 minutes. Possible answers were: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often and Always, Always carrying the highest value of 4, and Never the lowest of 0. The results were then added up and placed in a table such as the one shown in Figure 8 below.

Part 1: A ____ Visual B ____ Auditory C ____ Tactile/Kinesthetic	Part 7: A ____ Sharpener B ____ Leveler
Part 2: A ____ Extraverted B ____ Introverted	Part 8: A ____ Deductive B ____ Inductive
Part 3: A ____ Random-Intuitive B ____ Concrete-Sequential	Part 9: A ____ Field-Independent B ____ Field-Dependent
Part 4: A ____ Closure-Oriented B ____ Open	Part 10: A ____ Impulsive B ____ Reflective
Part 5: A ____ Global B ____ Particular	Part 11: A ____ Metaphoric B ____ Literal
Part 6: A ____ Synthesizing B ____ Analytic	

Figure 8. Table of results for the Learning Styles Survey. Reprinted from *Language Style Survey: Assessing Your Own Learning Styles* (p. 19), by A. D. Cohen, R. L. Oxford, J. C. Chi, 2002, Minneapolis, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota. Copyright 2002 by Regents of the University of Minnesota.

As mentioned before, the results of this survey showed a general style preference. In the instructions to interpreting one's results, it was mentioned that if results within a part of the survey were close, then one should read about both learning styles and consider both characteristics. However, Cohen, Oxford and Chi pointed out that learning styles change throughout one's life and can be stretched. Therefore, a learner should not consider himself or herself in terms of only one learning style. The authors of the survey advised learners to stretch beyond what was comfortable in order to expand their learning and working potential. This means that after having completed the survey, a learner should study the results and, with or without the help of a teacher, try to develop style areas that he or she did *not* use and use strategies to deal with language tasks.

As seen in Figure 8., a learner's results of Part 1 of the questionnaire could show his or her learning style preferences as visual, auditory or kinesthetic. Learning for a visual learner has the best effect through visual means: books, pictures, videos etc. An auditory learner learns best through listening and speaking, i.e. debates, tapes, lectures, and so on. A kinesthetic learners most through experiments, projects, games etc.

Part 2 distinguishes how students open themselves to learning situations. An extraverted learner would benefit from interactive tasks: games, debates, role-playing, etc. An introvert prefers working on his or her own or with a person they know well.

Part 3 of the survey deals with handling possibilities. A random-intuitive learner likes abstract thinking, speculations about the future and usually dislike step-by-step instruction. A concrete-sequential learner prefers dealing with the present and one-step-at-a-time tasks.

Part 4 differentiates learners with regards to how they approach tasks. A closure-oriented leaner focuses on most or all tasks, attempts to meet deadlines, plans ahead and is more comfortable with explicit directions. If the learner is open-oriented, he or she prefers discovery learning and learning without thinking about deadlines or rules.

Part 5 deals with receiving information. Learners who have a global preference are comfortable in communication even if they do not know all words involved and are more focused on getting the main idea. A learner with particular style preference focuses on and remembers details about a topic.

Part 6 shows how learners further process information. A synthesizing learner summarizes well, likes predictions and guessing. An analytic learner pulls ideas apart, prefer logical analysis and focuses on grammar rules.

Part 7 deals with committing material to memory. A sharpener tends to seek differences between information while memorizing. A sharpener can also easily retrieve information because they are stored separately. A leveler blends material together to remember, and focuses on similarities. However, a leveler is more likely to blur similar memories.

Part 8 shows the learner how he or she deals with language rules. If a learner is deductive, he or she like to start from the general and work his or her way to the specific, while an inductive learner prefers the opposite.

Part 9 deals with multiple inputs. A learner with a field-independent style preference enjoys separating material form context, while a more field-dependent learner deals with material in a holistic way. The latter works best without distractions.

In part 10, questions are directed at response time. An impulsive learner, as the name suggests, reacts more quickly with little or no thinking about what he or she is about to say. On the other hand, a reflective learner's thoughts precede his or her actions.

Part 11 deals with how literally a learner takes reality. A metaphoric leaner learns better if he or she produces an extended metaphor for the material. A literal learner likes to work with material as is. (Cohen, Oxford, Chi, 2002, pp. 21-22)

<div align="center">Procedure</div>

The interview and questionnaires were administered in June and July 2013, in the interviewer's home. All questionnaires and the interview were in Croatian, the participants' L1.

The participants were first given the background questionnaire. The interviewer explained the topic of the conversation and instructed the participants to take their time with their answers, encouraged them to ask for clarification if they did not understand the questions asked, to answer truthfully and honestly and stressed that there were not any right or wrong answers. The interviewer also assured the participants all information was confidential. After the interview, the participants were administered the SILL. The participants were also told that the SILL was originally a tool to help students better understand how to learn a new language and that the

information helped them become better learners. (Oxford, 1990, p. 278) Lastly, they were asked to fill out a questionnaire on learning styles.

Results

Five Case Studies

Participant A

Participant A was a 19-year-old girl who had been learning English for nine years. She rated her knowledge of English as *good*, but was not happy with the level of knowledge she possessed. When filling out the background questionnaire, she was asked to compare her knowledge with others in her class and she circled *approximately the same as others.* She also stated that improving her knowledge was *very important*, especially vocabulary. She did not like learning languages but said she wanted to learn because she was interested in language in general, how languages differ and function and the differences between languages she had been learning. She also found it necessary for her future career and travel. She had been learning Italian and Spanish and stated that her favorite part of language learning was the process of preparing for her matura exam. Her grades through the four years of high school were 3 in the first, second and fourth year, 2 in the third year and 3 for the matura exam.

In the interview, *participant A* said that, during high school, she studied for about an hour a day starting two days before her written exams alongside doing homework and paying attention in class. She read texts covered in class and did exercises the teacher had said could possibly be in the exam from her workbook. If all of the exercises had already been done in class or as homework, she used exercises from a 'giant' grammar book she has at home. Participant A also said she did not do anything different for English as opposed to other classes she studied for.

When discussing grammar versus vocabulary exams, she said she did not study for grammar exams but said she had 'learned it a long time ago'. However, she recognized the fact that there were grammar points she did not know and could learn but said they were not necessary for her exams in high school. For vocabulary exams, she said she read the texts she was being tested on and then went through the questions that accompanied the text, memorized words and important information. When discussing preparation for the matura exam, she acknowledged that there was a big difference from studying for written exams during her high school years. Studying for the matura exam was *'ultra turbo intense'* – she went through all the previous matura English exams and essays with an English teacher in individual private lessons who also gave her additional topics to write about and exercises to do. Participant A also made the distinction between 'studying' for written exams and 'preparing' for the matura exam. She did not see 'preparing' for the matura exam as studying. She also characterized her studying in high school as pointless learning by heart or '*štreberaj*'. The biggest problem she encountered when preparing for the matura exam was the essay portion of the exam, because she claimed her vocabulary was 'zero' and she did not know which words to use for the specific topic she was presented with. However, at a later point in the interview she said she actually also had a problem with placing facts in the essay – she had problems distinguishing between important and unimportant facts and their connection with the subject. She said her teacher with whom she had had individual lessons said she lost her train of thought easily when writing and transitioned to a completely different topic from one sentence to the next. When asked if she encountered these problems in high school, she responded with 'No, we didn't write essays in high school.' Going back to the 'zero' vocabulary answer, she acknowledged that she could have done something about it beforehand and not wait and see what would happen with the matura exam. Reading books in English, watching movies without subtitles and writing practice essays were her ideas on preparing for the matura exam in advance. When considering different types of preparation for the matura exam, she turned to an

English teacher in the family for guidance and together they decided it was best to prepare and study individually. Even though most of her classmates decided on group classes or just studying alone, she thought individual classes were the best for her because she felt she had specific problems and wanted to tackle them efficiently. There was also no fear of being left out in class or the teacher not getting to her and answering her questions as well as not feeling stupid for not knowing something others thought of as easy and common knowledge. She also said she did not encounter any new problems when she began going through the material – she knew what her trouble areas were when it came to English and it turned out she was right, therefore there were no surprises. The essay and the cloze test were her biggest fears. For the essay, she and the teacher brainstormed out loud and then turned ideas into concrete sentences together, and each time the teacher participated less and less – after three or four lessons, she was able to write an essay alone and felt a lot more confident even though she knew she had made many grammatical errors and mistakes. For the cloze test, the teacher gave her a lot of similar exercises which they went through. She said it helped a lot, but she realized it could have been even better if she had thought of the matura exam at the beginning of high school or even earlier. Even so, she was happy with the results of the matura exam and the leap in knowledge she was aware had happened. She was very excited about the fact that the teacher helped her 'cheat' in the essay by using words such as *however, moreover, therefore, thus, finally, initially* etc. or what they called 'fancy words'. She also said she learned how to effectively go through texts for reading comprehension exercises without getting pulled into the story but focusing on the task at hand. She was very proud of the fact that she helped a few of her classmates do better on the exam by sharing some of this newly acquired knowledge and said it felt great to have them say 'thanks for your help in English', when English was always her problem subject in school. This participant also said she liked the fact that by going through all of the tenses with a teacher one-on-one helped fill in the blanks and she now understood which tense to use and actually used them more. Because English was always a

problem for her, she was happy with her grades and progress but realized she could have done
better in high school with different "learning habits" and perhaps a tutor.

The analysis of the SILL scores for *participant A* showed that she scored highest in
compensation strategies (M=3.75) which was also the only one of her SILL averages that was in
the *High* category. All of the rest of her scores were settled in the *Medium* category. She scored
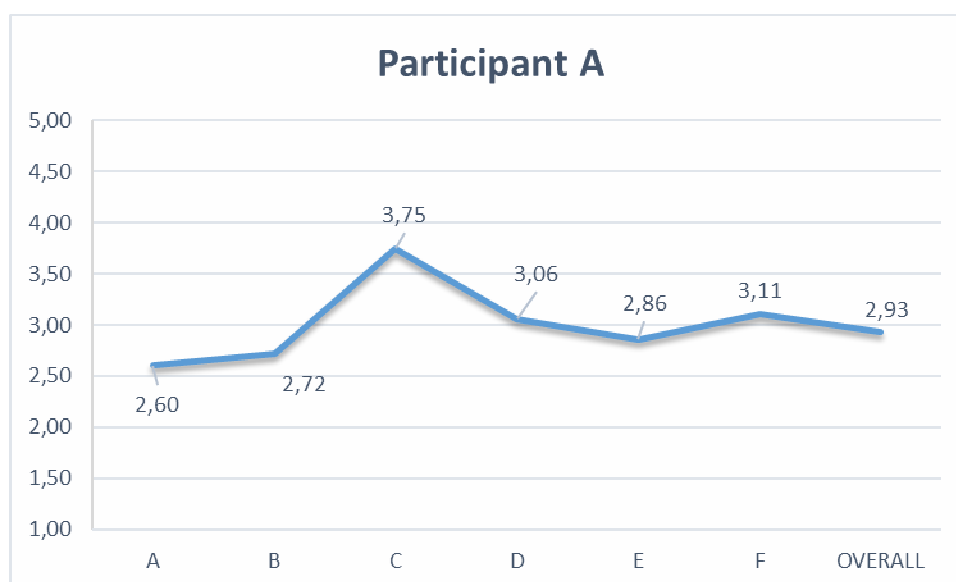lowest in memory strategies (M=2.60).

Figure 9. Participant A's SILL scores.

According to the Learning styles questionnaire, *participant A* was a visual and auditory
learner. There was a slight difference in the score in favor of the introverted learning style. Results
of parts 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 11 showed only a small difference between the possible learning styles.
She therefore had displayed characteristics of a random-intuitive and concrete-sequential learner, a
closure-oriented and open-oriented learner, a global and particular learner, a sharpener and a
leverer, a deductive and inductive learner, and a metaphoric and literal learner. Parts 6 and 10

showed she was impulsive and preferred synthesizing to analyzing. Only in part 9 was the score exactly the same for field-independent and field-dependent characteristics.

Participant B

Participant B was an 18 year-old girl who had been learning English for nine years. She answered *good* when asked how she would rate her knowledge of language. She was not satisfied with her language competence and would have liked to improve her fluency of speech. When comparing her language competence to others' in her class, she answered *better than others.* She opted for *important* when answering the question of importance of enhancing competence. She did not like learning languages but saw English as important for her future career and travel. She had learned Italian and stated her favorite part of language learning was writing essays. Her grades were 4 in the first, second and fourth grade, 3 in the third and 4 for the matura exam.

Participant B said she did not study English for tests or oral exams but found it was enough to pay attention in class and do the homework assigned by the teacher to do well. She later amended that she did prepare for exams she thought could be more difficult than usual by reading what was done in class. However, it never took her more than 15 minutes to review everything she considered necessary or the teacher said would be in the exam. She also said doing homework did not take more than 15 minutes. When discussing grammar versus vocabulary exams, she said she prepared more for grammar exams by going over exercises done in class or as homework from her workbook. She never had individual private lessons or tried to find additional exercises to prepare for exams. When talking about the matura exam, she admitted going to group preparatory lessons and added that it was completely different from the type of "studying"[1] she did in high school. Contrary to Participant A, Participant B said she had the most problems with grammar when

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[1] Participant B used her hands to put quotation marks when saying the word *studying*.

preparing for the matura exam but said she did not have this problem before. She said she tackled her grammar issues by asking a lot of questions in additional group preparatory classes she attended for the matura exam. The teacher in those classes explained the subject matter 'five times better' than her high school English teacher and that made her studying and tackling exercises easier. The participant mentioned that she did not know she had problems with grammar and only realized it when attending group preparatory classes where the teacher specifically addressed single grammar topics at a time – this was what the participant claimed helped the most. She also said this was not the case in high school, where the teacher only mentioned certain grammar points in connection to a specific text, but did not deal with it in a more thorough manner. Although she got good grades in high school, this participant noted it was her opinion that her grades did not have much to do with the high school teacher but with her EFL teachers before high school and her own 'ear for languages' which helped her 'just feel' if something was correct or incorrect in the exams. When discussing why she chose group preparatory lessons instead of private lessons or preparing by herself, the participant said she had never written an essay in English before, as it was never asked of her during her high school years. This caused her to think it was best and easiest to attend a preparatory class where a teacher would explain how and what to do. She chose the preparatory class herself. She claimed she was not influenced by her friends. She said she chose the classes because of the price and location, as well as the reputation of the teacher. Once she started classes, she did not have problems with the subject matter and found it easy to follow and acquire what was required. When asked about the best part of preparing in a group class, she said it was good to see that the teacher had different ways of explaining the same thing to different students and the students had different ways of learning – some she found easy, some difficult, but she claimed she benefited from experiencing all of the above. The teacher first explained what they needed to do to prepare for writing, what an essay must contain, how to think about the topic at hand, how to consider pros and cons, and gave them examples in the form of

written essays where they found good and bad points, critiqued and found better solutions and thought of different, more appropriate sentences. Then they wrote essays discussing many different topics and critiqued those. She said that after a few essays she saw improvement which motivated her to study and improve even more. She did not feel like a lost cause the way she did when classes started. She also said she somewhat changed the ways she learned, because she never thought of it in that way before. For example, when trying to remember vocabulary that she found very difficult and incomprehensible, she always tried to learn by heart. Words and phrases such as: however, notwithstanding, moreover, in addition to, as introduced by, followed by, in conclusion to, to sum up, with regards to etc. However, she saw in the group classes that one girl was writing the words on a piece of paper into a house she had drawn using the ground floor as the beginning of the essays and the roof as the conclusion and putting other words and phrases in the windows. This made her remember the words instantly. Moreover, she tried this learning strategy when learning biology and Croatian literature, but used different drawings, for example an ocean where the fish became smaller in size as the facts were more detailed, and a forest where the tree trunks were more general facts and the branches and leaves more detailed facts. Her conclusion was that she needed to focus more on what helped her learn instead of thinking in terms of what she viewed as 'normal' or 'standard', such as writing notes or learning straight from the book without summarizing or mapping the chapters. When asked if she found the group classes a good experience, she said she found them more beneficial than the four years of high school. What she considered great was the fact that she did not have to study outside of the preparatory classes but learned in class, which left her plenty of time to study for school, since the classes were held all through spring (March, April, May). The aspect of her knowledge she found improved most is her essays: she now enjoyed writing them and was happy when she completed an essay because she saw what she did right and what could have been better. This participant described studying in high school and preparation for the matura exam as vastly different. She did not study in high

school and she knew it was because of laziness. She was also very happy with the grades she got and with how "she overcame her own personality" when faced with an important issue as getting into college. She was also happy with how she did on her matura exam, and even though her grade was not the highest possible, she realized that in proportion to the amount of effort she put in, the grade was a fair and objective result of the knowledge, preparation and studying. The single thing she emphasized and thought could have helped her get a better grade was to do more work on her own outside the preparatory classes or school.

Participant B scored highest in the compensation strategies group (M=3.88); and lowest in the affective strategies (M=2.14). Her metacognitive strategies mean was low. The rest were in the medium range.
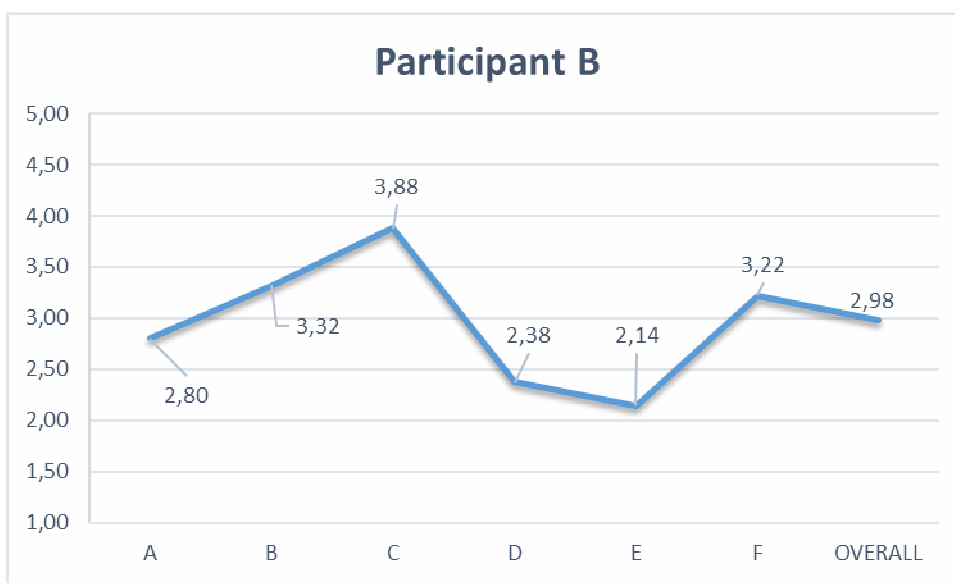

Figure 10. Participant B's SILL scores.

The Learning style questionnaire showed that *participant B* was a kinesthetic learner, extraverted, open-oriented, deductive, field-independent and metaphoric. Her results were similar in parts 3, 5, 6, 7, and 10. This showed that she had characteristics of all the following learning

styles: random-intuitive and concrete-sequential, global and particular, synthesizing and analytic, sharpener and leveler, and impulsive and reflective.

Participant C

Participant C was an 18-year-old girl who had been learning English for nine years. She rated her competence in English as *good* and stated she was happy with the level of knowledge she possessed. However, she also stated she would have liked to improve both her vocabulary and knowledge of grammar. When comparing herself to others in her class, she viewed herself as *approximately the same as others.* She stated it was *important* to enhance her competence level because she found it necessary for travel. She liked learning languages because she considered it a challenge to acquire new, interesting information and use it in communication. She had also learned Italian. She found gathering information, summarizing what was important and repetition her favorite part of learning languages. Her grades were 4 for the first three years of high school, 3 for the fourth and 3 for the matura exam.

Participant C said that the teachers practised giving them additional exercises similar to the ones that would be in the following written exam. They then did those exercises at home and saw what they needed to work on and prepare for the exam based on the results. She studied by reading from her textbook and notebook, and finding exercises, explanations and examples on the internet. She found homework assignments helpful but they were only discussed during oral exams and were not grammar exercises but related more to expressing yourself and expanding vocabulary. She also noted that grammar and vocabulary were pretty strictly separated and this caused confusion when she needed to perform well in both aspects at once. When asked how she prepared for such different exams, she said she 'crammed' for vocabulary exams, as well as made summaries for texts she needed to know and retell and then repeated what she had written out loud

simulating her oral examination and answering as she would in the classroom. She approached grammar in a similar way she handled math – the more exercises she went through, the more she repeated the rules, the more she remembered and the more secure she felt. She spent from an hour to an hour and a half preparing and studying for exams, both written and oral. This participant did not attend either private or group preparatory classes. She prepared by herself, going through previous matura exams and study materials from *Trinom* [2] she got from a friend. The biggest obstacles in preparation for the matura exam was the essay, because she felt high school had not prepared her for expressing herself through writing but focused on oral communication, which was useful in life but had its shortcomings when dealing with the matura exam. She said that her preparation for the matura exam was 90% hope that all will end well and 10% thinking of topics and how she could and would make an essay out of what she knows from her first language essays skills. Having said it aloud, she immediately added, *'I realize now that I should have tried writing what I came up with in my head but it didn't occur to me at the time'*. She said they had homework essays assignments in high school, where the teacher took one or two classes to repeat the structure of essays and had the students do a practice essay and then assigned a topic for them to be graded on. Even though she saw then and knew now that the essay made her the most uncomfortable and gave her the most problems, she tried to tackle it on her own without seeking help from friends or teachers but by looking up examples of what others wrote on the internet. When writing the few practice essays she tried on her own, she wrote them in Croatian and then translated into English. She said she regretted preparing that way because when at the matura exam, she wrote in English fearing she would not have enough time, which made all her practicing meaningless. However, she said she was not sorry for the way she prepared for the matura exam nor did she think she could have done it differently because she did not know then and still did not know how else she could have prepared differently. She was happy with how she did on the exam

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[2] A learning center based in Zagreb specializing in preparatory classes for matura exams and college admission exams.

and said it was a relief because she thought the exam itself would be much worse and therefore mentally prepared for the worst possible outcome. When asked if she could have done better on the essay part of the exam if she had prepared differently, she said no because it turned out to be the 'easiest' part, having gotten a topic she was very familiar with. She also stressed that the most difficult part of the exam was the last task, a cloze test, and felt she got most of it wrong. When asked if she could have prepared better for the matura exam including her high school years she said her teacher did the best she could and there was nothing more to do. However, she was not happy with the way she studied or prepared during high school or for the matura exam but she was very happy with the grades she received. At the end of the interview, however, she said she could have read more books in her free time and that would have helped with her vocabulary.

Participant C had a medium score (M=3.07) in the memory strategies group while all her other means were high, scoring highest in social strategies (M=3.89). This was also the only participant that scored above the 3.00 point in all strategies tested.
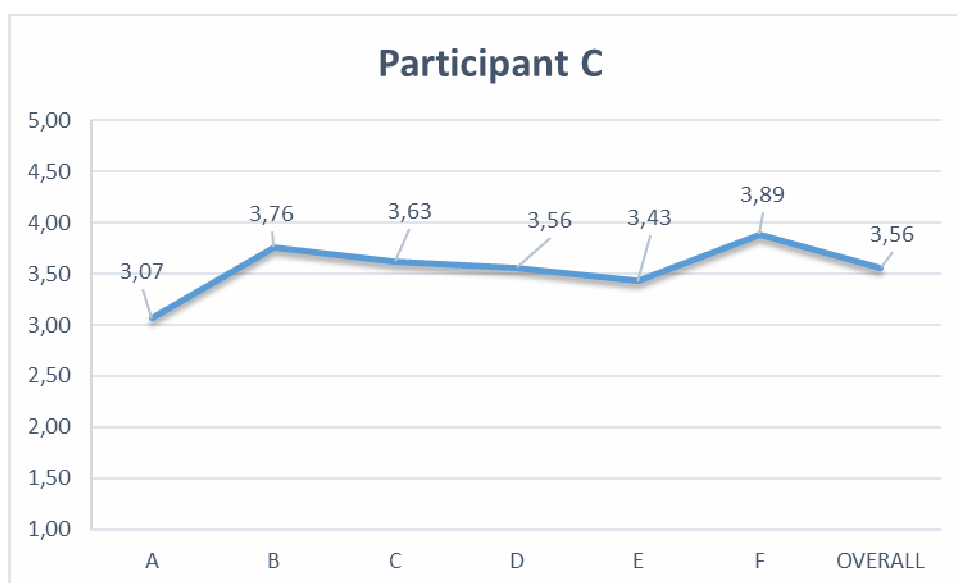

Figure 10. Participant C's SILL scores.

According to the Learning styles questionnaire scores, *participant C* was a visual and kinesthetic learner, concrete-sequential, and prefered synthesizing. She had the same score in parts 5, 8 and 10 meaning she was equal parts a global and particular learner, deductive and inductive; and impulsive and reflective. Her scores were similar in parts 2, 4, 7, 9 and 11, which meant she had characteristics of both extraverted and introverted learners, closed-oriented and open-oriented learners, a sharpener and a leveler, was both field-independent and field-dependent; and metaphoric and literal.

Participant D

Participant D was a 19-year-old boy who had been learning English for 14 years. He rated his language competence as *good* but was not satisfied with his level of knowledge. When tackling the question about what he would have liked to improve, he wrote *"to speak it like it was my mother tongue"*. He rated his language competence as *approximately the same as others* in his class. He found it *very important* to improve his language competence because he had friends who spoke English and found English necessary for his future career and travel. He also discovered he had a mandatory English class at the university he planned to attend. He did not like learning languages. He had learned German and Spanish, and also listed Latin. His favorite part of language learning was the games his teacher taught them, which they played in class. His grades were 4 for the first two years of high school, 3 for the second two years of high school and 3 for his matura exam.

Participant D said that paying attention in class and doing his homework was not enough but he had to study and prepare for every test, written and oral, which took him about half an hour. He read texts from his textbook and exercises done in class or as part of a homework assignment

but did not try and find additional exercises or explanations. When asked if there was a difference between studying for vocabulary versus grammar tests, he responded by saying that he made cheat-sheets for vocabulary tests. For grammar tests, he learned what he called 'patterns'. For example, when preparing for tests on tenses he would remember phrases *every day, every week, every month* etc. to recognize present simple. When he did not have time to study, he said he would rely on his "feel for the language" – upon going through the test he would do the exact opposite of what his 'feeling' would tell him and that would produce a passing grade. For the matura exam, his mother decided he should attend private group preparatory classes. This participant liked the fact that the classes comprised a small number of people (8 people per class) and that everything was done in a small amount of time, which gave him the opportunity to compare facts. For example, in the classes, they went through all tenses in a matter of two sessions in one day; this helped him understand the differences, and better, and therefore correctly, use the tenses. They also wrote practice essays which the teacher graded and discussed with the class. When asked about the way he studied, participant D said it changed during his last year of high school, when he started taking preparatory group classes, because they taught him how to deal with exercises in a different way. This enabled him to study for preparatory classes and learn what he needed to learn for school. This participant also found the cloze test exercise most difficult and even labeled it frightening because he felt he could not study for this type of exercise in the amount of time he had, but that he failed to learn what he needed to in all his years of previous education. However, he focused most of his attention during the preparatory classes on this type of exercises, and asked the teacher to provide him with additional exercises which he did at home after the weekly sessions. Alongside himself, he blamed his high school English teacher for not providing more cloze test exercises and preparing him and his classmates better for the matura exam. The essay part of the matura exam did not bother him because "*[he] could always stick to present simple and not mess up too much*". The participant was very happy with the chosen

method of preparation for the matura exam but thought that what could have helped him more were private classes with a teacher one-on-one, which he considered a better way to learn in general because then he would focus on what he personally had trouble with most. However, he thought he was lucky that the group he was a part of had similar problems, but it could have turned out very differently. He noticed changes in his knowledge in recognizing tenses and when to use which, in his spelling etc. He was very happy about how he studied for the matura exam, but was very unhappy with his studying during his high school years. Upon additional questions, he became very specific: he blamed his teacher for the fact that he did not learn 'anything' in four years. He claimed his teacher demanded he do everything at home alone, which he found ridiculous, and said *"then I didn't even have to go to school, if I don't learn anything in class, it's the teacher's fault"*. However, he did not say the teacher lacked knowledge, but was not eager or willing to teach them. Since she appeared not to be motivated, he claimed nobody else could have been either. Nevertheless, he said he did not do anything to improve his English during high school so it could have potentially been his fault should the teacher have been different. He confessed that he now saw how doing his homework regularly, going through his workbook, picking ten words from the dictionary every week and writing them down and trying to explain them in his own words would have helped him long term but would not take up a lot of time at all. He also concluded that all of this would have helped him with the cloze test exercise and he would recommend to every student newly enrolled in high school to do all of the above regularly. However, he did not feel sorry or regretful about it as he said 'I can do it now, it's never too late to learn a language but I'm still just too lazy to put in the effort'. He felt his grade matched the effort put into preparing and studying through the years as well as just prior to the matura exam and felt satisfied with what he accomplished.

Participant D scored highest in compensatory strategies group (M=4.13). Interestingly, this is also the highest score for this category out of all five participants. However, all of his other

means were low, the lowest being in case of affective strategies (M=1.29), also the lowest for affective strategies out of all five participants.
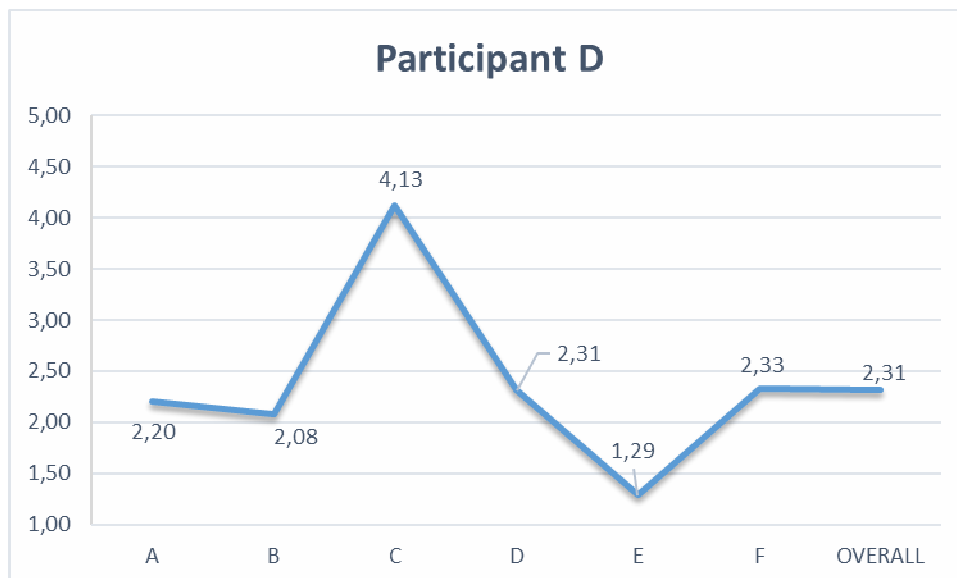
Figure 11. Participant D's SILL scores.

Participant D's Learning styles score as evenly distributed in the first part: he was a visual, auditory and kinesthetic learner. However, he had no other category of learning styles even close in scores. He was an extraverted, random-intuitive, open-oriented, global, synthesizing learner. He was also a leveler, inductive, field-independent, impulsive and metaphoric learner.

Participant E

Participant E was an 18-year-old boy who had been learning English for 15 years. He rated his language competence as *excellent* and was happy with his level of knowledge. He would have liked to improve his pronunciation. He rated his language competence as *better than others* in his class. He found it *important* to improve his level of knowledge because he was interested in the English language, in different cultures which he could only explore using English, he had

friends who spoke English, he would have a mandatory English class at the university he plans to attend after his year off, and found it necessary for his future career and travel. He enjoyed learning languages because he found it fun to acquire new knowledge and considered it a challenge to remember as much information as possible which he could later "*wow people with*". He had also learned German and found communicating with others the best part of learning a language. His grades were 5 in the first, second and fourth year of high school, 4 in the third and 5 for the matura exam.

Participant E said he did not study English at home all through high school, but tried to pay attention in class as much as he could. He stated he always loved English so paying attention was not that difficult even though he was somewhat of a troublemaker all through his school years. Even though he sometimes found the topics of the lessons boring, he found something new and interesting in every lesson and therefore kept himself motivated. Homework took very little time to do and he said he could not remember the last time he got a bad grade in English. He claimed he went through the texts from his English textbook once before written or oral exams, which was enough because he looked up unknown words during class (there was a dictionary in the classroom available for use) or after class. For the matura exam, he practiced writing essays which his high school teacher then corrected. He said that he did not have any problems preparing for the matura exam, nor for tests during his high school years. He therefore did not take any additional preparatory classes, individual or group, but went through matura exams from previous years by himself and took any advice his high school teacher gave to the class and to him personally. He considered taking group preparatory classes, but after going through previous matura exams and talking to his high school English teacher, decided against it and opted to pay for classes for other subjects which he had more difficulty with. He was happy with what he achieved and the grade he got. He said he could not be happy or unhappy with his learning of

English since he just 'picks it up along the way', but said he could probably learn even more. However, he did not see the need for it.

Participant E scored highest on the cognitive strategies (M=3.88) and lowest on the ffective strategies (M=1.71).
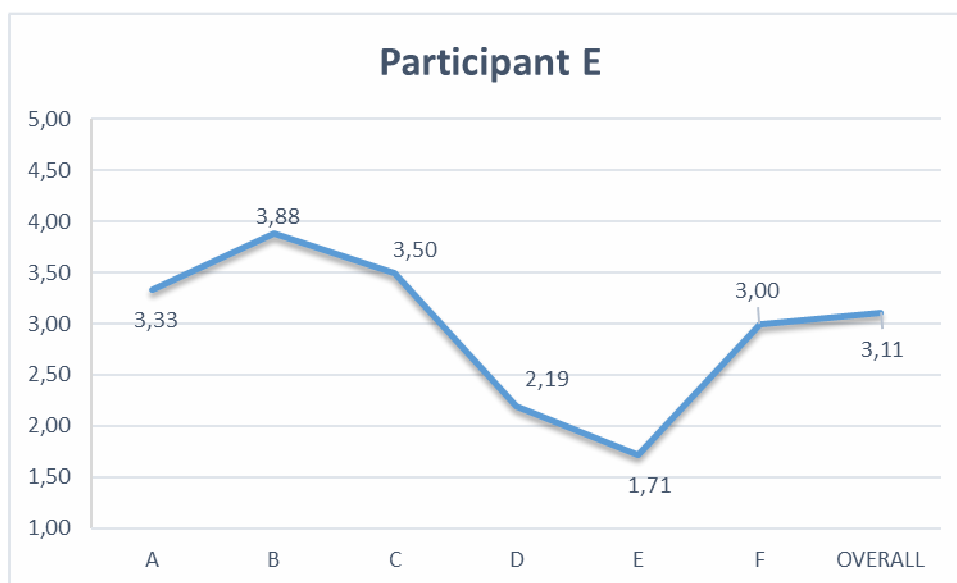
Figure 12. Participant E's SILL scores.

According to the Learning styles questionnaire scores, *participant E* was a kinesthetic, random-intuitive, open-oriented, synthesizing, impulsive and metaphoric learner. His scores showed he was both an extraverted and introverted learner, global and particular, a sharpener and a leveler, deductive and inductive and field-independent and field-dependent.

Discussion

While the participants were happy to discuss their learning strategies, they seemed to have no idea how they actually learned and what worked best for them. This wasn't something they seemed to consciously have considered prior to the interview. In their background questionnaires,

most of them stated they would like to improve their language competence but in the interview, when asked what they could do to achieve their goal, they either had no idea what to answer or thought it was not their job to think about these kinds of things but the responsibility of the teacher. They also did not seem to be interested in enrolling in foreign language schools as a way to better their communicative competence, but seemed to think English classes in high school, which were two hours a week, should have been enough. The above mentioned points to the fact that their teachers had not done any classes in teaching their students how to learn a language but had simply given homework and expected results.

SILL results show that the most successful participant, participant E, had his highest SILL score (M=3.88) in the cognitive strategies category. His score was also the highest score in this category out of all the participants. According to Oxford (1990), cognitive strategies are not only essential in the process of learning a new language, they are responsible for the "manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner." (p. 43) Participant E's lowest score was in the affective strategies category (M=1.71). Oxford (1990) stated that a learner's affective characteristics probably have the most to do with success or failure in language learning. (p. 140) This statement makes perfect sense: a learner's ability to lower anxiety, control his or her emotions or encouraging him-/herself is vastly important for successful language learning, and later on, communication. Hurd (as cited in Hurd, 2008, p. 219) suggested that, when dealing with an independent learner, the affective variables are more relevant than other strategies, because of their effect on modification and change. However, our most successful participant (participant E) also had a low score in the affective category. His highest score (M=3.88) was in the cognitive strategies category (as shown in *Table 1*. below). This was also the highest score in this category of all the participants. Repeating, practicing, analyzing, etc. are all cognitive strategies participant E used the most when learning a language. Participant C had three highest scores of all participants in the following categories: metacognitive, affective and social strategies as well as

the highest overall score. Participant C's SILL scores were not a surprise. In the interview, she stated that she organized the hours she spent learning in detail: finding exercises, writing summaries, paying attention in class, making an effort to study regularly etc. This was the basis for the score in the affective strategies category (M=3.43), as it provided reassurance that she had in fact studied and was prepared for the exams, therefore lowering her anxiety. The way she prepared for the matura exam confirmed the scores in the social strategies category: she relied on friends, fellow classmates and what she found on the internet for resources and learning material.

Table 1. SILL scores and grades of all participants according to strategy categories. Circled in blue are highest scores and grades of the category. Circled in orange are lowest scores and grades of the category. Participants' personal highest scores are marked with a superscripted H, and the lowest with a superscripted L.

	A	B	C	D	E
Memory strategies	2.60^{L}	2.80	3.07^{L}	2.20	3.33
Cognitive strategies	2.72	3.32	3.76	2.08	3.88^{H}
Compensation strategies	3.75^{H}	3.88^{H}	3.63	4.13^{H}	3.50
Metacognitive strategies	3.06	2.38	3.56	2.31	2.19
Affective strategies	2.86	2.14^{L}	3.43	1.29^{L}	1.71^{L}
Social strategies	3.11	3.22	3.89^{H}	2.33	3.00
Overall SILL score	2.93	2.98	3.56	2.31	3.11
Grades	3323 3	4434 4	4434 3	4433 3	5545 5

The question that arises is why the participant with the highes grades did not have the highest SILL scores. Dörneyi (2005) stated that a high score on the SILL is connected with how many strategies a learner uses, and is a reflection of quantity, not quality of the strategies used. Gardner, Trembley, and Masgoret (as cited in Dörneyi, 2005) conducted a study which negatively related language learning strategy use to achievement. The authors pointed out that this result was not consistent with other studies. It was caused by the instrument used. (p. 183) As mentioned above, successful learners, according to SILL, were those who used many strategies. It is therefore possible that the learners found a small number of strategies not included in the SILL which produced results. However it is an interesting fact to add to this paper where the most successful learner was not the one with the highest SILL score.

This raises the question about what a good strategy is. Cohen and Aphek (as cited in McDonough, 2005) gave a report on good, neutral and bad communicative strategies. (p. 20) However, these three categories were not connected with eventual success or failure of the learners. The authors simply produced a number of 'than-if' situations. For example, if the learner uses guessing, it should be in 'a well-informed manner'. (p. 20) This suggests that the definition of a good strategy depends on the learner and his/her characteristics, and that a strategy cannot be good or bad without considering the characteristics of a learner. Oxford (1990) concluded that learners who use 'better' strategies are, in general, more aware and advanced. Oxford also listed many factors which could and do influence strategy choice: degree of awareness, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex, nationality/ethnicity, general learning style, personality traits, motivation level, and purpose for learning the language. (p. 13) Everything mentioned above further complicates the classification of strategies as good and bad, appropriate or inappropriate.

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, strategies need to be related to the learning task at hand, need to fit the particular student's learning style and students' need to employ the strategies effectively and link them to other strategies. Most of the participants in this study did not find strategies that worked for them on their own but relied on others, specifically their teachers, to teach them strategies, or 'how to learn', as they addressed it. However, once they acquired strategies, studying and the task they had problems with got easier and more effective.

Conclusion

Language learning strategies are a very difficult phenomenon to categorize, measure, as well as teach. This study used the SILL to measure strategies the participants used. The discussion section focused on results of the most successful participant and the participant with the highest SILL scores. The results can be connected with Gardner, Trembley, and Masgoret's study (as cited in Dörneyi, 2005), mentioned in the Discussion section, which negatively connected strategy use to achievement. Even though Participant C used many strategies, she was not as successful as Participant E. While we agree that quantity and quality cannot produce equal results, we cannot support the negative correlation between strategy use and achievement. We believe that raising learners' awareness of the existence and benefits of using strategies can help their knowledge and language competence much more than affect their learning in a negative way.

These are still the beginnings of the matura exam and all it entails in Croatia. Learners' understanding of preparation and studying for this important exam are still rather questionable, and further research on the subject could raise awareness of the different strategies that could help students achieve better results.

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Appendices

1. Background questionnaire

Version for Speakers of Other Languages Learning English
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Croatian version by Tena Kralj 2013

Upitnik

1. Ime i prezime		2. Datum		
3. Dob	4. Spol	5. Materinji jezik		
6. Jezik kojim govorite kod kuće.				
7. Strani jezik koji ste pripremali za državnu maturu.				
8. Koliko dugo učite jezik naveden pod pitanjem broj 7?				

9. Kako biste ocijenili svoje znanje jezika pod brojem 7?

(Zaokružite jedan od odgovora):	Odlično	Dobro	Prolazno	Loše

10. Jeste li zadovoljni svojom razinom znanja jezika pod brojem 7? (Zaokruži jedan od odgovora):	Da	Ne

11. Što biste željeli usavršiti u znanju jezika pod brojem 7?
....
....
....

12. Kako biste ocijenili svoje znanje jezika pod brojem 7 u usporedbi sa ostalim učenicima u vašem razredu?

(Zaokružite jedan od odgovora):	Bolje od ostalih	Otprilike isto kao kod ostalih	Lošije od ostalih

13. Koliko vam je važno povećati razinu znanja jezika pod brojem 7?

(Zaokružite jedan od odgovora):	Jako važno	Važno	Nevažno

14. Zašto želite učiti jezik pod brojem 7? (moguće je odabrati više od jednog odgovora) :

…….. zanima me jezik.

…….. zanima me kultura.

…….. imam prijatelje koji govore jezik.

…….. obavezno je položiti kolegij iz jezika kako bih završio fakultet.

…….. potreban mi je za buduću karijeru.

…….. potreban mi je za putovanja.

…….. drugo (navedi)…………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………

15. Uživate li učiti jezik/e? (Zaokruži jedan od odgovora): | Da | Ne

15.A.

 Ako da, zašto uživate učiti jezike? (moguće je odabrati više od jednog odgovora)

…….. zabavno mi je usvajati nova znanja.

…….. zanimljive su mi informacije koje susrećem u procesu učenja.

…….. profesor stranog jezika je vrlo zabavan i zanimljiv.

…….. volim učiti gramatiku (kako bih se mogao/la ispravno izražavati).

…….. izazov mi je zapamtiti što više informacija te ih koristiti u daljnjoj komunikaciji.

…….. drugo (navedi)…………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………

16. Koje ste još jezike učili? …………………………………………………………..

17. Koji dio učenja jezika vam je bio najdraži?

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

2. Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

UPITNIK O STRATEGIJAMA UCENJA

Upitnik se odnosi na učenje engleskog jezika.

Molim te da pažljivo pročitaš svaku rečenicu i brojkama (od 1 do 5) označiš koliko se svaka pojedina tvrdnja odnosi na tebe. Tvoji odgovori trebaju pokazati što **zaista činiš** dok učiš engleski, ne ono što bi možda trebao/la činiti ili što drugi ljudi čine.

Molim da upitnik ispunjavaš brzo, ali pažljivo. Važno je da odgovori budu **iskreni**.

Ovdje nema točnih i netočnih odgovora.

> **1 - Nikada ili gotovo nikada** to ne činim.
> **2 - Uglavnom** to **ne** činim.
> **3 - Ponekad** to činim (u manje od 50 % slučajeva).
> **4 - Često** to činim (otprilike u 50 % slučajeva).
> **5 - Uvijek ili gotovo uvijek** to činim.

A

Kada učim novu riječ, ...

1. pokušavam naći neku vezu između nje i onog što već znam. ____

2. napravim s njom rečenicu kako bih je lakše zapamtio/la. ____

3. povežem je s drugim riječima s kojima ima nešto zajedničko (npr. riječi koje se odnose na odjeću ili koje imaju nepravilnu množinu). ____

4. povezujem je s već poznatom rječju koja slično zvuči. ____

5. koristim se rimom da bih je zapamtio/la (npr. bat-cat; deep-sleep). ____

6. u mislima si predstavim što znači ili to nacrtam. ____

7. u mislima stvaram sliku o tome kako se riječ piše (spelling). ____

8. da bih je zapamtio/la, koristim se kombinacijom zvuka i slike. ____

9. napravim listu poznatih riječi koje su povezane s njom i označim njihovu vezu (npr. strelicama). ____

10. zapamtim gdje se na stranici nalazi riječ ili gdje ili kada sam je prvi put vidio/vidjela ili čuo/la. ____

11. koristim se karticama s novom riječju na jednoj strani i sa značenjem na drugoj. ____

12. pokušavam fizički odglumiti njezino značenje. ____

Kada učim novo gradivo, ...

13. često ga utvrđujem i ponavljam. ____

14. u početku ponavljam češće, zatim rjeđe. ____

15. pokušam se sjetiti i onog što sam o tome davno učio/la. ____

B

---

16. Često izgovaram ili ispisujem nove izraze da bih ih zapamtio/la. ____

17. Oponašam govor izvornih govornika. ____

18. Dijalog ili tekst čitam više puta, sve dok ga ne razumijem. ____

19. Kada nešto napišem, često to sam/a ispravljam da što bolje zvuči. ____

20. Vježbam izgovarati glasove engleskog jezika. ____

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

21. Koristim se izvornim frazama engleskog jezika. _____

22. Riječi koje znam kombiniram u nove rečenice. _____

23. Kad imam priliku, sam/a započinjem razgovor na engleskome. _____

24. Na TV/radiju gledam/slušam emisije na engleskome. _____

25. Pokušavam i razmišljati na engleskome. _____

26. Sudjelujem u izvanškolskim aktivnostima gdje se govori engleskim jezikom. _____

27. Čitam na engleskome za vlastito zadovoljstvo. _____

28. Na engleskome pišem poruke, pisma, ili sl. _____

29. Kad nešto čitam na engleskom jeziku, najprije preletim tekst da vidim o čemu je riječ, zatim ponovno čitam pažljivo. _____

30. Kad nešto čitam ili slušam, obraćam pozornost na detalje. _____

31. Koristim se rječnicima i/ili priručnicima kad upotrebljavam engleski jezik. _____

32. I bilješke u razredu pravim na engleskom jeziku. _____

33. Novo gradivo sistematiziram (sređujem) (npr. u bilježnici). _____

34. Kad se koristim engleskim, opća pravila primjenjujem na nove situacije. _____

35. Novu riječ podijelim na dijelove koje razumijem pa tako tražim njezino značenje (npr. un-interest-ing). _____

36. Pokušavam naći sličnosti i razlike između engleskoga i hrvatskoga. _____

37. Nastojim razumjeti što slušam ili čitam bez prevođenja na hrvatski. _____

38. Riječi i pojmove iz hrvatskoga ne prenosim automatski u engleski

(npr. eventualno ≠ eventually - na kraju). _____

39. U engleskome sam/a tražim pravila. _____

40. Sam/a otkrivam pravila engleskog jezika, makar ih često moram i mijenjati kad saznam nešto novo. _____

C	☐

41. Kad ne razumijem sve riječi, pogađam približno značenje prema smislu onoga što slušam ili čitam. _____

42. Pri čitanju ne idem tražiti svaku nepoznatu riječ u rječnik. _____

43. U razgovoru predviđam što će osoba sljedeće reći na temelju onoga što je već rečeno. _____

44. Kad govorim i ne mogu se sjetiti pravog izraza, koristim se gestama ili hrvatskim jezikom. _____

45. Ako se u razgovoru ne mogu sjetiti pravog izraza, pitam svog sugovornika. _____

46. Kad se pri govoru ili pisanju ne mogu sjetiti točnog izraza, pronađem drugi način da izrazim misao: npr. koristim se sinonimom (riječ istog značenja) ili opišem što želim reći. _____

47. Ako ne znam točnu riječ, sam/a izmislim novu. _____

48. Razgovor skrenem na temu za koju znam riječi. _____

D	

49. Unaprijed pogledam novu lekciju da saznam o čemu se radi, što sadrži i da li već o tome nešto znam. _____

50. Kada čujem da netko govori engleski, pokušam se koncentrirati na ono što govori i zaboravim na druge stvari. _____

51. Unaprijed odlučim na što ću obratiti pozornost u jeziku (npr. na to kako izvorni govornici izgovaraju određene glasove). _____

52. Trudim se postati što bolji učenik engleskog jezika čitajući ili razgovarajući s drugima o učenju jezika. _____

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

53. Trudim se redovito učiti i vježbati engleski, ne samo prije testa. ____
54. Za učenje se pažljivo pripremam: npr. nađem tiho i ugodno mjesto. ____
55. U bilježnici za engleski istaknem važne dijelove gradiva. ____
56. Postavljam si ciljeve u učenju engleskoga: npr. koliko znanja želim steći ili za što ću se koristiti znanjem engleskoga. ____
57. Svaki dan ili tjedan planiram što ću naučiti u engleskome. ____
58. Za određene zadatke pripremam se razmišljajući o tom zadatku, o tome što već znam i što još trebam svladati. ____
59. Jasno uočim svrhu određene aktivnosti na satu: npr. pri slušanju katkad trebam razumjeti samo opću ideju, a katkad detalje. ____
60. Sam/a se trudim pronaći prilike za vježbanje engleskoga. ____
61. Trudim se pronaći osobe s kojima mogu govoriti engleski. ____
62. Trudim se uočiti pogreške koje pravim na engleskom i razumjeti zašto ih radim. ____
63. Na svojim pogreškama u engleskome učim. ____
64. Sam/a procjenjujem koliko napredujem u engleskome. ____

E

65. Svaki put kad osjećam nervozu jer se trebam koristiti engleskim, nastojim se opustiti. ____
66. Sam/a se ohrabrujem u učenju da budem uporan/uporna. ____
67. Sam/a se potičem da slobodno komuniciram na engleskome, pa tako pogađam značenje novih riječi i govorim što više iako pravim pogreške. ____
68. Za svaki svoj uspjeh u engleskome nagradim se nečime. ____
69. Obraćam pozornost na fizičke znakove stresa (npr. znojenje) koji utječu na moje učenje engleskog jezika. ____
70. Svoje osjećaje u vezi s učenjem engleskog zapisujem u dnevnik. ____
71. O svojim osjećajima u vezi s učenjem engleskog jezika razgovaram s osobom u koju imam povjerenja. ____

F

72. Kad nešto ne razumijem, zamolim sugovornika da uspori, ponovi ili objasni ono što je rekao. ____
73. Tražim od drugih da potvrde jesam li nešto dobro razumio/la ili rekao/la ____
74. Tražim od drugih da ispravljaju moj izgovor. ____
75. Pri učenju, vježbanju i ponavljanju radim s drugim učenicima. ____
76. Uvijek učim engleski s istom osobom. ____
77. Kad razgovaram s izvornim govornikom (npr. Englezom), trudim se pokazati kad trebam pomoć.__
78. Kad s nekim razgovaram na engleskom jeziku, postavljam pitanja kako bih se što više uključio/la u razgovor i pokazao/la zanimanje. ____
79. Trudim se saznati o kulturi zemalja u kojima se govori engleski. ____
80. Kad s nekim komuniciram na engleskom jeziku, obraćam pozornost na njihovo mišljenje i osjećaje. ____

3. Learning styles questionnaire

UPITNIK ZA MJERENJE STILA UCENJA

Ovaj je upitnik izrađen kako bi procijenio vaš općeniti pristup učenju. On ne predviđa vaše ponašanje u svakom trenutku, ali je jasan pokazatelj vaših sklonosti.

Molimo vas da pažljivo pročitate sve stavke i zaokružite odgovor koji najbolje ocjenjuje vaš pristup. Molimo vas da nijednu stavku ne preskočite.

Kada pročitate tvrdnju, promislite što obično radite dok učite.
Ne razmišljajte predugo o svakoj pojedinoj tvrdnji – zabilježite prema osjećaju koji se prvi javi i prijeđite na sljedeću tvrdnju.

Svaku tvrdnju ocijenite od 0 do 4. | 0 = nikad, 1 = rijetko, 2 = ponekad, 3 = često, 4 = uvijek |
Sve se tvrdnje odnose na učenje engleskoga jezika.

1. dio: FIZICKA OSJETILA _____ _____

1. Kad zapišem, bolje zapamtim.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Pravim detaljne bilješke za vrijeme predavanja.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Dok slušam, u glavi stvaram slike, brojeve ili riječi.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Radije učim uz pomoć televizije ili računala nego putem nekih drugih medija.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Kod učenja mi pomaže obilježavanje bojama.	0	1	2	3	4
6. Za rješavanje zadataka trebam pisana uputstva.	0	1	2	3	4
7. Ljude moram gledati da bih razumio/razumjela što govore.	0	1	2	3	4
8. Bolje razumijem predavanja kada profesori pišu na ploču.	0	1	2	3	4
9. Grafovi, dijagrami i mape pomažu mi da razumijem što netko kaže.	0	1	2	3	4
10. Pamtim lica ljudi, ali ne i njihova imena.	0	1	2	3	4

A – UKUPNO_____

11. Bolje nešto zapamtim ako s nekim o tome porazgovaram.	0	1	2	3	4
12. Radije učim slušajući predavanje nego čitajući.	0	1	2	3	4
13. Za rješavanje zadataka trebam usmena uputstva.	0	1	2	3	4
14. Zvuk u pozadini pomaže mi kod razmišljanja.	0	1	2	3	4
15. Dok učim slušam glazbu.	0	1	2	3	4
16. Razumijem što ljudi kažu čak i kada ih ne mogu vidjeti.	0	1	2	3	4
17. Pamtim imena ljudi, ali ne i njihova lica.	0	1	2	3	4
18. Pamtim viceve koje čujem.	0	1	2	3	4
19. Mogu identificirati ljude prema njihovim glasovima.	0	1	2	3	4
20. Kada uključim televizor, više slušam zvuk nego što gledam ekran.	0	1	2	3	4

B – UKUPNO_____

21. Odmah počinjem raditi zadatak i ne obraćam pozornost na uputstva.	0	1	2	3	4
22. Uzimam česte stanke tijekom učenja	0	1	2	3	4
23. Jedem dok učim.	0	1	2	3	4
24. Ako mogu birati između sjedenja i stajanja radije stojim.	0	1	2	3	4
25. Postajem nervozan / nervozna ako dugo mirno sjedim.	0	1	2	3	4

26. Bolje razmišljam ako se krećem.					
(npr. koračam ili tapkam stopalima)	0	1	2	3	4
27. Tijekom predavanja igram se kemijskim olovkama					
ili ih grickam.	0	1	2	3	4
28. Razmještanje predmeta pomaže mi da zapamtim što					
netko kaže.	0	1	2	3	4
29. Gestikuliram dok govorim.	0	1	2	3	4
30. Za vrijeme predavanja crtam sličice u bilježnicu.	0	1	2	3	4

C – UKUPNO_____

2. dio: SITUACIJE U KOJIMA UČIM_____

1. Bolje učim kad sam uključen / uključena u neki					
interaktivni zadatak nego kad sam sam / sama.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Bolje učim u razredu nego na instrukcijama					
samo s nastavnikom.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Lako pristupam nepoznatim osobama.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Interakcija s puno ljudi daje mi energiju.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Najprije gradivo dobro uvježbavam, a onda					
se potrudim razumjeti ga.	0	1	2	3	4

A – UKUPNO_____

6. Crpim energiju iz svog unutrašnjeg svijeta.	0	1	2	3	4
7. Skloniji / sklonija sam individualnim ili jedan – na –					
jedan igrama i aktivnostima.	0	1	2	3	4
8. Iscrpljuje me rad u velikoj grupi.	0	1	2	3	4
9. Kada sam u velikoj grupi, obično šutim i slušam.	0	1	2	3	4
10. Prvo se trudim razumjetu, a potom i praktično					
primijeniti naučeno gradivo.	0	1	2	3	4

B – UKUPNO_____

3. dio: MOGUCNOSTI UCENJA_____

1. Kreativan / kreativna sam. .	0	1	2	3	4
2. Pažljivo planiram svoje učenje.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Radije sam / sama otkrivam stvari nego da mi se sve					
objasni.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Ubacujem originalne zamisli kada u razredu o					
nečemu raspravljamo.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Bez predrasuda prihvaćam sugestije svojih					
kolega tijekom učenja.	0	1	2	3	4

A – UKUPNO_____

6. Radije se usredotočim na postojeću situaciju kakva je,					
nego da razmišljam o tome kako je moglo biti.	0	1	2	3	4
7. Vjerujem dokazanim činjenicama umjesto novim,					
neprovjerenim idejama.	0	1	2	3	4
8. Više volim kad mi se stvari prezentiraju postupno.	0	1	2	3	4
9. Ne sviđa mi se kada moj kolega promijeni					
plan našega zajedničkog projekta.	0	1	2	3	4
10. Uputstva slijedim pažljivo.	0	1	2	3	4

B – UKUPNO_____

4. dio: NEJASNOĆE I ROKOVI

1. Volim pažljivo planirati vrijeme učenja jezika i pripremiti lekcije na vrijeme ili ranije.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Moje natuknice, zabilješke i ostali nastavni materijali pažljivo su organizirani.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Volim biti siguran / sigurna u značenje riječi na engleskom jeziku.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Želim znati kako i zašto se primjenjuju pravila.	0	1	2	3	4

A – UKUPNO _____

5. Ne poštujem rokove za učenje ako se bavim nečim drugim.	0	1	2	3	4
6. Materijali mi se gomilaju na radnom stolu.	0	1	2	3	4
7. Ne brine me hoću li sve razumjeti.	0	1	2	3	4
8. Ne donosim brze zaključke vezane uz ono što učim.	0	1	2	3	4

B – UKUPNO _____

5. dio: USVAJANJE FORMACIJA

1. Više mi se sviđaju kratki i jednostavni odgovori nego duga objašnjenja.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Zanemarujem nevažne detalje.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Lako primjećujem „veliku sliku" (*eng. big picture).*	0	1	2	3	4
4. Dovoljno mi je uhvatiti glavnu misao.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Kada pričam staru priču, zaboravljam mnoge specifične pojedinosti.	0	1	2	3	4

A – UKUPNO _____

6. Trebaju mi specifični primjeri kako bih potpuno nešto razumio / razumjela.	0	1	2	3	4
7. Obraćam pozornost na neke zanimljive činjenice ili informacije.	0	1	2	3	4
8. Dobro usvajam nove fraze ili riječi kada ih čujem.	0	1	2	3	4
9. Volim popunjavati praznine u tekstu riječima koje čujem.	0	1	2	3	4
10. Kada pokušam ispričati vic, sjetim se detalja, ali zaboravim bit.	0	1	2	3	4

B – UKUPNO _____

6. dio: OBRADA INFORMACIJA

1. Bez problema rezimiram materijal koji učim.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Brzo mogu parafrazirati ono što drugi kažu.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Kad smišljam koncept nekog izlaganja, krenem prvo od glavnih točaka.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Uživam u aktivnostima u kojima moram sabrati glavne ideje.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Lakše nekoga razumijem nakon sagledavanja cjelokupne situacije	0	1	2	3	4

A – UKUPNO _____

6. Imam poteškoća s razumijevanjem ako ne znam
svaku riječ. 0 1 2 3 4
7. Dugo nešto prepričavam ili objašnjavam. 0 1 2 3 4
8. Volim se usredotočiti na gramatička pravila. 0 1 2 3 4
9. Dobro rješavam složene zadatke, zagonetke,
križaljke i sl. 0 1 2 3 4
10. Lako primjećujem čak i najsitnije detalja koji se
odnose na neki zadatak. 0 1 2 3 4

B – UKUPNO_____

7. dio: POHRANJIVANJE MATERIJALA U MEMORIJU_____

1. Obraćam pozornost na sve pojedinosti
novoga materijala kojeg učim. 0 1 2 3 4
2. Kada različite djeliće jezičnoga materijala zapamtim,
mogu ih se lako prisjetiti – kao da sam ih pohranio /
pohranila u različite odjeljke mozga. 0 1 2 3 4
3. Dok učim novo gradivo, pravim jasnu razliku između
zvukova u govoru, gramatičkih oblika, riječi i fraza. 0 1 2 3 4

A – UKUPNO_____

4. Kada učim nove informacije, pamtim ih tako da ih
povezujem u cjelinu pri čemu se koncentriram na sličnosti,
a zanemarujem razlike. 0 1 2 3 4
5. Memoriram samo opće podatke, a
zanemarujem detalje. 0 1 2 3 4
6. Pamtim tako da spajam otprije poznato s novim
gradivom. 0 1 2 3 4

B – UKUPNO_____

8. dio: JEZIČNA PRAVILA_____

2. Prvo učim pravila i teorije, a onda pojedinačne
primjere. 0 1 2 3 4
3. Prvo pronalazim opće obrasce u jeziku, a onda
primjere koji se na njih odnose. 0 1 2 3 4

A – UKUPNO_____

4. Prvo učim gramatičke strukture i druge
jezičnim pojedinostima te preko njih indirektno
usvajam pravila. 0 1 2 3 4
6. Pravila izvodim na temelju većeg broja primjera s
kojima se tijekom vremena susrećem. 0 1 2 3 4

B – UKUPNO_____

9. dio: ISTOVREMENA OBRADA VECEG BROJA PODATAKA_____

1. Znam razlučiti važne od nevažnih informacija.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Tijekom usmenog i pismenog izražavanja trudim se uskladiti sve gramatičke strukture.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Također vodim računa i o razini formalnosti i uljudnosti.	0	1	2	3	4

A – UKUPNO_____

4. Kada govorim ili pišem, gramatika mi je važnija od samog sadržaja poruke.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Teško mi je istovremeno se usredotočiti na gramatiku i sadržaj komunikacije.	0	1	2	3	4
6. Duge rečenice me zbunjuju, pri čemu zanemarujem gramatiku i stil.	0	1	2	3	4

B – UKUPNO_____

10. dio: BRZINA DAVANJA ODGOVORA_____

1. Brzo reagiram u komunikacijskoj situaciji.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Odgovaram prema svom instinktu.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Izlanem se, vidim što se događa i, prema potrebi, se ispravim.	0	1	2	3	4

A – UKUPNO_____

4. Dobro promislim prije nego nešto kažem ili napišem.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Moram dobro vladati gradivom da bih se odlučio / odlučila nešto reći ili napisati.	0	1	2	3	4
6. Pokušam se prisjetiti svega već naučenog prije nego što počnem komunicirati.	0	1	2	3	4

B – UKUPNO_____

11. dio: SHVAĆANJE STVARNOSTI_____

1. Metafore mi pomažu da se lakše služim jezikom (npr. doživljavanje jezika kao stroja s nizom sastavnih dijelova).	0	1	2	3	4
2. Učim jezik kroz metafore i asocijacije. Priče i primjeri pomažu mi kod učenja.	0	1	2	3	4

A – UKUPNO_____

3. Shvaćam jezik doslovno i ne služim se metaforama.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Prihvaćam stvari onakvima kakve jesu, stoga radije učim kad mi se jezično gradivo prezentira nedvosmisleno.	0	1	2	3	4

B – UKUPNO_____

Sažetak

Glavna tema ovog rada su strategije učenja jezika i njihov utjecaj na uspjeh u stranom jeziku, što se u ovom kontekstu očituje kroz ocjene iz engleskog jezika tijekom srednjoškolskog obrazovanja i ocjena postignutih na ispitu državne mature iz engleskog rada. Provedeno je istraživanje kako bismo dobili uvid u različite pristupe učenika-sudionika istraživanja učenju, strategijama učenja, te pripremama za maturu te jesu li oni i u kojoj mjeri utjecali na rezultate. Prvi dio rada sadrži pregled strategija učenja jezika, glavnih istraživača i ključnih taksonomija. Drugi dio opisuje ciljeve, sudionike, sam proces istraživanja, sredstva korištena pri istraživanju, i rezultate. Iako je primarni cilj ovog istraživanja bio odnos između uspjeha u stranom jeziku i strategija učenja jezika, tokom istraživanja javila su se pitanja koja je potrebno dodatno istražiti. Državna matura je donekle novi dio hrvatskog obrazovnog sustava i potrebno ga je sagledati u odnosu na naš sustav školovanja i učenike koji imaju drugačije stilove učenja, strategije učenja, utjecaje i navike od onih u drugim kulturama iz kojih smo i uzeli model državne mature.

Ključne riječi: strategije učenja jezika, stilovi učenja, državna matura, učenici stranih jezika