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LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

IDENTIFYING STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE COMMUNICATIVE

COMPETENCE IN SENIOR LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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IN SENIOR LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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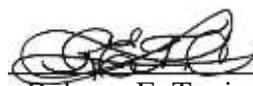
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DEDICATIONS

To my father, my biggest support.

To my mother, who always takes care of me.

To Judith, my beautiful sister and loving friend.

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ABSTRACT

The present qualitative investigation is an action research inquiry aimed at the identification of the strategies of communication that a group of senior language learners uses while learning and interacting in the English language. The action research approach of inquiry allows going through different stages of analysis and study, therefore, it was possible to plan, implement and observe while the group learned and communicated in the target language. The results of the study show the communication strategies that senior language learners use and how they use them. This study might be a starting point for further investigations focused on senior adult language learners, a fast growing group, as population trends show. The study finishes with recommendations on how to help senior adult language learners achieve their goals of developing better communication in the target language.

Keywords: Strategies of communication, adult learning, senior language learner, communicative competence.

RESUMEN

Este estudio de corte cualitativo tiene por objetivo la identificación de estrategias de comunicación que un grupo de adultos mayores estudiantes de una lengua usan cuando interactúan y se comunican en la lengua inglesa. El enfoque de la investigación-acción permite transitar a través de diferentes etapas de análisis y estudio, por lo cual fue posible planear, implementar acciones y observar al grupo mientras se comunicaba utilizando la lengua meta. Los resultados del estudio muestran las estrategias comunicativas que los adultos mayores usan y como lo hacen. El presente estudio podría ser un punto de partida para investigación más profunda enfocada en los adultos mayores que aprenden una lengua, grupo de rápido crecimiento, como lo muestran las tendencias poblacionales. El estudio termina con recomendaciones sobre cómo ayudar a los adultos mayores que están aprendiendo un idioma a lograr sus objetivos de desarrollar una mejor comunicación en la lengua meta.

Palabras Clave: Estrategias de comunicación, aprendizaje en adultos, adulto mayor que aprende una lengua, competencia comunicativa.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction

To develop the ability to communicate in a second or a foreign language is a need because of the global relations that occur among people today. According to Kramsch (2014), globalization promotes mobility of people and goods, and now the multilingual reality is something more common and visible. In addition, global communication technologies intensify the multiplicity of ways of teaching, learning and communicating. Nowadays, children are encouraged to learn English from an early age. Rodiki (2018) says that English language is an important part of the schools' curriculum because being able to communicate in more than one language is a basic need. For this author, education is moving to an international stage where foreign language learning is part of the curriculums.

While children are encouraged to learn a language and guided during the process, the situation might be different for adults; for most of them, learning a language represents a challenge because they do not study anymore and have adult responsibilities. Furthermore, the feeling of not being capable of learning something new at an adult age can make the learning process even more difficult. In words of Schuman (as cited in Griffiths, 2008, p. 39): “affective variables may play a more important role than does biological maturation in problems associated with adult second language acquisition”.

For adults, learning might be a challenge; however, they also possess important characteristics seen as strengths. According to the theory of Andragogy, independency, intrinsic motivation, responsibility and readiness to know are principles considered the core of the learning of adults (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005). This theory sets that adults are the center of the process, so it is necessary to provide an environment of respect and trust where they

can make decisions over their own learning. According to Nunan (1999), it is also important to encourage learners' independence through the setting of goals, the self-assessment and by promoting in them the responsibility of their own learning.

Learning in adulthood has been a controversial topic, from the postures which set that learning something new is highly difficult in the adult age (Eubank and Gregg, 1999); to those that affirm that age *per se* is not a factor that inhibit learning (Krashen, 1982). However, and in spite of the difficulties, learning a language is the objective of many adults.

Since the ultimate aim of learning a language is to be able to communicate ideas or thoughts, a way to promote communication can be through the development of strategies. According to Oxford (1990), language-learning strategies are often conscious, they can be taught and are problem oriented but flexible, and contribute to the main goal of communication. For this author, strategies are actions that the student applies not just to make the learning easier and faster but enjoyable and self-directed. Then, the adoption of communication strategies by the adult learners might help them to have a better communication in the target language. Then, to identify the strategies that language learners use can help to understand their communication process and in this way, propose the use of other strategies that can be also useful for them.

1.1 Establishing the problem

Senior adults are a fast growing group according to global population trends. Besides the advances in health and technology, the probabilities for seniors to keep active and productive at a more advanced age make them become visible in more areas, such as language learning. While finishing my studies, I started my teaching practice in *Casa del Jubilado Universitario* BUAP, with students who wanted to learn and practice the English language. My students' age ranged

from 55 to 70 years old. The opportunity of working with senior language learners has given me an insight of the problems that adults face when they communicate using the target language.

Many times, adult language learners cannot communicate in an effective way, probably due to the lack in the use of communication strategies. Strategies are conscious actions that help learners when they are learning something. The strategies of communication help learners to maintain the communication open in spite of problems while interacting, so the lack in their use impedes a fluent communication. This study aims to investigate the strategies that senior language-learners use and how these strategies help them to improve communication in the target language.

1.2 Research questions

As a result of what has been explained in this chapter, three questions were designed to guide this investigation:

- What type of communication strategies do the senior language learners in the study use?
- How does the use of communication strategies help these senior language learners to improve communicative competence in the target language?
- What are the most useful strategies that foster communicative competence in these senior language learners?

1.3 Objectives

Derived from the research questions, the following objectives were established:

- To identify the strategies of communication that senior language learners use.

- To explain how the use of communication strategies help senior language learners to improve communicative competence in the target language.
- To identify the most useful strategies to promote communicative competence in senior language learners.

1.4 Justification and importance of the study

The present paper pretends to fill a gap in the field of Adult Language Learning, focusing on the learning of senior language learners and the strategies of communication they use. Senior adults are becoming more active they are motivated to keep their active roles in different areas. An example of this is Don Felipe, a 79 year-old man who presented the admission exam at BUAP and was accepted to study engineering at this institution. Senior adults have also expressed their interest in different areas, such as learning a new language, which is the context in which this study took place.

The results of this investigation might increase the existing subject knowledge in *Facultad de Lenguas BUAP*, where there are already investigative papers that cover the field of adult language learning but from other perspectives such as, reading strategies, learning preferences, strengths and weaknesses of adult learners, and factors that promote successful learning. However, the learning process and the use of communication strategies in senior adults has not been researched.

Senior adult learners are determined students. Those who want to continue learning something set goals and work hard to achieve them; cases of older learners studying again, in spite of the possible difficulties they might encounter during the process, are prove of that. Therefore, this study might bring an insight to approach this segment of students. It also might

serve as a tool to guide teachers and students by helping them to know more about the strategies that can be useful in a communication process. Finally, this research may lead the researcher to learn more about the different strategies that might be useful to improve her own communication.

1.5 Delimitations

The study took place in Puebla Mexico, and it was carried out during the sessions of a workshop for senior adult learners who were already studying English in “*Casa del Jubilado Universitario BUAP*”. It was a three-month length investigation.

The study looked for identifying the strategies that senior adult language learners use; it was not intended to cover the study of other competences or skills. The results of this study may not be generalizable to other adult language learning processes as the context in which this study took place is a particular one.

1.6 Research content and organization

This thesis is organized in five chapters: Chapter 1 introduces the topic to be developed, describing the research problem, the research questions, as well as the setting and the importance and delimitations of the research. Chapter 2 presents the literature review or the knowledge of experts about the topic. The mentioned chapter presents the language learning process in adults and specifically in senior adults, and then it moves to presents the factors that can inhibit and promote learning in adults. Finally, it covers the topic of learning strategies and strategies of communication. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology followed in the study. It presents the type of study, the context, the participants, as well as the instruments and the data collection

process followed. In Chapter 4, the findings of the research are presented. Finally, Chapter 5 consists on the conclusions and recommendations or suggestions derived of this investigation.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The present chapter addresses the study of the literature about adult language learning, as well as the strategies of communication that learners use when they interact using a language. First, there is a mention about learning a first language and a second or a foreign language. Then, entering the field of adult learning, the study moves to cover the characteristics of adult learners, adult language learners, and senior language learners. Next, the discussion focusses on the strategies for learning a language and the strategies of communication. Finally, this chapter presents the topic of instructional design, which is an important process that promotes the development of learning environments that can contribute to the development of communication.

2.1 The complexity of language learning

Learning a language is a complex process. For Larsen-Freeman (2011), language has to be seen as an open, dynamic, adaptive system, in which complexity is developing. When talking about learning a language, different factors influence the process. The following sections cover the differences between learning a first language and learning another language, which can be a second or a foreign language.

2.1.1 Learning a first language

Learning a first language is a natural process in which babies and young children have the opportunity to learn surrounded by a language; they are exposed to simple language about simple matters and they usually have the chance to experiment and play while learning. On the contrary, learning a language as an adult is usually a process that represents a challenge because adults might feel time pressure for learning and they are expected to handle complex topics. Robinson

and Selman (1996), state differences between learning a first language as a baby and learning another language as an adult:

Chart 1. Language learning: A comparison

Learning first language as a baby	Learning an additional language as an adult
No time pressure	Pressure to learn to meet other goals (e.g., work or study)
No embarrassment	May be embarrassed by errors
Surrounded by language related to physical events	May lack opportunity to hear English they can understand
No pressure to speak	May be required to speak
Experiments with sounds; learns all English sounds	Expects to make meaningful sounds; must learn unfamiliar sounds; may confused unfamiliar sounds (e.g., d and t)
Use language to get basic needs met	Meets own basic needs-needs are more complex
Exposed to simple language about simple matters	Wants and needs to handle complex topics and abstract concepts
Parents tolerate and enjoy errors	May experience negative reactions to errors
Parents support language learning	May lack support
Usually has acute hearing	Hearing may be less sharp especially if older
Unable to analyze	Can analyze language patterns
Can use only oral language	If literate, can use reading and writing to support learning
Starts with single words	Starts with single words
Has no language to begin with	Has a first language that differs from English
No preconceived notions about how to learn language	May have preconceived notions about how to learn a language

Source: Partnerships in Learning. Teaching ESL to Adults. Robinson and Selman (1996)

According to Robinson and Selman (1996), while babies are exposed to simple language about simple matters, and have the chance to experiment with a first and unique language, adult language learners have to deal with the presence of a first language that differs

from the target language, which in many cases, is seen as interference for learning. Adults also have preconceived notions about how to learn a language and they might feel embarrassed by errors, which might cause negative reactions. Nevertheless, as adults, they have the capacity of analyzing language patterns, they can handle complex topics, and they can use reading and writing to support learning.

For Krashen (1988), the presence of a previous language is not interference but an influence in the acquisition of another language. For this author, the issue is about how the one language influences the other. According to him, the first language influence seems to be strongest in some grammatical aspects such as word order or in the word for word translation, but other grammatical constructions such as the subject verb agreement or the adjective – noun agreement, does not seem to be influenced by the first language. Additionally, for this author, in environments where the input is deficient or limited or where the translation practice is common, the influence of the first language might be strongest. The influence of the first language will continue until the learner has enough knowledge of the second language so he/she can use it instead of using his/her first language. The first language definitely has influence in the learning process of a new one.

2.1.2 Learning a Second or a Foreign Language

As previously mentioned, there are differences between learning our mother tongue and learning another language as adults. Additionally there are differences if we talk about learning a foreign or a second language. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is studied in countries or places where English is not the first language. The population in an EFL context is homogeneous because people share the background of having the same nationality (Gebhard, 2006). In Mexico,

for instance, we share a similar history of being Mexican people and we have the same culture, then, studying English for us means to study a foreign language. People in a context of EFL do not have the opportunity to practice or listen to the target language outside the classroom or school.

On the contrary, people learning English as a Second Language (ESL), are surrounded by the use of the target language and they face different everyday situations that encourage them to practice it all the time. An ESL context is represented by a heterogeneous population, people from different cultures living in the same country, trying to adapt themselves to a new environment. Arabic, Chinese or Spanish people living in countries where English is the first language, such as Australia, New Zealand or Canada, live in an ESL context (Gebhard, 2006). Having explained some aspects about the complexity of learning a language, the next section intends to give a characterization of adults, and in particular, to describe adult language learners.

2.2 The adult as a learner

The idea of being an adult is a concept that is not only connected with age but with other concepts such as independency, responsibility or maturity. Tight (1996, p. 14) considers that, “Adulthood may thus be considered as a state of being which both accords status and rights to individuals and simultaneously confers duties or responsibilities upon them”. Adults as learners possess certain characteristics that must be understood in order to help them better in their learning process. The following sections look for explaining the characteristics of adult learners and those of adult and senior language learners.

2.2.1 The adult learner

Adult learners show a set of interesting characteristics that are very valuable and helpful to attain their goals. According to the theory of Andragogy (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005), there are six assumptions or principles that are the core of the adult learning process:

- Adults possess different characteristics in terms of background, learning style, motivation.
- Adults lead their lives and are responsible for their own learning.
- They are ready to learn things that are useful to face real-life situations.
- Adults need to know why they are learning something and why it is important.
- Adults will be more motivated to learn if they can work on tasks.
- Motivation is intrinsic in them.

The theory of Andragogy also sets that the adult is the center of the learning process, so it is necessary to provide an environment of respect and trust where the person can make decisions over his own learning (Knowles et al., 2005). According to Cranton (2000), adults usually decide to study by choice, and this means that they have clear and concrete objectives related to their own needs; most of them prefer to be self-directed learners. However, adult learners are also reluctant to change their values or behaviors, and returning to school after many years may represent a challenge for them. Johnson (2004) says that, a strong way to help students to learn is by promoting cooperation and teamwork and by taking into consideration students' personal experiences as part of a meaningful learning.

For Galbraith (2004), variability is what better describes adults, so it is not very adequate to talk about "the adult learner" while trying to give a homogeneous definition of them. Adult learners are different in the physical, social and psychological aspects. According to this author, they are independent, which makes them direct their own learning, however, learning for

them can be highly emotional too; they need to feel that they are learning in a respectful environment to affirm their self-worth. Finally, although the role of student is important for adults, there are times when other roles are more important for them: "...when the learner–student role is assumed by adults, often it is a low priority role. Other adult roles such as parent, worker and so forth are frequently more important." Galbraith (2004, p. 35).

Adults are autonomous, independent and want to lead their lives, all which can help them to develop a self-directed learning. Responsibility leads to autonomy in the learning process. If adults are independent and responsible, they know that their efforts are determinant to progress in learning. For Scharle and Szabó (2000), a responsible learner takes action over his own learning without waiting to be told what to do. For these authors, intrinsic motivation -the source within the student that makes him take responsibility to achieve goals- and self-confidence – which refers to the learners believing they are capable of managing their learning- are some attitudes that foster responsibility and autonomy.

Then, it might be adequate to say that adult learners show a set of characteristics that can help them in their learning process, however, not only those intrinsic characteristics are determinant; there are other factors that can influence the adult learning process as well, such as the context or the cultural assumptions about learning. According to Hanson (1996), theories, such as the theory of andragogy, might present the learning of adults more as a prescription than a description: "Adults should be self-directed, should be able to make use of their own experiences, and should want to know or be able to do things for a particular reason at a particular time in their lives." (Hanson, 1996, p. 102). For this author, Andragogy fails to address the context because it privileges the individual over the social factor, presenting uncontextualized views of learning and empowerment of adults. Thus, it might be relevant and

interesting to consider all of the different factors that might influence adults' learning and be open when trying to give a definition or characterization of adults.

2.2.2 The adult language learner

According to Robinson and Shelman (1996), adults who learn a foreign language have more life experience and they know their own needs; they are equipped with maturity, knowledge and skills; and they know what they want to learn. Bernat (2004), centered in the second language learning process, says that adult learners often share some of the following characteristics:

1. Adults have a lot of experience. Adults possess valuable experience, which is very important to recognize and notice.
2. Adults are proud of their independence. Adults need to be recognized as independent and autonomous learners.
3. Adults have strong feelings about learning. For some adults, their previous learning experience at school has been something positive; however, for some others it has been something depressing and demoralizing.

Then, it is appropriate to say that adults as language learners have great opportunities to attain their language learning goals because they know their own needs, they are independent learners and have a lot of life experience, among other characteristics.

2.2.3 The senior adult language learner

After a life of hard work, many older people decide to return to school to learn something new. According to the website of the British Council (2016), study again helps senior adults to increase their feelings of self-confidence as well as their feelings of well-being and health, and

they have not only life experience but also a great motivation and a positive attitude towards learning. Many senior adults want to continue learning and today, science is interested in understanding more about the health benefits that learning a language brings with it, especially for older people or seniors. Some hypotheses state that learning a language at an older age could prevent some neurodegenerative syndromes.

After working with older people who presented different cognitive illnesses such as Alzheimer Disease (AD) or dementia, Bialystok, Craik and Freedman (2007) concluded that bilingualism allows the brain to endure those pathologies. For the mentioned authors, biological factors interact with environmental experiences, so bilingualism can provide benefits because it may help in keeping older people's cognitive functioning. Antoniou, Gunasekera and Wong (2013) suggest that, since learning a language is an activity that requires the activation of different processes in the brain, – for instance, inductive reasoning, sound discrimination, speech segmentation, or rule learning – it could improve cognitive reserve. Cognitive reserve is defined as “resilience to neuropathological damage of the brain, and is thought to be the result of experience-based neural changes that are a consequence of a physically and mentally stimulating lifestyle.” Whalley *et al.* (as cited in Antoniou et al., 2013). Then, research suggests that learning a language seems to be beneficial in promoting a healthy cognitive function in older adults; this is a good reason for them to learn a language.

Older learner's health is an important issue because health problems may interfere with study. Galbraith (2004) says that, there are physiological variables present in older learners that might affect the learning process in some way, for instance, problems or situations related to the vision, hearing or low energy levels. Similarly, Cranton (2000) says that older adults might need more time in class to perform assignments and they might need more breaks during class and

other facilities that help them in the learning process. However, and in spite of the challenging situation that older adult learners face, they have an enormous motivation towards learning. Having explained some of the characteristics of adult and senior language learners, the discussion now moves to cover some of the factors that can promote or inhibit the learning process in adults.

2.3 Factors that enhance the learning process in adults

There are different factors that enhance or strengthen the learning process in adult learners. Some of these factors can be external or internal. The current section presents some of the factors that can improve learning in adults.

2.3.1 Inclusion and Motivation

For most adults the sense of a good relationship that promotes motivation for learning is a feeling of inclusion. Adult learners possess a rich background that includes educational background and learning experiences that are related to inclusion but in some cases with exclusion as well. For Wlodkowski (1999), teaching or training begins with a relationship of respect between teacher and student. According to this author, “Upon awareness of exclusion, adult learners will begin to lose their enthusiasm and motivation...Feelings of cultural isolation often cause adult motivation to learn to deteriorate” (Wlodkowski, 1999, p. 90). It seems highly important to promote a respectful and inclusive learning environment for adult learners, paying attention to factors such as cultural variation, gender, individualism and collectivism, among others.

Talking about motivation, one of the hypotheses that support Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition is “the affective filter hypothesis”. This hypothesis states that

affective variables have a relation with the performance of a language. If a person have optimal attitudes, such as motivation or a good self-image, it is probable that he or she is going to have a good achievement in the target language. The affective filter can be high or low; if it is high, it means that the person is not open to receive the input or that the input received is not going to have a great impact in the acquisition; the opposite will occur if the affective filter is low (Krashen, 1983). That is why motivation results so important for acquiring a language.

2.3.2 The teacher as an enhancing factor

As independent learners, adults need to direct their learning with the guide of the teacher. According to Galbraith (2004, p.7), “the teacher of adults is in a sense a guide to learners who are involved in an educational journey”. The adult teacher can facilitate not only the learning process but also the personal growth and development in the learners. Then, it is important to be aware of some of the principles that guide the teaching practice that is why he says:

“When we think about what occurs in the teaching and learning encounter that seems to be significant, it is at that moment we need to stop and reflect on what guiding principles made it such a good event” (Galbraith, 2004, p.7).

The role of the teacher according to this author has to do with:

- Promoting challenging transactions that encourage reflection
- Attend how students are experience learning
- Taking risks and be a role model

According to Scharle and Szabó (2000), the teacher can take the role of facilitator or counsellor for promoting the development of autonomy in students. Then, the teacher must be aware of the fact that the development of responsibility in students is a gradual process that

involves raising awareness in the starting point, changing attitudes, and transferring roles for giving students freedom in deciding and accomplishing tasks. The adult learning process must focus on the particularities of adult people, taking into consideration adults' real needs when designing teaching plans (Robinson and Selman, 1996).

2.3.3 Meaningful Learning

Interest is seen as a basic element that promotes learning. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2018), Interest can be defined as “the feeling that you have when you want to know or learn more about somebody/something”. Interest is also defined as: “a state of curiosity or concern about or attention to something” (The American Heritage Dictionary, 1994). For Wlodkowski (1999, p. 181), interest may be defined as “a person's desire or preference for interaction with something”. Interest is often linked to a meaningful learning, a kind of learning that is related to active, collaborative and authentic work, where the learner continuously constructs interpretations of her/his actions (Jonassen & Strobel, 2006).

For Wlodkowski (1999) there are actions that promote adult interest:

- Relate to adult interests, concerns, and values. It means that the learning activities must be interesting for adult students, having a connection with their values and concerns.
- When possible, clearly state or demonstrate the benefits of a learning activity.

For adults it is important to know why is beneficial to learn what they are learning.

- Selectively use examples, analogies, metaphors and stories. All of them are important because they stimulate comprehension; increase interest in learning, and captivate students' attention.

Adults who learn usually want to put into action the new knowledge they are learning, and for them, the learning process is a way to improve their abilities or skills to face real life problems. They tend to enter into a new learning activity having in mind that it may help them to solve real problems. Knowles (1996, p. 93) says that “(...) Because adult learners tend to be problem-centered in their orientation to learning, the appropriate organizing principle for sequences of adult learning is *problem areas*, not *subjects*”. The problem orientation of adult learners suggests that a good way to initiate them into the learning process is starting with the problems and concern they have on their minds.

2.4 Factors that inhibit the learning process in adults.

After explaining some factors that might enhance learning, the current section addresses the factors that, on the contrary, might inhibit the learning process in adults and that may be taken into consideration when teaching senior adults.

2.4.1 The social role of adult learners

Since adults have a job and family responsibilities they do not have enough time for dedicating to study, so they must take advantage of their free time as much as possible (Robinson and Selman, 1996). Many adult students have a job, and also, they have to take care of their families; sometimes, parents who study might feel guilty of not being close to their children. Other adult students are community leaders or volunteer workers so they have to find a balance in their lives to perform all those roles (Fairchild, 2003).

According to Mercer (as cited in Fairchild, 2003), there are some obstacles that adult learners must overcome which have to do with situational, dispositional and institutional barriers.

Family and job play a part in determining situational barriers; dispositional barriers are related to the inner part of the person, linked to different feelings and attitudes; finally, institutional barriers are systemic barriers that sometimes can make it difficult for adults to enter in the educational system.

Nevertheless, and in spite of the difficulties that adult learners might face, they can succeed in learning because they focus their learning on skills that suit for their particular situation. Bradley and Graham (as cited in Fairchild, 2003) say that adult learners have a more complex knowledge and at the same time, they are strongly involved with their families and careers, which provides a connection to meaningful real life experiences.

2.4.2 The age factor

It is very common to consider age as a factor that impedes learning stating that for adults is more difficult to learn something; however, learning in the adulthood is not necessarily a factor that impedes learning. The current section covers opposing positions on the subject. The hypothesis of the Critical Period by Eric Lenneberg (as cited in Eubank and Gregg, 1999) stated that there was a critical period for the successful acquisition of a language. This author claimed that languages cannot be acquired successfully after the close of that period because after it, the ability to learn declines.

A critical period is that period in the development when the neurons have the ability to make new connections depending on different stimulus; once a critical period has elapsed, certain plasticities that were available before are excluded now, however, recent evidence suggests that there is not one and only critical period for learning. Eubank and Gregg (1999) say that special cases of delayed acquisition of a language like the case of deaf children of hearing

parents, who had to wait to get linguistic input, suggest that there is not an only critical period for linguistic competence and the delayed exposition to the language has different results in the development of a language.

According to Krashen (1982), the age *per se* does not inhibit the acquisition of a language; instead there are other variables, such as the access to comprehensible input, which means, receiving understandable messages that can lead the learner to his or her next level of competence in the language. Krashen and Terrel (1983) say that teachers must take into consideration the fact that, while children are better achieving higher levels of competence over the long run; over the short run, adults are superior because older acquirers are better at encouraging speech. They can ask for help and direct a conversation with the aim of making the input more understandable, something difficult to do for children. Adults also possess “a greater knowledge of the world” (Krashen and Terrel, 1983, p.46), a knowledge that helps them to get a more understandable input.

2.4.3 Negative feelings towards learning

The affective factor plays a decisive role when learning. According to Schuman (as cited in Griffiths, 2008), adults who are learning a new language might feel anxious, ashamed, rejected and disoriented all which can inhibit the acquisition process. Adults see themselves as intelligent individuals who can deal with different situations. However, when facing new and completely uncertain situations, such as learning a language, they can have feelings such as insecurity or fear. In relation to this, Horwitz has stated that “because complex and nonspontaneous mental operations are required in order to communicate at all, any performance in the L2 is likely to

challenge an individual's self-concept as a competent communicator and lead to reticence, self-consciousness, fear, or even panic" Horwitz and Cope (as cited in Horwitz, 2001).

Bernat (2004) claims that adults are afraid of losing their dignity. Adults might be uncertain about themselves but at the same time, they want to be in control of the situation; they do not want to commit errors or show weakness, so it is important to let them know that errors or mistakes are something natural in the learning process. Robinson and Selman (1996) also address the issue of the affective domain in adults and say that when an easy task becomes difficult for them, because of not having the adequate abilities, their self-esteem can result even more affected than in the case of children or adolescents. For Scharle and Szabó (2000), some factors such as cultural attitudes or preferred learning styles might also inhibit the development of autonomy. For instance, students who cannot work without the teacher's supervision or students who always need to know the correct answer might be less willing trying to be autonomous.

After having characterized adults as learners and having covered some factors that might inhibit and promote their learning, the study moves to present the topic of strategies, starting from defining different types of learning strategies to finally going deeper into the strategies of communication.

2.5 Strategies for learning a language

Strategies are useful tools that help students when they are learning something. According to Griffiths (2008), good language learners can lead their own learning to achieve their goals with strategies. Adult students must be aware of the use of strategies because strategies can help them better in their learning process.

2.5.1 What are strategies?

Strategies are conscious actions that benefit students when they are learning something. According to Griffiths (2008), there are features that converge when trying to make a definition of language learning strategies: language strategies are those actions that students do; consciousness is a basic characteristic of learning strategies; their choice depends on factors such as the learning situation, the motivation and style of learning and the nature of the learning goal. Some of the strategies used by good language learners are: they use all the resources they find for practicing the language; they speak to others in the target language very frequently; they make frequent use of listening as a strategy and; they study grammar frequently (Griffiths, 2008). In the following sections, different types of strategies will be presented.

2.5.2 Grammar Strategies

Grammar is a basic component in the process of learning that offers an opportunity for strategy development. According to the website of the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition CARLA (2014), grammar strategies are “thoughts and actions that are primarily aimed at improving grammatical accuracy”, those strategies help students to learn and to use different grammar structures and improve their overall knowledge. For Larsen-Freeman (2009), it is important to understand the student learning process when learning grammar. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the following considerations: learning is a gradual process in which students do not learn grammatical structures one at a time. Second language learners rely on their previous knowledge (the knowledge of their first language). Third, teachers teach to different students, and who the students are affect the instruction of grammar; finally, different learning processes affect different aspects of language. According to Larsen-Freeman

(2009), the acquisition of grammar structures can be reached through the meaningful practice of them.

2.5.3 Listening Strategies

Other strategies are those related to the listening skill, which can help students to develop the ability of listening. According to Oxford (1990), some of those strategies are:

- Using imaginary. Creating pictures in our mind or drawing are good strategies to remember new concepts.
- Associating/Elaborating. This strategy involves connecting new information, concepts or vocabulary with information already stored in memory.
- Skimming and scanning. Skimming refers to search for the main ideas the speaker wants to get through; scanning on the other hand, means searching for details that are interesting to the learner.

However, these are not the only strategies, adults use when learning a new language, more strategies will be presented in the following sections.

2.5.4 Speaking strategies

Strategies that foster speaking skill are important because these type of strategies might promote communication. According to Oxford (1990), some strategies used to develop or promote language skill are:

- Representing sounds in memory. It means linking a new word with familiar words or sounds. Rhymes are an example of representing sounds in memory. Another way of

representing sounds in memory is by linking a new word with a word in the mother tongue that has a similar sound or a similar meaning.

- Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems. This strategy helps listening and speaking and it is focused on perception of sounds rather than on comprehension of meaning. A useful activity is to record the student voice so he can hear and compare his own voice with a native speaker's voice.

- Switching to the mother tongue. This strategy involves using the mother tongue for an expression without translating it, for instance, an English speaker learning French that says: *Je ne pas go to school* (Oxford, 1990, p.95) is creating a sentence using words in the mother tongue that he does not know in the target language.

Now, after explaining the kind of strategies that might be used by senior adults, mentioning some of them, the research moves to cover the topic of strategies of communication.

2.6 Strategies of Communication

Communication is the final aim of the language learning process. According to Canale and Swain (1980), the primary objective of language instruction must be to provide the learners with information and practice to help them to achieve a real and meaningful communication.

2.6.1 Communication and communicative competence

Communicative competence goes beyond the concept of communication because it refers to an effective communication. For Canale and Swain (1980), the communicative competence is an integration of an elemental system of knowledge and skill needed for communication. According to these authors, the knowledge can be conscious or unconscious and there are three types:

knowledge of grammatical principles; knowledge of how to use language in a social context; and knowledge of how to combine utterances and communicative functions with respect to discourse principles. The concept of skill refers to how a learner can use his or her knowledge in actual communication.

For Savignon (1976), communicative competence is the ability to function in a genuinely and dynamic communicative context, in which competence, must adapt itself to the information input. The context defines communicative competence. As reported by Savignon, performance is the open manifestation of competence and it is through performance that competence can be observed, developed or maintained. Páez (2001) says that communicative competence allows the speaker of any language to communicate in an effective way and with the necessary correction in the target language. The communicative competence is acquired through training and with the application of learning techniques and strategies in a cooperative environment to achieve a specific wanted purpose and it is formed by the following components:

- Linguistic competence. The ability to use language rules in a correct way.
- Socio-linguistic competence. The ability to interpret and use linguistic signs in a sociocultural context.
- Discursive competence. The ability that allows composing units of meaning.
- Strategic competence. The ability to manipulate the language applying adequate strategies to compensate the gaps that might appear while communicating.

Then, communicative competence refers to a mixture of different elements that allow the speaker to communicate effectively when using the target language in real situations. However, the application of any theoretical model of communicative competence is not absolute (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell, 1995). There are different contexts with different types of

learners, who have particular learning objectives, so a model can be adapted according to the communicative needs of a specific learner or group.

According to Páez (2001), one element of the communicative competence is the strategic competence that looks for compensating the gaps that might appear while communicating, so next, the discussion moves to cover the different types of strategies that are involved in the process of communication.

2.6.2 Types of communication strategies

Language learners use different strategies in a conversation when using the target language. Faerch & Kasper (as cited in Bygate, 1993), say that in the earlier stage of learning some of the strategies that look for compensating problems for expression are: achievement strategies and reduction strategies. According to Bygate (1993), within the achievement strategies are those related to guessing, paraphrasing and cooperation:

- **Guessing strategies:**
 - Borrowing a word from the mother tongue.
- **Paraphrasing strategies:**
 - Using another word instead of the word we do not know such as a synonym or a more general word.
 - Using several words instead of the one we intend to assemble some sort of phrase and in this way, explain what we want to say.

- **Cooperation strategies.** They refer to the student getting help when he physically indicates the object that he means or when he does miming while explaining what he wants to say (Bygate, 1993).

Learners who value fluency over accuracy and who are prepared to take risks when using the language use achievement strategies. According to Lewis (2011, p. 48), “there is a strong argument for equipping our learners with achievement strategies in order to help them to become better communicators”. The use of these strategies can compensate for gaps in the communication process, especially in the initial stages of the learning of a language, when gaps are more frequent.

On the other hand, there are other kinds of strategies that refer to the learner’s reducing his communicative objectives; these are called reduction or avoidance strategies. A learner may want to avert producing a certain sound sequence or wish to avoid difficulties in expressing something because a lack of vocabulary, or even, may alter his message to make it more manageable (Bygate, 1993). According to Lewis (2011), those students who feel anxious about making mistakes frequently use reduction strategies and to whom taking risks is something not very common to do. This author also says that, to depend a lot on the use of avoidance or reduction strategies is something that can provoke stagnancy in an early stage of the learning process, which can impede language-learning improvement.

According to Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1995), the strategic competence is the knowledge of communication strategies and their use. For these authors, the strategic competence is related to three functions or perspectives:

- **Psycholinguistic perspective.** Communication strategies are verbal plans that speakers use to overcome problems when they plan their speech and they execute it.

- **Interaction perspective.** Communication strategies have to do with asking for help while speaking: negotiation of meaning and repair mechanisms.
- **Communication maintenance perspective.** Communication strategies look for maintain the communication open in spite of communication difficulties.

Based on these perspectives, the strategies of communication proposed are:

- a) **Avoidance or reduction strategies.** These strategies involve fitting our message according to our own language resources by replacing or even abandoning a message, or avoiding difficult topics for us to handle.
- b) **Achievement strategies.** Strategies that have to do with manipulating our language resources to reach a communicative goal. Some of those strategies are: guessing, paraphrasing or cooperation
- c) **Stalling or time gaining strategies.** These strategies refer to hesitation as well as repetitions; for instance, to repeat what the other person said while thinking what to answer.
- d) **Self-monitoring strategies.** They involve correcting or changing words or ideas when we talk as well as rephrasing one's message to further ensure it is correct.
- e) **Interactional strategies.** The interactional strategies stress the cooperative aspect of strategy use. When the speaker uses these type of strategies, the objective is to get information from his/her interlocutor's knowledge; instead of using his/her own language resources. Some examples are the use of the phrases: "What do you call...?" or "Could you say that again please?"

Now, talking about time gaining strategies and specifically about fillers, Basurto, Hernández and Mora (2016) state that it is very important to help students to know and practice fillers in English because their use can increase the level of involvement of the student in a conversation in a more spontaneous way. They mention that when students use fillers in their mother tongue they do not feel confident enough to speak in the target language. The use of fillers in English such as: “I mean”, “Right”, “Ok”, “Well”, “You know?” might help the speakers to fulfill functions in the development of oral skills, and also help them to keep the concentration and feel more confident while they are having a conversation. Teachers should consider the use of fillers as a tool for their students to improve their language skills: “Further, FL teachers should never underestimate the teaching of any strategy that may contribute to our learners’ language improvement, no matter how insignificant they might appear” (Basurto et al., 2016, p.200).

Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) believe that communication strategy training can have a place in the syllabi of language teaching. For them, the strategy instruction might involve helping the learner to be aware of the benefits and potential of knowing and practicing strategies: encouraging students to take risks and providing them the opportunities to practice those strategies. Finally, the design and implementation of activities that promote the use of strategies might be achieved following a process of instructional design, which is a description of how the teaching-learning process is being carried out (Seel, Lehmann, Blumschein and Podolskiy, 2017). This process of instructional design is detailed next in order to establish the theoretical framework of the syllabus design of the study.

2.7 Instructional Design

Instructional design promotes the planning and creation of learning environments, which are integrative systems that foster engagement through student-centered activities. It is important to encourage the development of learning environments because they have the purpose of raising expectations and reflective thinking on the learner, and contribute to improve communication. The instructional design is a complete process that includes the analysis of needs and objectives, the development of instructional materials and the implementation and evaluation of what has been implemented (Seel, et al., 2017). According to Góngora and Martínez (2012), a model of instructional design is the model ADDIE, integrated by different stages shown in the next chart:

Chart 2. Instructional Design Model ADDIE

STAGE	What is it?	TASKS
Analysis	The process of defining what must be learned	* Needs evaluation * Problem identification * Tasks analysis
Design	The process of defining how something must be learned	*Objectives *Develop the topics *Instruction plan
Development	The process of approval and production of materials	*Working process with writers/developers to develop schedule and program *Development of practical exercises *Creation of a learning environment
Implementation	The implementation of the project in a real context	*Pilot training *Teacher training
Evaluation	The process of determining how adequate is the instruction	*Evaluation and interpretation of the results *Application of surveys *Review of activities

Source: *Del diseño instruccional al diseño de aprendizaje con aplicación de las tecnologías.*
Góngora & Martínez (2012)

Instructional design helps instruction and syllabus designers accomplish the teaching practice in order to improve the students' learning process. In this case, adult learners can be benefitted with the use of an appropriate instructional design. The current research now moves to the next chapter, which covers the methodology followed for developing the investigation.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of the present paper was to observe and identify the strategies of communication that senior adult language learners use when they communicate and interact in the target language. After presenting the literature review, the current chapter presents the methodology chosen and developed for the study. Moreover, there is a detailed description of the context, the participants and the instruments. Finally, the data collection and the data analysis procedures are presented.

3.1 Methodology

A research design is the plan that a researcher follows to integrate the components of the investigation in a coherent way, going from general assumptions to specific methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). With the help of a research design, the investigator connects data with the initial questions of the study. The research design is “an action plan from getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about the questions” (Yin, 1994).

Creswell (2009) addresses three paradigms of research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods:

- **Qualitative Research.** A qualitative method of investigation seeks to understand how individuals or groups of people ascribe to a social problem or situation. The research process is based on emerging questions and procedures and the data is usually collected

in the participant's setting. A researcher following this type of research embraces an inductive style and focuses on individual meaning.

- **Quantitative Research.** A quantitative method of investigation is a way for testing theories by the analysis of the variables involved. The variables can be measured on instruments and the data obtained can be analyzed using statistical procedures. A researcher who engages in this form of analysis has assumptions of testing theories deductively, being able to reproduce and generalize the results.
- **Mixed Methods Research.** This research method combines both, qualitative and quantitative methods. The use of both approaches gives as a result a strong study based on both.

For the present study, the most appropriate paradigm seemed to be the qualitative research, as the aim of the investigation was to observe how people of a specific group communicate. At the same time, the researcher interacted with the group, so the investigation followed an inductive way of analysis, and in this way was possible to understand a real problem.

3.1.1 Action Research as approach of inquiry

Creswell (2009) states that, within the qualitative type of research there are different approaches of investigation, such as ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, narrative research, among others. The aim of these approaches is to study or explore in depth a phenomenon in its natural context by observing it or interacting with it.

Action Research fits into a qualitative approach of research as it is a reflective, experiential and participatory research framework, in which the researcher interacts in the

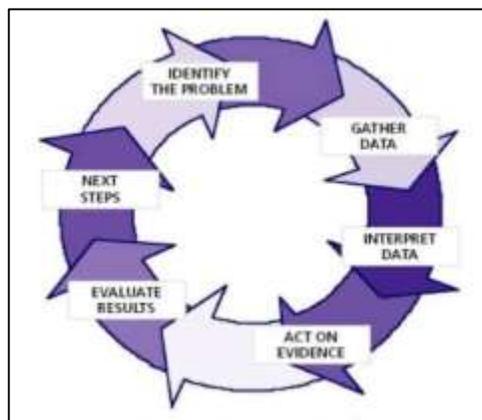
context of the study and where all individuals involved participate actively. Berg defines Action Research as: “a collaborative approach to research that provides people with the means to take systematic action in an effort to resolve specific problems” (Berg, 2004). According to Tripp (2005), action research starts from some kind of problem and it occurs in natural and real social settings. It is dynamic with regard to change, which is based on the understanding achieved through the analysis of information. Action research should be a continual process to improve any aspect of its own practice.

Berg (2004) says that action research follows a “kind of spiraling progression rather than the more traditional linear one”, and that progression involves four stages: 1) identifying the research questions, 2) gathering the information to answer the questions, 3) analyzing and interpreting the information, and 4) sharing the results with the participants. According to Ferrance (2000), action research follows five stages of inquiry: (1) identification of problem area, (2) Collection and organization of data, (3) Interpretation of data, (4) Action based on data, and (5) Reflection.

The most distinguishing characteristic of action research is continuity: “Action research, as a form of action inquiry, is an ongoing, repetitive process in which what is achieved in each cycle provides the starting point for further improvement in the next” (Tripp, 2005). The cycle of action research follows three main stages: planning of, evaluation of and implementing of, however, in any of those stages the researcher can plan, monitor or evaluate before moving to the next one. Reflection is an essential activity that occurs in all the entire process, not only at the end. Action research is a collaborative process because the effects of the implemented actions affect not just the practice of one person but the practice of all the people involved in the process (Tripp, 2005).

The approach of inquiry chosen for developing the current investigation was the action research approach. Action research seemed to be the most appropriate approach of inquiry since working with a group of people for identifying the communicative strategies they use, required to follow steps going from identifying a problem, planning and implementing actions, interpreting the data obtained, reflecting on the findings, until giving suggestions for further investigation.

Figure 1. The Action Research Cycle



Source: Action Research. Themes in Education. Ferrance (2000).

Once, having explained about the research design followed in the present research, the setting and the participants are described in next sections.

3.2 Setting

The study took place in *Casa del Jubilado Universitario BUAP*. *The Casa del Jubilado* is an institution where retired people can enroll in different activities such as cooking classes, dancing classes, language classes, among others. In this place, senior adults receive services such as medical attention, physiotherapy or psychological consultation.

To carry out the investigation, the researcher asked for permission to work with the language students of the mentioned institution. The research was carried out during a conversation workshop class addressed for an intermediate level group, every Thursday from 9 am to 11 am, for five weeks from August to October 2017. The researcher planned the workshop activities and implemented them. The main objective of the study was to observe the students' interaction and in this way, identify the strategies of communication that they use.

3.3 Participants

The participants were a group of senior adult language learners attending English classes in *Casa del Jubilado Universitario*. Their ages were between 55 and 70 years old. The group was formed by six women and one man enrolled in an intermediate level class. However, according to the website of The Council of Europe and Language Education (2018) and the scale of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) they did not show the proficiency level required to be in an intermediate class.

According to a diagnostic test given before the course, they were placed in a more basic level because they made a basic use of the English language: they understood and used very elemental structures to talk about themselves and routine matters and they could describe aspects of their background or immediate environment in a simple way. This decision of placing the students according to their level in *Casa del Jubilado Universitario* depended on the head teacher's evaluation of each student. The students formed a united group, very committed to their learning; they were very motivated and wanted to continue learning. The decision of working with students in the mentioned place was a personal decision based on the researcher's previous

experience working with older adult language learners. Chart 3 shows the ages of the participants at the moment of the study.

Chart 3. The participants

The participants	
	Age
Lulú	60 years old
Lupita	55
Alma	70
Nadia	65
Pepe	58
Carla	63
Lilia	65
Rosa	65

The participants were active, enthusiastic, friendly people. All of them had a background of school experience, some of them have studied for many years and some others have been teachers, and because of that, they have faced different learning situations. They were studying again, because not only they liked the language, but also because studying was something that they were used to doing; in addition they were motivated with the idea of learning something new.

3.4 Instruments

The research methods are the forms that researchers use to collect, interpret and analyze the data during the process of investigation (Creswell, 2009). For this research, a questionnaire with open and closed questions and audio recordings of the participants' interaction were the two sources for data collection. The instruments are described in the following sections.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

In order to gather enough data for the study, a questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire's aims were:

- a) To know about the strategies of communication that the participants use when they interact in the target language and
- b) To have an insight about the participants' language learning process.

The questionnaire consisted on seven items or questions; questions one, two, three, five and six were open questions while items four and seven were closed questions. The instrument was designed in Spanish because it was very important that the participants understood the questions clearly, so they could give a reliable answer.

One way to validate the questionnaire was by the approval from supervisors at *Facultad de Lenguas* BUAP and by applying the instrument to a couple of students in the same school. According to Brink (1993), one strategy used to produce credible findings in qualitative research has to do with the validation from others -colleagues, participant informants- at different stages of the research. Once the questionnaire was validated, it was applied to the participants. The participants were asked to answer a questionnaire during the last session of the workshop.

3.4.2 Audio Recordings

During the first two and last two sessions, the conversations among the participants were recorded and then, they were analyzed to be able to identify the strategies of communication present in those recordings. A chart was designed to present in a clear way the information obtained after listening to the recordings. The application of a questionnaire and the analysis of audio recordings allowed the researcher to have two different sources or data and compare both

to understand better about the way in which the participants use strategies. Having explained about the participants, the setting, and the instruments, the research cycle is described next.

3.5 The Action Research Process

The action research approach of inquiry followed in this study permitted to go through different stages to carry out the investigation. The process involved going from identifying the problem, through the collection and interpretation of data, and reflecting about the findings, to finally state conclusions. The next chart shows the process in detail:

Chart 4. The Action Research Cycle

<p>Stage 1 Identifying the problem</p>	<p>Senior adult language learners use different strategies when they communicate in the target language in an oral way. However, those strategies have not been properly studied, so their study and use might help the learners to achieve communicative competence.</p>
<p>Stage 2 Planning</p>	<p>The stage of planning involved different activities that had to do with thinking about the number of sessions for the workshop, the design and implementation of each activity, the available resources to carry out the session, and the design and application of the instruments, then, the process of planning was developed during all the process.</p>
<p>Stage 3 Collection of the data</p>	<p>The data collection followed the next stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the first session, the participants were informed about the purpose and length of the workshop. The head teacher was present during the sessions. 2. The data collection process meant for the investigator to work and interact very closely with the participants in every session: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) At the beginning of each class, the teacher introduced the topic to be developed in different ways, for example in session two, the topic was “multiple intelligences”, so the investigator started making questions to the students about what intelligence meant for them. The questions were made in both English and Spanish.

<p style="text-align: center;">Stage 3 Collection of the data</p>	<p>b) After introducing the topic, the students worked in different assignments. For the topic of “multiple intelligences” for instance, they had to work in pairs to discuss and then match meanings with definitions. In some activities, the researcher only observed the interaction but in some others, she played the role of a student. Every session was different depending on the topic and the objectives to be achieved.</p> <p>c) After each session, the investigator did a self-reflection, thinking about the relevant aspects of the session and the intervention, as well as the best activities to be done in next sessions. While interacting with the group, the researcher detected the need of planning the lessons in a more accurate way. The design and implementation of activities conduct to evaluate the results of the implementation as well as carrying out a new analysis and design for further activities.</p> <p>3. A first step to identify the strategies of communication was the interaction between researcher and group, but also it was needed to take other actions. The first action was to record the participants’ interaction. The second action for the strategies’ identification was the application of a questionnaire, instrument that was designed by the researcher. The researcher explained the students about the recordings and questionnaire. In the case of the questionnaire, the students were asked to collaborate answering it and it was applied in October 2017. Seven students answered the instrument.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Stage 4 Data Analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio recordings analysis: The analysis was done by listening many times to the audios and by making transcripts of the conversations. After identifying the strategies in the audios, the researcher filled a chart to present the findings. The researcher organized and presented the information in a coherent way. • Questionnaire: The researcher gathered the information from this instrument, then, an analysis and reflection was made. The findings were presented through narrative, graphics and charts. Although graphs were used to present the results, they were not used to represent a quantitative analysis.
<p style="text-align: center;">Stage 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The investigation process allowed the researcher to reflect about the work done. This reflection was made during the workshop sessions, during the

Reflection and action based on data	analysis of the information gathered, during the writing and revision, and of the research document. The researcher linked the results of the investigation with the initial research questions and answered them. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Although the action research cycle could not be repeated, the findings helped to give suggestions for further investigation and in this way have the chance to start a new cycle in the future.
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Then, after addressing the important issues that concern the research design of the present paper, the findings obtained from the investigation is presented in the following chapter, which corresponds to the results of the study.

Chapter IV: Results and Findings

Introduction

The research problem of this investigation sets that language adult learners have problems for communicating in English, probably due to the lack in the use of adequate strategies of communication. Then, the research looks for identifying and describing the communication strategies that a group of English as a foreign language senior learners use when they interact and communicate in the target language and how their use helps them. After establishing and explaining the methodology of the study, the current chapter presents the findings of the investigation.

4.1 The results and findings

The interpretation of the results in this investigation was made from a qualitative perspective. According to Creswell (2009), following a qualitative interpretation of the data means that the researcher analyses what he or she observes during the investigation process. The analysis of the two sources of information, the questionnaire and the audio recordings, provided with information about the use of strategies by the participants. Hence, the findings of the study are presented in the following sections.

4.1.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire (See, Appendix 1) was a helpful tool to know about the communicative strategies that the participants use when they communicate in the target language. In order to find out the strategies, the students graded statements according to the frequency of use. The following chart shows the participants' answers:

Chart 5. Communication Strategies used by the participants

Statement	Scale*					
	1	2	3	4	5	T
1.I use English and Spanish when I do not have the vocabulary to make an entire sentence in English, example: “I can’t <i>ir a school</i> ”	x	2	3	1	1	7
2.I make my partner understand me using synonyms when I do not know how to say a word in the target language	1	x	3	3	x	7
3. When I do not know how to say something, I try to use several words instead of the one I intend and I give more examples so my partner understands me.	x	1	2	3	x	6**
4.When it is difficult for me to express what I intend, I abandon my message or idea	2	3	1	1	x	7
5.I repeat the question that my partner said while thinking what to answer	1	1	3	2	x	7
6.In a conversation I avoid using words that have a difficult pronunciation for me	1	x	2	3	x	6**
7.After I say a word or a phrase and I realize it is incorrect, I correct myself immediately	x	1	1	3	1	6**
8.I repeat out loud what I said to be sure that it is correct	2	x	1	3	1	7
9.If I do not use the word in English, I use the word in Spanish	x	2	2	1	2	7
10.I change my initial message so the conversation continues without much interruptions	1	1	2	3	x	7

Source: Elaborated by the researcher based on information from chapter 2.

*Scale: 1= Never; 2= Almost never; 3= Sometimes; 4= Regularly; 5= Always

**Unanswered statement by some the participants

Each one of the statements in the chart belongs to one of the following strategies: achievement, avoidance, time gaining and self-monitory strategies, which are described in the following sections.

Achievement Strategies

The statements 1 and 9 refer to the achievement strategy of switching to the mother tongue (or code switching). This strategy refers to the use of words in Spanish when someone does not have all the vocabulary to make an entire sentence in English. According to the students' answers, most of them use the mentioned strategy sometimes.

Graph 1. Switching to the mother tongue strategy



The participants of the study are beginners of the English language. The use of this strategy suggests that even when they do not have all the words to make an entire sentence in English, they can move through the conversation by using achievement strategies. This finding is parallel to the words of Faerch & Kasper (as cited in Bygate, 1993), who says that in earlier stages of the learning of a language, achievement strategies such as switching to the mother tongue, helps the students to overcome problems in communication, in spite of a lack of vocabulary.

According to the answers provided in the questionnaire, another achievement strategy used by the students is paraphrasing. To use another word instead of the word that we do not know such as a synonym (statement 2), or to use several words instead of the one we intend (statement 3), are both paraphrasing strategies. According to the participants' answers, these strategies are regularly used by most of them:

Graph 2. Paraphrasing strategies

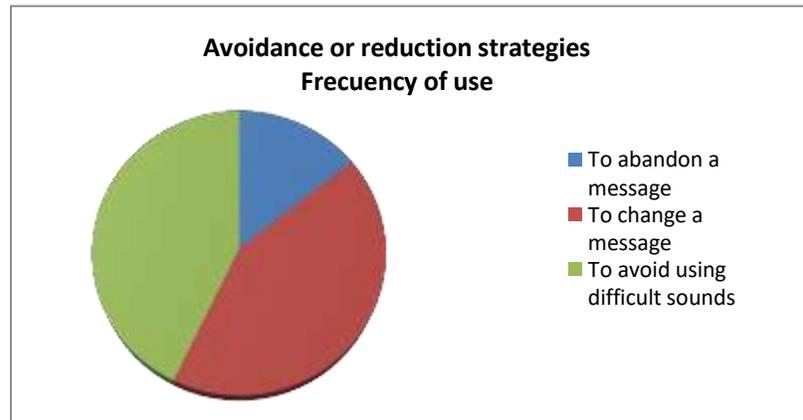


The use of this strategy suggests that senior learners are very determined to deliver their message. As adults, they have much to say and want to have the opportunity of saying it. In addition, Bernat (2004) says that adult learners possess valuable life experience and they want to be listened, recognized and noticed, so the findings confirms this assertion since senior language learners are eager to share their experiences with other people and make use of the resources they have to achieve this goal. Lewis (2011) states that the use of achievement strategies can compensate for gaps in communication particularly in the initial stages of the learning, so it is important that students be aware of these kind of strategies.

Avoidance or Reduction Strategies

On the other hand, the avoidance or reduction strategies (statements 4, 6 and 10) refer to actions such as abandoning (or replacing) one's message, and avoiding topics or sounds sequences in a conversation. According to the statements graded, the students regularly change their messages and avoid pronouncing sounds that are difficult for them, however, they almost never abandon what they intend to say:

Graph 3. Avoidance or Reduction Strategies

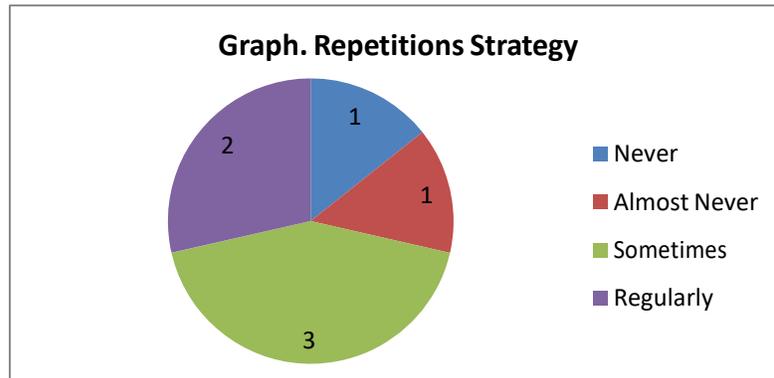


The participants said that they never or almost never abandon their message. However, when it comes to the pronunciation, they prefer to avoid pronouncing certain sounds that are difficult for them. This might be related to their expectations of not making mistakes. Bernat (2004) says that adults want to be in control of the situation and they do not want to commit errors or show weakness. Robinson and Selman (1996) also state that adult learners may feel more insecure if they think they do not have adequate abilities, so they might prefer to avoid topics or sounds if they feel insecure. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that regarding Lewis (2011) reduction strategies are frequently used by those students who feel anxious about making mistakes, for whom taking risks is not something usual.

Time Gaining Strategies

The time gaining strategies are those that speakers use when they try to gain time while analyzing what to say or respond in a conversation. To the statement: "I repeat the question that my partner said while thinking what to answer", three of the participants said that they use this strategy sometimes, while two of them said they use it regularly.

Graph 4. Repetitions strategy

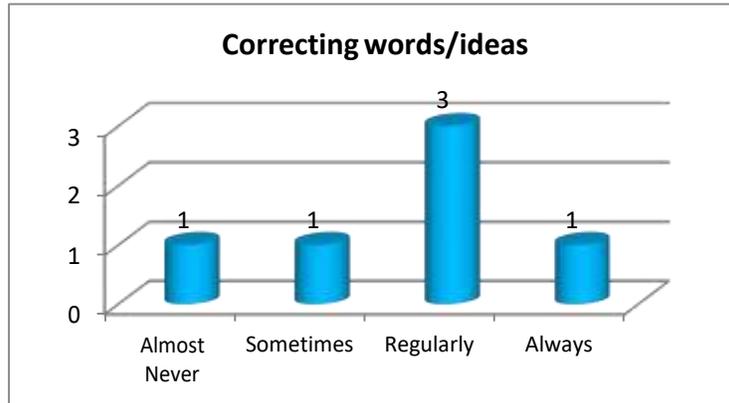


These senior students use this strategy to gain time while thinking. This strategy can be used in combination with other time gaining strategies that can make the student feel more secure and confident. For instance, the use of other strategies such as "Fillers" from the target language, can increase the level of involvement of the student in a conversation as Basurto, Hernández and Mora (2016) state, which results fundamental to achieve the goal of a better communication.

Self-Monitoring Strategies

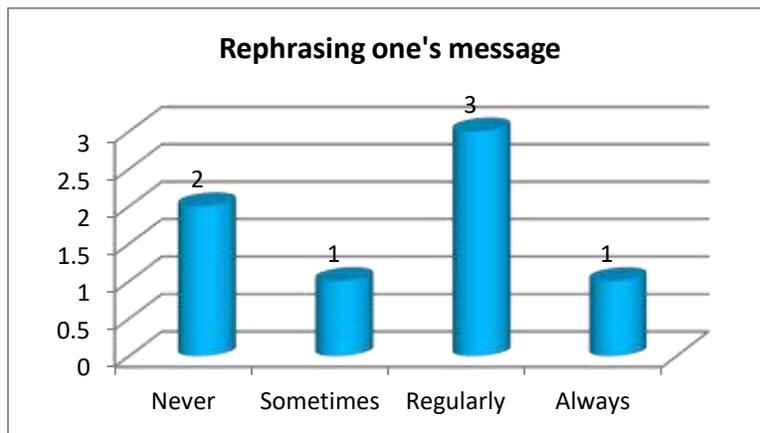
Finally, within the self-monitoring strategies, the students graded two statements, one of them linked to the strategy of correcting words or ideas and the other related to the "rephrasing one's message" strategy. To the sentence "After I say a word or a phrase and I realize it is incorrect, I correct myself immediately", three of the participants said they regularly use this strategy:

Graph 5. Correcting words or ideas strategy



Furthermore, to the statement “I repeat out loud what I said to be sure it is correct”, three of the senior participants said that they use this strategy regularly:

Graph 6. Rephrasing one’s message strategy



This suggests again that, senior language learners want to deliver their message in the best way possible and want to make sure about what they are saying. As Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) state, the use of this strategy, can give the speaker security and confidence since they make sure that their message copes before sending it. Now, after presenting the findings of the questionnaire, the next section presents the strategies identified after analyzing the audio recordings.

4.1.2. The audio recordings

During the first two and last two sessions, the participants' interaction was recorded. The activities recorded were those that the researcher thought to be more meaningful in the looking for the data. The transcriptions of the conversations are shown in the appendix C. The three main groups of strategies identified are presented in the following table:

Chart 6. Strategies of communication used by the participants

STUDENT	ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES			TIME-GAINING STRATEGIES			SELF-MONITORING STRATEGIES	
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2
Lulu		X				X		X
Lupita				X		X		
Rosa					X	X		
Nadia				X	X	X	X	
Pepe	X		X				X	X
Carla				X		X		
Alma	X				X	X		

Achievement Strategies:	Time gaining Strategies:	Self-Monitoring Strategies:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Switching to the mother tongue 2. Cooperation 3. Paraphrasing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hesitation 2. Repetitions 3. Fillers (Fillers in Spanish) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Correcting words/ideas 2. Rephrasing one's message

The data obtained says that: first, all of the students use more than one strategy when they communicate. Second, the time gaining strategies are the most popular among the students,

specifically fillers, the majority of the participants use this strategy. Third, the strategies less used by the participants are the achievement strategies; only three of the students used them when they communicate in the target language.

The conversations recorded showed that the majority of the students use fillers in Spanish when they speak in English; the students also use “repetitions” and “hesitations”. However, the analysis made to the audio recordings and the interaction between researcher and participants shows that, the use of these strategies were not very useful for them to achieve a good communication. Silent pauses and hesitations did not help students to interact in a good way because the conversation stopped many times and the interlocutor could not help his or her classmate. Talking about fillers, which are commonly used in a conversation, they did not help the students much since the participants used fillers in Spanish. This finding goes along with the words of Basurto *et al* (2016), who say that the use of fillers in Spanish when we speak in English can diminish the oral production of the students and make them feel less secure. The mentioned suggest that if not properly used, these strategies might constrain communication.

The analysis of the recordings also revealed that some of the participants were constantly looking for the teacher’s help. These might suggest that for senior learners the teacher is an important figure of knowledge so they relied on her to help them to continue the conversation. It also suggests that students do not know how to ask for help in a conversation, in other words, they are not familiar with the use of strategies that can help them to ask for help. According to Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1995), when the speaker uses interactional strategies with phrases such as “What do you call...?”, “I don’t know the word in English” or “Could you say that again?” the objective is to get information from his/her interlocutor's knowledge while having a better interaction.

Now, referring to the other two groups of strategies, achievement and self-monitoring strategies, it was clear to see that not many students made use of them. The analysis of the audios and the interaction with the group allowed the researcher to see that the students with a better knowledge of the English language were those who dared to use other resources to deliver their message. For instance, trying to give a bigger explanation of what they intended to say or to use synonyms for the words they did not know. This confirms what Lewis (2011) states about the use of achievement strategies by those students who are more prepared to take risks because they might prefer fluency to accuracy.

Finally, it was proved that the self-monitoring strategies were used by only a few of the participants, as well. This suggests that the students are not familiar with the use of this type of strategies, which can be very useful for them to correct or change something in their speech, as well as using rephrasing, to make sure their ideas are correct.

4.2 The findings, a comparison

The analysis of the questionnaire and the audio recordings provided with useful information about the use of strategies by the participants. In the present section, a comparison of the strategies found in both sources of information are listed and presented in the following chart:

Chart 7. Strategies most used by the participants. A comparison

STRATEGY	Questionnaire	Audio Recordings
Achievement Strategies:		
Switching to the mother tongue (Code switching)		
Paraphrasing	x	
Cooperation		
Avoidance or Reduction Strategies		
Abandoning one's message		
Avoiding sounds	x	
Replacing messages	x	
Time Gaining Strategies		
Repetitions		x
Hesitation		x
Fillers (fillers in Spanish)		x
Self-monitoring Strategies		
Correcting words or ideas	x	x
Rephrasing one's message	x	

Although the students made use of different strategies of communication, the chart shows the strategies marked in the questionnaire as regularly used by most of the participants (Chart 4, scale 4), so it is possible to see a contrast in the use of strategies according to both sources of information. First, although in the questionnaire most of the students marked the strategy of paraphrasing as a regularly used, in the audio recordings it was not possible to identify the mention strategy as one of the most used. This suggests that for the participants is very important to deliver their message; however, they do not know how to make use of synonyms or of more general words to achieve this goal.

The questionnaire provided with information on the avoidance or reduction strategies, which refer to replace our message or to avoid certain topics while we communicate. During the interaction with the participants, it was not easy to know if they were using these kind

of strategies, so the information obtained from the questionnaire was very valuable. The use of these strategies suggests that the senior language learners do not want to make mistakes so they prefer to avoid difficult sounds for them. However, before abandoning their message they change it or replace it, which says that they are eager to express what they want to say.

Finally, the time gaining strategies were not representative as frequently used according to the data from the questionnaire, however, according to the conversations recorded these strategies were the most used. Since the senior students have basic English level, and they might be struggling with issues such as a lack of vocabulary, so they made an extended use of hesitations, repetitions and fillers. They made use of fillers in Spanish because they do not know fillers in English, which did not allow them to improve communication.

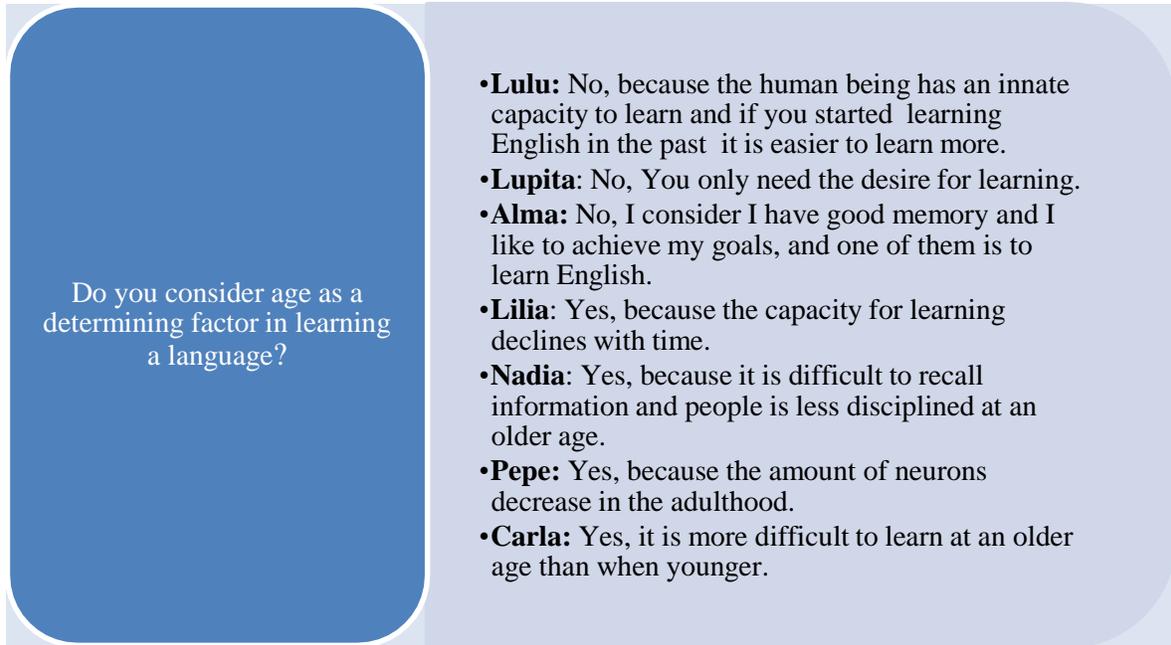
4.3 Other Findings

The questionnaire also provided with valuable information about other aspects of the participants' learning process. It was intended to know about the students' vision of learning a language at an older age; their reasons for learning; and their learning style.

4.3.1 The age as a decisive factor in the language learning process

It was interesting to know the participants' opinion about the role that age plays in the learning process of a language. On the one hand, four of the participants answered to this question saying that age has a negative influence in the learning process, but on the other hand, three of the respondents said that age is not a factor that has an influence when learning. The following figure shows their answers:

Figure 2. Age as a determinant factor in language learning



The group opinions are divided when talking about learning at an older age; nevertheless, this group of senior learners want to continue improving their English level and have a big desire to continue learning.

4.3.2 Skills to develop in the target language

At the same time, it was interesting to know about the skills in the target language that the senior students consider more important to develop. All the participants think that the skill of speaking and being able to communicate is one of the most important abilities. Regarding to the skill of listening and understanding, six of the participants marked it as one of the most important as well. The ability of reading was chosen by only one of the participants, while other two participants marked “writing” as one main skills to be develop.

Chart 8. Skills to be developed in the English language

Participant	Writing	Reading	Listening and understanding	Speaking and communicating
Lulu			x	x
Lupita	x	x	x	x
Lilia	x		x	X
Nadia			x	x
Pepe			x	x
Carla			x	x
Alma				x

The information obtained suggests that all the students want to improve their communication skills in the target language, specially the skill of communication.

4.3.3 The self-directed learning

The participants graded sentences related to the topic of independence and self-motivation when learning. The group of senior adults in *Casa del Jubilado Universitario* have an educational background distinguished by the teacher as the center of the learning process, so it was interesting to know what they think about the self-directed learning process. The following chart shows how the participants graded each statement:

Chart 9. The self-directed learning

Statement	Scale*					
	1	2	3	4	5	T
1.I feel really motivated when I learn something new	x	x	x	3	4	7
2.My efforts are decisive to improve my learning process	x	x	x	2	5	7
3.I do different activities outside the classroom beside those asked by the teacher, so I can learn and remember better something	1	1	x	3	2	7
4.I feel less secure and with less freedom to express myself if I work under the teacher's supervision	4	2	x	1	x	7
5.I do not need to be sure I get the right answer after finishing an exercise or doing an activity	3	2	2	x	x	7
6.Usually I try to evaluate my performance and learning in an objective way	x	x	x	7	x	7
7.I try to set realistic goals when I am learning something new	x	x	x	6	1	7
8.Usually I do not involve myself in the decision making refer to the activities and evaluation criteria in class	2	1	x	2	1	6**
9.Usually, I do not think in the consequences of not accomplishing my goals	4	2	x	x	1	7

*Scale: 1= Totally disagree; 2= disagree; 3= Not agree or disagree; 4= Agree; 5= Totally agree

**Unanswered statements by some of the participants

Statements 1, 2 and 3 show that the majority of the participants are motivated and ready to learn new things. They know that their efforts are decisive in their learning and they do more activities outside the classroom. According to statements 6, 7 and 9, the students try to evaluate their performance in an objective way; this suggests that they are very committed to their progress and think about the consequences of not accomplishing their own goals. Finally, statements 4 and 5 show that the students do not think it is a good idea to work without the teacher's supervision, which suggests that to them, the teacher is an important figure of knowledge who can help them to feel more secure.

4.3.4 Planning

A valuable finding of this investigation was the understanding on the need of carrying out the planning of activities that could achieve a better communication among the participants. Furthermore, after the first sessions, the lack of effective strategies was identified; therefore, planning became a priority. Through concepts of instructional design, it was possible for the researcher to plan and implement. The following is a sample of a lesson plan designed:

Chart 10. Lesson Plan (a sample)

	Procedure	Time
Pre activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The teacher welcomes students and explains what will be the topic and activities.	10 min
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants are shown some pictures of Puebla City and they talk about them.	15 min
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working together, the students construct phrases and look for unknown vocabulary related to ask and give information and directions.	45 min
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants work in pairs asking for and giving information to assist to different events in Puebla City, they ask/give information on how to get to those places.	30 min
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All students comment/reflect about the activities and the outcomes of the session.	10 min
Resources:	Events' information in Puebla City, maps of the city, brochures.	
Reflection:	The activities design helped the participants to interact better using the target language, and at the same time, the researcher could get the information needed. For the next sessions, it is important to explain the instructions of the activity in a clearer way so the participants know what the activity is about and could participate	

The process of planning results essential because it helps to design different activities in every stage of a process, and in the case of the present research, it proved to be very useful in order to carefully select the activities and kind of interactions to be applied in class.

The present chapter has presented the analysis of all the information and data obtained. The findings were organized in charts, graphs and figures showing the participants' information which served as the foundations for the conclusions of the present study. By analyzing the information obtained it can be concluded that the participants of the study use different strategies to achieve communication, however, not all the strategies are useful for them. In addition, the participants are not aware of the use of a wider range of strategies that can help them better to achieve an effective communication. Now, the chapter five presents the conclusions of the study.

Chapter V: The Conclusions

Introduction

This study was undertaken in order to identify the strategies of communication that senior adult learners use, and how the use of these strategies help them in achieving the goal of communication. This chapter deals with the general conclusions of the study, for that purpose, the research questions are answered and the key findings are presented. This chapter also presents the limitations and contributions of the study, and directions for further research.

5.1 Working with senior language learners

From working with adults in *Casa del Jubilado Universitario* BUAP, I could understand in a better way how they interact and learn. Senior adults possess a rich life experience and have many things to share, they want to be listened and recognized, and they have an enormous willingness to learn. However, senior adults have been considered a vulnerable group in our society without considering all their characteristics. As older adults, however, they have strong feelings about learning and because of that, it is important, to guide them through the process. To communicate ideas in the target language means a challenge for them, but they always try to overcome any limitations.

From the group of participants, almost half of them think that the age factor does not have an influence in the learning process; the rest of them, on the contrary, think that learning something at an older age is more difficult than learning when younger. Nevertheless, all of them are motivated to learn the English language because they like the language and they are eager to improve their communicative competence. Usually, senior adults are self-directed learners;

however, they need to feel they have a support and a guide. They are independent learners but they like to feel the teacher's support.

5.2 Answers to the research questions

This section presents the answers to the research questions that guided the investigation. The answers were interpreted and summarized in order to give an answer to each of the questions that led the present study.

5.2.1 Research Question 1.

What type of communication strategies do the senior language learners use?

According to the findings of this investigation, the communication strategies more used by the participants were the following:

- 1) Avoidance or reduction strategies: avoiding sounds and replacing messages.
- 2) Time gaining strategies: repetitions, hesitations and fillers.
- 3) Self-monitoring strategies: correcting words or ideas.

5.2.2 Research Question 2.

How does the use of those strategies of communication help senior language learners?

It can be concluded that the use of avoidance and time gaining strategies by the participants was not useful in achieving a good communication. In the case of the avoidance or reduction strategy, the findings say that, when senior language learners use this strategy, they reduce their communicative objectives and they do not have an effective way to express their thoughts. This highlights the importance of letting senior students know about other strategies, for instance

achievement or interactional strategies, which can help them to express thoughts and ideas in a better way.

It can be concluded also that the use of time gaining strategies do not help the senior language learners either. It is supposed that when learners use time gaining strategies, they are looking for the time to think an answer or to plan their speech to maintain the conversation going. However, in the case of the present study, the use of this strategy made the conversation stopped many times impeding fluency, its use did not make the participants feel more confident, and it did not allow the other person in the conversation to help his/her interlocutor in any way.

Finally, it can be stated that the most useful strategy used by the senior language learners was the self-monitoring strategy of correcting words or ideas. Since senior students want to express their thoughts in the best way, the mentioned strategy did helped them to be sure that their speech reflected what they intended to say. The use of this strategy by the participants shows their efforts to deliver their thoughts and ideas in the best way possible.

5.2.3 Research Question 3.

What are the most useful strategies that foster communicative competence in older language learners?

Although the analysis of the information in this research showed the strategies used by the senior learners, there was not enough evidence to set which ones are the most useful in promoting communicative competence in them. In contrast, it is possible to conclude that senior learners need to be aware of a wider range of strategies that can help them better to achieve communicative competence. Which certainly can be concluded also is that the teaching of

communication strategies results a need since the participants of this project do not know about them and their use.

Thus, after answering the research questions of the study, the following section deals with the key findings derived from the combination of the instruments and the researcher's observations done during the investigation. The key findings show how participants made use of the strategies and how they expressed their interest in learning more about them.

5.3 Key findings: the use of communication strategies

The data analysis done provided the following key findings:

- Senior adult learners use different strategies to communicate their thoughts and ideas; however, they stick to the use of only few of them: time gaining, avoidance or reduction strategies and self-monitory strategies.
- The extended use among the participants of **time gaining strategies**, such as hesitations and repetitions was not useful for them to achieve a better interaction. Their use also suggests that the participants are dealing with other issues perhaps a lack in vocabulary or the unknown of appropriate grammar structures. On the other hand, the use of fillers in Spanish was not a useful tool for the participants as well. In this case, it is important that senior adults be aware of the use of fillers in English such as “well”, “you know”, “I mean”, among others, because this strategy might give them more confidence in the use of the target language.
- The use of **avoidance or reduction strategies** by the participants indicates that participants do not want to commit errors or that these senior adults feel they are not capable of expressing their thoughts. In that way, they prefer to avoid pronouncing

certain sounds that are difficult for them or change their message, reducing their objectives of communication, which in a long run can be detrimental in their process of communication.

- The use of **self-monitoring strategies** is linked to the learners' desire of delivering messages in the best way. Furthermore, as independent learners, they want to be sure of what they intend to say before delivering their message. It needs to be pointed out that the strategy of "correcting words or ideas" was the only one identified in both, the audio recordings and in the questionnaire as a strategy frequently used by the participants.

- According to the participants, the **achievement strategy of paraphrasing** was a strategy frequently used, however, after analyzing the conversations it can be said that the mentioned strategy is not a frequently used one. This expresses a big need of the senior adults to have a tool that helps them better to express their thoughts, by explaining in an extended way what they want to say. The participants of this study want to be understood and although they are very determined to deliver their message, they still do not have other tools that can help them to achieve their communicative goals.

- The findings also reveal that the participants are not aware of the use of **interactional strategies**, which involve the use of phrases such as: "Could you say that again please?", "What do you call...?", "Can I say that?" among other expressions. The use of the mentioned strategies promotes the action of asking for help and improves communication.

5.4 Limitations of the study

The present investigation was carried out in a specific context and in a given time, so there is a need to establish some limitations of the study for a better understanding of the making of it and its surroundings. One of the limitations was the fact that this study was done in a short and limited period of time. Therefore, there was not enough time to repeat the cycle of action research, however, the findings derived from the analysis and interpretation of the study allowed the researcher to make some suggestions for further investigation and in this way establish the possibility of starting a new cycle in the future.

Another limitation of the study refers to a limited context. The people who participated in the study share similar backgrounds. The majority of them studied university, some of them were teachers in the past, people that are familiar to learning environments, so it is useful to point out that the results and key findings are only valid for this context and these participants, results may vary under different circumstances.

5.5 Directions for further research

After developing this paper and reviewing the findings obtained, I can state that further and deeper investigation is needed on how the use of communication strategies help these learners to achieve communicative competence. There is also a need of doing deeper research on how classroom activities can promote the use of communication strategies to achieve more effective and hence, better communication. Additionally, since senior adults from the group of study use some strategies but they are not aware of a wider range of them, further research on how to teach communication strategies to senior language learners is needed.

This study has specific characteristics and the results were limited to this particular context. Then, another suggestion for further research would be, try to replicate this study in

another context in order to know how the application of the same methodology may lead to different key findings in a different group of study with different characteristics, having the experience of this first study.

Therefore, it would be interesting as well, to investigate more about other problems that the speakers face when they communicate in the target language in other contexts. There might be other factors, apart from the lack in the use of strategies that may impede fluent communication among senior adults, which can affect the performance of language learners in the target language, for instance, the inappropriate use of grammatical rules, bad pronunciation or an underdeveloped listening skill. The present study sets precedents to further study regarding the language learning of senior adults, a group that is growing according to global population trends.

5.6 Recommendations and contributions of the study

Besides the answers given to the research questions and the establishment of the key findings, some recommendations can be made for teaching English to senior learners. It is essential for adult learners to feel respected and recognized as Knowles (2000) claimed in his identification of the characteristics of adult learners, recognizing that they have a big life experience that they want to share. To Galbraith (2004), they are independent students, which make them direct their own learning; however, learning for them can be highly emotional so they need to feel that they are learning in a respectful environment, which affirms their self-worth. It is also important to take into consideration that, older adults might need more time in class to perform assignments

so they need facilities that help them in the learning process and teachers must create opportunities for them, as Cranton (2000) says.

On the other hand, the results and key findings of the present investigation bring out an insight on the knowledge of the learning of languages in older adults, which results important since there are no many papers that cover this subject. At the same time, this paper might serve as a reference for future studies about other aspects of the learning of senior adults, useful matter because this population will increase and represent a very representative sector in the future. According to Angel, Vega and Lopez-Ortega (2017) in their document “Aging in Mexico: population trends and emerging issues”, Mexico’s population average age will increase to 42 years old by 2050. Predictions have been made that the average age in Mexico will be 65 years old. These adults or older adults will be demanding different services such as learning services, among others. Therefore, there is a need of knowing more about this group of students that require a special dedication from teachers and guiders.

5.7 Final Conclusions

Senior learners are genuine enthusiastic people who undertake study again because they are motivated to keep learning and as adult learners, they know what they want to learn. They can help language teachers to improve their job because they trust their teachers and they truly get involved in their own learning, which can be very motivating for teachers.

The work done during this research allowed me to see that senior learners want to put into practice their English language knowledge, they want to achieve an effective communication, have a better interaction, and feel more motivated when using the target

language, so there is a need of working with them teaching about the strategies of communication and their use.

Senior learners from *Casa del Jubilado Universitario* BUAP made me feel accepted and welcomed from the first day and they were very excited about participating in this project. From having the opportunity of working with these senior adults, I got this feeling of wanting to do more to help them in achieving their goals. For me, this project means the first step to continue learning more about adult language learning because it is a field that has many things to offer regarding teaching and researching.

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APPENDIX A. The instrument

Cuestionario

Objetivo: Conocer acerca del proceso de aprendizaje del alumno, así como las estrategias que ha utilizado en el proceso de comunicación utilizando el idioma inglés.

Se agradece de antemano la información brindada. Los datos y la información recabados en el presente cuestionario serán tratados confidencialmente y utilizados exclusivamente con fines educativos.

Información requerida

Edad: _____

Sexo: F M

Nivel de escolaridad:

Preparatoria () Carrera técnica () Licenciatura () Otro:

Tiempo estudiando inglés: _____

Instrucciones: Conteste el cuestionario como se le indique:

1. ¿Por qué motivo(s) decidió estudiar inglés?
 - a) Para encontrar un mejor empleo
 - b) Para lograr un ascenso/una mejor posición en mi actual/anterior empleo
 - c) Porque deseo viajar
 - d) Porque viajo al extranjero
 - e) Porque me gusta el idioma
 - f) Otro:

2. ¿Considera que la edad es un factor que puede influir en el aprendizaje de otro idioma?
Si ()
No ()
¿Por qué?

3. ¿Cuál de la(s) siguientes habilidades a desarrollar en el idioma inglés considera más importante(s)?
 - a) Escritura
 - b) Lectura
 - c) Habilidad para escuchar y entender
 - d) Habilidad para hablar y comunicarse

A continuación, lea la pregunta y después cada enunciado y conteste respecto a su nivel de acuerdo con cada uno. La escala va de “totalmente en desacuerdo” a “totalmente de acuerdo”. No piense mucho al decidir y trate de no cambiar su respuesta:

4. ¿Qué tan importante es para usted el auto-aprendizaje? Califique cada enunciado usando la siguiente escala:

Escala:

- 1) Totalmente en desacuerdo
- 2) En desacuerdo
- 3) Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
- 4) De acuerdo
- 5) Totalmente de acuerdo

Enunciado	1	2	3	4	5
Me siento realmente motivado cuando aprendo algo nuevo					
Mis esfuerzos son determinantes para mejorar mi proceso de aprendizaje					
Realizo actividades fuera del salón de clases, aparte de las que me solicita el profesor, para aprender o recordar mejor un tema					
Me siento menos seguro y con menos libertad para expresarme si trabajo bajo la supervisión del maestro					
No necesito asegurarme de que obtuve la respuesta correcta al finalizar el ejercicio o actividad					
Regularmente trato de evaluar objetivamente mi desempeño y aprendizaje					
Me pongo metas alcanzables cuando aprendo algo nuevo					
Regularmente no me involucro en la toma de decisiones referente a las actividades o formas de evaluar en clase					
Usualmente no pienso en las consecuencias de no cumplir con mis propios objetivos.					

- En las siguientes preguntas, conteste de acuerdo a su experiencia:

5. ¿En qué situaciones de comunicación real ha podido utilizar el idioma inglés?

6. ¿A qué problemas se ha enfrentado cuando intenta comunicarse en dicho idioma?

Lea la siguiente pregunta, lea cada enunciado y conteste respecto al nivel de frecuencia. La escala va de “Nunca” a “Siempre”. No piense mucho al decidir y trate de no cambiar su respuesta.

7. ¿Aplica algún tipo de estrategia cuando se comunica en inglés? Elije de la siguiente lista usando la siguiente escala:

Escala:

- 1) Nunca
- 2) Casi nunca
- 3) A veces
- 4) Regularmente
- 5) Siempre

Enunciado	1	2	3	4	5
Combino inglés y español cuando no poseo el vocabulario para hacer una oración completa en inglés, por ejemplo: “I can’t ir a school”					
Trato de darme a entender utilizando sinónimos, cuando no sé cómo decir una palabra en inglés					
Cuando no sé cómo decir algo, trato de dar una mayor explicación y doy más ejemplos para darme a entender					
Cuando tengo dificultades para expresar algo abandono mi idea o mensaje inicial					
Repito la pregunta de mi interlocutor mientras la analizo y pienso que contestar					
Cuando converso evito usar palabras que tienen una pronunciación difícil para mí					
Después de decir una palabra o frase y darme cuenta de que es incorrecta, me autocorrijo inmediatamente					
En voz alta repito en voz alta lo que acabo de decir para asegurarme de que es correcto					
Si no conozco la palabra en inglés utilizo la palabra en español					
Cambio mi idea o mensaje inicial para que la comunicación se siga dando sin muchas interrupciones					

Muchas gracias por su tiempo para contestar este cuestionario.
 En caso de dudas o comentarios escribir a: ana_llaguno_m@yahoo.com

APPENDIX B. The observations instrument

STRATEGIES OF COMMUNICATION CHART

STUDENT	ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES			TIME-GAINING STRATEGIES			SELF-MONITORING STRATEGIES	
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2

<p>Achievement Strategies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Switching to the mother tongue 2. Cooperation 3. Paraphrasing 	<p>Time gaining Strategies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hesitation 2. Repetitions 3. Fillers (Fillers in Spanish) 	<p>Self-Monitoring Strategies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Correcting words/ideas 2. Rephrasing one's message
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APPENDIX C. The transcripts

Transcript 1

Teacher: Ok, Lulu, Lulu, would you learn to play the guitar for your friend? Yes or no?

Lulu: Yes

T: Ok, yes

L: First

T: Ok

L: First, I have to buy a guitar

T: Ok, but you don't have to write it, just try to talk to me, eh?

(The teacher makes a signal to tell Lulu it is not necessary to read. The teacher made a mistake, she says: "write it" instead of "read it" but the student understands that the teacher is asking her not to read her notes).

L: Ah! Ya! Sin leer.

T: Ah!

L: Aja, bueno, first I need to buy a guitar because I don't have one

T: Ok, very good, you have to buy a guitar, excellent

L: Aja, second, I need to find a teacher, I need to find a... music teacher?

T: Excellent

L: Ah, that give me... guitar class

T: Excellent! Very good! That's your plan?

L: That's my plan.

Transcript 2

Teacher: Ok Lupita

Lupita: Yes?

T: Do you have a plan for your friends, for your friend's wedding?

L: Yes, I...

T: What's the plan?

L: I looking a person who knows play the guitar

T: Ok

L: Um, later, eh, say can you teach me play the guitar? And... two months, eh, we have to practice the... ¿Cómo se dice, eh... las canciones que se van a tocar?

T: You try to say it as, as you, as you... (inaudible part)

L: The... reper, repertorio, no sé cómo se dice en inglés

T: The list of the songs

L: The list of the songs and together in the weaden, in the weading...

T: Excellent

L: Eh, we have to play together

T: Excellent, very good

L: Yes.

Transcript 3

Teacher: Who wants to share, who wants to share with us about a problem in Mexico? (A student raises her hand) Ok Rosa

Rosa: I think the the best problem in Mexico is now the *narcotrafic*

T: Ok

R: Eh, I think the cause is because eh, the consumer is very extensive in, in a lot of pai... countries

T: Like in the US for example, right?

R: (Silence and observe the teacher)

T: Like in the US, the United States?
 R: Yes, yes like in the... is the most
 T: Ok, excellent, *ajá*
 R: And I... I think the solution, the solution is, is... rules eh, *fars* the education for the childrens
 T: Excellent
 R: And second, I... I think, eh, I... I think it'll, it'll it will in to legal, legal the, the drugs
 T: Ok
 R: Yes, *este*, for the control
 T: Ok, ok
 R: Cos, I, I think... (Silence)
 T: Ok, there you go, there you have, ok, excellent, excellent, very good.

Transcript 4

Teacher: Ok, so well, um, I would like us to discuss, I would like us to discuss about eh, what is intelligence for you?
 One Student: What *qué*?
 Teacher: What is intelligence?
 One Student: What... those?

Teacher: What is intelligence? What is for you? *Qué piensan que es la inteligencia?* What is intelligence for you? Does anyone have an idea? Yes? Oh! (The teacher asks a new student to introduce herself and then the conversation starts). Yes Nadia?

Nadia: Ah, *este*, I thin, eh, what *integigen* is eh, *wor the hot and repeat very much wok*. Eh because I, eh, learn, eh, *repeat wok, repeat wok* and listen, listen

T: "Listening, listening"
 N: Listening
 T: Ok, ok, repeating, repeating... (Inaudible part)
 N: Repeat words
 T: Ok
 N: And the "grabar"? Yo grabo
 T: Recording, recording
 N: Recording the lessons in the phone
 T: Ok
 N: And... (silence)
 T: Please, go on, go on
 N: And.. (silence)
 T: Continua, continua, asi esta bien.
 N: And... (pause) I have the "verbos en grabar" en phone.
 T: mmm uhu
 N: I listening... (inaudible part)
 T: Ok so, very good! So intelligence for you has to do with
 N: Repeating
 T: With repeating
 N: The words
 T: With listening also
 N: Yes
 T: Ok

Transcript 5

Carla: Excuse me, do, eh, do you can me? Eh...um (silence), do you can give me information where is the Callejón de los sapos?

Pepe: Yes! You can, you can go straight, you can go straight two blocks and...

The teacher interrupts the students to help with the conversation, then they continue:

P: You can go straight, eh, straight right and two blocks, you, you... ¿Es you can go or you can walk? You can walk *straight*?

Teacher: Go or walk

P: You can walk *straight* ahead two blocks and then turn to the, to the right and on walk three, three blocks and then you encounter or find? (The student changes his intonation to ask the teacher for the correct word). (Silence) Encount, encounter the Los Sapos.

C: Eh, yes. You are, you tell me, eh, (silence) there is interesting in the place?

P: In this place there, they sell, eh, national, national or foreign coins, books and, and many and many crafts, but there are and many used objects they say the Saturdays, on Saturdays and Monday, and Sundays.

C: Yes, ah, you tell, you tell me, eh, there is a hotel?

P: Is there a hotel? Ah, I don't know, but, but, in, in "Los Sapos" I don't know if there is, if there is a hotel

C: But I... I (silence), I (inaudible part) the place a new hotel

P: New hotel, Ah, maybe, maybe because eh, there are, there are new, there are new hotels in Puebla, that are, are making new hotels in Puebla, but I don't know if, if in, if in "Los Sapos" there are, there is one.

C: Mm, but I hear the hotel, um, have excellent food and special, specially, eh..

P: International food?

C: Bread, bread, eh (silence)

P: A delicious bread?

C: Uhu, yes

P: But I don't, I don't know, but maybe, maybe there, there is a hotel but I don't, I don't know, I don't know it.

C: Thank you

P: You are welcome

Transcript 6

Alma: Please, could you say how to go the "Fonda Santa Clara"?

Sol: Ah, eh, we are in the fountain of San Miguel and I...eh...

A: ¿En la Fuente de San Miguel?

S: Aja! I say, you'll need to work, walk from street on...no street... (inaudible part)

A: No, three, three, three, three poniente

S: You go to street on to the three poniente, this corner you need walk one, two blocks and middle street you came the "Fonda Santa Clara" eh... left

A: At the left, ah! (inaudible part)

S: Ah! Yes, yes, one block and middle, other middle, yes!

A: Despues, what are, what are the typical eats, I don't know nothing, nothing that foods

S: Ah, Do, do you like, eh, testing the chiles en nogada, um, gusanos, gusanos de maguey and, and... mole poblano, eh, its very rich

A: In the gusanos, que? De maguey

S: Aja!

A: In the... October month?

S: No, only in August-September

A: We, este, we, estamos?

S: Ohh! Its October!

A: We are in the October moth. Hahaha

S: Oh Sorry! Hahaha.