Chapter Seven
Conclusion

7.0 Introduction

This last chapter is a logical conclusion of the study on the learning strategies and learning styles of the Good Learner of English at the undergraduate level in the state of Gujarat. In a way it summarises the entire study and offers some useful suggestions for further research.

7.1 Overview

This research project on the Good Second Language Learner was undertaken in line with similar studies on the Good Language Learner carried out in Canada and the USA. Second language learning is a complex process involving not only intellectual or cognitive abilities but also influenced by social and affective factors as well. And, for this reason, second language learning is different from other subjects in the curriculum.

India is a multi-lingual country. English is studied as a second language in India. The investigation aimed at examining the precise strategies and overall styles of learning adopted by the Good Learners of English in our situation. The investigation was delimited to the learners at the Undergraduate level in the state of Gujarat. Major learner attributes covered in this study are: sex, age group, faculty or institution, medium of instruction, and level of competence in English language. All the learners approached for the study had a proven competence in English and
therefore, they were Good Learners of English. But, for the purpose of this study they were further divided into two categories- the Good Language Learners and the Better Language Learners, on the basis of their scores in English language paper in the last exam.

The set of hypotheses was formulated in such a manner that the study could examine whether different learner attributes had any significant bearing on the strategies and styles adopted by the learners of English in our situation. The selected sample for the study was administered a strategy questionnaire. The random sampling method was used for the selection of the subjects. A few subjects from the selected sample were approached for face-to-face interview, which intended to elicit data on the use of learning strategies in more detail and in an informal setting. The data yielded through the questionnaire were quantified for the application of appropriate statistical measures. Analysis of the available data enabled the investigator to confirm or reject the hypotheses.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter seeks to provide a framework for the entire study- by reviewing the ELT scene in India and Gujarat, by making a statement of the problem, and by determining the scope and constraints of the study. The second chapter reviews in detail the research on various learner attributes/factors that relate to differential success in Second Language Acquisition and, in particular, it focuses on the research on learning strategies and styles. The third chapter describes the tools used for data-collection and outlines procedures adopted for the analysis of the available data on the strategies adopted by the Good Learners of English at the Undergraduate level in the state of Gujarat. The
data is analyzed using Z-test, keeping in mind the comparatively large sample. The fourth chapter gives an overview of the administration of the tools for data-collection and describes how the selected sample was representative of the universe. The chapter concludes with the observations made by the investigator. The fifth chapter is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of the data. The analysis is presented in the form of tables of mean, Standard Deviation (SD) and Coefficient of Variation (CV) as well as in the form of charts. The sixth chapter deals with major findings of the research and implications for English Language Teaching in the state. The last chapter forms a conclusion of the study and offers some suggestions for further research.

It is hoped that this research on the Good Language Learner will go a long way in making second language teaching more effective and productive. The poorer language learners can also be encouraged to use the strategies that the Good Language Learners employ and in this way, they can improve their competence in the target language. The findings yielded through this study may help to sensitize language teachers and educators in the state to learning strategies and to the styles of our language learners. It is important that various learner factors are taken into consideration in materials production and curriculum design and implementation. Further research on learner attributes like attitudes and motivation, and personality factors may be helpful to make English Language Teaching in the state more learner-centred.
7.2 Suggestions for further research

Second Language Acquisition is a challenging and wide area of study. Over the years researchers in the field have carried out many important studies and arrived at significant research findings. Gradually, the language learner has come to hold the centre stage in SLA research. In the state of Gujarat we follow the traditional methods of language teaching and evaluation of achievement in English. It is time we woke up to the situation and tried our best to catch up with the developments in the field. We can no longer afford to neglect the teaching of English given its worldwide importance in the age of Internet.

7.2.1 A variety of learner factors play an important role in learning a second language. SLA research needs to study and focus on these factors. Some areas of interest for further research on second language learning are such as attitudes and motivation, aptitude for second language learning, and different personality characteristics.

7.2.2 It is necessary to study learning styles of the students in other faculties like science and technology, home science, medicine, fine arts, and so on to ascertain whether same learning styles are adopted by these students.

7.2.3 Future studies may also explore the possibility of influencing the learners' choice of learning strategies through strategy training. It would be interesting to investigate whether specially prepared language learning
tasks, specifically administered learner training and other academic factors would positively or negatively affect the strategies adopted by the learners.

7.2.4 It would be interesting to investigate whether the learning strategies adopted by the students in Gujarat are significantly different from those adopted by the students in other states of India.

7.2.5 A longitudinal study spread over seven to ten years may also throw some light on the fact whether students consistently adopt the same set of learning strategies across school, college, and university levels or their strategies change at various levels.

7.3 Conclusion

In view of the explosion of numbers getting enrolled in Indian universities we are likely to be forced to adopt a policy of teaching them in larger classes. This is diametrically opposite to the movement of paying attention to individual learners and their learning strategies. It is hoped, however, that adequate studies of the learning strategies adopted by our students will be carried out in future, so that instructional problems not only in language teaching but also in other areas of the curriculum will be better understood and as a result, will be properly resolved. The present study marks just a beginning in that direction. A small study taken up by one individual researcher has a limited scope. However, it is satisfying to note that the first step is taken in the right direction.