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CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE WORK ALREADY DONE

2.1 Earlier Research in the Field of Language Learning Strategies

During the last two decades and since the introduction of SILL as a reliable measurement of language learning strategies, lots of research has been conducted involving language learning strategies. Some of these studies investigate the impact of these strategies in language learning. Some others involve factors influencing language learning strategies. In this chapter not only the works done in these two categories are reviewed but also the works on personality factors including impact of personality factors on other variables and the works regarding the variables affecting personality factors are also reviewed.

2.2 Factors Influencing the Use of Language Learning Strategies

Many factors may affect students’ using language learning strategies, such as, age, gender, aptitude, attitude, motivation, learning stage, task requirements, teacher expectation, learning styles, individual differences, motivation, cultural differences, beliefs about language learning, language proficiency and personality factors (Rubin, 1975; Bialystok, 1979; Abraham and Vann, 1987; Oxford, 1989; Oxford and Nyikos 1989; Chamot and Kupper 1989; Ehrman and Oxford, 1995).

2.2.1 Gender and Language Learning Strategies

It must be mentioned that of all the international studies dealing with LLSs – probably the most often investigated variable is that of gender and how it is related to strategy use. In fact, gender was tested as a mediating variable in a majority of the studies and has been the focus of much attention in the field of strategy research in many more.

One of the very first empirical studies on the role of gender on strategy use was conducted by Politzer (1983) who examined 90 American college students learning foreign languages and found that female subjects used Social/ interactional strategies more frequently than their male counterparts.
In 1989, Ehrman and Oxford studied strategy use by various occupational groups. They found a much more frequent use of four strategy categories (general learning, functional, searching for/communicating meaning, and self-management) by females.

In another study in the same year, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) studied a group of American college students (N=1200) and they found that females made a greater use of three strategy categories of general study, input elicitation and formal practice.

The results of aforementioned studies showed the superiority of females in using learning strategies. Oxford, Nyikos and Ehrman (1988) attributed this superiority to women’s greater (a) desire for Social approval, (b) willingness to accept existing norms, and (c) verbal ability.

In 1996, Dreyer and Oxford studied 305 South African students (179 females and 126 males). They found that females used Social and Metacognitive strategies more frequently than males and in general females use strategies more often than males.

Graham (1997) argued that her research showed that across all tasks, there was an indication of a more careful, planned approach on the part of girls.

In 2003, in a large-scale study, Peacock and Ho conducted a research in China with 1006 Chinese participants (51% male, 49% female). They used Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) to measure the strategy use. They found that females had a higher use in all six categories than males. Furthermore, they found that females had a much higher use of nine individual strategies than males (78 per cent of which were from the Memory or Metacognitive categories).

There are, however, studies which have reported different findings regarding the role of gender and superiority of females in learning strategies.

In 1994, in a study conducted by Hashim and Sahil, the researchers found that apart from Affective strategies which women used significantly more frequently, no difference was observed in the other SILL categories.
In another study in 2000 in Singapore, Wharton conducted a research on 678 university students learning French and Japanese. The result revealed that men used a significantly greater number of strategies than women which is in contrast with the findings in studies mentioned above.

Griffiths (2003) found no statistically significant difference in strategy use between men and women. The study was carried out in New Zealand and a number of 234 females and 114 males participated in this study.

Nisbet, Tindall, and Arroyo came to the same result as Griffiths. In 2005, they conducted a study with 139 Chinese females and 29 Chinese males. They found no significant difference among males and females in the use of SILL strategies. They attributed the discrepancy described above to the effect of the specific cultural contexts of learning.

It has also been used in studies to correlate strategy use with variables such as learning styles, gender, proficiency level, culture, and task (Bedell and Oxford, 1996; Bruen, 2001; Green and Oxford, 1995; Oxford, Cho, Leung, and Kim, 2004; Nyikos and Oxford, 1993; Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995; Wharton, 2000).

2.2.2 Cultural Background and Language Learning Strategies

According to Politzerof and McGroarty (1985), the fact that certain types of learners defined by cultural background are predisposed to use certain types of strategies, and many language learning strategies may be based on ethnocentric assumptions about effective language learning. In a study, the researchers found that Hispanic students use the various strategy categories more frequently than their Asian counterparts, however, the Asians made more progress in English than did Hispanics. Based on the achieved results, they speculated that their identified ‘good’ strategies might be ethnocentric. Furthermore, they found that Asian students tend to prefer rote memorization and rule-oriented strategies. For instance, Taiwanese students seem far more structured, analytical, Memory-based, and Metacognitively oriented than other groups. They also found Social strategies to be generally unpopular among Chinese and Japanese students.
O’Malley et al. in the same year (1985), in a study showed that Asian students are less willing than Hispanic students to try new learning techniques.

Moreover, Huang and Van Naerssen (1987) and Tyacke and Mendelsohn (1986) pointed out that Asian learners prefer strategies including rote memorization and a focus on the linguistic code.

Politzer (1983), Politzer and McGroarty (1985), and Oxford (1989) argued that the choice of language strategies also relates strongly to ethnicity, language learning purpose, the nature of the task, and other factors.

In 1996, Bedell and Oxford conducted a research on 353 mainland Chinese EFL university students. They found that Compensation strategies were the highest ranking category. According to the researchers, this was also true with Chinese students studying in Taiwan and the US. In contrast, Puerto Rican and Egyptian students reported only a moderate use of Compensation strategies. Based on these findings, they argued the higher use of Compensation might be typical of Asian students. Memory strategies, contrary to the popular belief, were ranked low in their study.

In 1999, in a study of Japanese EFL students, Mochizuki confirmed the infrequent use of Memory strategies by Asian students.

Grainger (1997) studied 133 Japanese learners with various ethnic backgrounds. He found no significant differences in overall SILL scores among native English speakers, those from European backgrounds, and those students from Asian backgrounds. The study revealed that Asian –background students were better at managing their Affective state. They remembered more effectively and compensated better than students with English-speaking background.

In a recent study, However, Griffiths (2003) reported that European students used SILL strategies more frequently than did students from other backgrounds.

The results of the aforementioned studies suggest that nationality and cultural backgrounds are major factors influencing the use of learning strategies.
2.2.3 Personality Factors and Language Learning Strategies

Some researchers have examined the impact of personality traits on strategy use. Most of the works on personality types and strategy use have been reported by Ehrman and Oxford. Some of the works are listed as follows:

In a study, Ehrman and Oxford (1989) investigated the effects of personality types measured by Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) on strategy use measured by SILL. They found that Extroverts used two strategy categories of Social and visualization more frequently than introverts, while introverts tend to use ‘searching for/communicating meaning’ strategies more often than Extroverts. The researchers also found that four strategy categories of Affective, formal model building, authentic language use, and searching for/communicating meaning are used more frequently by intuitive people than sensing people. And general study strategies are in greater use by feeling-type people compared with thinkers.

Ehrman and Oxford (1990) studied Seventy–nine foreign language learners at the Foreign Service Institute and they reported that their subjects exhibited some differences in strategy use, depending on their Myers-Briggs type. For example, extroverts used Social strategies consistently and easily, while Introverts rejected them. They also found that Sensing students displayed a strong liking for Memory strategies. Intuitives were better at Compensation strategies. Thinkers commonly used Metacognitive strategies while feelers rejected such strategies. Feelers used Social strategies while thinkers did not. Judgers rarely used Affective strategies but Perceivers found Affective strategies very useful.

In another study, Ehrman and Oxford (1990) investigated the relationship between personality traits and strategy use with 20 adults learning Turkish in the US. They found that extroverts preferred Social and functional practice strategies, while introverts preferred learning alone the most, so as to avoid Social contact and surprises.

In 1995, Oxford and Ehrman reported that overall strategy use measured by the SILL was related to extraversion on the MBTI.
In the last study reported, Wakamoto (2000) conducted a research on 254 Japanese college students. The researcher used MBTI and SILL to measure personality type and strategy use. The results revealed that extroversion was significantly correlated with functional practice strategies and Social-Affective strategies, while, unlike the Ehrman and Oxford’s studies, introversion was not correlated with any preferred use of strategies.

Lots of studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between personality factors and language. A few studies have been conducted to research the relationship between personality factors and strategy use. In almost all reported studies MBTI has been used as a personality type instrument. Since the introduction of NEO.PI.R, as a reliable source for the measurement of personality dimensions and facets, a few researches have been conducted in order to investigate the impact of these personality traits on language learning in general and language learning strategies in particular. The present work might be considered one of the first studies in which NEO. PI.R has been correlated with SILL categories.

2.2.4 Motivation and Language Learning Strategies

The publication of Oxford’s ‘What Every Teacher Should Know’ (1990) and O’Malley and Chamot’s ‘Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition’ (1990) ignited a series of empirical studies on LLSs in the international research community which has lasted for nearly two decades. Many of these studies have relied on quantitative analysis and have used the SILL as the instrument for data collection. Some of these international studies considered the effects of motivation on strategy use (Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Oxford et al., 1993).

Psychologically–Oriented Language 2 researchers have investigated the relationship between the motivation for Language2 which can be measures by various means and use of different learning strategies measured by questionnaires. In descriptive studies, motivation has often had the strongest relationship to Language2 strategy use compared to other learner variables (see Oxford and Nyikos1989; Ku 1995; Okad, Oxford and Abo 1996; Wharton 2000).
According to Oxford et al. (1993), Motivation to use the L2 outside the classroom is linked with greater strategy use at high school, university, and adult levels.

In 1995, Oxford and Ehrman also came to the same result that greater strategy use is linked with motivation to use L2 outside of the class. And in 1996, Schmidt, Boraie and Kassabgy stated that other types of motivation (not only outside of class motivation) were linked with greater strategy use in adult level.

In 1996, Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, and Robbins showed a significant increase in motivation and self efficacy as the result of strategy instruction.

More recently, many researchers around the world have been considering the effects of self-regulation on strategy use (Nota et al., 2004; Cleary, 2006; Tseng et al., 2006).

### 2.2.5 Learning Style and Language Learning Strategies

Some studies have looked at the effects of language learning styles on the selection of strategies (Ehrman and Oxford, 1989; Rossi-Le, 1989; Reid, 1995; Ko, 2002).

In 1995, Reid conducted a research on the relationship between the learning strategies and learning styles in a hypermedia environment with 63 college international students. The researcher reported that different learning style groups employed different strategy categories in accomplishing the same task.

A review of the following studies (Ehrman and Oxford, 1989; Oxford, 1996) reveals that students typically use learning strategies that reflect their basic learning styles if they are left to their own devices and if not encouraged by the teacher or forced by the lesson to use a certain set of strategies.

### 2.2.6 Learning Situation and Language Learning Strategies

Some studies show that context of a particular task and situational factors exert a substantial influence on the use of strategy categories. In one study conducted
at a Japanese university by Locastro (1994), class size and the effects of learning environments found effective on the use of strategies.

Ikeda and Takeuchi (2000) investigated the effect of task difficulty as a situational variable. They conducted the research on 192 Japanese university level EFL learners in Japan. They reported the exertion of influence on strategy use by task difficulty as a situational variable.

In 2004, Oxford, Cho, Leung, and Kim reported a complex picture of how task difficulty and proficiency level affected the reported frequency of strategy use by ESL students. They argued that task-based strategy assessment was useful because it anchored strategy use within the context of a particular language task.

Other studies have compared the differences between EFL and ESL students in their strategy use (Oh, 1992; Oxford, 1992; Kojic-Sabo and Lightbrown, 1999).

Green and Oxford (1995) commented that the number and type of learning strategies differed according to whether the learner was in a foreign language environment or a second language setting. In their review of the research literature, the same researchers discovered that second language learners generally employed more strategies (with a higher frequency) than did foreign language learners.

Riley and Harsch (1999) compared 28 Japanese ESL students in Hawaii studying in language course and 28 Japanese EFL students in a university in Japan. The researchers reported a difference in strategy use by these groups. They maintained that the environmental differences could play an important part in learning another language.

Recently, researchers (for example, Gao, 2006) have asserted that the development of learner strategies is highly affected by the Social context in which they occur.

2.2.7 Age and Language Learning Strategies

Only a few studies have been carried out so far to investigate the relationship between Age of a learner and the type and frequency of using strategies.

In 2003, Griffiths conducted a research involved 348 students aged 14 to 64. In this research, the effect of age, gender, nationality, was investigated quantitatively.
She did not find differences according to age and gender, but nationality showed to be in relation with strategy use.

In another work in the same year (2003), Peacock and Ho examined 1006 students with the age range of 18 to 39. They found that older students (aged 23-39; N=112) used some learning strategies, as classified by Oxford, significantly more often than did younger students (aged 18-22; N= 894). The use among the older students was higher for Memory, Metacognitive, Affective and Social categories and for 13 individual strategies and much higher for seven strategies.

In a study by Victoria and Tragant (2003) which involved 766 students from three age ranges (10, 14, and 17-years old), the older two groups used Cognitive strategies significantly more often than the younger learners, whereas the younger learners reported using Social strategies more often.

2.2.8 Proficiency and Language Learning Strategies

How important are the strategies in learning a language? What factors are related to the choice and the use of these strategies? These questions have been the bases for much research. The rationale behind these questions is that strategy instruction is only useful when it is proved to enhance language learning.

One of the first studies which attempted to clarify the relationship between strategies and language proficiency was that of Rubin (1975) who focused on observation of successful second language learners, and concluded that the characteristics of good language learners are to be a willing and accurate guesser, to have a strong drive to communicate, to learn from communication, to be uninhibited and willing to make mistakes, paying attention to form by looking for patterns, taking advantage of every opportunity to practice, monitoring the speech of themselves and others, and focusing on meaning. Therefore, Rubin suggested that language teachers could help less successful learners to promote their language proficiency by paying more attention to productive language learning strategies.

Bialystok and Frohilich (1978) studied 157 high school subjects studying French as a second language and they found that the combined use of three learning strategies (practicing, inferencing, and monitoring) was responsible for their achievement in reading, listening, and grammar tests.
In another study, Bialystok (1979) examined the influences of using learning strategies on ESL learners’ performance and found that using all four strategies (formal practicing, monitoring, functional practicing, and inferring) in Bialystok’s model of second language learning had positive effects on language learners’ achievement, and only functional practicing affected language learners’ proficiency in all tasks.

Alvermanna and Phelps (1983) and Padron (1985) concluded that students in lower grade classes used less sophisticated and more inappropriate strategies.

O’Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, and Kupper (1985) reported that higher level students used more strategies and employed more sophisticated strategies.

Oxford and Nyikos (1989) explored the relationship between language learners’ proficiency and their use of learning strategy as well. They used SILL to investigate 1200 students of university who studied five different foreign languages, and found that different background affected use of language learning strategies. Moreover, students’ self-rating of proficiency levels was closely linked to their use of language learning strategies; for example, students who considered themselves to be proficient in speaking, listening or reading tended to employ more language learning strategies.

Vann and Abraham (1990) carried out research into successful and unsuccessful language learners. The results of their studies revealed that unsuccessful learners did use strategies generally considered useful, and often they employed the same strategies as successful learners. However, the difference is that successful learners used strategies more appropriate in different situations than unsuccessful learners, and used a larger range of strategies in language learning more frequently and appropriately.

Takeuchi (1993) conducted a study with 78 Japanese students studying English. He found that 50 per cent of the variance in the Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT) scores was associated with reported strategy use on the SILL.

According to Green and Oxford (1995) more successful students used strategies for active involvement more frequently than did less successful learners. They came to this result in a study of learners of English in Puerto Rico,
Ehrman and Oxford (1995) found that only Cognitive strategies had a significant relationship with language proficiency in the SILL category. Other strategies, (Memory, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social strategies) had no significant relationship with proficiency. On the other hand, only Cognitive strategies significantly influenced ESL/EFL learners’ proficiency outcomes. To conclude, it is clear that there are significant relationships between language learning strategies and language proficiency. In other words, language learners who use language learning strategies more than others generally achieve greater language proficiency, and research into L2 learning demonstrated that good language learners used strategies more frequently and appropriately to enhance their target language learning. Therefore, in Order to help language students to learn the target language more successfully, and effectively, the relationship between the employment of language learning strategies and language proficiency should be further explored on a worldwide scale.

Some studies have looked at differences between beginners and advanced language learners (Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Green and Oxford, 1995; Wharton, 2000; Griffiths, 2003).

Dreyer and Oxford (1996) conducted a research with South African college students majoring ESL. They investigated the relationship between English proficiency scores and strategy use. They found that 45 per cent of the variance in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores were predicted by the use of SILL strategies. They also reported a correlation of .73 between English Proficiency scores and strategy use.

In 1997, Park reported the same result as Dreyer and Oxford in South Korea. He carried out a research with 332 Korean university students. The results of his study revealed a significant linear relationship between SILL and English proficiency measured by a practice version of the TOEFL. Results showed that Cognitive and Social strategies were more predictive of TOEFL scores than other strategy categories, and these two categories jointly accounted for 13 per cent of the total variance on the TOEFL.
A recent study by Vandergrift (2003) compared the listening comprehension strategies of more- and less-skilled Canadian seventh-grade students of French. Students listened to several French texts and were prompted to think aloud during the process. The more skilled listeners used more Metacognitive strategies, especially comprehension monitoring, than did their less skilled peers. In addition, more skilled listeners engaged in questioning for clarification, whereas the less skilled used more translation.

Graham (2004) investigated the attitudes toward learning French of upper secondary English students and found that the less successful students did not seem to be aware of the potential role of learning strategies in improving their language performance.

A review of the works by Chamot and El-Dinary (1999) and Chamot and Keatley (2003) reveals that these studies have confirmed that good language learners are skilled at matching strategies to the task they were working on, whereas less successful language learners apparently do not have the Metacognitive knowledge about task requirements needed to select appropriate strategies. This trend is apparent with children in foreign language immersion classrooms, secondary school ESL and foreign language students, and adult language learners.

In contrast to these studies, there are studies which do not report any significant relationship between strategies and proficiency.

Politzer and McGroarty (1985), for example, did not find such positive relationships. They conducted a study with 36 Asian and Hispanic graduate level students in an intensive English course. Three tests of language ability were administered twice at an eight-week interval, and the tests scores were related to results of a self-reported strategy inventory. However, there was a relationship between the test of communicative ability and reported strategy use, it was weak and it was no significant.

Mullins’ (1992) study in Thailand reported few significant relationships between SILL strategies and EFL learners’ proficiency/achievement. The measures of proficiency were entrance examination, placement test, and GPA.
Oxford and Ehrman (1995) also reported low correlations between the strategies on the SILL and proficiency rating in an intensive foreign language program in the US.

Memory-related strategies have been shown to relate to L2 proficiency in a course devoted to memorizing large numbers of Kanji characters (Kato, 1996) and in L2 courses designed for native-English speaking learners of foreign languages (Oxford and Ehrman, 1995).

And in a recent study in 2005, Nisbet et al. conducted a research with 168 university students in English major in mainland China. They found that only one category of SILL strategies, i.e. Metacognitive strategies, was significantly correlated with TOEFL scores and that the strategies accounted for just four per cent of the variance in the scores.

Later studies comparing more and less effective language students have revealed a recurring finding that less successful learners do use learning strategies, sometimes even as frequently as more successful peers, but that their strategies are used differently (Chamot and El-Dinary, 1999; Khaldieh, 2000; Vandergrift, 1997).

As mentioned in this section, some studies in language learning strategies found that more proficient language learners use learning strategies more frequently and more different types of strategies than less proficient language learners and are better able to choose strategies appropriate to the task. And some of them some studies yielded insignificant relationship between strategy use and proficiency. According to Scarcella and Oxford (1992), one possible explanation might be that other variables overshadowed strategy use, such as tolerance of ambiguity, self-esteem, risk-taking and motivation. Nisbet et al. (2005) believe that another possible explanation for the weak relationships observed was that learners might have used strategies other than those reported on SILL. Other researchers (like Cohen 1998; and Gu 2002) have argued measuring strategy use in terms of frequency count only furnishes part of picture, and serious consideration needs to be given to the appropriateness of strategy use for the given context.
2.3 Studies Involving Strategy Instruction

To increase L2 proficiency, some researchers and teachers have provided instruction that helped students learn how to use more relevant and more powerful learning strategies. In ESL/EFL studies, positive effects of strategy instruction emerged for proficiency in speaking (Dadour and Robbins, 1996; O’Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Küpper, and Russo, 1985) and reading (Park-Oh, 1994), although results for listening were not significant (O’Malley et al., 1985). Chamot et al. (1996), Cohen et al. (1995), and Cohen and Weaver (1998) investigated the effects of strategy instruction among native-English-speaking learners of foreign languages and found some positive results mixed with neutral findings.

In other studies, strategy instruction led to increased EFL learning motivation (Nunan, 1997) and, among native-English-speaking learners of foreign languages, it led to greater strategy use and self-efficacy (Chamot et al., 1996).

Important effects of training in the use of language learning strategies have been discovered by a number of researchers (see Bejarano, 1987; Chamot and Kupper, 1989; Cohen and Hosenfeld, 1981).

Cognitive strategies were significantly related to L2 proficiency in studies by Kato (1996), Ku (1995), Oxford and Ehrman (1995), Oxford, Judd, and Giesen (1998), and Park (1994) among others. Of these studies, three were specifically in EFL settings: Ku (Taiwan), Oxford, Judd, and Giesen (Turkey), and Park (Korea). One study which researched the effects of the teaching of Cognitive and Metacognitive strategies on reading comprehension in the classroom was conducted by Tang and Moore (1992). They concluded that Cognitive strategy instruction (title discussion, pre-teaching vocabulary) improved comprehension scores. Metacognitive strategy instruction, on the other hand, involving the teaching of self monitoring strategies, appeared to lead to improvements in comprehension.

In one of the first experimental studies of language learning strategies instruction, high school ESL students were taught how to apply learning strategies to three different types of tasks, and their performance was compared to that of students in a non strategies control group (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990). This study was
conducted with 75 high school ESL students randomly assigned to experimental or control groups. Students were pretested on three types of language tasks—vocabulary, listening comprehension, and speaking from prepared notes—but not on their use of learning strategies. The experimental group students were taught various strategies for the same types of tasks over a two week period. The instruction was provided by the researchers, all of whom had ESL teaching experience. Students were post tested on the same types of tasks, but did not report on their use of learning strategies. The main conclusions of this first language learning strategies experimental study were as follows:

- Vocabulary learning strategies were effective only for students who had not already developed alternative effective strategies.
- Listening comprehension improved for students instructed in learning strategies on texts that were accessible, not on those that were too difficult and/or for which students lacked relevant prior knowledge.
- Oral reports (presented from written notes) given by strategy-instructed students were judged to be significantly more comprehensible and organized than those of control group students.
- Explicit learning strategy instruction embedded within the language syllabus appeared to be effective.

The belief that language learning strategies are teachable and that learners can benefit from coaching in learning strategies underlies much of the research in the field (for instance Oxford, 1990; Larsen-Freeman, 1991; Cook, 1991). In line with this belief, many researchers have worked to demonstrate the pedagogical applications of findings from studies into language learning strategies.

One study which researched the effects of the teaching of Cognitive and Metacognitive strategies on reading comprehension in the classroom was conducted by Tang and Moore (1992). They concluded that while Cognitive strategy instruction (title discussion, pre-teaching vocabulary) improved comprehension scores, the performance gains were not maintained upon the withdrawal of the treatment. Metacognitive strategy instruction, on the other hand, involving the teaching of self monitoring strategies, appeared to lead to improvements in comprehension ability.
which were maintained beyond the end of the treatment. This finding accords with that of O’Malley et al. (1985) who discovered that higher level students are more able than lower level students to exercise Metacognitive control over their learning.

In another classroom based study which aimed to research whether learner strategy training makes a difference in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, Nunan (1996, p.3) involved 60 students in a 12 week program “designed to help them reflect on their own learning, to develop their knowledge of, and ability to apply learning strategies, to assess their own progress, and to apply their language skills beyond the classroom”. Nunan concluded that his study supported the idea that language classrooms should have a dual focus, teaching both content and an awareness of language processes.

A negative result for the effectiveness of language learning strategy instruction was achieved, however, when O’Malley et al. (1985) and his colleagues randomly assigned students to one of three instructional groups where they received training in (1) Metacognitive, Cognitive and socio-Affective strategies, (2) Cognitive and Socio-Affective strategies, or (3) no special instruction in language learning strategies (control group) for listening, speaking and vocabulary acquisition skills. Among other findings, it was discovered that the control group for vocabulary actually scored slightly higher than the treatment groups. O’Mally explains this unexpected finding as being due to the persistence of familiar strategies among certain students, who continued to use rote repetitive strategies and were unwilling to adopt the strategies presented in training, especially when they knew they would be tested within only a few minutes. This is an interesting finding when compared with Porte’s (1988) observations concerning his underachieving students.

Although results regarding the effectiveness of strategy training are rather mixed, the hypothesis that some of the success achieved by good language learners may be as a result of more effective language learning strategies is intuitively appealing, as is the assumption that the language learning strategies of the more successful students may be learnt by the less successful students and that teachers can assist the language learning process by promoting language learning strategy awareness and use. This teachability component has meant that language learning strategies are increasingly attracting the attention of contemporary educators and
researchers who are keen to harness the potential which language learning strategies would seem to have to enhance an individual’s ability to learn language.