

Ivana Ćirković Miladinović<sup>1</sup>  
Faculty of Education in Jagodina, University of Kragujevac

# Language Learning Strategies Used by Adult Learners: Benefits for the Teacher as a Researcher

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to explore language learning strategy research in the Serbian university classroom in addition to investigating the students' perception of the frequency usage of these strategies. The aim is also to examine what learning strategies students mostly use in this teaching context (university teaching context in Serbia) and whether in-service teachers have some benefits from language learning strategy research. The research data was collected in the form of two questionnaires. The results revealed that students and teachers perceptions of the frequency of certain strategy groups' usage mismatch very much and the significance of the results is in providing the suggestions for the foreign language teaching and learning improvement.

**Key words:** language learning strategies, teaching English, adults, students.

## Introduction

There is a belief that professional development constitutes an important part of being a teacher. It is also believed that teacher professional development should provide an opportunity for in-service English teachers to explore their teaching practice and to critically evaluate themselves as professionals (Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Wallace, 1991). One of the ways to enhance teachers' professional development is to raise their awareness of the importance of language learning strategy research. Ideally, strategy research would help teachers to combine their theoretical knowledge with English language teaching (ELT) practice and to be able to use that knowledge in their classroom for the purpose of enhancing both teaching and learning process.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ivana Ćirković Miladinović, PhD is a lecturer in English, Faculty of Education, University of Kragujevac.

As far as the teaching context is concerned, it is university teaching context in Serbia that was researched. Students, from 19 to 24 years of age, are of upper-intermediate and advanced level and they are studying English as a foreign language. They study at the Faculty of Education in Jagodina, Vranje and Užice. Namely, the research participants studying at the following departments: class teacher, preschool teacher and boarding school teacher.

The purpose of this paper is to find out what learning strategies students mostly use in this teaching context and whether in-service teachers have some benefits from language learning strategy research.

### Classification of Language Learning Strategies

The importance of classifying learning strategies emerged from the principle that it would help researchers and teachers to understand and recognize what sort of strategies language learners use to solve language learning tasks. In Rubin's (1975) study, for instance, the results exposed that learners' variables include learner psychological characteristics, learner cognitive strategies, learner communication strategies and learner social strategies. Later, in her subsequent study, Rubin (1981) elaborated on her research by proposing a category of two main strategies: strategies that *directly* affect learning and strategies that *indirectly* affect learning. Beside these two main categories Rubin (1981) proposed eight secondary strategies. Language strategies that directly affect learning involve six secondary strategies: classification/verification, monitoring, guessing/inductive, differencing, deductive reasoning, and practice. On the other hand, strategies that indirectly affect learning involve creating opportunities for practice and production tricks strategies (see Table 1 below).

Following Rubin (1981), Wenden and Rubin (1987) suggest that there are three kinds of strategies which have been identified and contribute directly or indirectly to language learning: learning strategies, communication strategies and social strategies.

Bialystok (1979) grouped strategies into four types according to linguistic features. These strategies are grouped as follows: first, strategies which focus on language form such as strategies used in situations for practising pronunciation and memorizing vocabulary. This category includes formal practising strategies, monitoring strategies and inferencing strategies. The second category, on the other hand, is concerned with functional practising strategies. This category includes strategies for language use that are often used by learners to communicate meaning in L2. The conclusion Bialystok (Bialystok, 1979) drew from her research

was that implementation of the four strategies had revealed a positive effect on success in the performing only a particular type of test. She argued that the kind of knowledge required in a given task could play a crucial role in determining the type of strategies learners would use.

**Table 1:** Rubin's (1981) classification of second language learning strategies

Primary strategy classification	Representative secondary strategies	Representative examples
Strategies that directly affect learning	Classification/verification	Ask for an example of how to use a word or expression, repeat words to confirm understanding Correct errors own/others' pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, style
	Monitoring	Takes note of new items, pronounces out loud, finds a mnemonic, writes items repeatedly
	Memorisation	Guessing meaning from key words, structures, pictures, context
	Guessing/inductive inferencing	Compares native/other languages to target language, groups words, looks for rules of co-occurrence
	Deductive reasoning	Experiments with new sounds, repeat sentences until pronounce easily, listens carefully and try to imitate
	Practice	
Processes that contribute indirectly to learning	Creates opportunities for practice	Creates situation with native speaker, initiates conversation with fellow students, spends time in language lab, listening to TV
	Production tricks	Use circumlocutions, synonyms, or cognates, use formulaic interaction, contextualizes to clarify meaning

The major contribution to the field of learning strategies was the work of O'Malley and Chamot (1990) which offered a clear distinction between cognitive and metacognitive strategies. In their classification of learning strategies, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) have differentiated learning strategies into three main types: cognitive strategies (e.g., note-taking, resourcing, elaboration), metacognitive strategies (e.g. planning learning, self-evaluation) and social strategies (e.g. working with fellow students or asking the teacher's help).

Based on what has been studied in the field, Oxford (1990) provided inclusive and comprehensive taxonomy of language learning strategies. She maintained Rubin's (1981) two main categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies. The former concerns working with the new language itself in a variety of specific tasks or situations, whereas the latter concerns general management of learning. Oxford (1990) provided more detailed classification of her direct and indirect strategies which in her taxonomy formed two classes. She identified two classes, six groups and 19 sets of strategies.

Further, Oxford (1990) argues that it is important to emphasize that any current understanding of language learning strategies is in its infancy and any existing system of strategies is only a proposal to be tested through practical classroom use and through further research. She also adds that "there is no complete agreement on exactly what strategies are, how many strategies exist, how they should be defined, differentiated and categorized; and whether it is possible to create a real, scientifically validated hierarchy of strategies" (Oxford, 1990, p.17). Moreover, Cohen (1998) proposes a taxonomy of learning strategies which has similar components as Oxford's. Cohen also divides learning strategies into two main classes. The difference which Cohen made, however, is that the two main classes are not direct and indirect strategies but *language learning strategies* and *language use strategies*.

Although Oxford's taxonomy has provided very detailed classification of learner strategies, it seems that some limitations can be observed in it. Dörnyei (2005) argues that two issues in this taxonomy should have been considered. He believes that compensation strategies are related to language use rather than learning strategies. He claims that two processes should be kept separate because they have two different applications and psycholinguistic representation. The second criticism Dörnyei has pointed to is that Oxford's taxonomy presents memory and cognitive strategies as two independent components of equal importance. Nevertheless, as Dörnyei points out, "memory strategies constitute a subclass of cognitive strategies" (Dörnyei 2005, p.168)

Despite some disagreements which can be found in the research body, particularly about the issue of defining what learning strategies are, some general conclusions can be derived from the research presented above. First, it is evident from the research into effective language learning strategies that good learners share almost the same characteristics and strategies (Rubin, 1975; Naiman et al, 1978). This finding could be pedagogically exploited by helping learners who are less successful in language learning to become aware of and later start using effective language strategies (Rubin, 1975). In that way they would become more successful in their target language learning. Second, by encouraging students

to use effective strategies, teachers can enhance learners' autonomy in language learning so that they are more capable of utilising these strategies when practising the target language outside the classroom (Wenden & Rubin, 1987). Third, researchers have presented different taxonomies on language learning strategies and they appear to consider cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies as basic subcategories in their taxonomy. Finally, strategy research has been concerned with general language learning strategies, and there is an apparent lack of research in many aspects of language strategies. Nonetheless, there has been a growing interest in investigating the benefits of learner strategy research for the practising teacher in Serbia. This research seems to be significant for the English language teaching practice as the way for Serbian in-service teachers to keep up with the innovations in this field.

### **Problem of Research**

In considering what learning strategies are, a useful starting point would be to refer to Wenden and Rubin (1987) who propose that learning strategies can be defined from three different aspects. First, from a cognitive point of view, learning strategies are considered as "behaviours learners actually engage in to learn and regulate the learning of a second language" (Wenden & Rubin, 1987, p.6). Secondly, from a metacognitive aspect, learning strategies refer to the strategic knowledge, or in other words, learners' knowledge about the strategies they use. Finally, from an affective point of view, learning strategies can be defined as "what learners know about aspects of their language learning other than the strategies they use" (Wenden & Rubin, 1987, p.7). Nevertheless, Wenden and Rubin (1987, p.6,7) also admit that the nature of this term is elusive because in the literature strategies have been referred to as 'techniques', 'tactics', 'learning skills', 'cognitive abilities', 'problem solving procedures' etc. In brief, these three views of learning strategies definitions, presented above, imply that learning strategies include strategy knowledge, strategic behaviour and affective factors which improve second/foreign language learning.

Many researches tend to describe learning strategies in different ways. In the years since Rubin (1975) brought the concept of language learning strategies to a wide audience, the term has been very difficult to define and consensus has been elusive. Namely, Rubin (1975) defined strategies as "techniques or devices" used by a learner in order to acquire knowledge, whereas Wenden (1986, p.10) referred to them as "steps or mental operations used in learning or problem-solving that require direct analysis, transformation or synthesis or learning mate-

rial in order to store retrieve, and use knowledge.” Oxford (1990, p.8) calls them “specific actions taken by learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations”. Griffiths (2007, p.91) agrees that language learning strategies should be considered as “activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning”. Ellis’ (1994, p.530) definition is that “a strategy consists of mental or behavioural activity related to some specific stage in the overall process of language acquisition or language use.” The two latter definitions acknowledge that language learning is a process in which learners move through stages. Saying that learning strategies are part of this process we also imply that they are amenable to change through this process.

However, McDonough (2006, p.63) prefers the term ‘learner strategies’ than the term ‘learning strategies’ because he believes that the term ‘learning strategies’ is more restricted. He explains that there are lots of things that learners do which may not contribute directly to their learning, “but do contribute, for example, to their use of the language and to their ability to monitor what they are doing”.

It can be seen from the above definitions that there seems to be a disagreement among second and foreign language researches in forming a precise definition of the term ‘learning/learner strategy’. This can be ascribed to the existence of perplexing concepts of the term. Although suggested definitions explicate the term, researches have failed to propose a conclusive definition. Consequently, these mixed ideas have encouraged many researches to suggest a number of taxonomies on learning strategies.

### Research Focus

Different students have different learning styles and use different learning strategies. The more teachers know about their students’ learning style and strategy preference the more effectively they can orient their strategy instruction. Oxford (2001) points out that L2 teachers should consider various ways to conduct strategy instruction in their language classrooms by starting with small strategy interventions, such as helping students to analyze and guess the word they are not familiar with from a given text. This would be more appropriate, according to Oxford (2001) than to apply full range of strategy-based instruction. Strategy training is defined as the explicit teaching of how, when, and why students should use FL learning strategies to improve their efforts at achieving language learning outcomes (Cohen, 1998; Ellis & Sinclair, 1989).

On the other hand, some teachers might find it useful and appropriate to move more rapidly into strategies-based instruction. Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) model was described by Chamot and O'Malley (1987) as a form of strategy-based instruction for L2 learners which includes explicit strategy instruction, content area instruction and academic language development. Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994) has been supported by research in learning theory (Anderson, 1993, as cited in Snow 2001). Anderson's theory support teaching approaches which "combine the development of content knowledge, practice in using this language and strategy training to promote independent learning" (Snow, 2001, p.304). In the university teaching context is very important that students, as adult learners, do initiate their own learning (Wenden & Rubin, 1987). In this way, students as autonomous language learners can become more intimately involved in providing solutions to their linguistic needs as they arise. It is further stated that for learning to be autonomous, learners need a critical awareness and understanding of the ability to make choices and, thereof, become responsible for their learning outcomes.

Since the 1970s, researchers have addressed the need for strategy training in response to the lack of students' awareness of the cognitive tools and strategies available to them (Chen, 2007). Dansereau (1978) reports for instance, that a large proportion of the participants have little knowledge of alternative learning techniques. This includes proficient university-level students as well. This lack of awareness is limiting the learners' ability to develop new strategies when encountering new learning contexts. Some researches of learner strategies advocate that learners be taught to use strategies and in this way they emphasize the importance of techniques (Holec, 1981). Therefore, together with the training in the use of strategies, the fostering of learner autonomy and expanding learners' views of what language means will require that learners become critically reflective of their learning. Accordingly, the purpose of learning a second/foreign language should also be understood.

In Vogely's findings (as cited in Chen, 2007), students' learning problems are due to the use of inadequate or inappropriate learning strategies. According to those findings student who even know about the learning strategies necessary to comprehend language tasks they do not mobilize these resources to the fullest extent. Oxford (2001) also cites growing evidence that strategy instruction can be valuable to many language learners. Thus, this should be the starting point for the teachers' practice: strategy instruction may enhance students' language learning outcomes. For this reason, research in strategy training seems valuable for the improvement of the English teaching practice in Serbia.

Wenden and Rubin (1987) point out that research on learner strategies dates back to 1966 when Aaron Carton first published his study *The Method of Inference in Foreign Language Study*. In this study he noted that learners vary in their tendency to make valid and rational assumptions and conclusions. In his second article published in 1971, Carton provides a detailed discussion of inferencing as a strategy used by second language learners who “can bring to bear his/her prior experience and knowledge in the processing of language” (Wenden & Rubin, 1987, p.19). After Carton's research, Rubin initiated research in 1971 which focused on the strategies of successful learners. She believed that after identifying the strategies used by successful learners those strategies could be made available to less successful learners. Later on, in 1975, Rubin described the research results by including the following variables: learner psychological characteristics, learner communication strategies, learner social strategies and learner cognitive strategies (Rubin, 1975). Research conducted in 1978 by Naiman also focused on personality characteristics, cognitive styles and strategies that were critical to successful language learning (Naiman et al. 1978).

Wenden and Rubin (1987) give a list of research conducted on language learning strategies: Stern (1975), Wesche (1975), Bialystok (1979), Tarone (1977, 1981), Hosenfeld (1977, 1984), Cohen and Apeh (1980, 1981). It is also emphasized that the work of Wenden in 1982 and 1986 has added an important new dimension to our understanding of learner strategies, namely, the importance of metacognitive knowledge in L2 learning (Wenden & Rubin, 1987). Rao (2007, p.101) goes on to explore conducted research on language skills. He gives a list of some recent research conducted to investigate the effects of strategy training on improving reading skills (for example, Dreyer and Nel, 2003; Rao, 2003), listening comprehension (for example, Rost & Ross, 1991; Thompson & Rubin, 1996), vocabulary acquisition (for example, Brown & Perry, 1991; Fraser, 1999) and the learning process (Chamot, 1993). However, in his opinion relatively little research has been done on productive skills, such as speaking and writing. Of the few studies that have dealt with strategy instruction in writing, only Richards (1990) has elaborated on how to apply the brainstorming strategy to develop students' writing. Therefore, some general conclusions can be derived from the research topics presented above. First, learners differ in their abilities to make conclusions about their learning so it is valuable to present effective LLS to less successful learners. Consequently, research on metacognitive knowledge seems important in this field. Second, researches presented their findings on reading skills, listening skills, vocabulary acquisition while relatively little research has been conducted on productive skills, such as speaking and writing. Finally, strategy research has been concerned with general language learning skills, and

there is apparent lack of research into benefits of LLS research for the practising English teacher.

What is more, the research of usage of the language learning strategies in the university teaching level was not done in Serbia, neither in the Balkan, so it is believed that this research would, at least, be the starting point of improving the university English teaching practice.

## Methodology of Research

### *General Background of Research*

It is believed that teachers are generally not aware of their students' language learning strategies (O'Malley et al., 1985). Indeed, according to Griffiths (2007) teachers' beliefs regarding their students' strategy usage differ from what students report about this issue. When the well known Strategy Inventory for Language Learning or SILL (Oxford, 1990) was designed to elicit students' habits and frequency of use of six types of language learning strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social) the results showed that students' and teachers' perceptions did not match at any point (Griffiths and Parr, 2001). "Nunan (1988) also talks of 'clear mismatches between learners' and teachers' views' (p. 93), and Willing (1988) of 'disparate perspectives' regarding learning strategies (p. 1)" (Griffiths, 2007, p.92). Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning or SILL (Oxford, 1990) was used in this research too.

The study aimed to explore the benefits of language learning strategy (LLS) research for the university teacher in Serbia. Another purpose of this research is to find out more about teachers' perceptions of language learning strategies in university teaching context in Serbia in order to enhance target language learning outcomes.

The importance of finding out more about language learning strategy research for the practising teacher is underlined by this research which results will be discussed later in the paper.

### *Research hypotheses*

1. If we identify the range of possible learner strategies used by students in the university teaching context we would be able to identify the strategies of good, successful learners and made them available to less successful learners.

2. Research in learner strategies would be helpful for university teachers in order to find out which strategies are used by their learners and to suggest alternative strategies for those learners who are less successful in language learning.
3. Learner strategy research in the language classroom seems to be one of the important parts of the teacher's role. Thereupon, if teachers are willing to be researchers in their own classroom then they will be in position to find out possible language learning problems of their students and solutions for them.

### *Instrument and Procedures*

The chosen instrument for this research was a questionnaire. The reason for this was that questionnaires are economical in terms of time (they are usually easy to complete) and money as well; then researcher can reach large number of respondents who receive the same questions usually quick to complete. Also, questionnaires tend to be quantitative and more easily generate conclusive findings (Wallace, 1998).

Conversely, there are some difficulties in terms of using questionnaires as a research instrument: they are not easy to design (this is one of the reasons why Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning or SILL<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1990) is adopted for this purpose). Further, data elicited by the questionnaires is limited to question answers and may not be very "rich" (Dörnyei, 2003; Lynch, 1996).

Nevertheless, Oxford's SILL (1990) has some disadvantages (that are evident from the explanation above), the researcher believes that it is very useful for university teachers in terms of finding out which strategies are used by their learners and in terms of suggesting alternative strategies for those learners who are less successful in target language learning. In this way it would be possible to suggest suitable learning strategies for specific language tasks and to encourage their students to consider which strategies work best for them.

Teachers were also given a questionnaire as well, the same Oxford's SILL as students were given. The reason for this was to find out in what way teachers' beliefs concerning the LLS of their students correspond with what students report?

---

<sup>2</sup> Oxford's SILL questionnaire retrieved from <http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/staff/olenka.Bilash/best%20of%20bilash/SILL%20survey.pdf>

### *Sample of Research*

A sample of N=375 students completed the SILL (Oxford 1990: 293-6). There were male (N=43) and female (N=332) students of the first academic year. The English Language is foreign language for these students and they study it as obligatory academic subject at educational faculties in Jagodina, Vranje and Uzice. Namely, the sample was consisted of students from the following departments: class teacher (N=130), preschool teacher (N=149) and boarding school teacher (N=96).

In addition, twenty non-native speaker teachers were involved in this research. These teachers are teaching target language at the university level in Serbia.

### *Data Analysis*

After collection, the information from the students' SILL questionnaires was entered onto a database (EXCELL) to enable data analysis to be carried out. The data obtained from the students' SILL questionnaires (N = 375) were analyzed according to tables. The average reported frequency of language learning strategy use across all students was calculated for each strategy item and overall. Then, the number of strategies used at a high rate of frequency was counted so that a list with a rank of the most used group of strategies and those that are less used is presented in Table 2 below. The data obtained from the teachers' SILL questionnaires (N = 20) were also analyzed for reliability and averages were calculated in order to determine the average level of importance attributed by teachers to each strategy item as well as to strategy use overall. The number of strategies which teachers reportedly considered highly important was also counted. These results were then compared with results from the students' data.

## **Results of Research**

### *Findings from students*

All students (N=375), participants in this study, completed the SILL questionnaire. First of all, students' responses were coded (response never or almost never was given code 1, usually – code 2, somewhat true of me – code 3, usually true of me – code 4 and always, or almost always true of me – code 5) and then they were presented in Table 2.

If it is according to Oxford's SILL (1990, p.208) key to understanding the average

HIGH	Always or almost always used	4.5 to 5.0
	Usually used	3.5 to 4.4
MEDIUM	Sometimes used	2.5 to 3.4
	Generally not used	1.5 to 2.4
LOW	Never or almost never used	1.0 to 1.4

then we may conclude that students (overall average 3.16) in our teaching context sometimes use language learning strategies, that is, language learning strategy usage is medium. Furthermore, the averages for each part of the SILL show which group of strategies are used the most – metacognitive strategies with average 3.70 and social with average 3.59, then which strategies are sometimes used – cognitive (3.33), compensation (3.10) and memory strategies (2.75) and finally, which strategies are generally not used or almost never used – affective strategies (2.33) (see Table 2).

**Table 2:** LLS rank according to group of strategies

LLS rank according to categories	
Part D - metacognitive strategies (most frequent)	3.70
Part F - social strategies	3.59
Part B - cognitive strategies	3.33
Part C - compensation strategies	3.10
Part A - memory strategies	2.75
Part E - affective strategies (least frequent)	2.33
Overall average	3.16

As can be seen by an examination of the data set out in Table 2, students report using affective strategies least. This means that students are mostly afraid of using English and making mistakes in class (37% of responses are ranked under always true category). They rarely write down their feelings in language learning diary (70.83% of responses) and rarely talk to someone else (e.g. teacher) about how they feel when they are learning English. On the other hand, most frequently used are metacognitive strategies. In other words, students are trying to find ways to be better learners of English (33.33% of responses say that students are always trying to find ways to be better learners of L2), then they are willing to improve their English skills (12.50% of responses) and they think about their progress in learning English (20.83%). The reason for this situation may be because the participants study at the educational faculties which offer many subjects that raise students' awareness of their learning outcomes (such as pedagogy, psychology, didactics, Serbian language methodology, pedagogical psychology etc.). This students' awareness of their learning success is highly praised by their teach-

ers, not only their target language teachers but all teachers at this faculty. After all, this awareness is very important because these students are future teachers as well. Therefore, students who use metacognitive strategies most frequently are making links with already known material; they pay attention, organize and plan their language tasks. Also, they are capable of self-monitoring and self-evaluating. These are all preconditions for successful language class which could be used for improving teaching and learning process of L2 by a teacher who is aware of this fact. Hence, this could be the benefit for the teaching practice if it is recognised in time.

As far as social strategies are concerned, students report using these strategies very frequently (see Table 1). For example, 25% of students say that they practice English with other students. This can be explained with the group work and work in pairs that are very common for the ELT practice in this faculty. Students are willing to participate in group work because they share language learning problems and in that way they are able to easily come to a solution of a language task. Hence, students who are more successful in language learning help those who are less successful.

Despite the fact that 37% of students are afraid if using English and making mistakes, 45.83% of students state that they ask English speakers to correct them when they talk. According to this, we may come to a conclusion that students appreciate more native speakers to correct their target language mistakes than non-native speakers and that they seem to be shy to speak in class but not in the situation when they need to ask help from English speakers (25%). Further, 50% of students state that when they do not understand something in English, they ask other person to slow down or say the sentence again.

In conclusion, these results seem to imply that students are willing to ask for clarification and for correction (from native speakers) and that they are also willing to cooperate with peers and proficient users of the foreign language but that they are afraid and usually not able to overcome the barrier of speaking by asking for teacher's help.

### **Findings from teachers**

Teachers (N=20) were asked to complete the same SILL questionnaire as students did, but this time from a different point of view. Namely, teachers were asked to read each statement and then to answer, in their professional opinion: How true of their students that statement is? Then, what learning strategies, in teachers'

opinion, their students use to enhance their L2 learning? and How often they do it?

Further, teachers' answers were coded in the same way as student answers and then they were compared with students' answers and presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Students' vs. Teachers' rank of LLS usage

Students' rank of LLS strategy usage	Teachers' rank of LLS strategy usage
Metacognitive strategies <b>most frequent</b>	Cognitive strategies <b>most frequent</b>
Social strategies	Compensation strategies
Cognitive strategies	Metacognitive strategies
Compensation strategies	Memory strategies
Memory strategies	Affective strategies
Affective strategies <b>least frequent</b>	Social strategies <b>least frequent</b>

According to this survey teachers believe that their students use cognitive and compensation strategies most frequently, while metacognitive and memory strategies are ranked in the middle of the Table 2 above. Teachers believe students least frequently use affective and social strategies. However, it is interesting to note that while students report using social strategies very frequently, their teachers believe they are least used. Further, whereas students report using metacognitive strategies most, they are ranked only third by teachers in terms of what teachers believe their students do. Compensation strategies, which teachers rank second to top, are ranked only fourth to top by students. Cognitive strategies are ranked as the most frequently used strategies by teachers but only third by students. Teachers' perception of LLS strategy usage and students' perception are similar in terms of memory strategies which are ranked fourth to top by teachers and fifth to top by students. The only point at which teachers and students almost concur are with affective strategies which are ranked second to bottom by teachers, and bottom to students. This means that teachers are aware of the fact that affective strategies are rarely used in their language classroom while memory strategies are used only sometimes. Hence, teachers', now partial awareness of their students' language learning strategies, may be increased by LLS research in the classroom which would bring benefits for the quality of language learning and teaching.

## Discussion

According to Westwood and Arnold (2004) it is highly desirable for teachers to recognize individual differences among learners and to use methods that allow them to address these differences in positive ways. This is where strategy training and strategy research is taking place.

However, research on students' individual needs, in several countries, has indicated that teachers do not find differentiation easy to implement (e.g., Westwood, 2002). It is believed that there is some scepticism in terms of differentiation in university teaching context in Serbia. Namely, it seems that teachers' practical work is mostly directed according to the curriculum which is believed to be well organised and structured. It is also believed that curriculum should be conducted as it is and that there is not much space for teacher's creativity. As a matter of fact, some teachers seem to be confident that sufficient number of strategies is embedded into existing curriculum which can be taught to students with only modest extra effort, and that can improve the overall class performance. Scepticism is also well-placed when it comes to applying the strategy training in university teaching context because it is widely believed that students are adult learners who know how to learn (this is to a certain extent students' opinion and to some extent teachers' opinion). Nevertheless, students' achievements in exams show that they do encounter learning problems and that they do need teacher's professional help. Thus, teachers' practices and perceptions are significant in terms of strategy training since they have the potential to influence the effectiveness of their students' learning process.

Interestingly, it is not so much all the strategies that teachers could teach and their students to use; it is how they use them, when they use them, how they decide what is working or not working for them at a particular situation, when they decide to use something else, how they deal with the product of that strategy and how it helps them to take over some of the decision making for their own language learning outcome. In other words, there are lots of questions that could be answered by, for instance, conducting the strategy research. Strategy research seems to be crucial for the learner training in the university teaching context in Serbia because it would give teachers clear and practical notion of what learners actually do and what are the benefits, or even drawbacks, of this instruction (Archibald & McDonough, 2006).

### Conclusions and pedagogical implications

In conclusion, it could be useful to refer back to research question: What are the benefits of language learning strategy research for the practising teacher in Serbia? One of the benefits of the LLS research in this teaching context might be finding out whether somebody's learning to be independent target language learner or not. This could be done not by asking students to practice all the strategies teacher has taught them a few months earlier, but helping them to develop their own strategies for the new learning situations they are in. Clearly, "strategy training aims at improving learning techniques and increasing the motivation to learn, its results are manifested in long-term changes in learners' behaviour and attitudes towards FL study, rather than in rapid improvements in FL proficiency" (Archibald and McDonough, 2006, p.68).

Another benefit from strategy research for the practising teacher in Serbia might be helping a teacher to bring right decisions in accordance with the strategy research findings in the right moment. In a sense, teachers sometimes need to make decisions in the classroom in haste which is very often not harmonized with students' needs, perceptions and their feelings. In this area teachers need lots of information such as: How to make right decision in terms of helping a particular student to be more successful language learner? How to help all students who need teachers' help at the same time? How to provide different treatments for different students? etc. All these questions might be answered by conducting the strategy research which would give clear picture of the students' learning situation and teacher's teaching situation. Strategy research would enlighten classroom situation for a particular moment and it would give some notions how to act in the future in terms of students' language learning problems and teacher's teaching problems. Although strategy research is very important in the language learning field, it is not practiced very much in the Serbian classroom. For this reason, it could be stated that strategy research is important for the university teaching context and if teachers conduct it regularly they would have lots of benefits from it.

## References

- ARCHIBALD, A. & McDONOUGH, S. (2006). Learner strategies: An interview with Steven McDonough. *ELT Journal* 60(1), 63-70.
- BIALYSTOK, E., FRÖLICH, M. & HOWARD, J. (1979). *Studies on second language learning and teaching in classroom settings: strategies, processes and functions*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- CHAMOT, A.U. & O'MALLEY, J. M. (1994). *The CALLA Handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Language Learning Approach*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- CHEN, Y.J. (2007). Learning to learn: the impact of strategy training. *ELT Journal*, 61(1), 20-29.
- COHEN, A. D. (1998). *Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language*. London: Longman.
- COHEN, A. D. & APHEK, E. (1980). Retention of second language vocabulary over time: investigating the role of mnemonic associations. *System*, 8, 221-235.
- COHEN, A. D., ANDREW, D. & APHEK, E. (1981). Easifying second language learning. *Second Language Acquisition*, 3, 221-36.
- DANSEREAU, D. F. (1978). The development of a learning strategies curriculum. In H. F. O'Neil, Jr. (ed.). *Learning Strategies*. New York: Academic Press.
- DÖRNYEI, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in second language research: construction, administration, and processing*. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- DÖRNYEI, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahweh; London: Lawrence Erlbaum
- ELLIS, G. & SINCLAIR, B. (1989). *Learning to Learn English: A Course in Learner Training*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ELLIS, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- GRIFFITHS, C. (2007). Language learning strategies: students' and teachers' perceptions. *ELT Journal* 61(2), 91-99.
- GRIFFITHS, C., & PARR, J.M. (2001). Language-learning strategies: theory and perception. *ELT Journal*, 55(3), 247-254.
- HOLEC, H. (1981). *Autonomy in foreign language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- HOSENFELD, C. (1977). A Preliminary Investigation of the Reading Strategies of Successful and Unsuccessful Second Language Learners. *System*, 5, 110-23.
- HOSENFELD, C. (1984). Case Studies of Ninth Grade Readers. In Alderson, J.C. & Urquhart, A.H. (Eds.). *Reading in a Foreign Language*. New York: Longman.
- LYNCH, B. K., (1996). *Language Program Evaluation. Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MCDONOUGH, K. (2006). The teacher as language learner: worlds of difference. *ELT Journal*, 56(4), 404-411.
- NAIMAN, N., FRÖLICH, M., STERN, H.H., & TEDESCO, A. (1978). *The Good Language Learner. Research in Education Series, 7*. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

- NUNAN, D. (1988). *Learning strategy preferences by EFL teachers in Southeast Asia*. Hong Kong: Institute of Language in Education.
- O'MALLEY, J. M., CHAMOT-UHL A., STEWNER-MANZANARES, G., KUPPER, L., & RUSSO, R. P. (1985). Learning Strategies used by beginning and intermediate ESL students. *Language Learning*, 35, 21-46.
- O'MALLEY, J. M., & CHAMOT UHL, A. (1990). *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- OXFORD, R. (1990). *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. New York: Newbury House.
- OXFORD, R. (2001). Language Learning Styles and Strategies. In Celce-Murcia M. (Ed.). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (pp 359-366). Boston.
- RAO, Z. (2007). Training in brainstorming and developing writing skills. *ELT Journal*, 61(2), 100-106.
- RICHARDS, J. & LOCKHART, C. (1994). *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- RICHARDS, J. (1990). *The Language Teaching Matrix*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- RUBIN, J. (1975). What the „Good Language Learner” can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly* 9(1), 41/51.
- RUBIN, J. (1981). Study of cognitive process in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 117-131.
- SNOW, M. A. (2001). Content-Based and Immersion Models for Second and Foreign Language Learning. In Celce-Murcia M. (Ed.). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (pp 303-315). Boston.
- STERN, H. H. (1975). What can we learn from the good language learner?. *Modern Language Review*, 31, 304-318.
- TARONE, E. (1977). Conscious communication strategies in interlanguage: A progress report. In Brown, H.D., Yorio, C.A. & Crymes R.C. (Eds.). *On TESOL '77* (194-203). Washington, D.C.: TESOL.
- TARONE, E. (1981). Some thoughts on the notion of communication strategy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 15, 285-295.
- WALLACE, J. M. (1991). *Training Foreign Language Teachers: a Reflective Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WALLACE, J. M. (1998). *Action Research for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WENDEN, A. & RUBIN, J. (1987). *Learner strategies in language learning*. Prentice Hall International.
- WENDEN, A. (1986). Helping language learners think about learning. *ELT Journal*, 40(1), 3-12.
- WESCHE, M. (1975). *The good adult language learner: A study of learning strategies and personality factors in an intensive course*. Toronto: University of Toronto.

- WESTWOOD, P. & ARNOLD, W. (2004). Meeting individual needs with young learners. *ELT Journal*, 58(4), 375-378.
- WESTWOOD, P. (2002). Are we making teaching too difficult? A critical look at 'differentiation' in the classroom. *Hong Kong Special Education Forum*, 5(1), 13-29.
- WILLING, K. (1988). *Learning Styles In Adult Migrant Education*. Adelaide, Australia: National Curriculum Resource Centre.

---

Ivana Ćirković Miladinović<sup>3</sup>

Fakultet pedagoških nauka u Jagodini, Univerzitet u Kragujevcu

## Strategije učenja stranog jezika koje koriste odrasli učenici: pogodnosti za univerzitetskog nastavnika kao istraživača

**Apstrakt:** Osnovni cilj ovog rada je da se istraže strategije učenja u nastavi stranog jezika na pedagoškim i učiteljskim fakultetima u Srbiji s tim da se posebno uoči učestalost korišćenja ovih strategija. Jedan od ciljeva je, takođe, i da se uoče koje strategije učenja studenti kao odrasle osobe najviše koriste u nastavi stranog jezika na ovim fakultetima i da se istraži da li nastavnici koji izvode nastavu imaju koristi od istraživanja koje se tiče strategija učenja u nastavi stranog jezika. Osnovna hipoteza ove studije je da bi istraživanje strategija učenja koje koriste studenti bilo od velike pomoći nastavnicima koji izvode nastavu na fakultetima. Rezultati istraživanja su pokazali da se mišljenje nastavnika i studenata veoma razlikuje. Naime, studenti su evidentirali u upitniku često korišćenje određene grupe strategija dok su nastavnici smatrali da njihovi studenti najviše upotrebljavaju neku drugu grupu strategija. Ovakvo saznanje (koju grupu strategija studenti koriste, a koje grupe strategija oni zanemaruju) može doprineti da se nastava na fakultetima znatno poboljša iako se smatra da su studenti odrasle osobe koje već znaju kako da uče i da im nije potrebna dodatna pomoć.

**Ključne reči:** strategije učenja stranog jezika, učenje engleskog jezika kao stranog, odrasli učenici.

---

<sup>3</sup> Dr Ivana Ćirković Miladinović je nastavnik na Fakultetu pedagoških nauka u Jagodini Univerziteta u Kragujevcu.

