

CZĘŚĆ II: PRAKTYKA - BADANIA - WDROŻENIA

TEACHERS AS LEARNERS:
LEARNING TO LEARN THROUGH STRATEGY TRAINING
PART I. TEACHER COMPETENCES AND LEARNER STRATEGIESNAUCZYCIEL W ROLI UCZNIA:
NAUCZYĆ SIĘ JAK SIĘ UCZYĆ POPRZEZ TRENING STRATEGII
CZĘŚĆ I. KOMPETENCJE NAUCZYCIELA I STRATEGIE UCZNIA

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Summary: The main aim of this series of three articles is to emphasize the significance of implementing the *learning to learn* idea in pre-service teacher education and in the qualified teacher's career, since successful teaching necessitates developing personalized skills and strategies necessary for further, *continued or lifelong* learning. In Part I., the author presents formal qualifications, knowledge and skills second/foreign language teachers are expected to acquire in Polish and European teacher training institutions and pays special attention to the ability to promote learner autonomy through skillful teaching of varied learning strategies. In Part II., she discusses essential roles and tasks modern language teachers need to be able to perform with regard to strategy training and stresses the need for educating 'strategic' teachers able to foster learner self-regulated learning. In Part III., the author presents the results of her empirical studies aimed at helping teacher trainees learn to learn by expanding individualized strategy repertoires; she also proposes practical ways of incorporating learning strategy instruction into teacher education.

Keywords: learning to learn, language learner autonomy, learning strategies, strategy training, 'strategic' teacher competences

Streszczenie: Niniejszy cykl trzech artykułów podkreśla znaczenie aktywnej realizacji idei *uczenia się jak się uczyć* w kształceniu nauczycieli języków obcych oraz w rozwoju zawodowym wykwalifikowanego nauczyciela, jako że skuteczne nauczanie oznacza konieczność ciągłego rozwijania umiejętności i strategii niezbędnych do *uczenia się przez całe życie*. W części pierwszej autorka przedstawia formalne kwalifikacje, wiedzę i umiejętności, jakie nauczyciel języka drugiego/obcego powinien zdobyć w polskich i europejskich instytucjach kształcących nauczycieli. Autorka zwraca szczególną uwagę na umiejętności rozwijania autonomii ucznia poprzez wprawne nauczanie strategii uczenia się różnych typów. W części drugiej omówione są role i zadania współczesnego nauczyciela języka obcego wynikające z realizacji postulatów integracji nauczania języka obcego i treningu strategii, co wiąże się z potrzebą kształcenia tzw. „strategicznego” nauczyciela. W części trzeciej autorka prezentuje wyniki własnych badań empirycznych w zakresie treningu strategii uczenia się i użycia języka obcego oraz proponuje praktyczne sposoby prowadzenia treningu strategii w kształceniu nauczycieli.

Słowa kluczowe: nauczyć się jak się uczyć, autonomia w nauce języka drugiego/obcego, strategie uczenia się, trening strategii, kompetencje „strategicznego” nauczyciela

Introduction

For many years, *learning to learn* and helping learners learn how to learn (more) effectively has been a much talked-about methodological message.

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Undoubtedly, it now constitutes one of the most crucial tasks that the national core curriculum of the reformed educational system in Poland has assigned to teachers. The realities of today's multicultural and plurilingual Europe, social and occupational mobility, dynamic economic and political changes, and new challenges they pose have made the related idea of *lifelong learning* particularly relevant for the present and future second/foreign language learners and, therefore, for language teachers as well. Thus, the idea concerns learners and teachers alike, and applies across

age groups, educational levels, and second/foreign language proficiency levels. This, in turn, implies that having accomplished their formal teacher education, language teachers cannot cease to be learners. People at all ages can learn and function as learners in a range of circumstances, since as Bruner (1977, p.17) rightly stated, "Learning should not only take us somewhere; it should allow us later to go further more easily." Learner self-direction, or the ability to learn autonomously and efficiently set goals, organize, monitor, manage or control, and evaluate one's own learning, has become an important development in second/foreign language learning theory, research, and teaching practice. Today, often referred to as *strategic* self-regulation thanks to appropriate individual strategy use, it has become indispensable in the set of essential life-long study skills, and human skills in general, for both teachers and learners.

Competences of modern language teachers: formal requirements

Undoubtedly, teachers can play a vital role in building students' positive learning experience, especially when they skillfully nurture learners' potential and create opportunities for personal fulfillment, acquisition of essential social skills and development of individual learning strategies. Therefore, the role of teachers in the knowledge society, their lifelong learning abilities, ongoing career, and development of key teaching competences and qualifications are perceived in the European Union "as a matter of priority" (Council of the European Union 2004, p. 28). The common European principles related to the teaching profession envisage a mobile, well-qualified profession based on partnership and "placed within the context of lifelong learning" (European Commission 2005, pp. 2-3). Thus, teachers are expected to be able to "work with others ... work with knowledge, technology and information ... work with and in society" (European Commission 2005, pp. 3-4). In fact, Caena (2011, p. 3) lists several formal EU requirements for teaching: a specialist knowledge of a given subject, pedagogical skills (e.g. abilities to teach heterogeneous classes, use ICT, teach transversal competences, create safe and attractive school environments), and attitudes of reflective practitioners open to innovation, ready to cooperate and do research, and able to learn in autonomous ways (cf. Council of the European Union 2007, 2008, 2009). The Lifelong Learning programme described in *The Lisbon Agenda* (European Parliament 2010) also stresses the significance of developing transversal competences, among which the meta-competence of the *learning to learn* idea constitutes one of the eight key competences declared by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union as necessary in today's dynamically changing world¹

(for details see *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* 2006; cf. Caena 2011).

The term 'competence', viewed holistically, can be defined as a dynamic and complex combination of knowledge, understanding, skills, values, attitudes, motivations and personal characteristics which empower an individual to take appropriate professional action in a given situation (Koster, Dengerink 2008, cited in Caena 2011, p. 7). Exploring the language teacher's competence, Richards (2011a, 2011b) enlists *language-specific competences* needed to teach effectively (i.e. an adequate threshold of L2 proficiency and the ability to use the target language in the classroom, to provide correct feedback and input of suitable difficulty), *content knowledge* (i.e. what teachers know about the subject they teach, or *disciplinary knowledge*, and *pedagogical content knowledge* based on the study of language teaching and learning, put into practice), *basic teaching or classroom skills* (i.e. techniques, procedures, routines needed to conduct lessons), and *contextual knowledge* which helps to understand "the dynamics and relationships within the classroom and the rules and behaviors specific to a particular setting" (Richards 2011b, p. 4). He also adds the ability to understand one's social and cultural roles in a particular classroom setting, or *the language teacher's identity*, the ability to facilitate students' learning, or *learner-focused teaching skills*, and *pedagogical reasoning skills* needed to plan lessons, select the subject matter of instruction, design effective teaching techniques, set linguistic objectives, sequence classroom activities, think about timing and grouping students, anticipate and solve problems. It must be stressed that teaching experience, based on everyday practice and continual learning, allows teachers to build their own personal systems of knowledge and beliefs which Richards (2011b, p. 5) defines as the *theorizing of practice*; the construct involves the essential ability to reflect on one's actions which allows for a better understanding of the nature of both language teaching and language learning.

The *European Profile of Language Teacher Education. A Frame of Reference* (Kelly, Grenfell, Gallagher-Brett, Jones, Richard, Hilmarsson-Dunn 2002; Kelly and Grenfell 2004, cited in Caena 2011, pp. 24-25) specifies the competences of *the European language teacher* also with reference to linguistic, didactic, cognitive, and technical skills, and presents them in terms of a common core of twenty seven descriptors related to the three categories of *Knowledge and Understanding*, *Strategies and Skills*, and *Values* (below). It is worth noting that this general, or frame, document explicitly refers to learning skills and strategies future teachers are expected to develop by the end of their formal education, and these are also implicit in other types of competences teacher trainees are supposed to acquire.

¹ The set of key competences for lifelong learning includes: communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences,

sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness and expression (*Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* 2006).

European Profile of Language Teacher Education. A Frame of Reference

(excerpt, focusing on expected learning outcomes of teacher education)

Knowledge and Understanding

- Language teaching methodologies, and state-of-the art classroom techniques and activities
- Development of a critical and enquiring approach to teaching and learning
- Language proficiency
- Information and communication technology for pedagogical use in the classroom
- Information and communication technology for personal planning, organization and resource discovery
- Application of various assessment procedures and ways of recording learners' progress
- Critical evaluation of nationality or regionally adopted curricula in terms of aims, objectives and outcomes
- Theory and practice of internal and external programme evaluation

Strategies and Skills

- Ways of adapting teaching approaches to the educational context and individual needs of learners
- Critical evaluation, development and practical application of teaching materials and resources
- Methods of learning to learn
- Development of reflective practice and self-evaluation
- Development of independent language learning strategies
- Ways of maintaining and enhancing ongoing personal language competence
- Practical application of curricula and syllabuses
- Peer observation and peer review
- Developing relationships with educational institutions in appropriate countries
- Action research
- Incorporating research into teaching
- Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)
- Use of the European Language Portfolio for self-evaluation

Values

- Social and cultural values
- Diversity of languages and cultures
- Importance of teaching and learning about foreign languages and cultures
- Teaching European citizenship
- Team-working, collaboration and networking, inside and outside the immediate school
- Context
- Importance of life-long learning

Source: Caena (2011, pp. 24-25)

Similarly, the Polish *Standards of Teacher Education* (Rozporządzenie Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 17 stycznia 2012 roku w sprawie standardów kształcenia przygotowującego do wykonywania zawodu nauczyciela) guide teacher trainers and teacher training institutions in Poland by describing the qualities and qualifications the future foreign language teacher is expected to acquire and/or develop by the end of a given training period within the three compulsory modules of factual knowledge needed to teach a foreign language, psychological and pedagogical preparation, and didactic preparation. There are also two non-obligatory modules of preparation for teaching another school subject and special needs education. Apart from the set of seven general end-of-teacher-training effects, the directive provides a number of detailed effects divided into the three categories of *knowledge*, *skills*, and *social competences*. The *learning to learn* skills are explicitly included in the document only within its fourth general objective; however, successful accomplishment of other end-of-training educational effects necessitates the ability to use a range of learning skills and strategies, and do it effectively. In fact, the *Standards of Teacher Education*

and the national core curriculum of the reformed educational system in Poland, i.e. the basic documents issued by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in relation to the outcomes of L2 learning at different educational levels and with regard to teacher education and competences, show the importance of the teacher's ability to develop learners' lifelong learning skills through teaching and helping learners learn how to effectively employ selected study skills and learning strategies; thus, these skills and strategies need to be included in the foreign language teacher's education programmes.

It must be emphasized at this point that teachers are obliged by the national core curriculum to smoothly integrate language teaching and learning with the teaching and learning of a number of useful strategies which can be applied in particular language learning contexts and which can be transferred to other learning situations. What is more, this document emphasizes the need for encouraging and stimulating the learner's initiative, self-reliance, and active involvement in the process of learning, beginning at the pre-school level.

Primary school pupils are supposed to acquire those learning skills which seem necessary to discover their own interests and satisfy curiosity, and which may help to lay the foundations for the pupil's future independent self-directed learning ability. The core curriculum also recommends that lower secondary and high school students should be able to significantly enrich their individual repertoires of study skills and learning strategies. It must be added that both general educational goals and the sets of detailed requirements specified for all educational levels underscore the significance of raising learners' language awareness and justify the need for introducing many different types of direct and indirect learning strategies (for detailed information, see Dąbrowska 2011).

Furthermore, in 2003 Wydawnictwa Centralnego Ośrodka Doskonalenia Nauczycieli published the Polish translation of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR) issued by the Council of Europe in 2001, i.e. *Europejski system opisu kształcenia językowego: uczenie się, nauczanie, ocenianie* (ESOKJ). The document stresses that language education is not restricted to developing one's language proficiency. It also comprises the tasks of raising learner sociocultural awareness, stimulating imagination, and developing the ability to use a variety of learning strategies, and is closely related to the learner's emotional development. CEFR adds two essential categories to the set of learner general competences, i.e. *personality traits*, which may influence the process and effects of one's learning, and *learning skills*, which are related to individual traits and the learner's declarative and procedural knowledge. In this way, the authors of the document stress the need for enhancing the learning process through individualization and an appropriate choice of teaching methods and techniques. They also accentuate the necessity to help learners develop self-awareness, metacognition, metalinguistic and metacognitive sensitivity necessary to take control of and responsibility for their own learning. The rationale behind this recommendation is that students who have come to know themselves, their learning processes and preferences can self-regulate their learning and become increasingly autonomous. This, in turn, implies the ultimate ability to plan, organize, manage, monitor, reflect on and evaluate their learning effects self-reliantly, without the teacher's supervision.

Among the solutions promoted for quite a long time, the proposal to foster learner autonomy (or self-management, self-regulation, individual independent learning) by developing their abilities to activate and apply strategies for language learning and use in varying contexts, and do this flexibly and appropriately, seems to be of key importance if the effectiveness of language education in and beyond school is to be enhanced. Many intervention studies prove that students who are taught explicitly when,

how, and why they may deploy particular strategies develop metacognition, enhance their metacognitive control of learning, acquire the ability to appropriately combine strategies of different types, and activate strategy chains in response to task requirements, which may facilitate strategy transfer to other tasks (O'Malley, Chamot 1990; Wenden 1998; Chamot et al. 1999; Chamot 2004; Oxford 2011). Also many Polish experts researching the role of learning strategies in language learning stress the importance of helping learners learn to learn and develop autonomy by enriching personal repertoires of effective learning strategies (Michońska-Stadnik 1996; Wilczyńska 1999, 2002; Drożdżiał-Szelest, Nowacka, Porczyńska 1999; Zybort 2000; Komorowska 2000, 2005). For many learners, and potentially for everyone, successful realization of learner autonomy may in fact ensure further, continued, self-motivated, and self-directed learning once formal education has been accomplished. The intention of educating autonomous, or self-regulated, learners able to take strategic action in response to the requirements and challenges posed by varied language learning tasks, entails the need for self-regulated, 'strategic' teachers, well-trained and personally experienced in successful strategy use – teachers who cannot afford to cease to learn since language learning is a long-term process or, in fact, a lifelong venture.

Learning strategies: functional definitions and practical typologies

Language learner strategies began to attract researchers' attention four decades ago. The notion of 'learning strategies' has become commonplace in second/foreign language learning studies since the 1970s when theorists, researchers, and language teachers began to realize the impossibility of designing a single universal teaching method that could guarantee all learners successful accomplishment of the complex task of foreign language learning. As a result of the 'good language learner' research, the earlier unexplained variability in levels of learners' success was associated with, and attributed to, a number of learner-specific characteristics, behavioural patterns, and thinking processes. The research also demonstrated that learners are by no means passive in the learning process. Early descriptive studies produced a number of overlapping sets of learner strategies, often referred to as 'techniques', 'tactics', 'operations', 'plans', 'steps', 'processes', or even 'skills'. Although the literature has not as yet offered one common definition and typology of learning strategies, Rebecca Oxford (1990, 2011) proposes functional definitions and taxonomies which can be easily applied in the classroom.

Oxford (1990, p. 8) defines 'learning strategies' as "operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information" and emphasizes that they constitute "specific actions

taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations." Hsiao and Oxford (2002, p. 372) further clarify that strategies are "the L2 learner's tool kit for active, conscious, purposeful, and attentive learning, and they pave the way toward greater proficiency, learner autonomy, and self-regulation." In Oxford's new *Strategic Self-Regulation (S²R) Model* of language learning, 'self-regulated L2 learning strategies' are broadly defined as "goal-directed attempts to manage and control efforts to learn the L2" (2011, p. 12). The expert stresses that strategies are teachable, intentional, and deliberate actions selected and applied to learn the target language. Therefore, as she further clarifies, they are distinct from 'skills', since the latter are under the learner's automatic control. In fact, it must also be added that Oxford (2011, pp. 31-32) differentiates between 'strategies' and 'tactics'. The former are defined as general action plans activated to accomplish a goal, while the latter denote their highly specific manifestations, or practical ways in which a given strategy can be employed by a particular learner to achieve his/her goal in a particular setting. In other words, a number of tactics can be used in order to realize a strategy. As Oxford (1990, 2011) explains, by activating appropriate tactics and strategies, learners can build the target language system and communicate with other L2 users, which may make interaction more effective and facilitate further development of communicative competence. The author also adds that each individual develops his/her own idiosyncratic sets of learning strategies which may be modified over the learner's lifetime and which may lead to second/foreign language learning success.

Oxford has also proposed two functional typologies of L2 learning strategies. What seems especially important to practitioners is the fact that her 1990 classification is detailed, more comprehensive, more systematic and terminologically less complex than other taxonomies. Moreover, Oxford (1990) relates particular strategy types and strategy groups to each of the four language skills and divides strategies into two main classes: *direct* and *indirect*, further subdivided into six groups. *Direct memory, cognitive, and compensation* strategies involve the L2 directly as they facilitate its mental processing. *Indirect metacognitive, affective, and social* strategies support the learning process indirectly by focusing, planning, organizing, controlling, evaluating, reducing anxiety, developing collaboration and empathizing with others. As the author emphasizes, the essential value of her 1990 typology lies in the fact that it allows for a better understanding of the relations between strategies, since direct and indirect strategies, similarly to the six strategy groups, can assist and support one another.

The six strategy groups perform different functions in the language learning process:

- *memory strategies* assist learners in remembering, storing, and retrieving information by grouping, associating, elaborating, semantic mapping, structured reviewing, as well as using

mechanical techniques, imagery, keywords, physical response or sensation;

- *cognitive strategies* facilitate foreign language comprehension and production through practising formally with sounds and writing systems, practising naturalistically, using formulas and patterns, repeating, using resources for receiving and sending messages, getting the idea quickly, analyzing contrastively, analyzing expressions, reasoning deductively, translating, transferring, note-taking, summarizing, and highlighting;

- *compensation strategies* help learners continue using the L2 despite gaps in L2 knowledge thanks to intelligent guessing with the use of linguistic and/or other clues and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing via selecting the topic, coining words, using a synonym or circumlocution, switching to the L1, getting help, using mime or gesture;

- *metacognitive strategies* enable learners to coordinate language learning and allow them to control their cognition through overviewing and linking new material with what is already known, paying attention, finding out about language learning, setting goals and objectives, organizing, seeking practice possibilities, self-monitoring, or self-evaluating;

- *affective strategies* help to regulate motivations and emotions via progressive relaxation, deep breathing, using music or laughter, making positive statements, taking risks wisely, self-rewarding, listening to one's body, writing an L2 learning diary, or sharing feelings;

- *social strategies* allow learners to intensify social contacts and develop the ability to learn with others by asking questions for clarification, verification, or correction; cooperating with peers and proficient users of the target language, developing cultural understanding as well as awareness of others' thoughts and feelings (for details, see Oxford 1990).

In her later work, referring to a number of key research studies on learner strategies and considering the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* with its focus on 'learning to learn' through the use of learning strategies, Oxford (2011) proposes the *Strategic Self-Regulation (S²R) Model* of language learning, within which learners employ strategies in an active and constructive way in order to organize, manage, control, and evaluate their own learning processes. Among the three reasons why she introduces the new model, there are two especially important arguments which must be emphasized on account of the subject matter of this series of articles. They include: "closer integration of LLS into the teacher's metapedagogical awareness, reflection, and classroom instruction"² and "closer examination of individual strategies and tactics for learning effectiveness" (Oxford 2011, p. 11).

In her *S²R Model*, Oxford (2011, pp. 14-16) proposes three mutually supporting L2 learning dimensions: *cognitive, affective, and sociocultural-interactive*, and explains that:

² The abbreviation 'LLS' used in the quotation stands for 'language learner strategies'.

- *cognitive strategies* facilitate second/foreign language remembering and processing, thus allowing for the construction, transformation, and practical application of linguistic knowledge; they comprise six strategies: Using the Senses to Understand and Remember, Activating Knowledge, Reasoning, Conceptualizing with Details (e.g. analyzing, comparing), Conceptualizing Broadly (e.g. synthesizing, summarizing), Going Beyond the Immediate Data (e.g. guessing, predicting);

- *affective strategies* help to evoke positive emotions, attitudes and motivations in the process of language learning; there are two strategies: Activating Supportive Emotions, Beliefs, and Attitudes and Generating and Maintaining Motivation;

- *sociocultural-interactive strategies (SI)* facilitate communication and help learners cope with culture and identity issues in particular sociocultural contexts; they include three strategies: Interacting to Learn and Communicate, Overcoming Knowledge Gaps in Communicating, and Dealing with Sociocultural Contexts and Identities.

These are managed and controlled by eight *metastrategies* which are further subdivided into: *metacognitive*, *meta-affective*, and *metasociocultural-interactive*, or *meta-SI*, strategies. Thus, apart from *metacognitive* strategies which help to control the use of cognitive strategies, in her 2011 model Oxford introduces *meta-affective* and *meta-SI* strategies which control the activation of affective and SI strategies. She does this to bridge the gap existing in earlier classifications in relation to the affective and social dimensions, and to accommodate the strategies commonly used by effective L2 learners. The *metastrategies* perform executive-control and management functions, and enable the learner to decide whether and how to apply a given strategy. They also help to assess whether the strategy is working in an appropriate way in a given context, in response to the learner's particular needs and purposes. This in turn facilitates *metastrategic regulation* in self-regulated learning. The eight *metastrategies* are: Paying Attention, Planning, Obtaining and Using Resources, Organizing, Implementing Plans, Orchestrating Strategies Use, Monitoring, and Evaluating (Oxford 2011, pp. 15-19).

Practicing teachers, who work with learners on an everyday basis, will certainly appreciate Oxford's contribution to our understanding of learning strategies for at least two reasons. Firstly, unlike many other researchers earlier, she does not concentrate only on cognitive and metacognitive L2 learning strategies, but expands the concept significantly. Oxford (2002, p. 128) stresses that the learner cannot be thought of as "a cognitive/metacognitive information-processing machine", but must be treated as a whole person, i.e. an intellectual, emotional, social, and physical being. Her 'self-regulated L2 learning strategies' also concern "the whole, multidimensional learner" (Oxford 2011, p. 14). Thus, she highlights the interrelatedness

and interdependence of human cognition and affectivity, or emotional self. This is reflected in her 1990 typology, where she includes two separate groups of varied affective and social strategies, and in her updated classification, where she stresses the importance of strategic regulation of the affective dimension of human emotions, beliefs, attitudes and motivations, and the sociocultural-interactive dimension involving contexts, communication, and culture. Many research studies confirm the significance of respecting the learner's culture-based strategy preferences since not only the learner's goals, but also the learning context and situation, and the culture-related values of his/her society can have a strong impact on the choice and acceptability of strategies for language learning and use (cf. Chamot 2004, p. 18).

Secondly, Oxford does not exclude communication strategies, or strategies of language use, from her systems of learning strategies, even though, referring to her 1990 classification in particular, some researchers consider it to be a shortcoming³. Instead, she designs an extended typology of over sixty learning strategies, including a reduced list of behaviours so far referred to as 'communication strategies' and introduces her group of 'compensation strategies'. She believes that the term 'communication strategies' has been used by many researchers in the restricted sense of compensating for knowledge gaps in the production of conversational speech only, which allows for a limited, one-skill interpretation of communication (in speaking situations), while communication occurs when learners develop other skills as well (i.e. listening, reading, or writing). She also stresses that it is often difficult to separate language learning from its use as the two processes may take place at the same time. Moreover, learning often occurs even if communication is the learner's main goal since, as she notices, learners may either learn to use the target language or use the target language to learn it. Finally, these two categories of strategies overlap to a great extent (cf. Oxford 1990; Hsiao, Oxford 2002; Oxford 2011). In fact, Grenfell and Macaro (2007, p. 14) confirm this view and explain: "social interactive contexts are an important source of strategic activity and, therefore, communication strategies complement and form a part of LLS."

It seems worth adding that, as Cohen's (2007) survey confirms, leading strategy experts today tend to agree with Oxford's claim that L2 learning strategies make the learning process easier, faster, more enjoyable, and "enhance performance in language learning and use, both in general and in specific tasks" (p. 43); thus, they help learners perform specified exercises and solve specific problems successfully. However, it must also be remembered that, as strategy research shows, many individual differences may influence the learner's choice of

³ Cohen (1998, 2010) recommends his distinction between 'language learning strategies' and 'language use strategies' and explains that communication strategies form a subset of the latter.

strategies and patterns of strategy application. As Oxford (1990, p. 13; 2002, p. 127) indicates, these include: individual motivation level, degree of awareness, career/academic specialization, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, sex, age, nationality/ethnicity, cultural background, personality traits, learning styles, and purpose for L2 learning. Oxford (2001, p. 359) stresses that learning styles, or learners' biologically and developmentally determined general learning approaches, together with their strategies, or specific thoughts and behaviours, seem to be the two key factors which may affect the L2 learning process.

Last but not least, Oxford (2001, p. 362) explains that a particular learning strategy cannot be judged either good or bad, since its value is neutral as long as the strategy is decontextualized. As she further clarifies, a given strategy becomes *positive* and *useful* if three essential requirements are met: (a) it is well related to a particular L2 learning task; (b) it is compatible with the learner's learning style preferences, and (c) the learner activates the strategy in an effective way and combines it with other essential strategies into successful strategy chains. Moreover, Oxford (2011, p. 15) considers a strategy *appropriate* if it: (a) allows the learner to achieve his/her goals and satisfy his/her needs, (b) is well fitted to the learning situation and sociocultural context, (c) combines well with and helps to stretch one's learning preferences, and (d) facilitates learning. Such learning strategies, if applied appropriately, can help learners "become more independent, autonomous, lifelong learners" (Oxford 2001, p. 362).

Language learner strategies: implications for teaching

An overview of the literature on learning strategies shows numerous definitions, defining criteria, characteristic features and classifications of L2 learning strategies since researchers are still attempting to better understand the phenomena. In fact, the typologies proposed so far cover comparable classes or groups of often overlapping constructs described and interpreted from different perspectives (e.g. O'Malley, Chamot 1990; Wenden 1991; Stern 1992; Cohen 1998; Oxford 2011). These may sometimes confuse and, as a result, discourage language teachers from experimenting with learning strategies or conducting classroom-based strategy research. As many experts indicate, learners are sometimes unsuccessful in the language learning process because they are either unaware of the power of appropriate and conscious use of different strategies or they tend to use strategies inappropriately; moreover, in the educational process, some learners are not offered adequate possibilities to apply new strategies and expand individual strategy repertoires, while others do not even know, or get to know, about such possibilities

(cf. Drożdżał-Szelest, Nowacka, Porczyńska 1999; Oxford 2001, 2011). Yet experts also agree that learners can learn certain strategies, techniques, and behaviours of 'good', successful and autonomous L2 learners (Chamot 2004, Komorowska 2005, Oxford 2011); hence, the need for 'strategic' teachers able and willing to help them.

In fact, there are numerous studies on the features, behaviours, and strategies that distinguish successful L2 learners from unsuccessful, or less competent, ones. The research shows that 'good' language learners are aware of language as a system and as a means of communication and interaction; therefore, they are concerned about both language forms and functional practice. Moreover, 'good' learners develop an awareness of the learning process itself and approach it in active ways, willingly seeking and identifying opportunities for language exploration. In the process, they employ learning strategies of different types, and do it flexibly and appropriately, in response to particular task requirements. They also utilize their prior linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world in order to learn and communicate. In addition to this, successful language learners take responsibility for and effectively manage their own learning process, and know how to cope with its affective demands. Such learners set their own goals and objectives, monitor and evaluate their progress, seek contacts with target language users and participate in authentic L2 use; in fact, they are not afraid of making mistakes and make mistakes work for them. Thus, 'good' L2 learners tend to be self-aware, inquisitive, tolerant, self-critical, realistic, well-organized, and willing to experiment with the new language and new strategies (cf. Rubin 1975; Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, Todesco 1978; Rubin, Thompson 1982; Stern 1983; Rubin 1987; Ellis, Sinclair 1989; Ellis 1994).

It must be stressed that although less successful learners are often thought of as possessing underdeveloped strategy repertoires, they also apply learning strategies and, as Vann and Abraham (1990) prove, sometimes they do so actively. However, studies indicate that less effective students tend to activate different patterns of strategy use. This can be attributed to the fact that they appear to lack properly developed and directed higher-order metacognitive, or self-regulatory, strategies that are needed to manipulate other strategies in response to the nature of the task at hand (Abraham, Vann 1987; Vann, Abraham 1990; Chamot et al. 1999). In contrast, 'good' language learners tend to be better at assessing the demands of different language learning activities, identifying task-related objectives and determining their own learning problems; in consequence, successful learners resort to more effective strategies that enable them to complete the tasks and/or overcome difficulties. Chamot (2004, p. 21) also confirms that high achievers activate more metacognitive strategies and are able to transfer strategies to other foreign language learning

tasks efficiently. In fact, all the descriptive studies conducted so far show that both successful and less competent language learners employ certain strategies for L2 learning; however, successful learners differ from their less effective peers, since they tend to make more appropriate strategy choices and apply strategies for language learning and use more skillfully. Last but not least, successful learners tend to use strategies of more varied types, activate them more often, and utilize strategies for deeper processing more frequently (O'Malley, Chamot 1990; Griffiths 2008; Oxford 2011).

Thus, both teachers and learners can learn from what we know about good and less competent language learners. The implications for teaching are that L2 learners, especially those less effective ones, must be given many chances to get to know more about themselves as language learners and about their own learning strategies and learning preferences; they also need numerous opportunities to learn about, experiment with, and explore the effectiveness of diverse language learning strategies when applied to different L2 learning tasks in and beyond the classroom. Moreover, they need to be able to identify those strategies which not only fit but also expand their own learning styles, and in this way build personal sets of preferred and effective strategies. In the process, they must also be helped to learn how to efficiently plan, manage, monitor, and evaluate their own learning since, as Chamot (2004, p. 18) rightly emphasizes, "all learners can profit from learning how to use metacognitive strategies." As the above presented research results indicate, developing learners' own metacognition in the language classroom is a way of empowering them to choose and apply strategies and strategy chains appropriately, taking into consideration the requirements of a particular language learning task. All this means that, similarly, language teachers need to know (more about) themselves as language learners and the strategies they tend to use in order to learn and communicate in the target language before they can get to know more about their own learners, the strategies learners activate, and individual factors which may affect learner strategy choice and use in particular cultural and situational contexts.

Conclusion

In this article (Part I.), the author examined sets of qualifications, or competences, second/ foreign language teachers are supposed to acquire and develop in the cycle of formal teacher education. These are specified in both European and Polish documents, and involve the ability to promote language learners' autonomy, or self-regulated learning, through appropriate use of learning strategies. The author explained the relevant terminology, presented functional classifications of learning strategies that can be easily applied

in the language classroom, and discussed vital L2 learner strategies-related implications for language teaching. Among these, there is the essential need for teaching learners how to apply varied learning strategies with different language learning tasks and helping learners build their own repertoires of effective strategies for language learning and use; in the process, special attention must be paid to the development of the learner's metacognition and metacognitive, or self-regulatory, strategies. This, in turn, relates to the need for educating 'strategic' teachers, skilled at and personally convinced of the effectiveness of particular strategies' application, and thus qualified to perform the task of helping learners *learn to learn*. In the following articles (Part II. and Part III.), the author will explore the question of what it means to be a 'strategic' teacher and what exactly is required from such a teacher. She will also discuss practical solutions for educating both autonomous learners and 'strategic' teachers.

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