TOWARDS STRATEGIC SELF-REGULATION IN SECOND/ FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING PART I. THE 'GOOD LANGUAGE LEARNER' ISSUE

STRATEGICZNA SAMO-REGULACJA W NAUCE JĘZYKA DRUGIEGO/OBCEGO CZĘŚĆ I. ZAGADNIENIE 'DOBREGO' UCZNIA

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Summary

The main aim of this series of three articles is to explore the question of what it is that makes 'good' language learners, what individual factors can influence the learner's success in second/foreign language learning, and what teachers and learners can learn from those who succeed in this complex task. In Part I., the author reviews a number of research studies on the 'Good Language Learner' issue conducted since the 1960s; she also attempts to summarize the main characteristics, strategies, and behaviours of successful and unsuccessful learners. Part II. presents an overview of studies focused on the role of selected individual differences and shows how the variables may influence the process and outcomes of language learning; it also indicates which strategies and behaviours of 'good' learners can be taught and learnt in the classroom. In Part III., the author explores the issue further and presents the results of her empirical studies aimed at identifying the features and strategies of both successful students of English as a foreign language and learners with lower achievements. The pedagogical implications for language teaching and learning discussed within the series are closely related to the ideas of strategies-based and styles-and-strategies-based instruction in language education, self-regulated or autonomous language learning, and continued lifelong learning.

Keywords: 'good' language learners, less successful language learners, individual differences, learning strategies, learning self-regulation

Streszczenie

Niniejszy cykl trzech artykułów poświęcony jest zagadnieniu tzw. 'dobrego' ucznia języka drugiego/obcego, związkom pomiędzy wybranymi czynnikami indywidualnymi a sukcesem w nauce oraz próbie odpowiedzi na pytanie, czego możemy nauczyć się od uczących się języków obcych, którzy odnoszą sukces. W części pierwszej autorka dokonuje przeglądu badań cech, strategii i zachowań 'dobrego' ucznia prowadzonych od lat 60-tych ubiegłego wieku oraz przedstawia charakterystykę uczniów o wysokich i niższych poziomach osiągnięć. Część druga poświęcona jest roli wybranych czynników indywidualnych oraz omówieniu badań wskazujących na to, w jaki sposób mogą one wpływać na przebieg i wyniki nauki języka obcego oraz jakich zachowań i strategii 'dobrych' uczniów można nauczać i nauczyć się w klasie szkolnej. W części trzeciej autorka prezentuje wyniki własnych badań empirycznych mających na celu identyfikację cech i strategii uczących się o zróżnicowanym poziomie osiągnięć w nauce języka angielskiego jako obcego w warunkach szkolnych. Implikacje pedagogiczne zagadnień omawianych w tej serii artykułów powiązane są z ideą instrukcji strategicznej w edukacji językowej, samo-regulacji i autonomii w nauce oraz umiejętnościom niezbędnym do kontynuacji uczenia się przez całe życie.

Słowa kluczowe: 'dobry' uczeń języka obcego, uczeń o niższych poziomach osiągnięć, różnice indywidualne, strategie uczenia się, samo-regulacja w nauce

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Introduction

Since the 1970s several psychological constructs falling under the umbrella term of 'individual differences' and the notion of 'language learner strategies' have become common subjects of numerous research studies in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). At that time, when conventional and unconventional language teaching methods were proliferating, not only theorists but also practitioners, researchers and teachers, began to realize that it was impossible to discover or invent a single or universal method of teaching languages which would help all learners accomplish the complex task of second/foreign language learning successfully. It was then that the earlier observed but unexplained variability in learners' differing achievements and varying levels of language learning success was related to a number of individual traits, thinking processes, and patterns of behaviour. In fact, the learner-specific, or idiosyncratic, approaches which learners adopt to obtain and process new information are closely connected with how they regulate their own interaction with incoming knowledge and new meanings, how they relate the new information to their already existing and hierarchically organized cognitive structures, how they generalize and store the newly acquired items in long-term memory, and how they retrieve the entities and monitor their later use (Wenden 1991; Droździał-Szelest 1997; Chamot et al. 1999; Williams, Burden 2004; Brown 2007). Thus, it was observed that different learners' individual approaches to language learning produced differing, more and less successful, outcomes.

It must be added that the development of cognitive science in the 1960s and 1970s and a growing interest amongst linguists and psychologists particularly in the cognitive operations, strategies, techniques, or tactics that people tend to activate when they think, learn, and solve problems triggered, as Wenden explains, the investigation of "how learners approach the task of learning a second language" (1987a, p. 4) in and beyond the language classroom. Cognitive psychologists' claim that learners should not be treated as passive recipients of knowledge but as individuals who are actively involved in the learning process highlighted the role of learner mental processes and initiated research into the learner's cognitive processing and varied strategies which learners actively employed in language learning (O'Malley, Chamot 1990; Wenden 1991; Williams, Burden 2004). Subsequently, the question of what makes a 'good', or successful, and later autonomous, independent, self-reliant, or self-directed language learner capable of planning, organizing, managing, controlling, and evaluating, or self-regulating his/her own learning processes appeared in the SLA literature.

In fact, researchers are still seeking to answer the question of what it is that makes 'good' language learners successful and, in effect, what we can learn from these distinguished individuals. Why do some language learners achieve more than other students? What individual learner characteristics, thought processes, and behaviours may influence efficient language learning? What role can individual differences – that is, gender, aptitude, cognitive/learning styles, personality traits, motivation types or orientations, personal beliefs and attitudes, cultural background, nationality/ethnicity, academic and career orientation, strategy preferences and patterns of strategy use in particular learning and communication situations, as well as the learner's language learning purpose, metacognition, degree of awareness and self-awareness - play in effective second/foreign language learning? These are just a few of a number of essential questions which still seem relevant today (Griffiths 2008, pp. 1-2; cf. Oxford 1990, 2002, 2011). In the following section the author will attempt to explore the issue in greater detail and present what experts already know about those who succeed.

'Good Language Learner' characteristics: an overview of the research

As Rubin (1987) notes, studies of the features and strategies of the 'Good Language Learner' (GLL) started with Aaron Carton's 1966 research on learners' variability in the "ability to make valid, rational, and reasonable inferences" (p. 19). As a result of his investigation, Carton (1971) arrived at the conclusion that language learning could not be discussed only in terms of skills, since it resembles "complex intellectual processes" and "becomes a matter for a kind of problem-solving" in which "the entire breadth of the student's experience and knowledge may be brought to bear on the processing of language" (p. 57). Moreover, as Rubin (1987, p. 19) adds, Carton noticed that learners' abilities to draw proper inferences differed depending on their individual tolerance of risk. Thus, it has become clear that individuals differ in the ways they approach and accomplish the task of language learning.

In 1971 Joan Rubin began her own research into the 'Good Language Learner' issue. She wanted to identify those traits and behaviours of successful learners which could be thought of as contributing to their ultimate success. Rubin (1987) hopefully assumed that, "once identified, such strategies could be made available to less successful learners" (p. 20). In consequence, most of the early research on learning strategies in SLA concentrated on attempts to identify, describe, and categorize strategies utilized by more and less competent learners with a view to determining which behaviours and strategies seemed effective and ineffective in particular learning situations and circumstances, and which, therefore, could be taught to less successful students. Thus, equipped with this knowledge, strategy researchers also sought to construct efficient schemes of learning strategy instruction intended

for less able language learners, and learners of other school subjects as well. Rubin's results, presented in her seminal paper in 1975, covered the following factors which characterized self-defined 'good' language learners: (1) psychological traits (i.e. risk-taking, tolerance of ambiguity and vagueness, willingness to appear foolish), (2) communication strategies (i.e. circumlocution and gestures), (3) social strategies (i.e. looking for possibilities to use the target language), and (4) cognitive strategies (i.e. guessing/inferencing, practising, attending to form by analyzing, categorizing, synthesizing, and monitoring) (Rubin 1987, p. 20).

It must be added that Rubin's initial generalizations concerning the features and behaviours of 'good' learners were intuitive in nature and based on teacher experience and observation in particular. The researcher defined those who succeed in language learning as willing and accurate guessers who look for opportunities to communicate with other users of the target language and who learn from communication; moreover, they tend to be uninhibited about their own mistakes. In addition to this, according to her description successful learners focus on both structure and meaning, look for patterns in language, take advantage of opportunities for practice, and monitor their own speech and that of others (Rubin 1975, pp. 45-48). Last but not least, the expert also noticed that 'good' learners' selection and application of learning strategies depends on the nature of the learning task in hand, their proficiency level and age, contexts of learning, general learning styles, and personality (cf. Droździał-Szelest 1997).

Rubin and Thompson (1982) modified this list and stated that 'Good Language Learners':
1. find their own way, taking charge of their learning
2. organize information about language
3. are creative, developing a 'feel' for the language by experimenting with its grammar and words
4. make their own opportunities for practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom
5. learn to live with uncertainty by not getting flustered and by continuing to talk or listen without understanding every word
6. use mnemonics and other memory strategies to recall what has been learned
7. make errors work for them and not against them
8. use linguistic knowledge, including knowledge of their first language, in learning a second language
9. use contextual cues to help them in comprehension
10. learn to make intelligent guesses
11. learn chunks of language as wholes and formalized routines to help them perform 'beyond their competence'

12. learn certain tricks that help to keep conversations going
13. learn certain production strategies to fill in gaps in their own competence
14. learn different styles of speech and writing and learn to vary their language according to the formality of the situation.
                (cited in Brown 1994, pp.191-192)

In fact, earlier, Stern (1975) had proposed his original and speculative, ten strategies, or "features that mark out good language learning" (p. 311), which still needed confirmation and partly overlapped with those listed by Rubin. He included the following GLL action plans:

1. A personal learning style or positive learning strategies; 2. An active approach to the learning task; 3. A tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers; 4. Technical know-how about how to tackle a language; 5. Strategies of experimentation and planning with the object of developing the new language into an ordered system and of revising this system progressively; 6. Constantly searching for meaning; 7. Willingness to practise; 8. Willingness to use the language in real communication; 9. Self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use; 10. Developing the target language more and more as a separate reference system, and learning to think in it.

However, his strategies known as: planning strategy, active strategy, emphatic strategy, formal strategy, experimental strategy, semantic strategy, practice strategy, communication strategy, monitoring strategy, and internalization strategy seemed to reflect a set of learner attitudes rather than relate directly to problem-solving used by the learner (cf. McDonough 1995, pp. 5-6; Droździał-Szelest 1997, p. 13). Thus, Stern (1983, pp. 411-412) later modified his original list and proposed four sets of strategies the employment of which was determined by learner factors such as the individual's age, maturity, education, and cultural background:
• an active planning strategy, or the ability to set goals and objectives, and actively participate in all stages and development sequences of the language learning process;
• an 'academic' (explicit) learning strategy, which expressed itself in the learner's willingness to study and practise; attend to, analyze, and revise the language as a formal system; use practice and memory strategies, and monitor one's own performance;
• a social learning strategy that activated communication strategies and in this way helped learners to seek contacts with other users of the target language and participate in authentic language use; and

- an affective strategy, which was associated with the learner's personality traits and entailed the ability to face and effectively deal with emotional and motivational obstacles involved in the process of second/foreign language learning.

Stern's initial list was used by Naiman et al. (1978, 1996, pp. 30-33) who conducted an empirical project based on interviews with adult L2 learners and identified a set of five major strategies of 'Good Language Learners', essential in successful language learning:

- active task approach (i.e. active involvement in the task of language learning);
- realization of language as a system (i.e. development and use of this type of awareness);
- realization of language as a means of communication and interaction (i.e. used to exchange messages and behave in accordance with the socio-cultural norms of the target language community; moreover, a 'good' learner might appreciate fluency more than accuracy, particularly at the early stages of language learning; he/she might seek opportunities for the development of communicative skills, and search for clarification of socio-cultural meanings; thus, he/she might manifest critical sensitivity to L2 use);
- management of affective demands (i.e. realization that the process of language learning might be affectively difficult and abilities to cope with such difficulties);
- monitoring of L2 performance (i.e. active revision of L2 system, monitor use, testing out inferences, making necessary adjustments, or asking proficient users of the L2).

Since then many other researchers have investigated the GLL issue, enriching the body of knowledge about those who know how to approach the language learning task effectively and who succeed in doing so as a result. For example, as Omaggio's 1978 study showed, 'good' or successful language learners are familiar with their learning styles and preferences, and actively approach their learning tasks; they are also ready and willing to take risks. Moreover, 'good' learners guess well, watch the meanings of words and sentences and their structural patterns, treat the target language as a separate system, attempt to think in it already at the outset, and approach the new language with tolerance and outgoingness (cited in Stevick 1989, p. 19). In a similar vein, Holec's (1987) studies indicated that "language learning refers to the active involvement of an individual in a variety of activities" (p. 146), which can lead him/her to competence in the target language. Defining the role of the learner in the language learning process, Holec (1987, p. 147) completed the picture of the 'Good Language Learner' with his brief remarks: "... good learners are learners who are capable of assuming the role of manager of their learning. They know how to make decisions involved. In other words, they know how to learn." Thus, these descriptions expose and underscore the role of the learner's good study skills, efficient self-instruction, self-reliance, responsibility, and self-regulation.

More recent research has also identified similar learner traits and effective learning habits. For example, O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper (1989) found that, doing listening tasks, the more successful learners in their study "monitored their comprehension by *asking themselves if what they were hearing made sense*, (...) related new information to their own *prior knowledge*, (...) made *inferences* about possible meanings" of new words, and transferred "their prior academic knowledge in Spanish to the requirements of the English-language classroom"; in fact, they used learning strategies "typical of good readers in native English-speaking contexts" (Chamot et al. 1999, p. 165). In addition, research on second language reading processes (e.g. Barnett 1988; Cohen, Cavalcanti 1990, cited in Chamot et al. 1999, p. 166) showed that successful or good L2 readers were able to monitor their comprehension, knew how to enhance its effectiveness, and efficiently exploited that knowledge in practice.

Ellis and Sinclair (1989, pp. 6-7), despite observing significant influence from varied learner individual differences, ventured to make several generalizations about effective, or successful, language learners. They did so in the form of seven broad categories of characteristics and strategies that could serve as the basis for designing learner training courses for second or foreign language learners. In their practical manual entitled *Learning to Learn English: A Course in Learner Training*, the experts stress that successful learners are self-aware; thus, they understand themselves as language learners, know and understand their own attitudes, feelings and emotions. They are also inquisitive and tolerant; they want to find out more about the target language in order to become more effective learners. They are self-critical; they self-assess systematically, and regularly monitor their own progress. Moreover, they are realistic learners who know that learning a language involves hard work based on setting long-term goals as well as realistic, short-term and manageable aims. They are also willing to experiment with new learning strategies to find the ones that suit them most and work best. In fact, they are actively involved in the process of learning and take risks. Finally, they are well organized and can effectively manage both their study time and language learning materials.

Furthermore, in 1989 and later in 1990 Oxford described 'Good Language Learners' in terms of their strategic behaviours, dividing the learning strategies used by those who succeed into six groups. Thus, the researcher claims that 'good' learners apply a range of metacognitive strategies to manage and coordinate their own learning processes, and

control their cognition; for example, they actively look for learning and practice opportunities, pay attention to what they learn, overview and link new material with what they already know, find about language learning, set goals, plan, organize, monitor their progress, and self-evaluate. They also resort to affective strategies; for instance, they regulate their emotions and motivations and reduce language learning anxiety through the use of music, laughter, deep breathing, progressive relaxation or meditation; they also apply self-encouragement strategies by making positive statements or using self-talk; they take risks wisely, listen to their bodies, write language learning diaries, share feelings with others, and self-reward. Moreover, successful learners use social strategies to intensify contacts and learn with others; they ask questions for clarification, verification, or correction; they cooperate with peers and proficient users of the target language, and develop cultural awareness as well as understanding of others' thoughts and feelings. They also activate memory strategies to organize, remember, and store new information through grouping, rhyming, semantic mapping, associating/elaborating, using keywords, physical movement/sensation or imagery, and apply these strategies to retrieve the information. They also utilize the strategy of structured reviewing to enhance the results of their learning. Furthermore, successful learners manipulate an L2 directly through cognitive strategies which facilitate comprehension and production; for instance, they repeat, practise formally with sounds and writing systems, practise naturalistically, use formulas and patterns, get the idea quickly, reason deductively, analyze contrastively, transfer information, summarize, take notes and highlight. Finally, they apply compensatory or communication strategies to overcome their own linguistic limitations and cope with gaps in L2 knowledge; thus, they guess meanings intelligently using different cues, use synonyms, and employ other communication tricks like selecting the topic, coining words, using a circumlocution, switching to L1, getting help, using mime or gesture (cf. Oxford 1989, 1990, 2001, 2002).

Yet another attempt at clarifying the nature of strategic behaviours of 'Good Language Learners' can be presented in terms of Cohen's (1991) searching-for-meaning orientation. Cohen describes successful learners as good observers who are open to input, even if it is too complex and difficult at a given moment. In their search for meaning, they tend to rely on their own knowledge of the world, and of the stated or discussed topic; thus, they not only possess extended topic-related knowledge, but also know how to appropriately activate and use it when needed. Moreover, they utilize their knowledge of the interlocutor, his/her voice qualities, manner of speaking and body language; this, in turn, enables them to use anticipation strategies and envisage the nature of the contextualized discourse, anticipating utterances that can potentially appear in a given context. In addition, efficient learners pay attention to the information carried by the speaker's use of word stress and relate current speech to the preceding parts of discourse. In fact, they constantly search for linguistic encounters, new language experiences, and access to the input of L2 primary data (Cohen 1991, pp. 111-112; cf. Drożdział-Szelest 1997, p. 18; Dakowska 2001, p. 178).

Discussing indicators of language learning success, characteristics, skills, strategies and behaviours of learners who appear to be the most effective at mastering a foreign language and succeed in developing sufficient communicative competence, Komorowska (2005) begins by stating that, first of all, 'good' L2 learners possess a good knowledge and command of their own mother tongue; thus, rich vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and fluency in their L1 seem to guarantee L2 learning success. The expert notices that learners who succeed may be described as more socially and interactionally competent, ready to engage in social contacts and communication, and initiate and maintain conversations. She also stresses that those inclinations are evident first in the L1 and they are later transferred to L2 behaviour. The expert adds that effective learners are not afraid of making mistakes, failing to achieve their goals or appearing foolish, and so, irrespective of their current L2 knowledge and stage of skills development, they actively try to communicate, and appreciate most the effectiveness of their attempts. Further, successful learners learn through action; they actively take advantage of what they already know in the L2, do not feel apprehensive when unable to comprehend and/or express everything they want to; they guess, resort to drawings, gestures, synonyms, or circumlocutions if they lack adequate vocabulary and simplify if they lack grammar structures. If they fail, such learners do not feel discouraged; on the contrary, they try again and in this way create and increase opportunities to practise more, and make more rapid progress. Thus, they know how to cope in difficult situations (see also Komorowska 1978).

Komorowska also emphasizes that such learners tend to be more self-reliant, independent, and inclined to behave autonomously. They do not confine themselves to classroom learning alone, but search for extra contacts with the target language by reading, watching films, or practising self-talk in the L2. They are able to and often find their own ways to organize the learning process, and invent personally meaningful techniques for studying, remembering, and revising new material. What is especially crucial is that 'good' learners are ready and willing to invest their time, effort, and ingeniousness, and do this even without prompting from the teacher. Thus, successful learners tend to be strongly and intrinsically motivated to learn. Their motivation does not need to be stimulated by and typically does not originate from external sources, and in fact it often constitutes a mixture of integrative and instrumental influenc-

es; not only are they interested in the target language and its culture, but they are also aware of the notable effects of its good command. Additionally, such learners develop positive attitudes toward the target language and its native speakers, and perceive the L2 and its culture as worth the cost of extra learning effort. Getting to know the language, 'good' or successful learners develop metacognitive knowledge, get to know themselves better, learn about and become better able to select the most personally beneficial learning methods and techniques, suited to varied learning situations (Komorowska 2005, pp. 99-101). Last but not least, these students know how to organize their learning, and are systematic and self-reliant doing both teacher assigned and self-initiated homework (Komorowska 1978, p. 137).

All the above presented attempts at specifying those features and behaviours that distinguish successful second/foreign language learners from unsuccessful or less competent ones could, in fact, be reduced to several major aspects of the issue. To begin with, 'Good Language Learners' (GLLs) can be described as aware of language as a system as well as a means of communication and interaction; this may explain why they tend to be concerned about not only language forms, but also functional practice. In addition to this, GLLs tend to build their awareness of the language learning process and actively approach their learning tasks; therefore, they willingly seek and identify opportunities for further exploration and use of the target language. What is more, they actively use their prior language knowledge and knowledge of the world in order to learn and communicate effectively. What appears particularly important for second/foreign language learning success is the fact that 'good' language learners activate and utilize learning strategies of varied types in order to cope with different language learning challenges and tasks. In fact, as research shows, they can use their strategies flexibly and apply them skillfully, depending on the requirements of a specific language learning task as well as the learner's own personal needs and preferences. They also know how to transfer useful strategies to other learning contexts and tasks. Thus, they know how to manage their language learning process competently, and efficiently deal with affective demands of the process by applying suitable affective strategies (cf. Ellis 2008). It must also be added that highly successful learners, as Siek-Piskozub (1997) proves, apply strategies consciously and deliberately and, as Dakowska (2001) shows, they are eager to utilize feedback and seem most accurate in using it to work on and correct their own mistakes and errors. Last but not least, as the expert adds, 'good' learners are willing to cooperate with their teachers and respect the teacher's advice; they also seem to intuitively select the most effective ways to learn. Thus, as Holec (1987) rightly states, they know how to learn.

It seems worth noting that in 1993 Dickinson (pp. 330-331) identified similar features and presented them as his five characteristics related to the concept of 'autonomous' language learners, claiming that:

1. they understand what is being taught, i.e. they have sufficient understanding of language learning to understand the purpose of pedagogical choices;
2. they are able to formulate their own learning objectives;
3. they are able to make use of and select appropriate learning strategies;
4. they are able to monitor their use of these strategies;
5. they are able to self-assess, or monitor their own learning.

Thus, language learners identified in the literature as 'good' or 'successful' can easily become autonomous. As Komorowska (2005) emphasizes, autonomy, or the ability to carry out tasks in new contexts and do this independently, unconventionally, flexibly, and in response to the type and requirements of a specific task, means the ability to work on one's own (i.e. without supervision), transfer new skills to new circumstances, and abandon the routine of well-learned, mechanical patterns of behaviour. However, as she rightly notices, among all age groups it is adult learners who are most likely to develop autonomy in learning, since they generally know their language needs, can determine their goals and objectives, and, typically, have the experience of working independently and taking responsibility for fixed-term completion of the assigned tasks. The expert also adds that teenagers, who need to develop autonomy most due to its positive motivational impact, are still commonly unprepared to learn independently at school, though some autonomous behaviours can be encouraged and observed already in young learners, even in pre-school children (cf. Chamot et al. 1999). In fact, as many researchers emphasize, proper attitudes and motivation to learn, the knowledge of and the ability to effectively organize and manage one's own learning, an awareness and appropriate use of individual learning strategies of different types, as well as self-discipline, effective study skills and systematicity seem to be especially vital factors that condition success in language learning and characterize successful language learners.

Finally, it also needs to be added that less competent or less successful learners are frequently believed to be those whose strategy repertoires are underdeveloped; however, as research shows, those who fail to succeed in language learning often employ learning strategies as well. Moreover, as Vann and Abraham's (1990) study proves, they often utilize their strategies actively. Nevertheless, as Abraham and Vann's (1987) research confirms, less efficient learners tend to activate different strategy patterns. The researchers explain that in their repertoires of learning strategies such learners do not seem to possess well-developed and appropriately directed higher-order metacognitive, or self-regula-

tory, strategies which allow for adequate manipulation of other types of strategies, in response to the nature of a specific task at hand (Vann and Abraham 1990, p. 191). High achievers, on the other hand, are more skillful at assessing learning activities, determining their demands, and identifying task-related objectives. Moreover, they are better at identifying their own language learning problems and, consequently, tend to select more suitable strategies for completing their tasks and overcoming learning obstacles. In fact, researchers often report that successful learners utilize varied metacognitive strategies, do this actively and appropriately, and skillfully transfer efficient strategies to other learning tasks. Also, experts frequently emphasize that self-direction or self-regulation, which can be seen as a feature of independent, self-reliant, or autonomous learners, requires well-developed abilities to use metacognitive skills and strategies (cf. O'Malley, Chamot 1990; Wenden 1998; Cohen 1998, 2010; Chamot et al. 1999; Chamot 2004; Leaver et al. 2005; Dornyei 2005; Cohen, Macaro 2007; Griffiths 2008b; Anderson 2008; Cotterall 2008; Oxford 2011).

Conclusion

In this article (Part I.), the author presented a number of research studies devoted to the features, strategies, and behaviours of those who manage to succeed in the task of learning a second/foreign language, also known as the 'Good Language Learner' issue. The studies referred to in the article have been conducted over a few decades. So far descriptive studies in particular have shown that both high and low achievers tend to employ learning strategies for language study. However, 'good' language learners seem to differ from their less competent peers in a more adequate choice and a more skillful and flexible application of strategies for language learning and use. Moreover, GLLs appear to utilize more varied strategy types of both direct and indirect nature, and do this more frequently. They activate a range of memory, cognitive, compensation, socio-affective as well as higher-order metacognitive strategies necessary for personal proactive involvement in controlling different aspects of language learning. In this way, they self-manage, or self-regulate, their own learning. All in all, as Dornyei (2005) concludes, 'good' language learners excel in their learning since they tend to be creative, use individualized or personalized learning strategies, participate in the learning process consciously, and proactively enhance the effectiveness of their learning.

In the following article, the author will explore in greater detail selected issues related to 'good' language learners, especially their individual characteristics, behaviours, and employment of strategies for language learning and use. She will also present vital pedagogical implications of the research findings for language teaching and learning.

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