TOWARDS STRATEGIC SELF-REGULATION IN SECOND/ FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING
PART II. LEARNING FROM GOOD LANGUAGE LEARNERS

STRATEGICZNA SAMOREGULACJA W NAUCE JĘZYKA DRUGIEGO/OBCEGO CZĘŚĆ II. NAUKA ZACHOWAŃ I STRATEGII DOBRYCH UCZNIÓW

Małgorzata Dąbrowska[1(A,B,C,D,E,F,G)]

[1]Państwowa Szkoła Wyższa im. Papieża Jana Pawła II w Białej Podlaskiej,
Wydział Nauk o Zdrowiu i Nauk Społecznych, Katedra Nauk Humanistycznych i Społecznych, Zakład Neofilologii

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, individual differences, learning strategies, learning self-regulation, learning to learn, strategies-based instruction, styles-and-strategies-based instruction

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, samoregulacji i autonomii w nauce oraz umiejętnościom niezbędnym do kontynuacji uczenia się przez całe życie.

Słowa kluczowe: 'dobry' uczeń języka drugiego/obcego, różnice indywidualne, strategie uczenia się, samoregulacja w nauce, trening strategii uczenia się

Introduction

Research on the 'Good Language Learner' (GLL) issue and subsequently studies of learner strategy use have shown that individual learners differ in the ways they employ learning strategies to cope with the complex task of second/foreign language learning. As experts often stress, both the choice of strategy types and the frequency of different strategies application with particular language learning activities appear to remain under the impact of intricate interactions between and among varied learner-internal and learner-external variables. These include learner individual differences, the learner's personal background, and situational and social variables. The first of the three sets refers to the cognitive factors of intelligence, aptitude, cognitive/learning styles, and the learner's age, as well as the affective factors of learner beliefs about language and language learning, attitudes, motivation, language learning objectives, and general personality traits. The second group involves the learner's previous education, language learning experience, proficiency level, and career orientation. The third one relates to the language under study, the context of L2 learning and teaching, the requirements of the task in hand, and the learner's nationality and gender (Droździał-Szelest 1997; Nyikos, Oxford 1993; Brown 2007; Ellis 2008; Oxford 2001, 2002, 2011).

Numerous research studies conducted over the last forty years have shown that the resulting unique individual learner profiles and patterns of strategy employment may determine the two major outcomes of language learning, that is, the rate of the process and the ultimate level of language learning success, or its lack. Simultaneously, as researchers often note, successes learners achieve on their routes to the final goal may also influence their learning behaviour, learning decisions, strategy selection, activation, and transfer in and across particular learning situations and circumstances (Ellis 2008). In the following section, the author will concentrate on presenting the results of a number of research studies which show the relationships between language learning success and selected individual learner differences, behaviours and patterns of strategy use. The studies, which show what 'good' learners, or high-achievers, do when they learn a second/foreign language, bear vital pedagogical implications; they indicate what both teachers who are interested in helping learners enhance learning outcomes and facilitate the language learning process, as well as learners themselves, can learn considering the features, strategies, and behaviours of those who succeed in the language learning venture.

The GLL issue and individual learner variables in ESL/EFL teaching and learning

In order to learn from 'good' language learners, one must not forget Rubin's (2008) words when she states: "there are different kinds of good language learners"; thus, "much more research needs to be conducted to profile the range of variables (...) that leads to good language learning" (p. 12). Therefore, it seems worth exploring the 'Good Language Learner' issue further by focusing on particular individual learner factors which, as the studies presented in Part I. and many other pieces of research on the topic indicate, may influence the process and outcomes of second/foreign language learning. Obviously, the question that needs to be answered concerns the patterns, or combinations, of individual differences which may have an influence on language learners' ultimate success or failure. Another essential and practical question relates to how the teacher as a practitioner can make the best use of such knowledge, especially when he/she wants to learn from 'good' language learners and wishes to help his/her own learners move forward towards greater autonomy and self-regulation.

Learner motivation

It is common knowledge that 'good' or successful learners are motivated. In 1975 Rubin mentioned motivation as one of the essential factors on which good language learning seems to depend (p. 42). Since the early 1970s, and especially after the publication of Gardner and Lambert's 1972 work on motivation, the construct has been described and categorized mainly in terms of its intrinsic or extrinsic type and integrative or instrumental orientation; these and their combinations have been frequently examined in relation to learner success or failure in the classroom and beyond it. The common conclusion drawn from the studies so far is that the learner's motivation and positive attitudes correlate with success in language learning. Moreover, it seems that learner motivation must be intrinsic rather than extrinsic; in other words, it must come from the learner who learns in order to satisfy his/her own self-perceived needs and achieve self-set goals rather than originate from external sources (e.g. the teacher), especially where long-term effects are taken into consideration (cf. Maslow 1970; Dornyei 1998, 2005; Ushioda 2008). In fact, Gardner and Lambert's (1972) study showed that integrativeness correlated with higher results on foreign language proficiency tests and was, therefore, related to learning success. However, other studies indicated that the learner's instrumental purposes could also lead to success (e.g. Lukmani 1972; Kachru 1977, 1992, cited in Brown 2007), which was later confirmed by Gardner and his associates as well. In fact, the two orientations do not appear to exclude each other and each of them may contribute to

some learners' success if the context of learning is conducive.

As Ushioda (2008) notices, there is another vital factor which may help to maintain learner motivation, namely "learners must see themselves as agents of the processes that shape their motivation" (p. 30), or as "agents of their own thinking" (p. 28); then, they can feel in control and develop skills and strategies necessary to regulate their own motivation. Dorneyi (2005) adds that helping learners to develop self-regulation in learning must involve fostering their cognitive and metacognitive as well as motivational self-regulation. Thus, as Ushioda (2008) further explains, promoting learner- instead of teacher-regulated motivation (i.e. motivation from within) must include encouraging learners to set their own goals and objectives, analyze and understand their own needs, seek to satisfy their own interests, and foster self-determination. As experts tend to agree, this means giving learners more autonomy in the language classroom and beyond it by involving them in informed decision-making which concerns their own learning; in this way, the teacher may help students learn to learn and gradually take charge of their own language learning (Chamot et al. 1999; Komorowska 2005; Dornyei 2005; Oxford 1990, 2011). Last but not least, incorporating cooperative and collaborative learning (e.g. project work), where learners in pairs or groups strive for accomplishing a common goal, can strengthen their "cognitive and motivational interdependence" and "a sense of shared responsibility" (Ushioda 2008, p. 28), especially if strategically well-prepared teachers can skillfully help learners learn to think about their own thinking and learning, monitor, reflect on, and evaluate their progress and learning outcomes.

Personality factors

In her study, Ehrman (2008) focuses on those students who may be listed among not just 'good' language learners, but the best, or the GLL elite whose target language proficiency can be described as 'distinguished' or 'near-native'. They are learners with "almost no limitations on the ability of the individual to use the language, including control of multiple registers, fine lexical distinctions, and pragmatic skill close to native" (p. 61). The researcher tries to answer the question of what characterizes those high achievers. Among the individual factors which may influence their learning success she mentions motivation, aptitude, cognitive styles, mother tongue background, and she focuses in particular on exploring the learners' personality to see what pedagogical implications personality studies in SLA may have for second/foreign language teaching and learning. In fact, personality can defined as "a person's enduring, unique qualities – the attitudes, feelings, and typical style of behaving that distinguish that individual as a person" and develop over time, partly as a result

of social interactions with other people (Seifert 1983, p. 108). Fontana (1981) further clarifies that the term covers also cognitive traits such as intelligence, thinking skills, and "a number of factors within learners that influence their ability to learn" (p. 131). Thus, as Dakowska (2005, p. 138) stresses, personality involves cognitive, affective, and social aspects.

In the SLA literature personality is often reported as one of the essential psychological constructs which may determine the language learner's success or failure. For example, Ehrman and Oxford (1995) emphasize that success may be associated with the following features of learner personality: "conceptual and random approach (intuition), questioning what one hears or reads (thinking), and flexibility (thin ego boundaries, especially external ones)" (p. 82). Naiman et al. (1978, 1996) and Ellis (2008) add that not only researchers and teachers, but also learners tend to perceive personality as a crucial factor in the process of language learning, since it can influence the learner's reactions to specific learning situations, affecting the process, its course, and ultimate results. Moreover, Ehrman and Oxford (1995) stress that personality may play "a major role in the usually unconscious choice of learning strategies" (p. 82), which has been confirmed in a number of studies; these show positive correlations between patterns of strategies activated by language learners and selected traits of their personality (see also Dąbrowska 2008). In fact, Oxford and Ehrman's (1995) research proves that some of the identified correlations appear to be quite strong; however, many questions in the area still remain unanswered and the issue needs further examination.

Using data obtained by the application of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Ehrman (2008) explores personality measured within Carl Jung's 1971 four dichotomous scales of extroversion-introversion, sensing-intuition, thinking-feeling, and judging-perceiving. These are combined to create sixteen four-letter personality types, or dispositions, which can be related to specific language learning achievements. Ehrman's research shows that introverted intuition is the combination prevailing among the elite achievers in her study. Introverts tend to focus on their inner worlds and internal experiences, feelings and concepts. Intuitive types concentrate on meanings, look for hidden patterns and relationships among different notions, accept changes, think about the future and do not necessarily need concrete experience to accept new information. As the expert explains, this result is "probably related to pattern recognition and analysis, receptivity to direct and indirect input, inferences, tolerance of ambiguity, orientation toward meaning, and sensitivity to universal aspects of language" which characterize this learner type (p. 69). The expert adds that thinking, which relies on logical consequences in making decisions and

drawing conclusions, appears to be another typical feature of top language learners. As she explains, it "seems to contribute sharpening tendencies that make possible the kinds of differentiation that promote precision of language" (p. 69), but only when combined with intuition. This combination of thinking and intuition is often related to strategic thinking, preferences for metacognitive strategies activation (e.g. goal-setting, self-assessment, self-monitoring) and an interest in intellectual and analytic mastery of the world. In language learning, it is connected with lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic precision. Finally, judging is the last element in the four-letter personality type prevailing among the high achievers in Ehrman's (2008) study. It is related to those learners' preferences for coming to closure quickly and desire for order and predictability.

Even though Ehrman's (2008) study suggests that high achieving learners tend to have the INTJ (introversion-intuition-thinking-judging) personalities, the researcher rightly states that statistics cannot pre-determine ultimate levels of individual attainment. They can only show certain directions and help to decide what forms of teacher assistance particular learners may need. For example, respecting learners' natural preferences and personalities, the teacher may not insist on introverts' participation in classroom group work activities or tasks which require extraverted inclinations. Thus, the teacher may try to vary classroom work to suit different personality types. However, he/she may also teach and encourage learners to activate the strategies of guessing and extracting meaning on the basis of contextual clues in order to help them develop intuition, analyze language information to strengthen thinking, or use a range of metacognitive strategies (e.g. plan and prepare for learning, order learning activities) to increase judging. Still, motivation seems to be the key to language learning success since, as Ehrman (2008) notes, "motivated individuals can become good language learners whatever their personalities" (p. 70). Interestingly, the top achieving learners in Ehrman's study were both men and women (in roughly equal numbers); they learned varied languages (e.g. Hebrew, Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, German, Italian, Russian) and studied the languages in their adulthood, while their average age was 38.4 (with standard deviation of 11 years).

The learner's age

Generally, research on the learner's age as a factor influencing the process of second/foreign language learning still provides conflicting evidence as to the younger-is-better notion. Many studies conducted so far have indicated that the younger the subjects are when they begin to learn a second/foreign language, the more likely they are to attain higher levels of proficiency, or even develop native-like proficiency, which relates to pronunciation in particular (see, for example, Brown 2007 or Ellis 2008 for a review of the studies). Research has also shown that younger learners tend to be better in the long run, even though adolescents and adults may have an initial advantage of learning more quickly (Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle 1978, cited in Ellis 2008). In fact, as Griffiths (2008a) stresses, there is substantial research-based evidence for children's superiority and "the advantages of an early start to language development" (p. 36). Moreover, a number of explanations have been offered to support the claims concerning age-related differences and their role in L2 learning, for example, maturational/biological and neurological considerations, the Critical/Sensitive Period Hypothesis, hemispheric lateralization, the process of myelination in the brain; cognitive, socio-affective, situational and teaching factors, in addition to an almost limitless number of individual differences which may influence the language learning process as well (cf. Ellis 2000; Steinberg, Sciarini 2006; Brown 2007; Ellis 2008; Griffiths 2008a; Littlewood 2008; Lightbown, Spada 2013).

Research shows that age (and age-related factors such as the stage of the learner's cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development) is a variable that determines learner abilities to deal with different aspects of language learning, since it also has its impact on learner choice and patterns of strategy use. Generally, all learners, irrespective of their age, seem to activate certain strategies to complete the assigned tasks. However, they do this differently and employ different strategies; for example, younger learners tend to apply strategies locally and therefore they often read word by word, while older students utilize global strategies more frequently, thus they look at the text as a whole. Obviously, with age, learners build their experience and develop wider repertoires of strategies for language learning and use; however, there seems to be a natural order of strategy emergence (Ellis 2008). For example, Chesterfield and Chesterfield (1985) prove that receptive and self-contained strategies which do not require social interaction (e.g. memorization, using formulas, repetition) prevail at the beginning stages of language learning. Szulc-Kurpaska (2001) also confirms that children often resort to "overgeneralization, incorporation, simplification, imitation, transfer and the use of prefabricated patterns" (p. 40), as well as activate self-talk, use formulaic expressions, appeal for assistance, switch to the mother tongue, and overlearn (pp. 99-100). With age and language advancement, more interaction-oriented strategies emerge, which allows learners to initiate and maintain conversations; thus, they begin to use verbal attention getting, appeal for assistance, asking for clarification, or role-playing. Arabski (1984) adds that teenagers begin to generate grammatical rules, make

associations, and deal with tests using a widening range of testing techniques and tactics. In fact, the appearance of complex processing-based strategies, elaboration, monitoring, guessing grounded in metalinguistic knowledge, and strategies showing learner awareness of grammatical errors indicates the learner's growing metacognitive awareness, as well as more flexible, more generalized, and more sophisticated activation of more varied types of learning strategies, which they learn in order to better adjust to the context of learning (cf. Chesterfield, Chesterfield 1985; Dakowska 2005).

Undoubtedly, the above presented research results must be carefully considered when planning lessons which integrate language learning with learner strategy training designed for different age groups, since the teacher needs to incorporate effective and age-appropriate strategies for language learning and use. The case studies described by Griffiths (2008a) prove that older learners (i.e. over sixty years old) can also be or become 'good' language learners who utilize a number of efficient personal strategies; obviously, this is closely related to, and dependent on, their determination, motivation and attitudes, personal goals, and active strategy repertoires. Also, as Griffiths (2008a, p. 47) stresses, language teaching methods, and consequently strategy teaching and learning procedures, need to be designed and applied appropriately and flexibly, taking into consideration a number of issues, among which the learner's age and age-related needs play a key role. Last but not least, we must remember that, as Sternberg (1995) clarifies, age seems to affect the development of the learner's thinking and learning styles, and numerous research studies indicate that learning styles and strategies are closely interrelated (Oxford 1989, 1990; Cohen 1998, 2010; Ehrman, Leaver 2003; Chamot 2004; Cohen, Macaro 2007; Oxford 2011). This appears to explain why adolescents and adults may use a significantly wider repertoire of strategies of all types, that is, memory, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies which are not yet accessible to young learners. Moreover, as research shows, older learners can use their strategies more flexibly, in response to the requirements of particular language learning tasks, and combine these strategies into effective strategy clusters (Brown 2007; Chamot 2004; Oxford 1990, 2011).

Learner styles

It must be noted that over the last four decades the term 'learner styles' has been understood, conceptualized and defined in a variety of ways. Generally, the notion refers to different ways in which learners process information they receive from the environment. Messick (1976, cited in Child 1986, p. 262) further explains that 'cognitive styles' are "consistent individual differences in (...) ways of organizing and processing information and experience (...) conceptualized as *stable attitudes, preferences or habitual strategies determining a person's typical modes of perceiving, remembering, thinking and problem solving*". Ausubel (1968) adds that this term "refers to both – individual differences in general principles of cognitive organization, and to various self-consistent idiosyncratic tendencies (...) that are not reflective of human cognitive functioning in general" (p. 170). Brown (2000) clarifies that the styles identified so far cover "sensory, communicative, cultural, affective, cognitive, and intellectual" factors and stresses that within educational contexts, where physiological, cognitive, and affective factors play a combined role, cognitive styles can be called 'learning styles'; then, they "mediate between emotion and cognition" and indicate how learners react to and interact with the learning situation or typify the learner's predispositions for individually relevant information processing (p. 114; cf. Skehan 1991, p. 288).

Furthermore, styles also constitute part of the area of personality studies and as Ehrman, Leaver and Oxford (2003, p. 314) note, learning styles are often referred to as 'personality types', 'sensory preferences', and learner 'modality'. In fact, Christison (2003, p. 270) in her *Learning Style Taxonomy for the L2 Classroom*, proposes three categories of learning styles. First, cognitive styles (i.e. field independent/dependent; analytic/global; reflective/impulsive). Second, sensory styles (i.e. perceptual: visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic; and environmental: physical, sociological). Third, personality styles (i.e. tolerance of ambiguity, right and left hemisphere dominance). Thus, all learners can be characterized in terms of cognitive, sensory, and personality types of learning styles; however, as she adds, there is still no single, exhaustive taxonomy of learning styles (pp. 270-271).

In fact, out of all the types of style identified in psychology, only a small number play a vital role in second/foreign language learning. Brown (2000, p. 114) stresses the role of such polarities as field independence/dependence or reflectivity/impulsivity, and discusses the influence of left-/right-brain-hemisphere dominance and tolerance of ambiguity. The literature also mentions other preferences, for example, divergent vs. convergent, holist vs. serialist, global vs. analytical, organizer vs. non-organizer or leveler vs. sharpener divisions (Nel 2008, p. 50). Still, Reid's (1987) visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and tactile perceptual style preferences, combined with group and individual learning styles, seem to be the most commonly referred to in educational settings. In fact, Sternberg (1995), who stresses that a "style is a way of thinking" which determines "how we use the abilities we have", rightly notes that "we do not have *a* style, but rather a *profile* of styles" (p. 266), which most successful learners fit to the situation and task in hand. Reid (1987) also notes that "the ability of

students to employ multiple learning styles results in greater classroom success" (p. 101) and stresses that although learner styles are considered to be relatively stable individual characteristics, they constitute "moderately strong habits", and not "intractable biological attributes" (p. 100), which has been confirmed by many studies so far. Therefore, Reid, like many other experts, suggests that learners need to be able to modify and extend their learning preferences. Thus, on the one hand, students should be allowed to learn in the ways compatible with their individual learning styles in the classroom and beyond it. On the other hand, they must also be encouraged to go beyond their stylistic comfort zone and try to stretch their learning preferences. Chapelle and Roberts (1986) confirm that successful learners tend to be flexible and capable of adapting their learning style depending on the requirements of a given task, while less competent learners seem to lack this essential flexibility (cf. Nel 2008).

Numerous research studies discussed in the SLA literature indicate that some styles seem to be characteristic of 'good' language learners. For example, field independence has been frequently positively and significantly correlated with learner success in different types of tasks, especially in classroom settings (for a review of the studies see, for example, Brown 2007, Ellis 2008, Dąbrowska 2010). However, it seems that Nel (2008) is right when she notices: "the dynamic nature of the individual learners and continuously changing contextual factors make the compilation of a generic stylistic profile of the good language learner impossible" (p. 53). Therefore, teachers are advised to design classroom L2 learning tasks taking into consideration learners' individual style profiles, and in this way help them maximize their learning potential. On the one hand, being aware of differing ways in which students learn most effectively allows for adapting tasks to suit particular learner preferences; on the other hand, as noted above, it necessitates stimulating learners to try out new solutions. Thus, accommodating different learning styles requires teachers' flexibility and capability to: vary their own teaching styles; select and apply a variety of teaching materials and aids; use varied teaching methods and techniques; differentiate testing and assessment tools; adapt the learning environment to suit various learner needs, instructional, personality-related and information processing preferences; and raise learner self-awareness (Nel 2008, pp. 54-57; cf. Chamot et al. 1999; Ehrman, Leaver 2003; Komorowska 2005; Brown 2007; Hedge 2008).

Learning strategies

Learner styles, or typical, consistent and rather enduring manners, tendencies or preferences in which a person does something are often related in the literature to the learner's personality traits, affective states, motivation, and favoured thinking strategies which are employed when a person approaches problem-solving tasks (Child 1986, Brown 2007). As mentioned earlier, in 1975 Stern included "a personal learning style or positive learning strategies" (p. 316) among the GLL action plans; this reflects definitional confusion related to the concepts of 'style' and 'strategy' still present today. Nevertheless, Griffiths (2008b, p. 85) aptly explains that "Learning style is a learner characteristic which relates to learner preferences, the strategies are what they do." Thus, what seems to differentiate learning styles from strategies is the focus on learner activity or activities, both physical and mental behaviours. In 1990 Oxford proposed a functional definition and her own taxonomy of learning strategies understood as "operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information" which 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" (p. 8). In 2002 Hsiao and Oxford added 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" (p. 372). In 2011 Oxford proposed her new *Strategic Self-Regulation (S^2R) Model* of language learning within which she broadly presented 'self-regulated L2 learning strategies' as "goal-directed attempts to manage and control efforts to learn the L2" (p. 12). In fact, strategy research conducted for over forty years now shows that experts tend to agree that L2 learning strategies are activated by learners to control or regulate their learning (Wenden 1991; Dornyei 2005; Cohen, Macaro 2007; Oxford 2011). Thus, as Griffiths (2008b, p. 87) states, learning strategies can be concisely defined as "Activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning." She also stresses that they are aimed at learning.

It seems worth noting that in Griffiths' (2008b, pp. 91-92) study, the 'good' language learners frequently employed numerous and varied language learning strategies, among which they activated in particular: (1) a large number of metacognitive strategies needed to manage their learning (e.g. they organized themselves to do homework, chose to learn in environments where the target language was spoken, kept a language learning notebook, learned from their mistakes, and invested a lot of time in learning), (2) vocabulary-expanding strategies, of which importance they seemed to be highly aware, (3) strategies aimed at improving their knowledge of grammar, (4) strategies of using different resources, including human resources (e.g. consulting the teacher, speaking with others in English, using dictionaries, watching TV, going to movies, listening to songs and native speakers talking), and (5) strategies which involved the

four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Interestingly, those 'good' learners tended to use games as a strategy for L2 learning infrequently; similarly, they did not often resort to the strategies of using a self-study centre, writing a diary, and listening to music while studying. The less competent learners, on the other hand, reported reading books and newspapers, and writing letters infrequently. In fact, teachers might find it useful to consider such individual-differences-related findings and their implications for their own teaching practice. They may also think of conducting their own action research aimed at exploring their learners' strategy preferences and patterns of strategy use, and if needed, teach learners to employ (more) strategies (more) frequently and do this (more) effectively.

Many strategy researchers and educators emphasize that learners can learn to use different types of strategies and expand their strategy repertoires, which is closely related to the idea of language learning strategy training, also known as 'learning to learn instruction', 'strategies-based instruction' (SBI), or styles-and-strategies-based instruction (SSBI) (Cohen 1998; Chamot et al. 1999, Chamot 2004; Brown 2007; Cohen, Macaro 2007; Oxford 2011). Experts also tend to stress that in order to learn and become able to activate appropriate or successful learning strategies, suitable in particular language learning contexts and well-adjusted to particular learning tasks, learners need to develop the necessary metacognitive awareness, or understanding of the value of varied learning strategies. This, as Chamot (2004, p. 21) clarifies, necessitates explicit training, which involves strategy demonstration, naming, and modelling by the teacher as well as frequent and multiple strategy practise opportunities until learners begin to use the new strategies autonomously and start transferring them to new learning contexts and language learning tasks. It is also essential for learners to learn how to select strategies which are suitable for a given task, monitor their own strategy use, and evaluate the effectiveness of personal strategy application with particular learning tasks.

The task of developing learners' metacognitive awareness means teaching them to think about their own thinking and learning, focusing on how they think and learn, or in other words fostering their strategic thinking, reflection, and self-reflection (cf. O'Malley, Chamot 1990; Chamot et al 1999; Brown 2007; Oxford 1990, 2011). Anderson (2008) further explains that metacognition is related to "the ability to reflect on what is known", which does not only mean thinking of and describing past events and emotions which they evoked. In fact, as he adds, metacognition leads to "critical but healthy reflection and evaluation of thinking", the result of which is taking specific action in order to manage or change the management of one's own learning, and choosing appropriate strategies in order to do so (p.

99). Thus, it empowers learners to consciously decide how to enhance their own learning and, therefore, seems essential if one wishes to understand 'good' language learners' success and behaviour.

At this point it seems worth noting that Anderson (2008) presents metacognition in language learning as consisting of five overlapping elements: (1) preparing and planning for learning, (2) selecting and using strategies, (3) monitoring learning, (4) orchestrating strategies, and (5) evaluating learning (pp. 99-100); he also takes 'telescopic', 'microscopic', and 'kaleidoscopic' views of the concept. The first one is an overall approach to the five components of metacognition; the second one demonstrates how they work in different classrooms across the world; the last one shows the interactive, non-linear and dynamic nature of metacognition which can help both teachers and learners facilitate language learning.

As far as the first element within the first perspective is concerned, the author emphasizes that the strategy of activating background, or prior, knowledge in order to prepare for and plan efficient learning seems crucial for language learning success. Thus, if learners lack the knowledge needed to do a specific L2 learning task, it is necessary to build it first, and help students learn how to do it on their own as well. Moreover, metacognition involves the knowledge of which strategies to select, when and how to use them to complete a specific L2 learning task and achieve one's learning goals. As reported by Vann and Abraham (1990) and discussed in the first article in this series (Part I.), poor learners often seem unable to choose and apply adequate strategies needed in a particular learning situation; in fact, this task requires active thinking about one's own thinking and conscious strategic decision-making, which less able learners appear to lack. This also implies being familiar with a full range of strategies available to L2 learners, which in turn often calls for explicit strategy training and multiple opportunities to experiment with various strategies in the classroom and beyond it. In addition to this, as Rubin (1975) notes, 'good' language learners utilize monitoring skills which allow them to control their learning, stop if they do not understand and look for new means of overcoming their learning problems. These skills, as many experts recommend, may be developed in less competent learners with the use of language learning diaries or journals and think aloud protocols (cf. Oxford 1990, 2011; Chamot et al. 1999; Anderson 2008).

Furthermore, Oxford (1990, 2011) emphasizes that the direct and indirect learning strategies in her taxonomy do not constitute entirely separate entities, but support each other; similarly, her strategy groups and particular strategies within them can also assist one another. Thus, strategies are often used in clusters rather than in isolation. Research shows that 'good', or metacognitively aware, learners are able to skillfully orchestrate

strategies they employ to achieve particular learning objectives. Successful development of such skills can be assisted with the use of surveys or questionnaires, and other forms of conscious training with multiple opportunities for practice. Last but not least, 'good' learners engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation; they assess their progress and learning outcomes, and think of "the efficacy of what they are doing", which is what poorer students tend not to do (Anderson 2008, p. 101). Thus, less successful learners may need help if they are to develop these vital metacognitive skills. This can be achieved by systematic engagement in varied forms of self-assessment, instructional videos, or regular conversations with the teacher and other learners, in the context of specific language learning tasks, where teachers and learners can share individual experiences of successful and unsuccessful strategy use. Strategy researchers and strategy training experts recommend also language learning journals as a useful tool for reflection, self-reflection and self-evaluation (Wenden 1991, 1998; Anderson 2008; Oxford 1990, 2011).

Language aptitude

Finally, it seems worth considering the issue of 'good' language learners and language aptitude. In her paper, Rubin (1975) enumerates the learner's aptitude as one of the three variables (the other two are motivation and learning opportunities) which may explain why different learners achieve differing learning results. Brown (2000, p. 98) calls aptitude a "knack" for learning languages. Ellis (2008, p. 652), similarly to Skehan (1989), defines aptitude as a "special ability for learning an L2". The researcher explains that the construct consists of "a number of distinct abilities including auditory ability, linguistic ability, and memory ability" and must be viewed as "a composite of general and specific abilities" (p. 652). In Carroll and Sapon's 1958 Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) and Carroll's traditional model there are four components of aptitude: phonetic coding ability, rote memory, grammatical sensitivity, and inductive language learning ability. These are seen as determining the learner's success or failure in the language learning venture. With the development of cognitive psychology and information processing theory working memory has been shown as the most important component of aptitude (McLaughlin 1995), and thus the most relevant predictor of learner success. It seems, however, that Skehan's (1989) explanation, based on Carroll's ideas, allows teachers to understand how to use information about aptitude in order to accommodate learners with different aptitude-related strengths and weaknesses, and not to exclude low aptitude students. The idea that learners can be strong, weak, or average in relation to different components of their individual aptitude-based profiles, means that, in practice, different types of

instruction might be introduced to help different learners (who may be memory-oriented or analysis-oriented) learn more effectively. For teachers, especially in learner-centred and communicative classrooms, this means the need for adjusting L2 instruction to accommodate different learners' aptitude profiles, helping students build on their strengths, cope with and overcome limitations. This may be done by implementing task-based learning and individualizing the learning process through group and pair work, and individualized instruction tailored to particular learners' needs (for examples of how to instruct learners with varying aptitude profiles, see Ranta 2008, pp. 147-148).

A review of these and other studies of the GLL and strategy-related issues shows that the learner's motivation, attitudes, age, personality type, cognitive/learning styles, general intelligence and language aptitude, degree of awareness and self-awareness, metacognition, national origin, gender, career orientation, as well as task requirements, the context of teaching and learning, duration of language study, the language being learned and the degree of its similarity to the mother tongue, the frequency of contacts with the target language and its users, and teaching techniques are among the essential factors which may influence the process of second/foreign language learning and its results (see, for example, Rubin 1975; Bialystok 1981; Politzer 1983; Ehrman, Oxford 1989, 1990a, 1990b; Oxford 1990, 2011; Szałek 1992; Oxford, Ehrman 1995; Cohen 1998, 2010; Ehrman, Leaver, Oxford 2003; Chamot 2004; Cohen, Macaro 2007; Ellis 2008). Moreover, it has been shown that the learner's purpose for learning the L2 (Oxford 1990) and learners' beliefs about language and their own learning are critical in the language learning process, strategy choice and strategy use (e.g. Horwitz 1987; Nyikos, Oxford 1993). Also, learner pre-existing assumptions may influence the use of strategies related to focus on form, learning management, focus on meaning, and mother-tongue avoidance strongly, consistently, and directly, as Wen and Johnson (1997) emphasize. Last but not least, discussing systematic relationships between individual differences and one's predispositions to select strategies, Skehan (1989) adds that it is integrative motivation that seems to correlate with higher frequencies of strategy activation, and that certain aptitude features can govern the kinds of metacognitive and cognitive strategies activated by different types of learners (e.g. use of memorization techniques by memory-dependent learners or deductive thinking and inferencing by more analytic students).

Conclusion

In this article (Part II.), the author focused on selected individual factors, strategies, and behaviours which characterize 'good' language learners and discussed practical implications of

a number of GLL- and strategy-related research findings for second/foreign language teaching and learning. She made an attempt to present what both teachers and learners can learn from those who succeed in the complex task of second/foreign language learning. Among the solutions proposed so far directed strategy training, Strategies-Based Instruction (SBI) and Styles-and-Strategies-Based Instruction (SSBI) seem to constitute useful ways of helping less successful learners learn to learn more effectively and enhance language learning outcomes through (more) appropriate use of (more) adequate learning strategies.

At this point, it needs to be re-emphasized that, as numerous studies show, 'good' language learners seem to be capable of selecting appropriate strategies and using them properly in a given situation, in response to their own learning preferences and particular task requirements. Studies devoted to success in L2 learning so far prove beyond any doubt that language learning outcomes do not depend on the impact of a single factor; as many experts stress,

it is always a combination of interrelated variables that determine the ultimate effectiveness, or success, of learning (Komorowska 1978; Zybert 2000, 2006; Ellis 2008; Lightbown, Spada 2013). Still, as Wolski (1997) notes, "strategies can be recognized as the main factors conditioning changes in interlanguage, and therefore [determining] the effectiveness of foreign language learning" (p. 144, the author's own translation; cf. Dakowska 2001, p. 114). Obviously, more conclusive evidence needs to be gathered on the topic and this complex issue requires further examination. As Griffiths (2008b) rightly states, "Individuals are infinitely variable, and any attempt at a one-rule-for-all type conclusion is unlikely to be universally applicable" (p. 95). Therefore, more research is needed into the issue of 'good' language learners.

In the following article (Part III.), the author will present and discuss the results of her own two empirical studies of 'good' and 'less successful' language learners' traits, learning preferences, and patterns of strategy use.

References:

1. Anderson N. J. (2008), Metacognition and good language learners. In: Griffiths C. (Ed.) *Lessons from Good Language Learners.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 99-109.
2. Arabski J. (1984), The Role of Age in Second / Foreign Language Acquisition. *Glottodidactica,* Vol. XVII: 65-71. PL ISSN 0072-4769. Adam Mickiewicz University Press, Poznań.
3. Ausubel D. (1968), *Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View.* Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York.
4. Bialystok E. (1981), The role of conscious strategies in second language proficiency. *The Modern Language Journal, 65*(1), pp. 24-35.
5. Brown H. D. (2000), *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching.* 4th ed. Pearson Education, Longman, White Plains, NY.
6. Brown H. D. (2007), *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching.* 5th ed. Pearson Education, Longman, White Plains, NY.
7. Carroll J. B., Sapon S. (1958), *The Modern Language Aptitude Test – Form A.* The Psychological Corporation, New York.
8. Chamot A. U. (2004), Issues in Language Learning Strategy Research and Teaching. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 1(1), pp. 14-26, http://www.google.pl/webhp?nord=1&gws_rd=cr&ei=DRtGVe2AEqSxygP6rIEQ#nord=1&q=e-flt.nus.edu.sg%2Fv1n12004%2Fchamot.pdf (14 May 2015).
9. Chamot A. U., Barnhardt S., El-Dinary P.B., Robbins J. (1999), *The Learning Strategies Handbook.* Addison Wesley Longman, White Plains, NY.
10. Chapelle C., Roberts C. (1986), Ambiguity tolerance and field independence as predictors of proficiency in English as a second language. *Language Learning 36*, pp. 27-45.
11. Chesterfield R., Chesterfield K. B. (1985), Natural order in children's use of second language learning strategies. *Applied Linguistics 6*, pp. 45-59.
12. Child D. (1986), *Psychology and the Teacher.* Villiers House, Cassell Educational.
13. Christison M. A. (2003), Learning styles and strategies. In: Nunan D. (ed.), *Practical English Language Teaching.* McGraw Hill, New York, pp. 267-285.
14. Cohen, A. D. (1998). *Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language.* Addison Wesley Longman, New York.
15. Cohen A. D. (2010), Focus on the Language Learner: Styles, Strategies and Motivation. In: N. Schmitt (Ed.), *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics.* (2nd ed.). Hodder Education, London, pp. 161-178.
16. Cohen A. D., Macaro E. (Eds.) (2007), *Language Learner Strategies: Thirty Years of Research and Practice.* Oxford University Press, Oxford.
17. Dakowska M. (2001), *Psycholingwistyczne podstawy dydaktyki języków obcych.* Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
18. Dakowska M. (2005), *Teaching English as a Foreign Language. A Guide for Professionals.* Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.

19. Dąbrowska M. (2008), *Strategies of Foreign Language Learning and Use: the Educational Value of Strategy Training in Teaching English to Adult Learners.* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation written under the supervision of Professor Hanna Komorowska. Warsaw University, The Institute of English Studies, Warsaw.
20. Dąbrowska, M. (2010), The Role of Individual Differences in Learner Activation of Language Learning Strategies. Part II. Cognitive/Learning Styles: An Overview of the Research. In: *Rozprawy społeczne*. Biała Podlaska, Państwowa Szkoła Wyższa im. Papieża Jana Pawła II w Białej Podlaskiej, Nr I (IV), pp. 100-108.
21. Dornyei Z. (1998), Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language Teaching 31*, pp. 117-135.
22. Dornyei Z. (2005), *The Psychology of the Language Learner: Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, New Jersey.
23. Droździał-Szelest K. (1997), *Language Learning Strategies in the Process of Acquiring a Foreign Language.* MOTIVEX, Poznań.
24. Ehrman M. (2008), Personality and good language learners. In: Griffiths C. (Ed.) *Lessons from Good Language Learners.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 61-72.
25. Ehrman M., Oxford R. L. (1989), Effects of sex differences, career choice, and psychological type on adult language learning strategies. *The Modern Language Journal, 73*(1), pp. 1-13.
26. Ehrman M., Oxford R. L. (1990a), Adult language learning styles and strategies in an intensive training setting. *Modern Language Journal 74*(3):311-327.
27. Ehrman M., Oxford R. L. (1990b), Effects of sex differences, career choice, and psychological type on adults' language learning strategies. *Modern Language Journal 73*, pp. 1-13.
28. Ehrman M., Oxford R. L. (1995), Cognition plus: Correlates of adult language proficiency. *Modern Language Journal 79*, pp. 67-89.
29. Ehrman M., Leaver B. L. (2003), Cognitive styles in the service of language learning. *System 31*, pp. 393-415.
30. Ehrman M., Leaver B. L., Oxford R. L. (2003), A brief overview of individual differences in second language learning. *System 31*, pp. 313-330.
31. Ellis R. (2000), *Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford University Press, Oxford.
32. Ellis R. (2008), *The Study of Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford University Press, Oxford.
33. Fontana D. (1981), *Psychology for Teachers.* (2nd ed.). The British Psychological Society, Leicester.
34. Gardner R. C., Lambert W. E. (1972), *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning.* Newbury House, Rowley, MA.
35. Griffiths C. (Ed.) (2008). *Lessons from Good Language Learners.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
36. Griffiths C. (2008a), Age and good language learners. In: Griffiths C. (Ed.) *Lessons from Good Language Learners.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 35-48.
37. Griffiths C. (2008b), Strategies and good language learners. In: Griffiths C. (Ed.) *Lessons from Good Language Learners.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 83-98.
38. Hedge T. (2008), *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom.* Oxford University Press, London.
39. Horwitz E. K. (1987), Surveying students' beliefs about language learning. In: A. L. Wenden, J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner Strategies in Language Learning.* Prentice Hall, Cambridge, pp. 119-129.
40. Hsiao T. Y., Oxford R. L. (2002), Comparing Theories of Language Learning Strategies: A Confirmatory Factor Analysis. *The Modern Language Journal, 86*, pp. 368-383.
41. Komorowska H. (1978), *Sukces i niepowodzenie w nauce języka obcego.* Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warszawa.
42. Komorowska H. (2005), *Metodyka nauczania języków obcych*. Fraszka Edukacyjna, Warszawa.
43. Lightbown P. M., Spada N. (2013), *How Languages are Learned*. 4th ed. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
44. Littlewood W. (2008), *Foreign and Second Language Learning: language acquisition research and its implications for the classroom.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
45. Maslow A. (1970), *Motivation and Personality.* Harper & Row, New York.
46. McLaughlin B. (1995), Aptitude from an information-processing perspective. *Language Testing*, 12, pp. 370-387.
47. Naiman N., Frohlich M., Stern H. H., Todesco A. (1978, 1996), *The Good Language Learner*. Modern Languages in Practice: 4. Multilingual Matters, The Ontario Institute For Studies in Education.
48. Nel C. (2008), Learning style and good language learners. In: Griffiths C. (Ed.) *Lessons from Good Language Learners.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 49-60.
49. Nyikos M., Oxford R. L. (1993), A Factor Analytic Study of Language-Learning Strategy Use. Interpretations from Information-Processing Theory and Social Psychology. *The Modern Language Journal* 77(1), pp. 11-22.
50. O'Malley J. M., Chamot A. U. (1990), *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
51. Oxford R. L. (1989), Use of language learning strategies: a synthesis of studies with implications for strategy   training. *System, 17*(2), pp. 235-247.

52. Oxford R. L. (1990), *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know.* Heinle and Heinle Publishers, Boston.
53. Oxford R. L. (2001), Language Learning Styles and Strategies. In: M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language.* Heinle & Heinle, Boston, MA, pp. 359-366.
54. Oxford R. L. (2002), *Language Learning Strategies in a Nutshell: Update and ESL Suggestions.* In: J. C. Richards, W. A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in Language Teaching.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 124-132.
55. Oxford R. L. (2011), *Teaching and Researching Language Learning Strategies.* Longman, Pearson Education, Harlow.
56. Oxford R. L., Ehrman, M. (1995), Adults' Language Learning Strategies in an Intensive Foreign Language Programme in the United States. *System 23*(3), pp. 359-386.
57. Politzer R. L. (1983), An exploratory study of self-reported language learning behaviours and their relation to achievement. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition 6*(1), pp. 54-65.
58. Ranta L. (2008), Aptitude and good language learners. In: Griffiths C. (Ed.) *Lessons from Good Language Learners.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.142-155.
59. Reid J. M. (1987), The learning style preferences of ESL students. *TESOL Quarterly,* 21(1), pp. 87-111.
60. Rubin J. (1975), What 'the good language learner' can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly,* 9(1), pp. 41-51.
61. Rubin J. (2008), Reflections. In: Griffiths C. (Ed.) *Lessons from Good Language Learners.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 10-14.
62. Seifert K. (1983), *Educational Psychology.* Houghton Mifflin Company. – brak miejsca
63. Skehan P. (1989), *Individual Differences in Second Language Learning.* Edward Arnold, London.
64. Skehan P. (1991), Individual differences in second language learning. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 13*, pp. 275-298.
65. Steinberg D., Sciarini N. V. (2006), *An Introduction to Psycholinguistics.* Pearson Education, Harlow.
66. Sternberg R. (1995), Styles in thinking and learning. *Language Testing, 12*(3), pp. 265-300.
67. Szałek M. (1992), *Sposoby podnoszenia motywacji na lekcjach języka obcego.* Poznań: Art Print.
68. Szulc-Kurpaska M. (2001), *Foreign Language Acquisition in the Primary School. Teaching and Strategy Traning.* Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, Wrocła.
69. Ushioda E. (2008), Motivation and good language learners. In: Griffiths C. (Ed.) *Lessons from Good Language Learners.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 19-34.
70. Vann R. J., Abraham R. G. (1990), Strategies of unsuccessful language learners. *TESOL Quarterly,* 24(2), pp. 177-198.
71. Wen Q., Johnson R. K. (1997), L2 Learner Variables and English Achievement: A Study of Tertiary-level English Majors in China. *Applied Linguistics, 18*(1). March 1997, pp. 27-48.
72. Wenden, A. L. (1991), *Learner Strategies for Learner Autonomy.* Cambridge: Prentice Hall.
73. Wenden, A. L. (1998), Metacognitive Knowledge and Language Learning. *Applied Linguistics 19*(4), pp. 515-537.
74. Wolski P. (1997), Strategie uczenia się języków obcych w świetle koncepcji kognitywnej. In: Grucza F., Dakowska, M. (Eds.), *Podejścia kognitywne w lingwistyce, translatoryce i glottodydaktyce. Materiały z XX Sympozjum zorganizowanego przez Instytut Lingwistyki Stosowanej UW i Polskie Towarzystwo Lingwistyki Stosowanej, Grzegorzewice, 12-14 stycznia 1996 r.* Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa, pp. 143-147.
75. Zybert J. (2000), Strategie uczenia się języka obcego i nauczyciel. In: Komorowska, H. (Ed.). *Nauczanie języków obcych w zreformowanej szkole.* Warszawa: Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, pp. 143-151.
76. Zybert J. (Ed.). (2006), *Issues in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching.* Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.