

TEACHERS AS LEARNERS: LEARNING TO LEARN THROUGH STRATEGY TRAINING PART III. STRATEGY INSTRUCTION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

NAUCZYCIEL W ROLI UCZNIA: NAUCZYĆ SIĘ JAK SIĘ UCZYĆ POPRAZ TRENING STRATEGII CZĘŚĆ III. INSTRUKCJA STRATEGICZNA W KSZTAŁCENIU NAUCZYCIELI

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Summary

The main aim of this series of three articles is to stress the significance of implementing the learning to learn idea in pre-service teacher education and in the qualified teacher's career, and encourage educators and learners to develop personalized skills and strategies necessary for further, continued or lifelong learning. In Part I., the author presents formal qualifications, knowledge and skills second/foreign language teachers are expected to acquire in Polish and European teacher training institutions. In Part II., she discusses essential roles and tasks modern language teachers need to be able to perform with regard to strategy training and emphasizes the need for educating 'strategic' teachers able to foster learner self-regulated learning. In Part III., the author presents the results of her empirical studies aimed at helping teacher trainees learn to learn by expanding individualized strategy repertoires through explicit and implicit strategy training; she also discusses their pedagogical implications.

Keywords: learning to learn, learning strategies, communication strategies, strategy training, 'strategic' teacher education

Streszczenie

Niniejszy cykl trzech artykułów podkreśla znaczenie aktywnej realizacji idei uczenia się jak się uczyć w kształceniu i rozwoju zawodowym nauczycieli języków obcych, co wiąże się z potrzebą rozwijania umiejętności i strategii niezbędnych do uczenia się przez całe życie. W części I. autorka przedstawia formalne kwalifikacje, wiedzę i umiejętności, jakie nauczyciel języka obcego powinien zdobyć w polskich i europejskich instytucjach kształcących nauczycieli. W części II. omawia role i zadania współczesnego nauczyciela wynikające z realizacją postulatów integracji nauczania języka obcego i treningu strategii oraz podkreśla potrzebę kształcenia tzw. „strategicznego” nauczyciela. W części III. autorka prezentuje wyniki własnych badań empirycznych w zakresie eksplicitnego i implicytnego treningu strategii uczenia się i użycia języka obcego oraz omawia ich implikacje pedagogiczne.

Słowa kluczowe: nauczyć się jak się uczyć, strategie uczenia się, strategie komunikacji językowej, trening strategii, kształcenie „strategicznego” nauczyciela

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Introduction

The main aim of strategy training is to facilitate the highly complex task of second/foreign language learning by making the learner (more) aware of the existence of varied strategies for language learning and use. These, as many intervention studies confirm, can be taught and learned, and become available for conscious manipulation and use. Brown (1994, pp. 189-190) notices that “the persistent use of a whole host of strategies for language learning, whether the learner is in a regular language classroom or

working on a self-study program” is a vital element of ultimate language learning success and stresses that “often, successful learners have achieved their goals through conscious, systematic application of a battery of strategies.” In fact, learning strategy instruction covers not only the idea of raising learners' awareness of strategies, but also expanding their metacognition and building learner self-awareness. Thus, through training students can accomplish a variety of goals. They can gain insights into their approaches to L2 learning and use; develop a deeper understanding of their own

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learning processes; learn how to choose strategies relevant to particular tasks and learning aims; use them in the classroom, self-study, or workplace; select strategies specific to each of the four language skills; employ strategies for improving L2 learning memory; learn how to transfer the knowledge of language and communication from one language to another; develop good learning habits; use resources wisely; or deal with errors more effectively. In other words, they can learn how to self-regulate individual and independent language learning (cf. Rubin 1987; Oxford 1990, 2002, 2011; Cohen 1998, 2007; Grenfell and Macaro 2007).

In this article, the author presents three different strategy training schemes which she designed for future teachers of English as a foreign language and integrated into their formal teacher training programme. The projects comprise a long-term, recursive and explicit, or fully-informed, strategy training scheme, as well as partly informed and implicit training in which communication strategy instruction in particular was integrated or embedded in different tasks of language learning and language use. The results of the studies appear to have important pedagogical implications as to the desirability and advisability of devoting teacher and

student time and energy to designing, conducting, and participating in strategy training that is targeted at the needs of adult language learners at more advanced levels of language proficiency (i.e. CEFR levels: B2/C1), especially if they are planning to work as language teachers. Thus, they may be of help not only to language teachers working with adult foreign language learners, but, which seems equally essential, to language teacher trainers, and teacher trainees as well.

Strategy training for future language teachers: empirical studies

The first study the author wishes to present briefly in this article was a part of a larger, two-stage project conducted in the English Department of the Higher Vocational State School in Biała Podlaska. The project lasted a full academic year; it started in October 2003 and was completed in June 2004. The author's principal aim in designing this part of the project was to gain deeper insights into quantitative and qualitative aspects of adult foreign language learners' learning processes and strategy use, and investigate the effects of a purposeful, long-term and fully-informed strategy training scheme on learner

Table 1. The design of the whole two-stage study (EG – experimental group; CG – control group)

Stage	Aims of the research study	Instruments
Stage One (diagnostic)	<p>Primary aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to examine how adult language learners (level: B2/C1), characterized by unique sets of individual differences, approach the task of learning English by using Oxford's (1990) learning strategies in and out of the classroom; <p>Enabling aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to identify selected individual differences (i.e. personality traits, cognitive styles, left-/right-hemisphere dominance) and prepare the students' psychological profiles; to detect and examine the nature of the relationships between the identified affective and cognitive factors to identify categories of strategies of language learning and use employed by the students in the sample and analyze the frequencies of their strategy use; to examine the subjects' patterns (i.e. categories, types, and frequencies) of use of selected communication strategies to investigate the nature of the relationships between particular affective and cognitive factors and learner strategy preferences; to identify 'good language learners' and 'less successful' students in the sample, examine their individual characteristics and patterns of strategy use; to relate more and less successful language learning (operationalized as the learners' average school grades obtained in the four Practical English classes) to their individual differences, as well as patterns of strategy use; to diagnose learning difficulties in particular personality-trait- and cognitive-style-related subgroups in the sample. 	<p>Primary:</p> <p>formal structured surveys – mainly paper-and-pencil questionnaires of personality traits, cognitive and learning styles, left-/right-brain dominance; surveys and tests of learning strategies use and communication strategies use – adopted¹ from and prepared by the author on the basis of the literature of the topic² (e.g. Fontana 1981; Ellis 1985, 1994; Child 1986; Oxford 1990; Wenden 1991; Brown 1994; Tanner and Green 1998; Strelau 2001)</p> <p>Supportive:</p> <p>introspective and retrospective survey studies - mainly semi-structured and unstructured informal interviews; classroom observation of the subjects doing selected language tasks, observation and field notes gathered during whole-group discussions</p>

¹ The tools adopted from the literature on the topic included: *Extroversion/Introversion Test* (Brown 1994, p. 196), *Right/Left Brain Dominance Test* (Brown 1994, pp. 197-198), *Learning styles* (Tanner and Green 1998, p. 90), *Questionnaire for a good language learner* (Wenden 1991, pp. 122-123), *Self-evaluation questionnaire* (Oxford 1990, pp. 182-183), *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)* (Oxford 1990, pp. 293-300); *Instruments Used for Assessing Background Factors* (Abraham and Vann 1987, pp. 99-101).

² For the instruments prepared by the author and applied in the study see Dąbrowska (2008).

Stage	Aims of the research study	Instruments
<p>Stage Two (experimental)</p> <p>Structure: four parts, each skill-related and completed within a period of about two months</p>	<p>Primary aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to design and conduct long-term and fully-informed, strategy training for adult upper-intermediate/advanced (B2/C1) language learners of English (prospective teachers) in response to their immediate learning needs and current strategic behaviours, and • to investigate the effects of strategy training in terms of changes in learner patterns (i.e. categories and frequencies) of strategy use and alterations in beliefs and opinions about themselves, language, and language learning; <p>Enabling aims:</p> <p><u>prior to the training:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to examine and compare patterns (i.e. categories and frequencies) of strategy use by the two groups of students participating in the first stage of the project, in order to designate the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG) for the experiment; • to gather and investigate background data, that is, general information about the subjects, as well as their beliefs and opinions on language and language learning, in the experimental and control groups; <p><u>strategy training:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to identify currently underused and / or unknown strategies helpful in developing each of the four language skills (i.e. listening, reading, writing, and speaking, separately) in the experimental group (EG); • to train the experimental group students how, when, and why they could activate new and/or so far underestimated and/or underused strategies for language learning and use; • to observe changes in learner strategy use, beliefs, opinions and attitudes throughout the course of strategy training; <p><u>after the training:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to investigate the effects of a long-term and fully-informed strategy training scheme upon patterns (i.e. categories and frequencies) of the EG learners' strategy use, and compare them with the results collected in the control group (CG); • to examine the impacts of conscious strategy training upon the EG learners' beliefs, opinions, and attitudes, and compare them with the beliefs and opinions expressed by the control group of learners.³ 	<p>Primary:</p> <p>series of formal written questionnaires and checklists administered over the whole training period - based on selected tools, suggestions and activities proposed in the literature on the topic (e.g. Abraham and Vann 1987; Horwitz 1987; Wenden and Rubin 1987; Ellis and Sinclair 1989; Brown 1989, 1994; Oxford 1990; O'Malley and Chamot 1990; Wenden 1991; Arnold 1999; Chamot <i>et al.</i> 1999)⁴</p> <p>Supportive:</p> <p>introspective and retrospective survey studies - mainly semi-structured and unstructured informal interviews and learner self-evaluation questionnaires; classroom observation and notes collected regularly throughout the whole course of strategy training, and guided student diaries</p>

patterns of strategy employment. In this way, the author intended to explore the issue of trainability of adult learners in language learning strategies; thus, she wanted to examine the possibilities of conscious strategy development at more advanced levels of language proficiency and in pre-service teacher education in particular. The completely informed learning strategy training was the second part of the project, designed on the basis of the results obtained in the preceding diagnostic stage, which allowed the author to extend her knowledge of the subjects and helped to raise the students' self-awareness in terms of selected personality traits,

cognitive styles, learning strategies, and individual learning preferences. The design of the whole two-stage project, its aims and the research instruments administered in each of its parts are presented in Table 1 below (for the detailed description of the project and thorough presentation and discussion of the results obtained within each of its stages see Dąbrowska 2008).

The experiment integrated intensive and recursive strategy training into the teacher trainees' second-year *Methodology* and *Lesson Observation* programmes (altogether 120 hours) carried out in the institution till the academic year 2004/2005. The training was operationalized in the form of the *Learning to Learn* instruction organized primarily within the framework provided by Ellis and Sinclair (1989). Thus, the scheme was divided into four parts, each devoted to strategy training with a different language skill (i.e. listening, reading, writing, and speaking), and related to the students' regular *Practical English* work. The strategy training

³ The study also aimed at investigating the subjects' beliefs and opinions about, and attitudes towards, different aspects of second/foreign language learning and themselves as language learners, as well as exploring their changes under the influence of a long-term and fully-informed strategy training scheme conducted within the experimental stage; these, examined within Horwitz's (1987, pp. 127-128) five areas included in *The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)*, are not discussed in this article.

⁴ For *The Programme of the Training* and a detailed specification and presentation of the tools and tasks used in the project see Dąbrowska (2008).

itself was conducted in accordance with Oxford's (1990) suggestion of adopting eight training steps, which came after diagnosing the learners' current employment of learning strategies. The first five strategy training steps concerned *planning* and *general preparation*, and the following three steps focused on *conducting*, *evaluating*, and *revising* the training scheme. To conduct the training, the author applied a number of practical tools and tasks based on the hints and selected activities proposed by many experts in the field (see, for example, Abraham and Vann 1987; Wenden and Rubin 1987; Ellis and Sinclair 1989; O'Malley and Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990; Wenden 1991; Brown 1989, 1994; Chamot *et al.* 1999; Arnold 1999).

The subjects were 42 second-year English teacher trainees at the B2/C1 proficiency level. There were 34 females and 8 males at the ages of 20-35 formally divided into two groups, that is, 22 Polish students in the experimental group (EG) and 20 Polish students in the control group (CG). The groups were designated on the basis of calculations of central tendency scores related to the mean frequencies of their current strategy use. Applying this criterion, the author appointed the group with the lower mean frequency as the experimental one. The pre- and post-experiment patterns of strategy activation by both groups were investigated by administering Oxford's (1990, pp. 293-300) formal paper-and-pencil questionnaire *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)*. Other information necessary to conduct the training was collected with the use of a self-prepared background factors questionnaire, with selected items adopted from Abraham and Vann's (1987, pp. 99-101) *Instruments Used for Assessing Background Factors* as well as self-prepared and/or adapted checklists and semi-structured informal interviews, group discussions, learner self-revelatory techniques, language learning diaries, and teacher observation (see Table 1 above). The tools were also used in order to raise the subjects' learning strategy awareness and self-awareness as foreign language learners.

The author did not intend to overtly test strategy-related hypotheses but to pose a number of research questions related to the subjects' patterns of strategy use, correlations that might exist between learner strategy preferences and selected individual traits, and strategy changes that might occur at more advanced levels of language proficiency as a result of intentional, conscious training. To begin with, the results of the research showed that the pre-experiment patterns (i.e. categories and frequencies) of strategy use by the control group (CG) and the experimental group (EG) differed slightly; the EG mean frequency of strategy use was 3.13 and the CG overall average score was 3.18. In fact, the *t*-test proved that the differences were not statistically significant. The *SILL* survey classified both groups as *medium frequency* strategy users, who activated learning strategies *sometimes*;

however, their category-related means of strategy use disclosed subtle discrepancies in the groups' strategic patterns (see Table 2). The CG subjects were classified as (lower) *medium frequency* users of affective, social, and memory strategies; (upper) *medium frequency* users of cognitive strategies; and (lower) *high frequency* users of metacognitive and compensation strategies. The EG students were described as *low frequency* users of social strategies, (lower) *medium frequency* users of affective strategies, and (upper) *medium frequency* users of memory, cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies. Interestingly, the frequency-related order of activation of Oxford's (1990) six strategy categories was exactly the same in both groups. The students tended to employ compensation and metacognitive strategies most often; cognitive and memory strategies were less frequently applied, and both groups used affective and social strategies least often, with the lowest scores obtained for the last two categories by the EG. It seems worth adding that the frequencies of strategy use by individual students in the sample stretched from high to low; however, no one activated strategies with either the highest or the lowest rates specified in the survey. Moreover, the patterns of strategy categories used by each of the frequency-related student subgroups differed, with the best strategy user relying least on memory strategies and the poorest one resorting to these strategies most often.

Furthermore, the detected patterns of strategy use in both student groups were linked to particular individual factors selected for the investigation in Stage One. Thus, extroversion, lack of inhibition, lack of anxiety, high self-esteem, risk-taking, ambiguity tolerance, field dependence and no particular field dependence/independence orientation, right- and no particular left/right-brain dominance, impulsivity, sensitivity to rejection, and lack of empathy were found to be connected with *higher overall average frequencies* of strategy use than introversion, inhibition, anxiety, risk-avoiding, field independence, left-brain dominance, lower levels of self-esteem, insensitivity to rejection, ambiguity intolerance, and empathy. Also, each of the individual factors was linked to learner use of certain strategy categories more often than to other strategy groups, and was associated with their more frequent use. In fact, some of the personality traits and cognitive styles, and their clusters (the first set), were not only linked to, but could be claimed to promote more intensified and/or more varied employment of particular learning strategy categories, while other individual factors (the second set) were shown to hinder more frequent and/or richer strategy use. In fact, introversion, inhibition, anxiety, low self-esteem, risk-avoiding, and ambiguity intolerance were often found to block the subjects' activation of learning strategies with L2 tasks.

Finally, the experiment showed that the adult upper-intermediate/advanced (B2/C1) foreign

language learners in the experimental group *could* and *did* extend their individual repertoires of learning strategies and intensified the frequencies of strategy use with different language learning tasks. In fact, both the post-experiment overall averages of strategy use and the mean frequencies of the CG learners' and the EG subjects' use of each strategy category differed considerably. At the end of the experiment, the CG utilized learning strategies almost as frequently as at its beginning, with the mean of 3.17, while the EG subjects' overall average frequency of strategy use increased substantially to 3.72. The final *SILL* scores classified the CG students still as *medium frequency* strategy users, while the EG learners now reached the overall *high frequency* of strategy activation. In Oxford's (1990) interpretation, the former utilized learning strategies *sometimes*, while the latter did so *usually*. Moreover, the *t*-test proved that the difference was statistically significant, which implied that the increase in strategy use by the EG subjects was due to the impact of the long-term and completely informed strategy training. As for the use of particular strategy categories, the EG learners activated *all* the categories more often, and did so markedly more frequently than the CG students in whose strategic patterns there were only some insignificant changes (see Table 2).

activated with *high frequencies*. Moreover, these common upward tendencies were also reflected in the fact that *all* of the EG students increased their overall average strategy activation scores. On the other hand, the initial and final mean frequencies of strategy use by the CG students were not substantially different, with a slight decrease in their use of cognitive, metacognitive, and memory strategies and a noticeable downward tendency in their use of affective strategies. There was only a slight increase in their compensation strategy use and a more noticeable increase in their social strategy use. Interestingly, the frequency-related order of activation of particular strategy categories remained similar in both groups; thus, compensation strategies were still employed most frequently, followed by metacognitive, cognitive, memory, social, and affective strategies. This finding seems to suggest that the subjects must have already developed and relatively firmly established their strategic preferences as well as consolidated the frequencies of strategy use at rather stable levels by the time the project started, though, as this research shows, learner strategy repertoires and use could still be intentionally modified.

It must also be noted that analysis of the mean scores of strategy use by all individual learners in each group and the obtained standard deviations

Table 2. The pre- and post-experiment mean frequencies of learning strategy use by the experimental group (EG) and by the control group (CG)

	Memory Strategies	Cognitive Strategies	Compensation Strategies	Metacognitive Strategies	Affective Strategies	Social Strategies	Overall average
EG: October, 2003	3.24	3.42	3.48	3.47	2.71	2.45	3.13
EG: June, 2004	3.54	3.79	4.03	3.92	3.40	3.70	3.72
CG: October, 2003	2.99	3.37	3.67	3.53	2.88	2.63	3.18
CG: June, 2004	2.93	3.36	3.71	3.49	2.76	2.80	3.17

As Table 2 shows, after the experiment the most outstanding differences were found between the frequencies of activation of social and affective strategies by the EG subjects and by the CG students. In fact, as the least often employed or even unknown to many EG subjects before the training, a number of social and affective strategies were introduced, focused on, and practised most intensively within the preparatory part and the first language skills-related part of the EG training, and later returned to throughout the whole training scheme in several repetitive cycles.⁵ This might explain why the EG students intensified their use of these two strategy categories in particular; in fact, they entered the (upper) *medium frequency* of affective strategy use, while all the other strategy categories were now

($SD[EG]=0.3135$, $SD[CG]=0.3590$) indicated that after the training the EG was the group of more homogeneous and consistent strategy users than the CG, which constituted a vital change and could be ascribed to the impact of the conscious and long-term strategy training. Before the training, the EG was the less homogeneous group in this respect since its standard deviation was higher ($SD[EG]=0.4039$) than the CG score ($SD[CG]=0.3228$). In fact, the initially poorest EG strategy user made the most conspicuous progress enriching her strategy repertoires and intensifying strategy use.

The second study and the third one the author wishes to briefly refer to in this article were devoted to communication strategy training which, however, did not take the form of explicit, completely informed training schemes. The studies were conducted in the same teacher training institution, that is, the English Department of Pope John II State School of Higher Education in Biała Podlaska. Both studies lasted a full academic year; one started in

⁵ During pre-experiment informal interviews the majority of the EG subjects stated that they often felt incapable of coping with anxiety and other negative emotional states evoked by certain language learning tasks and especially speaking situations. Additionally, the majority stressed their preferences for individual work rather than cooperation with others. It also indicated the need for intensive socio-affective strategy training.

October 2010 and ended in June 2011, and the other study lasted from October 2011 to June 2012. The main goal of the research was to investigate the patterns of communication strategies used by two groups of second-year English teacher trainees doing their *Practical English: Speaking* course and explore how the adult language learners' patterns of communication strategy use might change as a result of implicit or partly informed rather than fully-informed training.

The subjects who participated in the 2010/2011 study were 21 Polish students (17 females and 4 males) and the subjects who took part in the 2011/2012 research were 20 Polish students (16 females and 4 males) at the ages of 20-27. Similarly to the previous study, the students in both groups were at the B2/C1 proficiency level. Formally, each year the participants in the studies had their *PE Speaking* classes in two student groups; the classes were conducted by the author with the use of the same topic-based syllabus, teaching techniques and types of activities. The *Speaking* course requirements were also the same for all student groups. Analyzing the data collected in both studies, the author selected and took into consideration the results obtained by those subjects whose class attendance was determined as high (i.e. who missed class sessions not more than two times). It must also be added that the participants in both studies - prospective English teachers - were regularly sensitized to the need to actively use varied achievement-oriented communication strategies in order to cope with gaps in L2 knowledge and skill deficiencies, instead of avoiding communication in the classroom and beyond it.

To diagnose the subjects' communication strategy use at the beginning of the course, the author asked them first to perform two communicative activities and then administered a self-prepared questionnaire based on the literature on the topic and her own perception of communication strategies (Dąbrowska 2008, 2013). During the first activity the students were asked to have a conversation in English on a topic of their own choice; they were asked to work in pairs and observe their own as well as their partner's behavior in situations when they lacked adequate linguistic means (words, phrases, structures) to express the intended meaning. During the second activity the subjects were asked to use their linguistic and non-linguistic resources to communicate in English the meaning of over twenty words and phrases selected for that purpose (e.g. *cielec, skarłowaciłe drzewko, igraszka, zagajnik*). In this way, the subjects were prepared for conscious assessment of their own communication strategy use.

To help the participants better understand themselves as language learners, at the beginning of each project they were asked to diagnose their own personality traits and learning styles with the use of selected pen-and-pencil questionnaires applied also

during the 2003/2004 study. These were adopted from the literature on the topic - *Extroversion/Introversion Test* (Brown 1994, p. 196), *Right/Left Brain Dominance Test* (Brown 1994, pp. 197-198), *Learning styles* (Tanner and Green 1998, p. 90), *Questionnaire for a good language learner* (Wenden 1991, pp. 122-123), *Self-evaluation questionnaire* (Oxford 1990, pp. 182-183), and prepared by the author to help to diagnose the students' inhibition and anxiety levels, self-esteem, risk-taking, empathy, sensitivity to rejection, tolerance of ambiguity, reflectivity/impulsivity (see Dąbrowska 2008).

The subjects participating in the 2010/2011 study were instructed in what ways particular individual features and learning preferences, as the relevant research shows, might influence the process and effects of language learning and how each individual student could use the information to make his/her language learning and language use more effective. In contrast, the students participating in the 2011/2012 study were asked to search for this information by themselves and prepare reports on the correlations that might be found between the diagnosed individual differences and language learning processes, as well as reflect on the possibilities of using the information in order to become better target language learners and users. The students were encouraged to regularly enrich their knowledge of themselves as language learners, pay special attention to their learning styles and preferences, and develop self-awareness independently. They were also encouraged to learn more about and experiment with different ways of learning and communicating in a foreign language. It must be added that not all of the students prepared their reports; moreover, some of them did not remember their questionnaire answers a week later. This might suggest that those students were not aware of the value of such knowledge and, therefore, they were not interested in exploring the issue thoroughly on their own; in fact, during class discussions the majority admitted that they had not had a chance to get to know about the topic within the cycle of their earlier education.

The research conducted at the beginning of the second year *Speaking* course showed that the minority of 14% of the subjects in the 2010/2011 study and only 5% of the students in the 2011/2012 study did not use avoidance-oriented reduction strategies; the vast majority (86% and 95% respectively) declared that they applied reduction strategies either *sometimes* or *often*, with 38% and 40% doing it frequently. In fact, most subjects in both groups declared that they used the strategies of formal reduction, avoiding certain L2 rules of which they were not certain (71% and 80%), and functional reduction, abandoning rather than replacing certain topics or messages (71% and 75%). Moreover, all the students reported resorting to non-verbal means of communication *frequently*. At the same time, all the subjects claimed that they *sometimes* used

achievement-oriented communication strategies. The study showed that almost all of them (95% in both groups) resorted to indirect cooperative strategies to cope with communication problems; thus, they did not ask for help, but tended to indicate the need for assistance non-verbally; in fact, only 33% and 30% declared that they activated the strategy of appealing for help directly and did it either *sometimes* or *rarely*. About three fifths of the subjects in both groups (62% and 70%) claimed that they also *sometimes* used certain interlanguage-based compensatory strategies, especially all-purpose words (100% and 90% respectively), generalization (66% and 70%), restructuring (57% and 50%), routines and prefabricated patterns (52% and 70%), and paraphrase (62% and 60%) which was described as used either *sometimes* or *rarely* by the majority. Finally, about half of the subjects in both groups resorted to retrieval strategies (43% and 50% respectively). Thus, as the results showed, non-linguistic communication strategies, indirect appeal for help, use of all-purpose words and generalization, as well as formal reduction and functional reduction were the predominant strategies in the students' communication strategy repertoires in both groups.

Interestingly, referring to the results obtained by the author in her 2003/2004 study, it could be observed that the number of students who tended to resort to L2-based, or IL-based⁶, strategies when they experienced communication problems was gradually decreasing; in other words, year by year fewer and fewer students seemed inclined to activate strategies which utilized and could expand their IL resources (i.e. paraphrase, description, circumlocution). What is more, encountering problems in communication during class topic-based discussions most of the participants in the studies frequently resorted to the strategy of code switching, or borrowing; they used Polish words and phrases waiting for the teacher to supply the needed English items, especially within the first semester of the *Speaking* course. This suggested that those tertiary students still tended to be highly teacher-dependent. It also indicated that their personal sets of achievement-based communication strategies and abilities to activate the strategies self-reliantly were still inadequately developed. In addition, during class discussions of varied topics the majority of the students often employed generalization, all-purpose words, formulas and prefabricated patterns, and whole memorized language chunks. In fact, the latter were willingly utilized especially during mid- and end-of-term oral tests. Last but not least, during class discussions the majority of the *Speaking* course participants avoided using the strategy of direct appeal for help which necessitates the use of the target language.

It seems worth adding that, similarly to the previous research, these studies also showed links

between selected individual differences and the use of reduction strategies and achievement strategies. A high level of anxiety, introversion, risk avoidance, left-brain dominance and low self-esteem were found to be connected with learner preferences for using reduction strategies, while extraversion, impulsivity, risk-taking, a low level of anxiety, and right-brain dominance were related to more frequent activation of achievement strategies. In fact, as many experts stress, heightened awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses, individual traits, predispositions and learning preferences may help to build on the strong points and seek for strategic ways of compensating for the weaker ones (cf. Brown 1994; Oxford 2011).

The results of the study of communication strategy use conducted in both groups at the end of the 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 *Speaking* courses showed that implicit strategy training and regular sensitization to the need to apply achievement-based strategies instead of avoidance-based ones caused some positive changes in the subjects' strategy patterns, resulting in greater strategic variety and increased frequencies of use of achievement-oriented compensatory strategies. Now all the subjects in both studies claimed that having a conversation in English they employed achievement strategies either *often* or *always*, with 52% in the 2010/2011 study and 65% in the 2011/2012 study doing it always. Moreover, the subjects stressed that when they lacked the needed linguistic means they started to activate achievement strategies more consciously and deliberately, more often using a cluster of several strategies. In fact, the number of students who declared that they used reduction strategies decreased considerably, especially with respect to functional reduction (43% and 55% respectively), and the frequency of topic avoidance and message reduction or abandonment was described as either *sometimes* or *rarely* used. In addition, 100% of the subjects in both groups reported that they used more L2/IL-based strategies more frequently, especially paraphrase, applied in more varied forms of description, circumlocution, or exemplification, and resorted to restructuring more often (95% and 85%). Simultaneously, the number of students resorting to code switching, or borrowing, and using their first language in class discussions when they lacked adequate L2 resources decreased markedly; the frequency of using the strategy of waiting for the teacher to provide the needed English equivalents decreased noticeably as well. In fact, the majority of over 80% of the subjects in both studies now declared that they deliberately tried to avoid switching to the mother tongue and more often appealed for help directly using English.

All in all, it must be stressed that the long-term, explicit strategy training conducted within the first project resulted in the increase in the frequency and diversity of strategies used by its participants. Moreover, due to its intentional,

⁶ The abbreviation 'IL' stands for 'interlanguage'.

planned, recursive and completely informed nature as well as numerous additional awareness-raising and strategy training activities, it helped the subjects expand their knowledge of the processes of language learning and use, build expertise in how to enhance their own learning and help others select appropriate strategies in response to individual learning preferences, the purpose of the learning task at hand, and the requirements of a particular learning or communication situation. It also helped them develop the habit of reflecting on their learning experiences in a systematic way and allowed for the mastery of many practical strategic ways of coping with learning difficulties of different types. As the second and third studies presented above indicate, implicit training and systematic strategy sensitization also helped the subjects to acquire and develop a number of effective strategies for language use, which they began to employ more deliberately to overcome speaking problems; it also enriched their knowledge and heightened self-awareness as language learners and users, though to a lesser extent than the fully-informed training.

Strategy instruction: implications for language teaching and teacher training

Taking into consideration the theoretical issues discussed in this series of articles (Part I. and Part II.) as well as the results obtained in the three studies presented above (Part III.), it *does* seem worthwhile to devote the teacher's and the student's time and energy to conducting and taking part in different forms of strategy training, both explicit and implicit, since each one has much to offer the student, also at more advanced levels of language proficiency. Nonetheless, as many strategy researchers agree, purposeful, directed, long-term and explicit strategy instruction, especially schemes with a spiral design of recursive strategy training sessions in different contexts of language learning and use, seems to be the most recommendable option. A one-time session or a short-term training scheme may have certain value and effect in terms of learning success; however, it may not be sufficient to help learners acquire, develop, reinforce, and consolidate the desired forms of strategic behaviour.

As the author's research shows, patterns of strategies employed by more advanced language learners (CEFR level: B2/C1) seem to be relatively well-established and the frequencies of their strategy activation appear consolidated at certain, rather stable levels; this was evident in the negligible changes of strategies used by the control group students in the first study. Thus, it appears that individual sets of learning strategies may not alter or change considerably within further language learning, unless students receive purposeful and fully-informed strategy instruction. The implication for language teachers, and teacher trainers as well, is that reaching tertiary levels of education, or even

completing one's formal language teacher training, does *not* have to and, in fact, should not mean, or lead to, strategic fossilization. It can also be postulated that if strategy training is to be effective, in that it should influence learners' patterns of strategy employment and attitudes towards varied strategic solutions to language learning problems, it should be focused, long-term, and recursive. Obviously, the task constitutes a tremendous, though not unfeasible, challenge.

To make the task easier, language teachers and teacher trainers as well as learners can reach for numerous strategy training manuals and guidelines (see, for example, Ellis and Sinclair 1989; Oxford 1990; Brown 1989, 2002; Chamot, Keatley, Anstrom 2005; Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, Lassegard 2006; Oxford 2011). In fact, in 1991 Wenden offered a set of practical research-based hints for strategy instruction which are still relevant today and which may prove helpful to inexperienced teachers in particular. To begin with, as the expert rightly indicates, 'strategic' teachers should first consider the option of conducting informed strategy training. Through blind training learners can become better able to perform selected L2 learning tasks more efficiently, but even with extensive practice they are often unable to appropriately activate the required strategies on their own and transfer these strategies to other contexts. Second, they should give their learners training in self-regulation, or self-control, which implies management of one's own learning through planning, monitoring, managing, and evaluating one's own learning outcomes. Third, preferably, teachers should present new strategies in the context of subject matter content or skill for which these strategies are applicable and give their students opportunities for extensive practice. Thus, they should think of how to contextualize the new strategies, orient them towards particular language learning problems, and make them relatable to the learner's personal experience. Fourth, since strategy training should be interactive, the teacher's job does not finish with telling learners what to do and leaving them on their own. Teacher-learner interaction must continue until the learner becomes able to self-regulate appropriate use of new learning strategies. Finally, as Wenden (1991) emphasizes, teachers should design and conduct strategy training in response to diagnoses of learners' current patterns of strategy use, proficiency levels, and learning needs.

In fact, one should also stress the need for a diagnosis of selected individual learner differences. As the results of the first project described in this article and the literature on the topic confirm, the teacher's and the learner's increased personal awareness of particular individual differences, combined with enhanced knowledge of patterns of individual learner strategy use, may facilitate teaching and learning processes, help to diagnose one's strengths and limitations in particular, and

plan an adequate, strategic course of action focused on overcoming or reducing the impact of the learner's weaknesses.

As far as teacher education is concerned, ELT/FLT courses for future language teachers, that is, methodology or didactics classes run obligatorily by foreign language teacher training institutions in Poland, unfortunately now formally reduced to ninety hours within the three-year-long BA teacher education programme (Rozporządzenie Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 17 stycznia 2012 roku) do not allow sufficient time for adequate and comprehensive accommodation of explicit and fully-informed strategy instruction and strategic practice. It must be stressed that the strategy training project conducted within the first of the three studies presented in this article was intensive and focused since at that time methodological preparation in PWSZ in Biała Podlaska comprised more than twice as many hours. Undeniably, systematic strategy instruction should be directly and purposefully integrated not only into the contents of foreign language teaching/didactics classes, but also into actual language learning, which involves *Practical English* classes in particular. Still, didactics classes may prove valuable, supportive and beneficial in the process of enriching, reinforcing and consolidating teacher trainees' strategic technical know-how and developing their practical skills of using strategies in a (more) conscious, intentional, and responsible way. For this reason, it seems desirable that methodological or didactic education of future language teachers should be intensified and extended within the formal teacher training cycle.

Today the methodological preparation module allows only time for relatively brief presentations of the most basic ideas and principles underlying what in fact constitutes a long-term and practice-oriented strategy training venture. Therefore, the idea of *involving teachers of other subjects* that contribute to the completion of the process of language teacher education, in response to students' immediate learning needs and current strategy use, appears to offer the most optimal solution to the problem. As research shows and as many experts emphasize, strategy training seems to be most effective not only when it is explicit, or fully-informed, but also when it is integrated into the teaching and learning of the target language and other subjects curricula rather than carried out separately (cf. Chamot 2004; Rubin, Chamot, Harris, Anderson 2007). Such a conception allows for designing and conducting strategy instruction in many real-life contexts and learning situations related to the learner's actual needs; moreover, it creates suitable conditions for meaningful introduction of the needed strategies, their practical application in different contexts, individual experimentation, and selection of personally relevant, effective learning strategies. Hence, the Cognitive Academic Language Learning

Approach (CALLA) (see, for example, Chamot *et al.* 1999) and other instructional models related to the umbrella concept of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (see, for example, Mehisto, Marsh, Frigols 2008), which allow for smooth integration of the teaching of content, language, and learning strategies, seem to be good solutions not only in language education, but also in language teacher education.

Conclusion

The issues discussed in this series of articles, concerned with formal qualifications of the language teacher, strategies of the language learner, strategy training, and 'strategic' teacher competences are closely related to the crucial task of educating autonomous, independent, or self-regulated, language learners who know how to learn and who learn effectively. As many research studies show, thanks to strategy instruction, especially its explicit or fully-informed varieties and direct strategy integration into language and content courses, learners can develop metacognition and self-awareness necessary to understand their own learning processes and themselves as language learners; they can also learn how to activate strategies, techniques or tactics of varied types in order to facilitate and enhance different aspects of the complex task of second/foreign language learning and use.

Strategy training, however, although based on well-tested, varied, and largely successful models, materials and tasks, remains a challenging task. On the one hand, its success seems determined by adequate preparation, education, and attitudes of 'strategic' teachers personally experienced in strategy use, and thus by appropriate adjustment of teacher training goals. On the other hand, it is also conditioned by a host of factors related to general and personal characteristics of the language learner, and the language teacher as well. Moreover, it seems that in order to be effective, strategy training should become *interdisciplinary* and constitute an inseparable part of each subject taught at school and teacher training institution. Only in this way can the learner and the future teacher understand how particular strategies operate with varied learning tasks and why they are essential - by testing and experiencing strategy effectiveness in a wide spectrum of personally meaningful learning contexts and situations.

Last but not least, effective strategy training for second/foreign language learners and language teacher trainees may also entail strategy training for language teacher trainers. As Komorowska (2002, p. 13) rightly notices, the teacher needs to master those key competences which the Polish system of education expects the learner to develop, or otherwise, he/she will not be able to help learners acquire and develop life-long learning skills and

strategies. The key competences include the ability to deal with oneself and interact with other people effectively; solve typical problems in typical and untypical ways, and untypical problems in creative ways; think critically; communicate effectively; organize, plan, monitor, and assess the process of one's own learning and its effects, and activate appropriate social and interpersonal skills. These constitute and result from a range of desired strategic behaviours that learners can acquire if they are given chances to experiment with varied learning strategies in varied contexts at all levels of education. Thus, apart from solid methodological, psychological, and pedagogical preparation teachers of future teachers may also need to be better acquainted with the *learning to learn* idea and experienced in successful strategy use.

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