

Therefore, it is rather surprising that the precise definition of 'learning strategy' has not yet been developed.

The above list of the characteristic properties of language learning strategies provides a basis for reflection upon the concept. It also helps to select the features that may serve as the defining criteria for a more accurate definition of a learning strategy. From the above discussion it appears that the degree of consciousness involved is the single most important defining factor. The presence or absence of conscious choice in using strategies is what, for the majority of specialists, determines whether a given behaviour qualifies as strategic. The other properties of learning strategies, though still contentious, do not play that vital role in defining the concept. Their value, however, lies in their potential to describe many aspects of the complex nature of learning strategies.

Magdalena Mitura

'Learning To Learn' in Primary Classroom: Helping Young Learners Towards Greater Autonomy'

Raising students' awareness of the language and the learning process by developing their reflective skills through explicit classroom training has been increasingly recognised as a legitimate and significant component of the foreign language teaching programme. The findings of research into the children's application of strategies in problem-solving tasks seem to indicate that providing even quite young learners with opportunities for insight into their mental processes when approaching a task and involving them in an overt discussion of those processes led to the improvement of children's performance on similar tasks on future occasions. Conscious reflection on one's own progress, the nature of the task at hand and ways of approaching it, the emotions stirred by activities, materials and interaction patterns seems to promote motivation, foster responsibility and enhance learning effectiveness.

In spite of the apparent long-term benefits of language awareness and strategy training, certain reservations seem to emerge on the grounds that young learners have not yet attained maturity essential for critical self-monitoring and their analytical faculties have not developed in the degree that would allow for profound reflection upon the subject under study. Another objection is that 'learning to learn' assignments will confront young learners, already presented with a laborious task of making sense of a new language and struggling to express themselves through this medium, with additional cognitive demands increasing their workload. By discussing some classroom procedures this paper addresses the question of how to incorporate

strategy training meaningfully in the context of language work, so that reflection follows naturally and spontaneously from experience. The nature of the child's thinking in the pre-school period and in the process of acquiring literacy at school.

The child is initially unaware of her own thinking and learning processes. Before she enters school she is deeply immersed in the dealings of the world around her, i.e. here and now, and narrowly focused on making sense of the immediate surroundings. In other words the child remains in the realm of the so-called "human sense". The skills of copying with her environment are used to serve the most compelling purposes and once such purposes are gone they cannot be summoned deliberately. No conscious reflection accompanies the employment of the skills in particular contexts and therefore they cannot be transferred to other contexts. Lack of awareness excludes the control over one's thinking and learning - essential for the development of the intellectual powers. For this kind of intellectual growth to take place it is imperative then to move beyond the limits of "human sense".

Many young children are prone while solving a problem to act on impulse, accepting indiscriminately and uncritically the first solution that seems more or less right or which has proved successful on some past occasion. With time, age and experience learners become more reflective and before applying a particular solution they are able to consider several possibilities and realise that there may be more than one simple answer to the task at hand. They become conscious of what they do and not do, make choices, are able to suspend their actions and turn their attention inwards upon what is going on in their heads. They are increasingly able to regulate their mental activities ("higher-order thinking"), to identify the nature of the problem, look at it from different perspectives, determine if they possess sufficient knowledge to solve it, verify previously held assumptions, monitor their performance and judge the productivity of invested efforts and effectiveness of suggested solutions. To put in another way, the learner develops the capacity to think in more general and abstract

terms and her thinking becomes gradually divorced from the dependence on concrete objects and events in the current context.

The crucial moment when the child's thinking takes on a new course or direction begins when the child starts to attend school and, more specifically, when she encounters the written word and strives to learn how to read and write. Most pre-school children do not realise that separate words exist and that the flow of speech can be broken up into such units. Even when listening to stories, which are an example of a disembedded language, children do not really notice words as they focus their attention of the characters, motives, intentions - the meaning of the story. Donaldson said, "The child does not interpret words, but situations." (1978:87) and went on to explain that for the child directed outwards on to the real, meaningful world, in which he has purposes and intentions, language is embedded in the flow of events that accompany it (1978:88-89). The same is true of learning a foreign language, i.e. "his awareness of what he talks about normally takes precedence over his awareness of what he talks with - the words that he uses" (ibid.). At school language starts to be perceived as a separate structure. What is more, the permanent nature of the written representation of words, whose interpretation is independent of non-linguistic context, asks for a pause, slowing down, time for reflection on the part of the learner and thus is likely to encourage awareness of one's own thinking, learning and language itself and may be relevant to increased self-control in the long run.

Although preoccupied with the outside world, children in the pre-school period are believed to possess the capacity for self-awareness and reflection on their own thinking. Researchers, however, point out that even very young children seem to understand what it means to remember and forget, that it is easier to remember few things than many or that it is easier to remember things if they are repeated, that some tasks are harder than others, they also know what it is to order and classify things, however, they often do it randomly and are not very effective.

Research suggests that it is possible to train young learners to make their unskilled and random approaches to tasks more automatic and

strategic. An adult assistant (parent or teacher) plays a crucial role in the process. When helped and guided by adults in the application of strategies, children's performance improves, and although they are not spontaneous in their use of strategies, they can still cope with tasks normally undertaken by older children. This view of learning corresponds closely to the idea of co-operative learning exploiting the metaphor of 'scaffolding' and inspired by the views of Vygotsky. The underlying idea is that the more knowledgeable or competent assistant helps the less competent learner through explanation or discussion to become more independent in their thinking. In order to facilitate this process the more competent partner provides temporary support – "scaffolding" until the learner becomes an independent thinker.

Definition and classification of learning strategies

The problem of learning strategies has been addressed by many writers and an extensive body of literature has accumulated on the subject over the years. It's beyond the scope of this paper to allude to all important publications and only few authors and theories most relevant to the topic under discussion here will be referred to. According to Anderson, referred to in Ellis, strategies are mental processes which can be isolated and imparted to learners in order to make learning more effective. Learning strategies are a learned skill seen as "a set of productions that are compiled and fine-tuned until they become procedural knowledge" (1991:43). Ellis (1985) presents the division of learning strategies with regard to the level of type of processing involved into *metacognitive*, higher order executive skills that entail planning for, monitoring and evaluating the success of a learning activity, *cognitive strategies*, which manipulate the incoming information in a way that enhances learning, e.g. inferring, summarising, applying rules, categorising, rehearsal, the use of imagery, elaboration – linking new information with the existing knowledge, etc, and *social/affective strategies* including cooperation with peers, questioning the teacher, asking for explanation or clarification, self-talk or using mental control to assure oneself of the success or reduce anxiety about the task.

Another categorisation has been devised by O'Malley and Chamot, who illustrate learning strategies with examples of how they are reflected in the learner's behaviour in and outside the classroom.

Primary strategy Classification	Representative secondary strategies	Representative examples
Strategies that directly affect learning	Clarification	Asks for an example of how to use a word, repeats to confirm understanding
	Monitoring	Corrects errors in own or others L2 work
	Memorisation	Takes notes of new items, pronounces out loud
	Guessing/inferring	Compares L1/other L2 to TL, looks for rules of co-occurrence groups words
	Practice	Experiments with new sounds, listens carefully and tries to imitate
Processes that contribute indirectly to learning	Creates opportunities for practice	Seeks contact with native speaker, initiates interaction in L2 with T and peers, spends time in language lab, listens to TV, radio, etc.
	Production tricks	Uses synonyms, cognates, Formulaic expressions, Contextualises to clarify meaning
Active task approach	Responds positively to learning opportuni- ties or seeks and exploits learning environments	Acknowledges need for a structured learning environment and takes courses prior to immersing him/herself in L2
	Adds related language learning activities to regular classroom practice	Reads additional items listens to tapes, writes down words to memorise
	Analyses individual problems	Reads alone to hear sounds
Realisation of language as a system	Makes L1/L2 compa- risons, analyses indi- vidual problems, makes use of the fact that language is a system	Uses cognates, uses what is already known, uses rules to generate possibilities, relates new dictionary words to others in the same category

Realisation of language as a means of communication and interaction management of affective demands	Emphasises fluency over accuracy, seeks communicative situations with L2 speakers, finds socio-cultural meanings copes with affective demands in learning	Does not hesitate to speak, Communicates whenever possible Writes to pen pals, memorises politeness phrases
		Overcomes inhibition to speak, is able to laugh at own mistakes, looks for ways to improve so as to not repeat mistakes

(adapted from O'Malley and Channot, 1990)

Reasons for teaching about learning

Why should we teach children about learning strategies? In everyday lives people use various strategies to make sense of something, to understand or remember some information or solve a problem. The given data are transformed, manipulated and elaborated upon in a variety of ways – looking for regularities, categorising, reducing the data into manageable components or evaluating the “weight” of the task against one’s own resources for coping with it.

In the educational context the ability to reflect upon one’s own learning is a prerequisite to academic success. It leads to greater self-awareness as well as the awareness of one’s own preferred ways of learning. The lack of insight into one’s own thinking and learning excludes the control over these processes. Laying foundations under the development of study skills and critical thinking in the early age is likely to assist and facilitate further learning. These are the long-term benefits, but there are also the short-term gains such as increased self-confidence, positive attitude towards learning, sustained motivation and curiosity, overall learning improvement, building group spirit.

Helping children learn and think about their learning – creating the environment

Before ‘learning to learn’ can be incorporated in the classroom as regular element of language practice, in order for the responsibility for learning to be gradually passed on to the learner, appropriate conditions should be created. Moyles (1995:112) suggests that the

management of learning should be such as to give children the following opportunities:

- * to make their ideas explicit – in the process of ongoing planning one needs to start where the child is;
- * to produce and end result in different ways and with several alternative solutions – children benefit from investigations and problem-solving activities, as they bring “physical” fruit or evidence of what children know;
- * to explore ideas with peers – it is easier to argue a point with peers than with adults, particularly at the ages of 5 and 6;
- * to be part of situations in which they need to generalise in order to use and develop concepts;
- * to *observe for* rather than *look at* objects and artefacts and raise questions – this will help children perceive relevant similarities and/or differences;
- * to achieve attainable goals – it is possible when the teacher knows what a child can do and sets realistic goals for her;
- * to explore materials before expecting them to do something specific with them;
- * to learn and use the appropriate vocabulary for each topic so that they have the means to explain their activities to you;
- * to gather all the information they need in order to fulfil the demands of the activity
- * to be challenged and made to think by open-ended questions, rather than pointless, redundant and confusing (from the child’s point of view) closed-ended ones;

Once the conditions have been created, learners’ awareness of their learning can be increased either in an incidental unplanned way as problems emerge in the course of language activities or it can be developed through systematic explicit classroom practices. In either case learning to learn should not be perceived as an extra exotic addition taught out of context, but as an integral part of proper language practice. At the same time learner training should be conducted with transfer in mind, so that effective strategies could be used across tasks and subjects. For example, strategy training can take on an explicit form with the teacher and the learners engage in a class

discussion about how they handle their learning. Ellis (1984) suggests the following procedures:

1. Elicitation – Teacher questions pupils directly about their strategies, e.g. learning vocabulary;
2. Suggestion – Learners suggest their strategies and share them with peers
3. Demonstration – Teacher shows the learners the utility of a particular strategy in a particular context and how it can be applied;
4. Modelling – Teacher demonstrates, by interrogating the learners, the value of self-questioning and discovering strengths and weaknesses of one's strategies applied to the task in a given situation;
5. Discussion – General exchange of views and reflections, carried out in a more or less formal tone; the extra advantage here is personalised, open-ended, fluency-oriented form of practice;

It has already been mentioned that strategy training (the HOW) should be tied with the contents of activities (the WHAT). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) discussing learning strategies, illustrate with examples how a strategic approach towards learning a foreign language manifests itself in various learning techniques or actual actions undertaken by the learner intending to work on a specific aspect of the target language:

Aspects of language learning	Technique
Sound acquisition	repeating aloud after the teacher a native speaker or a tape, listening carefully, talking aloud, including role playing;
Grammar	following rules given in texts, inferring grammar rules from texts, comparing L1 and L2; memorising structures and using them often;
Vocabulary	making up charts and memorising them, learning words in context, learning words that are associated with each other, using new words in phrases in talking or in writing, using a dictionary when necessary, carrying a notebook to note new items;

Listening comprehension

listen to the radio, records, TV, movies, tapes; exposing oneself to different accents and registers;

Learning to talk

not being afraid of making mistakes when talking, making contact with native speakers or using L2 to talk to other foreigners, asking for corrections when talking to others, memorising dialogues, using tape-recorders to assess performance as talkers, making a set of rules for a group discussion and displaying them on the wall;

Learning to write

having pen pals, keeping a diary, writing book reviews, focusing on the process of writing – organising ideas, drafting, editing, writing for real audiences and for a purpose, collaborative writing;

Learning to read

reading something everyday, reading familiar stories, comics, reading texts at the beginners level, recommending books to peers

The area of teaching and learning, in which the notion of awareness raising comes to the forefront is assessment. There are of course a lot of reasons why learners' progress should be assessed and assessment techniques, but for the purpose of this discussion not all of them are as important as self-assessment. The learner can be encouraged to think about his learning progress in a variety of ways, e.g. by discussing explicitly what "I" = the child can do with the L2, drawing famous 'happy', 'neutral' and 'sad' according to the achievements and showing them to parents, filling in questionnaires devised by the teacher or materials writers, keeping a language learning diary or a portfolio bearing witness to smaller and bigger learner's achievements and containing samples of the learner's work over a period of time. Sharing record keeping with children gives them a sense of responsibility and control over their work. When discussing the issue of the learner's growing awareness of language and learning the role of peer learning in the process cannot be underestimated. Learning does not take place in a vacuum and autonomy does not necessarily mean isolation. Following Bruner and Vygotsky's conviction that we

actually come to understand what it is we think through talk (Merry in Moyles, 1995) and the proposition that language is, among other things, a tool of social interaction, due care should be taken of social skills training. Having learners verbalise their thoughts and compare ideas in the course of problem-solving tasks (e.g. jigsaw puzzles) in co-operative groups, with the teacher as a supportive adult, is likely to increase their learning. There are additional gains that cannot be overlooked, connected with control over one's learning and responsibility for it and self-confidence. According to Sylvia McNamara (1995 in Moyles), the children treated as responsible for what they do in group work are likely to show more and more responsibility on future occasions. Before this could take place, however, certain skills (quite sophisticated ones) have to be worked upon and these include:

- * how to listen to each other and value each other
- * how to talk about feelings so that mutual trust is built and the problems can be stated clearly before they are attempted to be solved
- * how to give feedback – positive and negative
- * how to encourage, help and teach others (peer tutoring)
- * how to negotiate
- * how to monitor and reflect their own and others' performances and contributions
- * how to self-organise, including assessing one's own strengths and weaknesses, set targets and plan action
- * how to break things down into small, manageable steps
- * how to clarify things among themselves without resorting to the teacher's help
- * how to share successful learning strategies with peers

Learning to learn and strategy training are also connected with the area of classroom management and planning. By demonstrating her/his ability to plan and organise the teaching/learning process in the classroom, so that children are genuinely involved in activities and show progress, the teacher indirectly sets an example for learners. Explaining the aims of the lesson in explicit and accessible ways and how they are going to be achieved is likely to make it easier for

children to perceive learning as purposeful and strategic activity. It seems a worthwhile strategy to involve students in the planning process and make them think of individual steps. On the onset of activity the teacher can for example ask the following questions: "What do you think is the best way to deal with this problem?", "What shall we start from?", "Who has an idea?". After the task has been completed there are more questions to be asked, for example: "Have you followed the steps?", "What did you do differently?", "How would you do it next time?". When talking about planning, particularly important seems also to explain pedagogical reasons for using fun-generating activities, such as games, songs, role plays, stories, TPR, creative activities as these may not be a part of classroom practice in teaching other school subjects and may not be perceived as legitimate techniques for teaching and learning.

Negotiation of classroom activities, materials, teaching aims and homework assignments, giving children a choice and letting them decide about what they want to do at home – write a story, read a book, practise new vocabulary, make flashcards, talk in English, creating opportunities for recapping, revising and reviewing, involving learners in making comments upon 'today's work' at the end of the lesson, i.e. what they learnt, enjoyed, felt uncomfortable about, etc., are among other strategies that are likely to help children focus attention on their learning.

The teacher's role in helping children find their route towards greater self-control is deciding what kind of help is needed in a particular situation and how it should be offered so that it is not too oppressive and stifling for the learner's own ingenuity and resourcefulness. Demonstration and 'doing it together' are crucial for the child to be able to develop adequate mental representation of the nature of the problem at hand, but once this is achieved, young learners take an active part in the search for solutions. By nature children are inventors and discoverers and they are capable of using the initial 'clue' that the teacher gives them as a starting point. subjects.

Problematic areas

What kinds of problems may emerge in the classroom during activities oriented towards enhancing learner's awareness of her own learning and the language? First of all, as some writers suggest not all learners will respond to strategy training equally eagerly and enthusiastically. They may resist involvement in cognitively more demanding tasks feigning dependency and calling for the teacher's support. Others may be taught appropriate strategies but fail to continue to use them spontaneously for themselves. In addition to that there is often a gap, especially in the case of very young learners, between their ability to understand and think about their learning on the one hand, and their ability to verbalise their thoughts and reflections. Children with high self-esteem, confident risk takers are more likely to participate or initiate interactions with the teacher in which they reflect and comment on the difficulties they experienced and the attempted solutions. The creation of classroom environment in which pupils become comfortable with such exchanges is likely to take time and requires patience and caution on the part of the teacher.

Among frequently voiced fears is also the apparent discrepancy between the need for individualised treatment of the child ('starting where the child is' again), the demands on the teacher's time and the wide range of curricular objectives (the pressure to 'follow' the standardised syllabus) on the one hand, and the size of most classes with related management problems on the other. Bearing this in mind it has to be stressed that the implementation of 'learning to learn' component is very much context-dependent, or highly conditioned by the variables of the learning/teaching situation. A degree of negotiation of priorities and compromise will probably be necessary, with some activities rejected for the sake of others.

Finally, the majority of state schools facing financial difficulties lack funds for adequate equipment, materials or facilities to cater for individualised needs of the learners. A reading corner with English readers, comics or magazines, a selection of tapes with favourite stories, not to mention a collection of videos with cartoons and films or other means to give the learner access to the English outside the

classroom, are not for many teachers a part of the classroom world. This fact may in some cases be a source of frustration and may inspire somewhat faithless approach towards the notion of learner autonomy and lack of commitment for the "cause".

The inclusion of the learning to learn/study skills component into the teaching programme entails additionally the shift of attention from the outcomes or products of learning to the process of learning itself. In classroom reality and ...human nature there is there is the unquenchable thirst for having the visible or tangible outcomes of our work to be evaluated, preferably in the form of marks. This preoccupation with the products, as well as giving and receiving marks, as a proof that learning has taken place, may create a comfortable but unjustified feeling of getting the work done. The pressure to move on, to cover the successive units in the coursebook within the time available further complicates the situation. Sometimes it may also seem that too much time invested in strategy training means in effect the loss of precious classroom time in which the "REAL" teaching/learning could have been done. The shift of focus from products to processes call for a certain change of the teacher's mindset. It refers especially to teachers favouring their strong dominant position in the class may find it hard to accommodate learning to learn in their routine classroom practice.

Introduction of a self-directed learning programme in the classroom, in spite of its limitations, is a very appealing idea, such a programme, however, does not in itself seem sufficient for making learners independent. The final remark I'd like to make follows from the claim made by Donaldson (1978), that child's learning takes place within the matrix formed by personal relations. Of course, in the early stages of learning a young learner out of necessity is very much dependent on the teacher as far as input and organisation of activities and materials is concerned. More importantly, however, any assistance the teacher can possibly offer with respect to learning, must be preceded by the building of a positive personal relationship with a child - a stranger in a strange school environment, so unlike the home. Only by creating a secure, non-threatening learning environment,

which gives the sense of belonging and achievement, promotes sensitivity of individual needs, respect for peers and positive attitude to learning can we hope to turn these high-flying ambitions into reality.

To conclude, the task of learning a foreign language in the early school years where there are so many new things to attend to and master, the struggling to read and write being among the greatest challenges, seems to be a quite a task in itself for a young child. Expecting the learner to take responsibility for this task may seem to enlarge the burden. Is it worthwhile or just to 'overwhelm' the child in this way? In spite of some reservations that can be made and that have been referred to earlier, the answer to this question appears to be affirmative. If we see teaching as making learning easier for the learner and leading ultimately to learner's independence of the teacher, providing the learner with means to control her learning is well justified. The positive consequences of such training are likely to reach beyond the area of language learning and affect intellectual growth for years to come.

References

- Brewster, J., Ellis, G. and Girard, D. 1991. *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Penguin Books
- Brunfit, Ch., Moon, J. and Tongue, R. 1984. *Teaching English to Children*. Longman
- Donaldson, M. 1978. *Children's Minds*. Fontana/Collins
- Ellis, R. 1985. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Ellis, R. 1998. *Second Language Acquisition Research and Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- McNamara, S. *Let's co-operate! Developing children's social skills in the classroom*, in Moyles, J. (ed)
- Merry, R. *Take some notice of me! Primary children and their learning potential*, in Moyles, J. (ed)
- Moyles, J. 1995. *Beginning Teaching: Beginning Learning in Primary Education*. London: Open University Press
- O'Malley, J. and Chamot, A. 1990. *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Barbara Sadownik

Spracherwerb und Kognition. Zur Kontroverse zwischen Modularismus und Holismus aus glottodidaktischer Sicht

1. Einleitung

Eines der wichtigsten Ergebnisse der Kognitiven Linguistik ist die Erkenntnis, daß die Fragen zu Struktur, Verarbeitung und Erwerb von Sprache nicht isoliert betrachtet werden können, sondern unter der Perspektive menschlicher Kognition stets aufeinander bezogen werden müssen (vgl. S. Felix/S. Kamngießer/G. Rickheit 1990). Die prozedurale Architektur des Spracherwerbs- und Sprachverarbeitungssystems wurde zum Gegenstand einer grundlegenden Kontroverse in der neuen Forschung. Die zentrale Frage dieser Kontroverse besteht darin, ob der menschlichen Kognition, d.h. sowohl dem Erwerbssystem als auch dem Verarbeitungssystem und Wissenssystem eine modulare Struktur mit autonomen Komponenten oder eine holistische Struktur zuzuschreiben ist (vgl. G. Rickheit/H. Strohner 1984). Vertreter des modulareren Ansatzes in der Kognitiven Linguistik grenzen die Sprache als ein spezifisches Subsystem der Kognition von anderen kognitiven Subsystemen ab. Untersuchungsgegenstand sind die genuin sprachlichen Regeln und Prinzipien, die konstitutiv für dieses System sind. Über die Beschreibung sprachlicher Strukturen und deren Verarbeitung versucht man Zugang zur Struktur der menschlichen Kognition zu gewinnen. Modularismus und Holismus als zwei entgegengesetzte wissenschaftliche Positionen der Kognitiven Linguistik bestimmen weitgehend die Forschungsdiskussion in der Glottodidaktik.

Die Glottodidaktik braucht dringend ein theoretisches Modell des Fremdspracherwerbs, das vom konkreten Sprachlerner ausgeht. Die aktuelle glottodidaktische Forschung konzentriert sich vorwiegend auf