

## LEARNING STRATEGY TRAINING IN ENGLISH TEACHING

By

EVANGELIN ARULSELVI M.

*Associate Professor, Department of English, University of Dammam, Eastern Province, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*

### ABSTRACT

*The fundamental task of schools is to endow students with strategies, which enable them to elaborate, transform, contrast and critically rebuild knowledge, that develops strategic knowledge. Learning strategy is the specific action to make the students better in learning a second language. Learning Strategy Training is based on problems the students encounter in the process of learning target language. These problems are needed to be solved for an effective learning. Learning Strategy Training focuses on learner training as much as language teaching. Students should be responsible for their own learning. The teacher helps them to facilitate their learning and to be more effective in learning the target language. Students should be aware of the use of strategies useful for language learning.*

*Keywords: Language Learning Strategies, Training Procedures, Training Models, Techniques, Cognition.*

### INTRODUCTION

Learning strategy is the specific action to make the students better in learning a second language. In the early 1970s, language learners were seen to be more actively responsible for their own learning. In keeping with this perception, in 1975, Rubin investigated what 'good language learners' facilitate their learning. From this investigation, some of their learning strategies, 'the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge' were identified. Good language learners, according to Rubin, are willing and accurate guessers who have a strong desire to communicate and will attempt to do. They attend to both the meaning and the form of their message. They also practice and monitor their own speech as well as of others. Rubin also observed that, the students who are not among the group of so called 'good learners' needed training in learning strategies. Less successful students can, therefore, improve their language performance if they become more strategic in their learning approach and develop an appropriate repertoire of learning strategies. Research also indicates that, teachers may play a crucial role in making students more aware of the range of possible strategies by making strategy training part of the foreign language classroom.

Wenden (1985) observed that, language learners' time might be profitably spent in learner training as much as in language training. Such suggestions led to the idea of

learning strategy training, a training in the use of learning strategies in order to improve their learning effectiveness.

According to Oxford and Nyikes (1989), language learning strategies are behaviors or actions which the learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable. It suggests that, teachers should elicit the problems of the students and try to develop a solution for them. Learning Strategy Training is based on problems the students encounter in the process of learning target language.

Stern (1983), had noted that, learning outcomes are much influenced by learning process, and the learning process is affected by the learners' internal characteristics and learning conditions. So the studies on language learning strategies have been of great significance. In this training, students are given the strategy than they are expected to apply it. Learning Strategy Training focuses on learner training as much as language teaching. Students should be responsible for their own learning. They should follow their learning process and be aware of their deficient and efficient sides.

Language training is based on the purpose of teaching the learners' language they learn all the things about a given language. They are expected to learn functions, rules, linguistic forms, how to use language and acquire the language skills also. This focuses on teaching language. On the other hand, learner training is based on learners and

their problem of difficulties in learning. Learners are provided with skills and strategies to be able to learn more easily and effectively.

The teacher help the students to facilitate their learning and to be more effective in learning the target language. After the students get some learning strategies, they have a cognition about them. But they also have a meta cognition which means that, the students should be aware of the use of the strategies. The teacher plays a modeling role while teaching the strategies to the students. The author applies the strategy on a context in the class by thinking aloud.

## **1. Techniques and Strategies used in Learning**

### **1.1. Think Aloud Technique**

Think-aloud is a research method in which the participants speak any words aloud in their mind as they complete a task. Think-aloud research methods have a sound theoretical basis and provide a valid source of data about participant thinking, especially during language based activities. Participants are asked to voice the words in their minds as they solve a wide variety of problems, from visual puzzles to reading comprehension. Think aloud technique is also useful for giving insights into whether people are tackling a task using pattern matching or sequential reasoning. It is also useful for identifying which things they bother with, and which things they don't notice. Learners are taught to think aloud as part of the learning process, so that the instructor can check that the learner is paying attention to the right things.

The teacher attracts the students' attention on their behaviours and use this technique accordingly. On performing this technique, it informs the students what they get by doing so. After introducing the strategy, the author wants the students to practice on the paper given by herself. Also, directs the students while they are practicing and asks questions about the practice and the students reply them. The students' previous experiences are taken into account by the teacher which increase the motivation of them. The teacher also asks why they think so. There is a two-way interaction between the teacher and the students. In this method, the teacher lets the student to think about their questions and guess the answer from the context

rather than giving the answer directly. Feedbacks for their guesses are given and reinforces the answers' accuracy by looking at the context. After the practice is done, students discuss about their performances and they express what they think about the uses of the strategy. They identify what they acquire and what they need more. The teacher emboldens and they will achieve their difficulties over time using the strategy. It is also announced that they should do more practice on the strategy out of the class and also it reminds them how to use the strategy. These strategies will be useful for the students' academic studies as well as learning the target language.

Research into strategy training shows that better strategy users who display a greater variety of strategies and employ them more frequently, make better language learners. Research has shown that to be effective, strategies should not be taught in isolation. Some other strategies also would be effective to acquire a task. Chamot and O'Malley identified three strategies to enhance learning strategy training, Cognitive strategies, Metacognitive strategies and Affective strategies.

### **1.2 Cognitive Strategies**

Cognitive strategy involve learner's interaction and manipulating what is to be learned. Examples include replaying a word or a phrase mentally to 'listen' to it again, outlining and summarizing what has been learned from reading or listening and using key words. Cognitive strategies enable the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways, e.g., through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, reorganizing information to develop stronger schemas (knowledge structures), practicing in naturalistic settings, and practicing structures and sounds formally.

### **1.3 Metacognitive Strategies**

Metacognitive strategies are used to plan, monitor and evaluate a learning task. Examples of metacognitive strategies include arranging the conditions that help one learn, setting long and short term goals and checking one's comprehension during listening or reading. Metacognitive strategies (e.g., identifying one's own learning style preferences and needs, planning for an L2 task, gathering and organizing materials, arranging a study space and a

schedule, monitoring mistakes, and evaluating task success, and evaluating the success of any type of learning strategy) are employed for managing the learning process overall.

## **1.4 Affective Strategies**

The other category is Affective strategies where learners, interact with other persons or use affective (emotional) control to assist learning. Examples include creating situations to practice the target language with others, using self-task, where one thinks positively and talks oneself through a difficult task and cooperating or working with others to share information, obtain feedback and complete a task. Affective strategies, such as identifying one's mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding oneself for good performance, and using deep breathing or positive self talk, have been shown to be significantly related to L2 proficiency, affective strategies showed a negative link with some measures of L2 proficiency.

There are few other strategies also in practice to enhance learning.

## **1.5 Memory-Related Strategies**

Memory-related strategies help learners link one L2 item or concept with another, but do not necessarily involve deep understanding. Various memory-related strategies enable learners to learn and retrieve information in an orderly string (e.g., acronyms), while other techniques create learning and retrieval via sounds (e.g., rhyming), images (e.g., a mental picture of the word itself or the meaning of the word), a combination of sounds and images (e.g., the keyword method), body movement (e.g., total physical response), mechanical means (e.g., flashcards), or location (e.g., on a page or blackboard).

## **1.6 Compensatory Strategies**

Compensatory strategies (e.g., guessing from the context in listening and reading; using synonyms and "talking around" the missing word to aid speaking and writing; and strictly for speaking, using gestures or pause words) helps the learner make up for missing knowledge.

## **1.7 Social Strategies**

Social strategies (e.g., asking questions to get verification,

asking for clarification of a confusing point, asking for help in doing a language task, talking with a native-speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms) help the learner work with others and understand the target culture as well as the language.

## **2. The Importance of Learning Strategies in Today's Education**

Learning strategies help the learners to reflect over their own way of learning, aiming at improving their processes. It helps the learners get to know themselves as "learners", identify their difficulties and competences at the learning moment, in order to anticipate and fill in their gaps and needs during their learning situation and ask for help. Using these learning strategies, learners make dialogue with one another, to activate their previous knowledge on the handling material and to relate them with each new piece of information. Learners are being intentional as to the objectives of their own learning and understanding of other people's priorities and objectives, especially their teachers so as to better adjust to their demands. Learning strategies help the learners to learn and not only to pass an examination in school subjects, making it clear that they can only learn properly when it implies comprehension effort and, above all, they should show them that this learning is more profitable in the future because it is lasting and functional. Learners act in a scientific way in his/her learning, converting ideas into hypotheses, giving evidence of the validity of those ideas through experimentation or confronting them with other ideas, interpreting the obtained results and reformulating them if necessary from the starting point.

Rubin (1981) states that, the strategies are not the preserve of highly capable individuals, but could be learned by other moderate and slow learners. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) also states that, the learning strategies of good language learners, once identified and successfully taught to less competent learners, could have considerable potential for enhancing the development of second language skills; and that second language teachers could play an active and valuable role by teaching students on how to apply learning strategies to varied language activities and how to extend the strategies to new tasks both

in the language classroom and in content areas requiring language skills.

### 3. The Teacher's Roles in Strategies Training

The language Teachers aiming at training his students in using language learning strategies should learn about the students, their interests, motivations, and learning styles. The teacher can learn what language learning strategies the students already appear to be using, observing their behavior in class. Besides observing their behavior in class, the teacher can prepare a short questionnaire so that the students can fill in at the beginning of a course to describe themselves and their language learning. The teachers can have adequate knowledge about the students, their goals, motivation, language learning strategies and their understanding of the course to be taught. Cohen (1998) speak about learning strategies fields and their usage in second language and importance of strategies training role by teacher in his book, and he expresses the strategy training and gives more responsibility to a student in the class who can develop language and help them to know their strength and weakness in learning process, so it encourages other learners to "learn how to learn" and "learn how use strategies". Strategies should be chosen to fit the requirements of the language task, the learners' goals, and the learner's styles of learning. Student should have plenty of opportunities for strategy training during language classes. Strategy training should include explanation, handouts, activities, brainstorming, and materials for reference and home study. Strategy training should be somewhat individualized, as different students prefer or need certain strategies for particular tasks. Strategy training should provide students with a mechanism to evaluate their own progress and to evaluate the success of training and the value of the strategies.

### 4. Various Techniques to Enhance Learning

#### 4.1 Concept Mapping

Cognitive psychologists postulate that, learning is a process that new knowledge is added to an existing knowledge web/network by creating associations to existing knowledge (Anderson 1992). Based on this idea, concept mapping is used as a technique of learning strategy. A concept map is a graphic representation for organizing and representing the

pieces and parts of knowledge. They include concepts, usually enclosed in circles or boxes of some type, and relationships between concepts or propositions, indicated by a connecting line between two concepts. The principle goal of concept mapping is to have your students discover, define and develop an understanding of the interrelated parts of a complex set of ideas.

#### 4.2 Mnemonic Devices

A mnemonic device is a memory-directed tactic that helps a learner transform or organize information to enhance its retrievability. Such devices can be used to learn and remember individual items of information (a name, a fact, a date), sets of information (a list of names, a list of vocabulary definitions, a sequence of events), and ideas expressed in text. These devices range from simple, easy-to-learn techniques to somewhat complex systems that require a fair amount of practice.

- Metacognitive development by providing students with skills and vocabulary to talk about their learning. Note taking, various study techniques, and vocabulary assignments can be handled in this way.
- They can make bridging by building on previous knowledge and establishing a link between the students and the material. Think-pair-share, quick-writes, and anticipatory charts can be handled this way.
- They can use Schema-Building by helping students see the relationship between various concepts. Compare and contrast, jigsaw learning, peer teaching, and projects can be given to the students using schema building.
- *Text Representation*: Inviting students to extend their understandings of text and apply them in a new way. Student created drawings, posters, videos, and games can be handled in this way.
- *Modeling*: Speaking slowly and clearly, modeling the language you want students to use, and providing samples of student work.

### 5. Models of Strategy Training

With the development of strategy training, researchers have probed and tested various models for strategy training.

## 5.1 Pearson and Dole's Model

Pearson & Dole (1987) designed a strategy training model for L1 learners. It advocates teachers to first give students the explanation of the benefits of applying a specific strategy and the modeling, which is followed by students transferring the strategy to new environment. In the beginning of the training, the teachers introduce various strategies and ask students to practice individually. Students may better understand the applications of the various strategies, if they are first modeled by the teacher and then practice them individually. After some strategies have been introduced and practiced, the teacher can further encourage independent strategy use and promote learners' autonomy.

The steps in implementing this strategy:

1. Introduction to the target strategy through examples.
2. The teacher exposes the students to examples and discusses with them how, when, where and why the strategy is used.
3. The selected strategy is defined and its application is demonstrated with the teacher modeling.
4. The teacher and students do exercises together for more practice so that the students can do independently.
5. The students do the same type of exercises independently.

## 5.2. Oxford Model

The steps in implemented in this strategy:

1. In the beginning, no cues are given to the students and they are asked to immerse into an authentic language task.
2. The teacher introduces and demonstrates other helpful strategies, mentioning the need for greater self-direction and expected benefits.
3. Allow learners with a plenty of time to practice the new strategies with language tasks and show how the strategies can be transferred to other tasks.
4. Provide practice using the techniques with new tasks and allow learners to make choices about the strategies they will use to complete the language

learning tasks.

5. Help students understand how to evaluate the success of their strategy use and to gauge their progress as more responsible and self-directed learners.

## 5.3 Cohen's Model

In this model, the teacher plays different roles.

1. As a diagnostician, the teacher help students identify the current strategies and learning styles
2. As a language learner, the teacher shares own learning experiences and thinking processes.
3. As a learner trainer, the teacher trains the students how to use learning strategies.
4. As coordinator, the teacher supervises the students' study plans and monitors their difficulties.
5. As a mentor, the teacher provides guidance on students' progress.

## 5.4 Chamot's Model

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is investigated by Chamot and O'Malley. It is designed to develop the academic language skills of the students with limited English proficiency. Since their first proposal of this approach in 1986, Chamot and O'Malley have continuously been working on the model, enlarging and refining it. This model integrates academic language development, content area instruction and explicit instruction in learning strategies for both content and language acquisition. The CALLA (Chamot, A.U. (2004) and Chamot 2005) model is composed of six steps, namely:

### 5.4.1 Preparation

In this stage, the teacher identifies the students' current learning strategies for familiar tasks, such as recalling their prior knowledge, previewing the key vocabulary and concepts to be introduced to the lesson.

### 5.4.2 Presentation

In this stage, the teacher models, names, explains new strategy; and asks students if and how they have used it, such as selective attention, self-monitoring, inference, elaboration, imagery and note-taking strategies.

### 5.4.3 Practice

In this stage, the students practice new strategy; in

subsequent strategy practice, the teacher fades the reminders to encourage independent strategy use by being asked to check their language production, plan to develop an oral or written report or classify concepts.

#### 5.4.4 Evaluation

In this phase, the students evaluate their own strategy use immediately after practice, determining the effectiveness of their own learning by summarizing or giving a self-talk, either cooperatively or individually.

#### 5.4.5 Expansion Activities

In this phase, the students transfer the strategies to new tasks, combine strategies into clusters, develop repertoire of preferred strategies and integrate them into their existing knowledge frameworks.

#### 5.4.6 Assessment

In this stage, the teacher assesses the students' use of strategies and their impact on performance.

Chamot's model integrates strategy learning into the content-based and academic activities, which reflects the philosophy in language learning and teaching.

### 5.5 Grenfell and Harris' Model

Grenfell and Harris (1999) developed a model of language learning strategies instruction as follows:

1. The students complete a task, and then identify the strategies they use. They also get awareness about the strategy they use.
2. The teacher models, discusses the value of new strategy, and makes checklist of strategies for later use.
3. The students make a general practice of new strategies with different tasks.
4. The students set goals and choose strategies to attain those goals.
5. The students carry out action plan using selected strategies; the teacher fades prompts so that, the students use strategies automatically.
6. The teacher and students evaluate success of action plan, set new goals, and the cycle begins again.

### 6. Implementation of the Training Strategies

Activities to be performed in the lecture has the function of

introducing specific strategies and guiding learners to reflect on their role in learning. After selecting a specific strategy, workshops can be offered for further practical opportunities for strategy implementation and reinforcement. Generally, activities encouraged learners to activate a set of strategies rather than practice one learning strategy.

During the training, learners can be informed of the value and purpose of strategies employed in specific activities and of the possibility of employing them in different contexts. When presenting new strategies, students must be instructed to carry out an activity first, without any training, and then they can be remarked on what they do to fulfill the task. Subsequently, the teacher can discuss the usefulness of strategies building on the students observations. Teachers can introduce other helpful techniques for the task at hand, and invite learners to try out the new strategies on similar tasks. It was assumed that, the students would feel free to experiment with them, and would accept or reject old and new strategies on the basis of their effectiveness for their individual learning, rather than use them purely because they were required for an assessment item.

### Conclusion

Language learning strategies, being specific actions, behaviors, tactics, or techniques, facilitate the learning of the target language by the language learner. All language learners, use language learning strategies in the learning process. Since the factors like age, gender, personality, motivation, self-concept, life-experience, learning style, excitement, anxiety, etc., affect the way in which the language learners learn the target language, it is not reasonable to support the idea that all language learners use the same good language learning strategies or should be trained in using and developing the same strategies to become successful learners.

### References

- [1]. Anderson, O. R. (1992). "Some interrelationships between constructivist models of learning and current Neurobiological Theory, with implications for science education". *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, Vol.29(10), pp.1037-1058.

## ARTICLES

- [2]. Chamot, A.U. (2004). "Issues in Language Learning Strategy Research and Teaching". *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, Vol.1(1), pp.14-26.
- [3]. Chamot, (2005). *Language Learning Strategy Instruction: Current Issues and Research*. Cambridge University Press.
- [4]. Cohen, A.D. (1998, 2000). *Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language*. Addison Wesley Longman Limited.
- [5]. Grenfell, M. & Harris, V. (1999). *Modern Languages and Learning Strategies: In Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- [6]. Oxford R. & M. Nyikos, (1989). "Variables Affecting Choice of Language Learning Strategies by University Students". *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol.3, pp. 291-299.
- [7]. O'Malley, J.M. & A.U. Chamot, (1990). *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [8]. Person P D & J A Dole, (1987). "Explicit Comprehension Instruction: A Review of Research and a New Conceptualization of Learning". *Elementary School Journal*, Vol.94(2), pp.121-137.
- [9]. Rubin, J. (1981). "Study of cognitive processes in second language learning". *Applied Linguistics*, Vol.11, pp.117-131
- [10]. Stern, H. (1983). *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [11]. Wenden, A L (1985). "Learner strategies". *TESOL Newsletter*, Vol. 19(5), pp.1-7.

---

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. M. Evangelin Arulsevi is presently working as an Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia. She earned her Master Degrees in English, Public Administration, Counselling Psychotherapy and Education and her Ph.D in Education English at Periyar University, Salem. She has a brilliant academic career and she has been teaching for the past 23 years. She has obtained the "Best Teacher" Award and the "Best Principal" Award. She has written 16 Books on English Education, which are used by Education Universities and many Education colleges in India and abroad. She has written several Research Articles in the leading International Journals and presented Research Papers in the International Conferences.

