



Efficiency of Language Learning Strategies in School Children by Lalitha Raja. R

## Efficiency of Language Learning Strategies in School Children

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### Abstract

In present scenario learning English language is the breath of one's life in education in India. Learning strategy is choice that the learner makes while learning or using the second language that affects learning. [Cook, 1996]. Unconsciously a learner follows certain types of strategies. This paper attempted to focus on the learning strategies taught by the teachers and used by the students of third, fourth and fifth standard language learners in immersion settings. Data collected for the main study included (a) classroom observations, (b) Think-aloud protocols and (c) interviews with teachers. The students in these immersion programs are mainly from native Tamil-speaking families. The present study observed the strategies which were used and taught to the school children. The strategies taught by the teachers and adopted by the students were equated with the strategies listed by Oxford (1990). The efficiency of the strategies used was estimated.

### Introduction

Learning a second language is almost acquiring the ability to use its structure within a general vocabulary under essentially the condition of normal communication among their peers at conversational speed. According to psychologists, language learning can't be understood through trial and error, association, gestalt or overt behaviour alone. It requires a more comprehensive explanation and some specific tools because it involves simultaneously

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the widest range of human activity. Learning strategy is one such tool to learn language easily.

Learning strategy is choice that the learner makes while learning or using the second language that affects learning [Cook, 1996]. Foreign or second language (L2) learning strategies are specific actions, behaviors, steps or techniques often used by students consciously to improve their progress in apprehending, internalizing, and using the L2 (Oxford, 1990).

Learning strategies are the certain type of procedures followed to improve one's own learning, through the storage, retention, recall, and use of new information about the target language. They are the specific thoughts and behaviors used by the students to facilitate the completion of language learning tasks. With the help of the strategies students can learn to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own language learning. They can also deal with difficulties when language learning strategies were applied systematically. In other words, learners can develop language learning repertoires which include:

- cognitive strategies to practice and manipulate the target language,
- affective strategies to gauge their emotional reactions to learning and lower their anxieties,
- compensatory strategies to overcome limitations in target language skills,
- memory strategies to increase their ability to acquire and use the target language,
- social strategies, such as cooperation with other learners, seeking opportunities to interact with efficient users of the language,
- metacognitive strategies to manage and supervise the strategy use. (Weaver & Cohen, 1994)

**Why strategies are important for learning?**

It is well known that learning is conscious knowledge of acquiring language rules. It does not typically lead to conversational fluency and it is derived from formal instruction. Language learning strategies contribute to this all parts of the learning continuum.

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Development of communicative competence requires realistic interaction among learners using meaningful contextualized language. Learning strategies help learners participate actively in such authentic communication. Such strategies operate in both general and specific ways to encourage the development of communicative competence.

According to Oxford (1990),

“Metacognitive strategies help learners to regulate their own cognition and to focus, plan, and evaluate their progress as they move towards communicating competence.

Affective strategies develop in the self confidence and perseverance needed for learners to involve themselves actively in language learning, a requirement for attaining communicative competence.

Social strategies provide increased interaction and the more empathetic understanding, two qualities necessary to reach communicative competence.

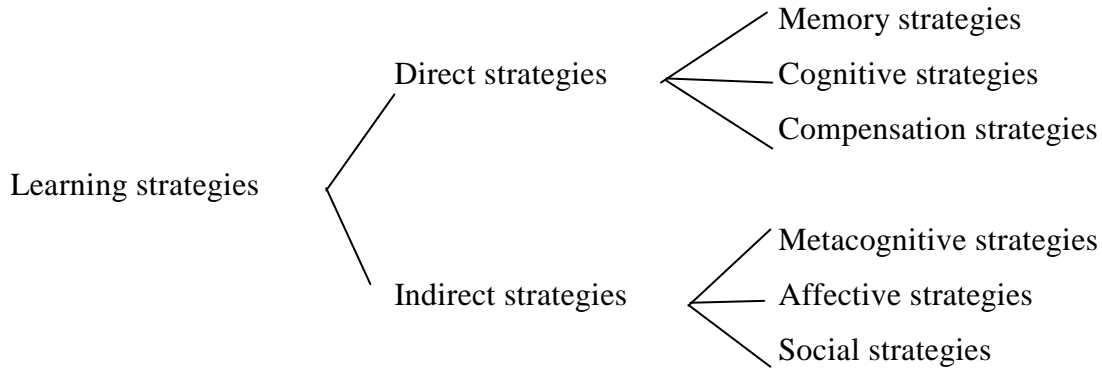
Cognitive strategies help in analyzing and memory strategies like keyword technique help to understand and recall new information.

Compensation strategies help in overcoming knowledge gaps and continuing to communicate authentically.”

Oxford also says that, when learner’s competence grows strategies can act in specific ways to foster particular aspects of that competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic elements.

**Types of Strategies**

According to O’Malley and Chamot (1990) these are three main types of strategies used by L2 students (i) meta cognitive (ii) cognitive and (iii) social strategies where as in Oxford (1990) the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies are given as direct and indirect strategies. Each of them having a further classification as direct learning strategy consists of memory, cognitive and compensation strategies and indirect learning strategy consist of metacognitive, affective and social strategies. According to Oxford (1990) the language learning strategies have been characterized as follows

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Further, these six strategies have been classified into 19 strategies and those are further classified into 62 strategies. Also language learning skills like Listening (**L**), Speaking (**S**), Reading (**R**) and Writing (**W**) which can be enhanced through these strategies were related to each strategy which helps to develop these skills were given. They are tabulated below.

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>W</b>
Grouping ( <b>L, R</b> )	+	+	-	-
Associating/ elaborating ( <b>L, R</b> )	+	+	-	-
Placing a new word in to a context ( <b>A- All four Skills</b> )	+	+	+	+
Using imagery ( <b>L, R</b> )	+	+	-	-
Semantic mapping ( <b>L, R</b> )	+	+	-	-
Using key words ( <b>L, R</b> )	+	+	-	-
Representing sounds in memory ( <b>L, R, S</b> )	+	+	+	-
Structured reviewing ( <b>A</b> )	+	+	+	+
Using physical response or sensation ( <b>L, R</b> )	+	+	-	-
Using mechanical techniques ( <b>L, R, W</b> )	+	+	-	+
Repeating ( <b>A</b> )	+	+	+	+
Formally practicing with sounds and writing system ( <b>L, S, W</b> )	+	-	+	+
Recognizing and using formulas and patterns ( <b>A</b> )	+	+	+	+



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Recombining (S, W)	-	-	+	+
Practicing naturalistically (A)	+	+	+	+
Getting the idea quickly (L, R)	+	+	-	-
Using resources for receiving and sending messages (A)	+	+	+	+
Reasoning deductively (A)	+	+	+	+
Analyzing expressions (L, R)	+	+	-	-
Analyzing contrastively (L, R)	+	+	-	-
Translating (A)	+	+	+	+
Transferring (A)	+	+	+	+
Taking notes (L, R, W)	+	+	-	+
Summarizing (L, R, W)	+	+	-	+
Highlighting (L, R, W)	+	+	-	+
Using linguistic clues (L, R)	+	+	-	-
Using other clues (L, R)	+	+	-	-
Switching to the mother tongue (S)	-	-	+	-
Getting help (S)	-	-	+	-
Using mime for gesture (S)	-	-	+	-
<b>Strategies</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>W</b>
Avoiding communication partially or totally (S)	-	-	+	-
Selecting the topic (S, W)	-	-	+	+
Adjusting or approximating the message (S, W)	-	-	+	+
Coining words (S, W)	-	-	+	+
Using the circumlocution or synonym (S, W)	-	-	+	+
Over viewing and linking with already known material (A)	+	+	+	+
Paying Attention (A)	+	+	+	+
Delaying speech production to focus on listening (L, S)	+	+	+	+
Finding out about language learning (A)	+	+	+	+

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Organizing (A)	+	+	+	+
Setting goals and objectives (A)	+	+	+	+
Identifying the purpose of your learning language task (purposeful L/S/R/W) (A)	+	+	+	+
Planning for a language task (A)	+	+	+	+
Seeking practice opportunities (A)	+	+	+	+
Self-monitoring (A)	+	+	+	+
Self-evaluating (A)	+	+	+	+
Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing or meditation (A)	+	+	+	+
Using music (A)	+	+	+	+
Using laughter (A)	+	+	+	+
Making positive statements (A)	+	+	+	+
Taking risks wisely (A)	+	+	+	+
Rewarding yourself (A)	+	+	+	+
Listening to your body (A)	+	+	+	+
Using a checklist (A)	+	+	+	+
Writing the language learning diary (A)	+	+	+	+
Discussing your feelings with someone else (A)	+	+	+	+
Asking for clarification or verification (L, R)	+	+	-	-
Asking for correction (S, W)	-	-	+	+
Co-operating with peers (A)	+	+	+	+
Co-operating with proficient users of the new language (A)	+	+	+	+
Developing cultural understanding (A)	+	+	+	+
Beginning aware of others thoughts and feelings (A)	+	+	+	+

**Methodology**

- The present study focuses on learning strategies taught by the teachers and used by the students of third, fourth and fifth standard language learners in immersion settings.



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The present study observed the strategies which were used and taught to the school children. The strategies taught by the teachers and adopted by the students are given below for each strategy which is equivalent to the strategies given by Oxford. If they do not follow any strategy they were left blank. The first row shows the strategies listed by Oxford and second row shows the strategies taught by the teachers and adopted by the students.

**MEMORY STRATEGIES**

Grouping	Associating	Placing new words into the context
Grouping related words	Associating with already known items	Make sentences of your own

Using imagery	Semantic mapping	Using Keywords	Representing sounds in memory
Flash Cards, Experimental Explanation	Mind mapping	-	Teaching rhyming words and synonyms

Structured reviewing	Using physical response or sensation	Using mechanical techniques
Practicing Periodically	Acting according to the commands	Flash card technique to memorize words and sentences



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**COGNITIVE**

Repeating	Formally practicing with sounds and writing system	Recognizing and using formulas and patterns	Recombining	Practicing naturalistically (spoken language )
By home work and tests	Pronouncing and writing	Teaching phrases as chunks	Joining words to make sentences	Using in natural context

Getting the idea quickly	Using resources for receiving and sending messages	Taking notes	Summarizing	Highlighting
Skimming, scanning	Using heard and printed resources	not used	Used for essay answers	By underlining

Reasoning deductively	Analyzing expressions	Analyzing contrastively	Translating	Transferring
With the knowledge of rules producing sentences	Breaking down the sentences to know the meaning	Analyzing sounds words and syntax with one's own language	Word to word translation in one's own language	{aTiccifying} Transferring rules in one's own language



## COMPENSATION STRATEGIES

Using linguistic clues	Using other clues
Suffixes, prefixes and word order for guessing meaning / Clues from their own language	Images / pictures

Switching to the mother tongue	Getting help	Using mime or gesture	Avoiding communication partially or totally
Used in spoken form	From teachers, parents and others	To compensate unknown words	To compensate unknown words

Selecting the topic	Adjusting or approximating the message	Coining words	Using the circumlocution or synonym
-	Giving the main idea	To form unknown words [Black board stand]	Using related words



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**METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES**

Over viewing and linking with already known material	Paying attention	Delaying speech production to focus on listening
Relating with already taught/ known things	Made to be attentive	Made to listen and then to speak

Finding out about language learning	Organizing	Setting goals and objectives	Identifying the purpose of your learning language task (purposeful L/S/R/W)	Planning for a language task	Seeking practice opportunities
-	Taught to organize the points	Homework, reading work for examination	Focusing on each skill according to the syllabus	Following the syllabus	Giving opportunities to practice

Self-monitoring In	Self-evaluating
Made to self-monitor by listening their own speech	Made to self-evaluate their own writing



## AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing or meditation	Using music	Using laughter
-	For memorizing points	-

Making positive statements	Taking risks wisely	Rewarding yourself
You can do /I can do	Trying to speak or write on their own	Enjoying by dancing and patting themselves

Listening to your body	Using the checklist	Writing the language learning diary	Discussing your feeling with someone else
-	-	-	-

**Efficiency of Language Learning Strategies in School Children by Lalitha Raja. R****SOCIAL STRATEGIES**

Asking for clarification or verification	Asking for correction	Cooperating with peers	Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
To teachers and peers	To teachers and peers	Group study	Clarifying doubt with group leaders

Developing cultural understanding	Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings
-	-

The usage of strategies by each student was observed. Also strategies taught by the teachers were also notified. Apart from observation and interaction with teachers about the usage of strategies, for each student Think-aloud protocol was used to identify the type of strategies used by him/her. On observation the strategies used for improving writing skills are mostly adapted. Also the children were given the sentence completion test for language assessment. Their results were analyzed and compared with their usage. With the help of the data statistical tools like Multiple Regression, and T-test, the efficiency of language learning according to the usage of strategies are analyzed and given below.

**Data analysis**

All the strategies are proved to be the reliable categories while testing language development by Multiple Regression.

Table A: Shows the Multiple Regression, for the language development in the syntactic analysis.

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MODEL	R	R SQUARE	ADJUSTED R SQUARE	STD. ERROR OF THE ESTIMATE
1	.895 <sup>a</sup>	.801	.797	10.2049

**Table A**

It is observed from the regression table that the obtained R square value is .801. So it is inferred that the sub-dimensional variables (all 62 strategies) are highly contributed at a percentage of 80 to develop the student's language proficiency. This has been confirmed statistically with the help of obtained F- value 201.251 which is highly significant.

This can be inferred from the Table B

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	188624.0	9	20958.226	201.251	.000a
	Residual	46758.714	449	104.140		
	Total	235382.7	458			

**Table B****Influence of Gender**

Table below, shows the mean, SD and t-ratio of all the students irrespective of the standards and schools, at Chidambaram Taluk regarding their development of language.

Gender	N	Mean	S D	SEM	t-ratio	LS
Boys	108	44.69	23.84	1.52	4.11	1%
Girls	108	54.05	24.72	1.69		

The total population is taken irrespective of school and standards. The mean score of girls (54.05) is more than that of boys (44.69). The difference obtained of mean score is statistically confirmed by the calculated t-value (4.11) which is significant at 1% level. So

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regarding the whole population, irrespective of schools and standards, the hypothesis that, ‘the girls have better usage of strategies than the boys’ in the development of language is accepted.

**Influence of socio economic status**

Table below shows the Mean, SD and t-value of all students irrespective of their standards and schools at Chidambaram taluk, regarding their development of language.

SES	N	Mean	S.D	SEM	t-ratio	LS
High	108	60.16	21.22	1.25	16.44	1%
Low	108	29.99	17.51	1.35		

The total student population is taken as a whole irrespective of schools and standards and it shows that high socio economic students have got more mean score (60.16) than that of low socio economic students (29.99) in the development of language. The difference of obtained mean score is statistically confirmed by the calculated t-value (16.44) which is significant at 1% level. Therefore the above said hypothesis “Students with high socio economic background have more usage of strategies than low socio economic background students” in the development of language is accepted.

**Statistical analysis of t-test was used to test possible differences between the efficiency of strategies while using and not using.**

Table below shows the Mean, SD and t-value of all students irrespective of their standards and schools at Chidambaram taluk, regarding their development of language.

Usage of Strategies	N	Mean	S D	SEM	t-ratio	LS
Used	108	27.47	24.86	1.59	7.01	1%
Not-used	108	45.20	27.52	1.88		

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When the total population is taken irrespective of schools and standards the mean score of used (45.20) is more than that of not-used (27.47). The difference of obtained mean score is statistically confirmed by the calculated t-value (7.201), which is significant at 1% level. Therefore regarding the whole population, irrespective of schools and standards the hypothesis that usage of strategies gives better learning capacity than that when strategies are used in the development of language is accepted.

**The percentages of student population using particular strategies are given below:  
According the results, out of 216;**

- 40.92% use memory, cognitive and social strategies
- 16.43% use memory, cognitive and compensation strategies
- 12.86% use memory, meta cognitive strategies
- 24.67% use memory, cognitive and meta cognitive strategies
- 5.12% use all memory, cognitive, compensation, meta cognitive, affective and social strategies together.

According to their usage of strategies [i.e. combination of strategies] their percentage of scoring differs. The combination of strategies used and the consequent results are given below.

- The students who use all the six strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation, meta cognitive, affective and social strategies ) together are scoring more than 80%
- The students who use memory, cognitive, meta cognitive, compensation and social strategies score more than 65%.
- The students who use memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies score more than 53%
- The students who use memory strategies alone score more than 51%
- The students who use affective strategies alone score more than 51%
- The students who use cognitive strategies alone score more than 48%

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- The students who use metacognitive strategies alone score more than 36%
- The students who use compensation strategies alone score more than 30%

**The sample data of efficient strategy users were given below:**

**DATA**

- I like fashionable dresses, beautiful pictures and lovely toys.
  - Interesting novels
- At night time I am having night mare.
  - I'm frightened of darkness
  - I have colorful dreams
- My great fear is to ride a bicycle
- When I was younger I was looking charm.
- I suffer from fever often.
- Writing is interesting.
- At school we enjoy with our friends.
- I failed to do my homework yesterday.
- I hate enmity.
- My father is a fantastic man.
- Most girls are idiots.
  - have long hair.
  - are beautiful.
- A mother is a loving one.
  - caring person.

**Results**

The present study shows that;

1. Language learning strategies are helpful and show significant development in vocabulary and syntactic formation.

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2. Girls are better than boys in using the strategies. They use strategies for their efficient learning. So girls score more marks than boys and also they are very proficient in language than boys.
3. Socio economic status of the student shows a significant discrimination between high and low group. This proves that the environment supports the high economic group a lot for the usage of strategies in efficient way than the other group.
4. Also efficiency is found in language learning while using the strategies than not using it. It is proved that there are possible differences seen while using strategies and not using it and the efficiency of language learning is shown as the result.
5. The vocabulary and in syntax of the children who use the strategies efficiently is excellent than the non users.

**Conclusion**

- Due to the beneficiary aspects of strategy usage; the schools and they colleges has to implement the strategy training programs for both teachers and students. It provides a variety of options for teaching large number of students efficiently, as well as to the needs of the individual institution or language program.
- The educational institutions have to use the available resources (e.g., time, money, materials, and availability of teacher trainers) for training strategies to the children. If resources are not available, the institution has to make it possible to design the strategy training program according to the students' needs. They should find out the feasibility of providing this kind of instruction.
- When they are including strategies-based instruction in a language curriculum, they must also choose an instructional model that introduces the strategies to the students and raises awareness of their learning preferences; teaches them to identify, practice, evaluate, and transfer strategies to new learning situations; and promotes learner autonomy to enable students to continue their learning after they leave the language classroom.

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