

English Language Learning Strategies in Second Language Environments: Implications for L2 Learners and Teachers

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Abstract

Within the field of language learning and teaching over the last few decades, a gradual but significant shift has taken place, resulting in greater emphasis on learners and learning. This article provides an overview of key issues concerning one consequence of the above shift: the focus on, and use of language learning strategies (LLS) in second language (L2) learning and teaching. In doing so, the paper first defines the concept: language learner strategies drawing from key points in the LLS literature. It further considers some kinds of language learning strategies and provides a short description of how and why LLS may be used in the classroom by second language teachers. Even though learner autonomy is a subject matter that can sustain a full fledged article, it is briefly examined here. This succinct discussion is occasioned by the learner autonomy's very close correlation with language learning strategies. The paper notes that LLS use and training in the L2 class not only encourages learners in their language learning, but also helps teachers reflect on, and improve their teaching. It thus suggests the integration of LLS into both the language learning/teaching curricula of schools in L2 environments, so that LLS might be included in the regular L2 classes. The final section pithily outlines some questions that need researchers' attention.

Keywords: language learning, second language, learning strategies, second language environments, language learning strategies

1. Introduction

We are compelled to engage in this discussion by the dwindling state of the learning and teaching vis-à-vis the apparent abysmal performance of Nigerian students in the English language in schools. The paper draws inspiration from the theory of language learning and teaching.

We observed in the abstract that one of the most important spin-offs of more communicatively oriented language learning and teaching has been the premium placed on the role of the learner in the language learning process. This shift of responsibility from teachers to learners is the result of a concatenation of changes to the curriculum itself towards a more learner-centred kind of learning. The reshaping of teacher and learner roles has been conducive to a radical change in the age-old distribution of power and authority that used to plague the traditional classroom (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Thanasoulas-Autonomy.html>). Pitched in a new perspective and regarded as having the 'capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action' (Little, p. 4), learners, autonomous learners are expected to assume greater responsibility for, and take charge of, their own learning. This, however, does not imply that the teacher be laid off, or relinquishes his control over what is happening in the language learning process. In this paper, it will be understood that language learning strategies and learner autonomy are dynamic processes rather than static products, which can be reached once and for all. Besides, the main thrust of the paper and therefore what permeates it is the belief that in order to help learners assume greater control over their own learning, it is important to help them become aware of, and identify the strategies that they may already be using, or could potentially use.

Training in, and awareness cum application of both learner autonomy and language learning strategies by second language learners will help to alter their current attitudes towards language learning. According to Oxford (1990a):

... many language students (even adults) ... like to be told what to do, and they only do what is clearly essential to get a good grade – even if they fail to develop useful skills in the process. Attitudes and behaviour like these make learning more difficult and must be changed, or else any effort to train learners to rely more on themselves and use better strategies is bound to fail. (p. 10)

It is therefore hoped that both L2 learners and teachers will not only draw insights from, but be inspired by the knowledge that the paper provides.

2. The concept of language learning strategies

Within L2 education, a number of definitions of LLS have been used by key figures in the field. Earlier on, Tarone (1983) defines a learning strategy (LS) as "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language – to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence" (p. 67). In their seminal study, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) define LS as "the special thoughts or behaviours [sic] that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p. 1). Oxford (1992/1993) provides

the following seemingly comprehensive definition:

... language learning strategies [are] specific actions, behaviours [sic], steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability. (p. 18)

In the same vein, in a survey article, Weinstein and Mayer (1986) define learning strategies broadly as “behaviours and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning” [which are] “intended to influence the learner’s encoding process” (p. 315). These early definitions from the educational literature reflect the roots of LS in cognitive science, with its essential assumptions that human beings process information and that learning involves such information processing. Unquestionably, learning strategies are involved in all learning, irrespective of the content and context. LS are thus used in learning and teaching other subjects such as chemistry, political science, mathematics, history, etc.

From the above definitions, a change over time may be noted: from the early focus on the product of LSS (linguistic or sociolinguistic competence), there is now a greater emphasis on the processes and the characteristics of LLS. At the same time, we should note that LLS are distinct from learning styles, which refer more broadly to a learner’s “natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills” (Reid 1995, p. viii); though, there appears to be an obvious relationship between one’s language learning styles and his or her usual or preferred language learning strategies. (Lessard-Clouston, Available: <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Lessard-Clouston-Strategy.html>)

We would like to observe that in the literature, different scholars use various terms to refer to the concept such as learner strategies, learning strategies, and language learning strategies (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Lessard-Clouston-Strategy.html>). We use these terms interchangeably in this discourse. It is also important to note that generally speaking or in ordinary parlance, strategies are specific plans and methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end. Attempts to define learning strategies are situated in psychology, within the theories of cognition. In the context of language learning, as can be seen in the definitions we have witnessed so far, researchers have different views on what LLS exactly mean. In addition to the foregoing definitions, Rivera-Mills and Plonsky (p. 1) define language learning strategies as the thoughts and actions of learners who are attempting to increase their learning comprehension and retention. Nunan (1991) has posited that language learning strategies are the mental and communicative procedures learners use in order to learn and use a language (p. 171). Otagburuagu (1999) cites Richard, et al as having stated that language learning strategies are ways in which learners attempt to work out the meanings and uses of words, grammatical roles, and other aspects of a language, for example, by the use of generalization and inferencing (p. 100). Lessard-Clouston, again, explains language learning strategies as “specific actions, behaviour, steps, or techniques that students, often intentionally, use to improve their progress in developing second language skills” (p. 12). Macaro corroborates O’Mally and Chamot’s definition, grounded in cognitive theory, that language learning strategy applications “...resemble production system” with *if and then clauses*. For instance: “If the goal is to comprehend an oral or written text, and I am unable to identify a word’s meaning then I will try to infer the meaning from context” (p. 329).

The following definitions of strategies, by some key figures in the field, can explain the concept further; second language learning strategies entail:

- “...any set of...plans, routines used by learners to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval and use of information” (Rubin, p. 19);
- “...tactic, conscious manipulation...a plan, step or conscious action towards (the) achievement of an objective or a goal” (Oxford, 1990a, p. 8);
- “...skills, procedures, and techniques that have been routinized to a level of automaticity, enabling learners to perform a given task fluidly and effectively” (Rivera-Mills & Plonsky, p. 1).

It is therefore apparent from the foregoing that language learning strategies have to do with the input learners of a language make in order to comprehend, process, store, retrieve, and use linguistic data. Drawing from the above, we define language learning strategies as the goals, conscious and unconscious mental actions, language acquisition processes, skills, learning plans which the second language learners adopt in their efforts to learn and use their second language. Learner strategies are thus performance-related, application-specific, subject to different levels of achievements, and usually lead to language learning success. They are tools for self-directed involvement for developing linguistic ability.

3. Characteristics of LLS

There are a number of basic characteristics in the generally accepted view of LLS. Information available in the literature reveals that language learning strategies:

- are learner generated; they are steps taken by language learners;
- enhance language learning and help develop language competence, as reflected in the learner’s

- skills in listening, speaking, reading, or writing the L2;
- may be visible (behaviour, steps, techniques, etc.) or unseen (thoughts and mental processes); and
 - involve information and memory (vocabulary knowledge, grammar rules, etc.) (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Lessard-Clouston-Strategy.html>).
 - Lessard-Clouston explains that different experts in the field of LLS have divergent views on what constitute the features of LLS. He cites Oxford (1990a) and Wenden and Rubin (1987) who postulate that, when discussing LLS, consideration of a desire for control and autonomy of learning on the part of the learner must be included. He further explains that Cohen (1990) insists that only conscious strategies are LLS, and that there must be a choice involved on the part of the learner. He concludes by stating that Oxford, in her teacher-oriented text, summarizes her view of LLS by listing twelve key features. In addition to the foregoing characteristics, she states, among others, that LLS:
 - allow learners to become more self-directed,
 - expand the role of language teachers,
 - are problem-oriented,
 - involve many aspects, not just the cognitive,
 - can be taught,
 - are flexible, and
 - are influenced by a variety of factors.

4. Importance of LLS to L2 Learning and Teaching

Within current communicative approaches to language teaching, the principal objective is for the learner to develop communicative competence in the target L2, and LLS can help students in doing so. Note that an important distinction exists, however, between communication strategies and language learning strategies. While the former are used by speakers intentionally and consciously in order to cope with difficulties in communicating in a L2, the latter is used more generally for *all* strategies that second language learners use in learning the target language. Communication strategies are therefore just one type of language learning strategies (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Lessard-Clouston-Strategy.html>).

For all L2 teachers who aim at helping develop their students' communicative competence and language learning, an understanding of LLS is crucial. As Oxford (1990a) puts it thus, LLS "... are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence" (p. 1). Teachers can help students understand good LLS and should train them to develop and use them. In addition to developing students' communicative competence, LLS are important because research suggests that training students to use LLS can help them become better language learners.

Language learning strategies are also important because second language learners, on their part, can employ a number of positive strategies in their learning efforts. Such strategies include:

- using an active task approach in, and monitoring one's L2 performance;
- listening to programmes conducted in the English language on the radio in the L2 environment; and
- speaking with native speakers when the opportunity is available.

5. Types of language learning strategies

Different researchers have sought different tags to classify learner strategies. Experts such as Lessard-Clouston (1997), R. Ellis (2005), and D. D. Steinberg and N. V. Sciarini (2006) are in accord that successful language learners frequently use the following components of strategies: verification, inductive processing, deductive reasoning, practice, memorization, and monitoring.

From the studies available in the literature, categorization seems to revolve from social, linguistic, creative, and meta-cognitive to affective, compensation and socio-affective strategies. There are, therefore, many, although interrelated, language learning strategies. The kinds of LLS treated here provide categories that summarize the most common types of learner strategies. Skehan's (1989, 1991), O'Malley and Chamot's (1990), and Rivera-Mills and Plonsky's (2007) classification systems include cognitive strategies. Learner characteristics inherent in cognitive strategies, according to Otagburuagu quoting O'Malley and Chamot, include: repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, deduction, recombination, imagery, auditory representation, key word, contextualization, elaboration, transfer, (and) inferencing (pp. 108 – 10).

Meta-cognitive strategies, as noted earlier, are among the types identifiable in the literature. Such strategies involve functional planning, and thinking about production and comprehension. In addition, learners who use these strategies are said to be engaged in directed attention, selective attention, self-management and monitoring, delayed production, note-taking and self- evaluation.

Research by renowned figures in the field gave rise to a new group of learner strategies referred to as *socio-affective strategies* – those that take consideration issues such as co-operation, classroom interaction, question for clarification, and learning environment (Cohen, p. 1; O'Malley & Chamot, cited in Otagburuagu, p. 110; Rivera-Mills & Plonsky, pp. 1-2).

In addition, scholars such as Brown (2000) and Macaro (2001) have recognized what they identify as *communicative strategies*. These, according to Rivera-Mills et al, quoting Macaro, “are productive classroom tools in that they provide learners with the assurances that they are able to communicate despite their perceived lack of ability and knowledge” (p. 2). In the peculiar second language environment, this type of strategy is not useful and should not be encouraged because it encourages the use of Pidgin English.

David Nunan's classification of language learning strategies followed a different slant from those of the other scholars before him: he matched each of the five categories of his learner strategies with macro and micro-skills, and in some cases gave examples of tasks. The five categories of Nunan's language learning strategies include:

- | Strategy | Skills involved |
|-------------------|--|
| i) Cognitive | – classification, predicting, inducing, taking notes, concept mapping, inferencing, discriminating, and diagramming; |
| ii) Interpersonal | – co-operating, and role-playing. This is similar to socio-affective strategies which we have earlier on explained. |
| iii) Linguistic | – conversational patterns, practising, using context, summarizing, selected listening, and skimming; |
| iv) Affective | – personalizing, self-evaluating, reflecting; and |
| v) Creative | – brainstorming. |

(David Nunan qtd. in Otagburuagu, 1999, pp. 111 – 114).

Two other features that make Nunan's language learning strategies distinctive are: Firstly, his linguistic skills mean the same thing as language skills, because the characteristics of this type of LLS and their tasks relate more to speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Secondly, brainstorming is given a special status by categorizing it as a creative strategy.

In the literature, language learning strategies are also categorized as good/positive/coping strategies, or bad/negative/evasive strategies. The former relate to those that help the learners to tackle the learning tasks successfully, and to build up appropriate data that will enable them to use language well for their communicative needs. The latter, on the other hand, lead the learners to handle tasks erroneously and block the acquisition of proper linguistic data for the development of skills (Otagburuagu, p. 1).

Information available to us shows that Oxford's work lays out the most exhaustive hierarchy of learner strategies to date (Rivera-Mills & Plonsky, p. 2). Oxford developed a fairly detailed list of LLS in her taxonomy. She (1990b) differentiates between *direct language learning strategies* and *indirect language learning strategies*. Her direct LLS directly involve the subject matter; i.e., the L2. Under the direct strategies, she lists:

- *Memory strategy*, which creates and helps mental linkages; it also assists in entering information into long-term memory, and retrieving same when needed for communication;
- *Cognitive LLS* that are used for forming, analyzing, and revising internal mental models, and for receiving and producing messages in the target language; and
- *Compensation strategy*: This is used for guessing. It is noted that compensation strategy is needed to overcome any gaps in the knowledge of the target language (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Lessard-Clouston-strategy.html>).

On the other hand, Oxford's indirect LLS “do not directly involve the subject matter itself, but are essential to language learning nonetheless” (Oxford, 1990a, p. 71). Under indirect language learning strategies, Oxford (1990a, 1990b) also describes three types, namely:

- *Meta-cognitive*: This type of learner strategy helps the learners to execute control through planning, arranging, focusing, and evaluating their learning;
- *Affective strategy*: This helps self-encouraging, and enables learners to control feelings, motivations, and attitudes related to language learning. In the opinion of Macaro, affective strategy requires the knowledge of oneself as a learner through recurrent monitoring of one's learning (328); and
- *Social strategy* constitutes Oxford's third type of indirect LLS. It facilitates interaction with others. Within social strategy is found such features as asking questions, co-operating and empathizing with others (Oxford, cited in Lessard-Clouston, p. 4).

Information available in the literature has it that these six main types of Oxford's LLS are further divided into 19 strategy groups and 62 subsets. However, we will only briefly consider the social LLS that Oxford lists under indirect strategies, because of our perception of its relevance to learners of English as a second language.

Three types of social LLS are noted in Oxford (1990a): asking questions, co-operating with others, and

empathizing with others (p. 21). A few applicable examples of LLS given in each of these categories are as follows:

- *Asking questions:*
 - asking for clarification or verification, and asking for correction,
- *Co-operating with others:*
 - co-operating with peers, and co-operating with proficient users of the new language,
- *Empathizing with others:*
 - developing cultural understanding, and becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings.

(Michael Lessard-Clouston, Available: <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Lessard-Clouston-Strategy.html>)

Lessard-Clouston cites Oxford as saying:

What is important to note ... is the way LLS are interconnected, both direct and indirect, and the support they can provide one to the other. In ... social LLS, for example, a student might ask the questions [to] her peers, thereby 'co-operating with others', and in response to the answer he or she [receives] ... might develop some aspect of L2/FL cultural understanding or become more aware of the feelings or thoughts of fellow students, the teacher, or those in the L2/FL culture. What is learned from this experience might then be supported when the same student uses a direct, cognitive strategy such as 'practising' to repeat what he or she has learned or to integrate what was learned into a natural conversation with someone in the target L2/FL. In this case, the way LLS may be inter-connected becomes very clear (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Lessard-Clouston-Strategy.html>).

It is important to note that

- i) Oxford's categories of language learning strategies overlap with those of Nunan.
- ii) one thing is common in the different classifications of the scholars whose works we have examined so far: all of them attempt to identify what successful learners do.

In our experience, during our many years of teaching undergraduates, we notice that students are hesitant to, or do not at all employ the LLS we have discussed so far in their efforts to learn.

As we try to have a better understanding of the complex interplay of variables such as language learning strategies that promote second language acquisition, we here turn our attention to a related concept - learner autonomy.

6. Learner Autonomy

Innumerable definitions of autonomy permeate the relevant literature, such as 'independence' (Sheerin, 1991), 'language awareness' (Lier, 1996); and 'self-direction' (Candy, 1991). This attests to the importance attached to it by scholars. We shall here review a few of these definitions and try to glean insights into what learner autonomy means and consists of.

Benson and Voller (p. 1) cite Holec who describes autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's learning." They further state that the term autonomy has come to be used in at least five ways; according to them, autonomy is/used for:

- a situation in which learners study entirely on their own;
- a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning;
- an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education;
- the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning; and
- the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Thanasoulas-Autonomy.html>).

Linguists and educationists have not reached a consensus as to what autonomy really means. For instance, in David Little's terms, learner autonomy is "essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning – a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (p. 4). This implies that it is not something done to learners. In the same vein, Leni Dam (1990) explains that autonomy entails the learner's willingness and capacity to control or oversee his own learning. In other words, "someone qualifies as an autonomous learner when he independently chooses aims and purposes and sets goals; chooses materials, methods and tasks; exercises choice and purpose in organising and carrying out the chosen tasks; and chooses criteria for evaluation" (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Thanasoulas-Autonomy.html>).

The autonomous learner, in the opinion of Kohonen (1992), takes a pro-active role in the learning process, generating ideas and availing himself of learning opportunities, rather than simply reacting to various stimuli of the teacher. Candy, et al (1991) cites Rathbone, who describes the autonomous learner as:

a self-activated maker of meaning, an active agent in his own learning process. He is not one to whom things merely happen; he is the one who, by his own volition, causes things to happen. Learning is seen as the result of his own self-initiated interaction with the world. (p. 271)

Candy, et al explain further that within such a conception, learning is not simply a matter of rote

memorisation; “it is a constructive process that involves actively seeking meaning from (or even imposing meaning on) events” (p. 271).

Furthermore, Wenden (pp. 41 – 2) cites Omaggio who outlines the following as the attributes of autonomous learners; according to this source, autonomous learners:

- have insights into their learning styles and strategies;
- take an active approach to the learning task at hand;
- are willing to take risks; i.e., to communicate in the target language at all costs;
- are good guessers;
- attend to form as well as to content; that is, place importance on accuracy as well as appropriacy;
- develop the target language into a separate reference system and are willing to revise and reject hypotheses and rules that do not apply; and
- have a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language.

Here, some comments with respect to the preceding list are called for. The points briefly touched upon above are necessary, but not sufficient conditions. We wish to note that other factors also come into play in the development of learner autonomy. Such variables include learner needs, motivation, learning strategies, and language awareness.

Learner autonomy seems to correlate slightly with the principles of positivism, one of which is the notion that knowledge is attained by dint of the “hypothesis-testing” model, and that it is more effectively acquired when “it is discovered rather than taught” (Benson & Voller, p. 20).

However, constructivism, within applied linguistics, is more strongly associated with learner autonomy. As Candy, et al observe, “One of the central tenets of constructivism is that individuals try to give meaning to, or construe, the perplexing maelstrom of events and ideas in which they find themselves caught up” (254). Candy, et al’s view implies that constructivism “leads directly to the proposition that knowledge cannot be taught but only learned (that is, constructed)”, because knowledge is something “built up by the learner”. This is because according to Candy, et al, citing von Glasersfeld & Smock,

... language learning does not involve internalising sets of rules, structures and forms; each learner brings her own experience and world knowledge to bear on the target language or task at hand. Apparently, constructivism supports, and extends to cover, psychological versions of autonomy that appertain to learners’ behaviour, attitudes, motivation, and self- concept. (p. 270)

Constructivist approaches therefore encourage and promote self-directed learning as a necessary condition for learner autonomy.

Rivera-Mills and Plonsky cite Oxford as having defined learner autonomy as “the self-regulatory practices that a student undertakes in his or her own learning (and which) are characteristics in second language studies that have been found to correlate positively with successful second language acquisition” (p. 2).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that a strong relationship exists between learner autonomy and learner strategies, since both of them promote the self-directed nature of learning. It is also clear that learner autonomy and language learning strategies, especially when used by informed students, place students at the centre of the second language classroom enabling them to make pedagogically sound decisions concerning their own learning. What we have discussed so far underscore the fact that autonomy in learning and language learning strategies are criteria for language learning, especially in second language contexts.

7. Implications of LLS & Learner Autonomy to L2 Teachers/Learners

As a result of the efficacy of LLS and learner autonomy in language teaching and learning, teachers should integrate them into a variety of classes for L2 students. Efforts should be made and care taken to choose texts that will help second language learners understand the language learning process, the nature of language and communication, what language learning resources are available to them, and what specific LLS they might use in order to improve their own vocabulary use, grammar knowledge, and L2 skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This is because LLS training can enhance and complement the L2 teaching and learning.

Whatever type of class the L2 teacher may be focusing on, the following three step approach to implementing LLS training in the classroom may prove useful.

Firstly, it is significant for teachers to study their teaching context, paying special attention to their students, their materials, and their own teaching. A teacher who wants to train his students in using LLS ought to know something about their interests, motivations, learning styles, among others. By observing their behaviour in class, the teacher will be able to see what LLS they already appear to be using. He will be in a position to observe whether they often ask for clarification, verification, or correction, and if they co-operate with their peers or seem to have much contact outside of class with proficient L2 users (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Thanasoulas-Autonomy.html>).

More importantly, teachers ought to study their own teaching methods and overall classroom style.

One of the best ways to do so is to write lesson plans, which must be considered to see if they incorporate various ways that students can learn the language being modelled, practised or presented. We wish to note, and sadly too, that many language teachers in second language environment, such as Nigeria, enter and teach the subject without any prepared material(s), because they want to let the students believe that they (teachers) are intelligent; they can teach offhandedly! It is also helpful to videotape the language teaching/learning session(s). This is because by videotaping one's classroom teaching, the teacher will, after the lesson, be in a position to objectively consider exactly what was actually taught and modelled, and how students responded during the class session and appeared to learn what was taught.

Teachers should encourage questions from their students, and pose questions that are relevant to the learners with whom they interact. Experts in LLS are agreed that

whether formally in action research or simply for informal reflection, teachers who study their students, their materials, and their own teaching will be better prepared to focus on LLS and LLS training within their specific teaching context. (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Thanasoulas-Autonomy.html>)

Secondly, teachers should focus on specific LLS that are relevant to their regular teaching. Informed focus on LLS and LLS training will help students learn and provide more opportunities for them to take responsibility for their learning (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Thanasoulas-Autonomy.html>). If there are some different LLS in the class text, these should be highlighted as the course progresses. It is also necessary to give the students clear examples and model how such LLS may be used in learning generally, and learning to write in particular. If it is found that some LLS which are relevant to the students are not in the text, the gaps should be filled.

The import of LLS and learner autonomy is that teachers of second language should encourage more independent language learning, on the part of the students, both in class and out-of-class activities. As Graham (1997) posits, LLS training:

needs to be integrated into students' regular classes if they are going to appreciate their relevance for language learning tasks; students need to constantly monitor and evaluate the strategies they develop and use; they need to be aware of the nature, function and importance of such strategies. (p. 169)

The third approach to implementing LLS training in the classroom requires teacher reflection, echoing a current trend in pedagogy and the literature in L2 education. In other words, the third step in implementing LLS and LLS training in the L2 classroom entails purposeful teacher reflection and encouraging learner reflection. Lessard-Clouston states that basically, it is useful for teachers to reflect on their own positive and negative experiences in L2 learning. He quotes Graham (1997) who suggests thus: "Those teachers who have thought carefully about how they learned a language, about which strategies are most appropriate for which tasks, are more likely to be successful in developing 'strategic competence' in their students" (<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Lessard-Clouston-Strategy.html>).

At the end of each language class, the teacher should engage in reflection and ponder the effectiveness of the lesson and the role of LLS and LLS training within it. The following, among other questions, should form the major issues to be thought of after each class session:

- i) Do students seem to have grasped the point?
- ii) Did they use the LLS that were modelled in the task they were to perform?
- iii) What improvements for future lessons of this type or on this topic might be gleaned from students' behaviour?

Learner reflections, both during and after the LLS training in the class, should also be encouraged. The views of Graham lend credence to the importance of learner reflections: "For learners, a vital component of self-directed learning lies in the on-going evaluation of the methods they have employed on tasks and of their achievements within the...programme" (p. 170). This stresses the fact that whatever the context or method is employed, it is imperative for second language learners to have the opportunity to constantly meditate on their language learning and LLS use.

8. Conclusion

It is a widely believed that our actions speak louder than words. The features of both learner autonomy and LLS espouse active rather than passive learning. LLS obviously involve individuals' unique cognitive, social, and affective learning styles and strategies.

This paper has provided a brief overview of LLS by examining the different meanings ascribed to the concept by some experts in the field.

It also offered some approaches which teachers could consider in implementing LLS training within their own L2 classes. The paper notes that using LLS and LLS training in the L2 class not only encourages learners in their language learning, but also helps both teachers and learners reflect on and improve upon their teaching and learning respectively.

The paper contends that if learners must be autonomous in their learning, encouraging and promoting learner motivation should be a key concern for teachers. It, however, warns that in trying to motivate the students and advance their learning, care must be taken not to manipulate them in the process. This is because, ultimately, as the characteristics of both LLS and learner autonomy entail, teaching should be appropriately learner-centred, and learning itself is the student's responsibility. The paper thus suggests the integration of LLS into both language learning/teaching curricula of schools in second language environments, so that Language Learning Strategies might be included in regular L2 classes.

The following questions call for further research on Language Learning Strategies:

- What types of LLS appear to work best with what learners in which contexts?
- What is the role of language proficiency in LLS use and training?
- How long does it take to train specific learners in certain LLS?
- How can one best assess and measure success in LLS use or training?
- Are certain LLS learnt more easily in classroom or non-classroom contexts?
- What LLS should be taught at different proficiency levels?

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