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The Exploring Nature of Definitions and Classifications of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) in the Current Studies of Second/Foreign Language Learning

Seyed Hossein Fazeli, M.A.

Abstract

This study aims to explore the nature of definitions and classifications of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) in the current studies of second/foreign language learning in order to show the current problems regarding such definitions and classifications. The present study shows that there is not a universal agreeable definition and classification for LLSs; however, Oxford's definition and classification have received considerable attention in the related literature.

1. Introduction

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Since 1970s, dozens of studies have contributed to our understanding of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) used by ESL/EFL learners at the level of adults. Such studies show that in order to affect changes in perceptions of the learners' role in learning process; we need to discover more about what learners do to learn language successfully.

Thirty years history of LLSs is much sporadic (Chamot, 2005), and even controversy among the prominent researchers in the field of terminology, as Wenden and Rubin (1987) argue "the elusive nature of the term" (p.7). The literature includes terms such as "technique" (Stern, 1983), "tactic" (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Seliger, 1984), "move" (Sarig, 1984), which are not clearly defined. In this way, agreement on the terminology of strategies has been one of the fundamental problems that continue to be stressed in the related studies. Such a situation is the result of different approaches among the researchers in the related field.

The LLSs have potential to be, "an extremely powerful learning tool" (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, Kupper, 1985a, p.43), and, in conjunction with other techniques, may well prove to be an extremely useful tool for learners' language learning (Griffiths, 2004). They have been researched in the relationship with gender (Dreyer & Oxford, 1996; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Ghasedy,1998; Goh &Foong ,1997; Green & Oxford, 1995; Griffiths, 2004; Hong-Nam & Learvell,2006; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Lee & Oh, 2001; Oxford,1989; Oxford & Nyikos,1989;Oxford, Nyikos & Ehrman,1988; Politzer,1983), proficiency (Chamot, 2005; Chamot & Kupper ,1989; Ghasedy,1998 ;Green & Oxford,1995; Griffiths, 2003; Hong-Nam & Learell, 2006; Lan & Oxford,2003; Oxford,1993b,1996; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Shamis, 2003; Wharton, 2000), students' field of study (majors) (Dreyer & Oxford,1996; Ghasedy,1998; Lee & Oxford, 2008; Oxford & Nyikos,1989), ethnicity (Ehrman & Oxford,1995; Grainger,1997), self-confidence (Chamot,1994), multilinguality (Ellis,1994; Nation & Mclaughlin ,1986), to be in abroad (Tamada,1996; Gao,2006), learning style (Ehrman & Oxford,1990), course level (Griffiths,2003), and nationality of learners (Griffiths &Parr,2000).

The use of LLSs help learners store and retrieve material, and facilitate their learning (Grander & MacIntyre, 1992), and the frequency and range of such strategy use is the main difference between effective learners and less effective learners (Chomat, Barnhardt, El-Dinary

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&Rabbins, 1999). Moreover, such strategies are used more frequently by high-level students (Green & Oxford, 1995) or type of strategies are used by advanced learners are varied from elementary learners (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo & Kupper, 1985b). However, some studies on the relationship between LLSs and successful language development by speakers of other languages have produced mixed results (Griffiths, 2003).

Martinez (1996) discusses some features of LLSs that are inferred from the literature:

- a) They play important role to facilitate language learning;
- b) The learners may use LLSs as problem-solving mechanisms to deal with the process of second/foreign language learning;
- c) The learners can choice LLSs that they like;
- d) LLSs can be taught to learners;
- e) LLSs are not observable to the human.

Moreover, Oxford(1990) discusses that there are some other features for LLSs such as “problem orientation, action basis, involvement beyond just cognition, ability to support learning directly or indirectly, degree of observability, level of consciousness, teachability, flexibility, and influence on strategy choice” (p.11). In addition, Wenden (1987) reminds us that LLSs are the actual behavior that one learner has.

2. Definitions for Language Learning Strategies

First Rubin (1975) brought the Language Learning Strategy concept to a wide audience. Review of related literature shows that this term enjoys wide currency among researchers. The presentation of the concept to the field of language teaching and learning was the basis for developing the use of this term in this particular meaning and for particular purposes in the related field. In course of time, such use of this term developed into more specific terminology. In the same year Rubin defined (1975) this concept as “the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge” (p.43).

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The review of literature reveals that one of the main problematic issues in the field of LLSs is a plethora of terminology, dearth of clear understanding of the term, and controversy among the prominent researchers in the field of terminology of LLSs. In this way, we do not have any universal definition for LLSs; and finding somewhat general agreeable definition among all researchers for the concept of LLSs is rather difficult. Such a situation causes many basic problems in the field of LLSs. The concept of LLSs as a general accepted definition is needed.

The concept of LLSs is mentioned by Wenden and Rubin (1987, p.7) as “elusive nature”, by Ellis (1994, p.529) as “fuzzy”, by Cohen (1998, p.3) as a “conflicting view” and O’Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, & Russo (1985a) claim that there is “considerable confusion about its definition” (p.23). But the Oxford’s definition has received considerable attention in the literature.

Oxford (1990) defines LLSs as “operation employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information...; specific actions ... by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more efficient, and more transferable to new situations” (p.8). The comparison of Oxford’s definition with other dominant definitions in the related literature shows that this definition expands the purposes that were listed by O’Malley and Chamot (1990). In this way, there is a claim that the Oxford’s definition is a type of complementary definition for the purposes which were suggested by O’Malley and Chamot (1990).

Oxford’s Definition and Its Implications

In Oxford’s definition, four steps for L2 acquisition are supposed. The first step includes the obtaining of L2 which can be considered as input of L2 materials. The second step is organizing and storing L2 materials neurologically and psychologically. The third and fourth steps include the output of L2 materials. In all of the four steps, LLSs play as a performance which helps the process of L2 acquisition.

In the above-mentioned definition, many characteristics are suggested as LLSs' characteristics. For example, LLSs help the learners to be independent.

In the case of specific definition for LLSs, Rigney (1978) defines LLSs as "operations used by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage and retrieval of information". Such definition, as Griffiths (2004) suggests, can be a useful base for understanding LLSs. Rigney observes LLSs as types of processes and performances which occur as what an individual wishes in order to obtain and use particular language materials. Indirectly Rigney's definition shows that such processes are used alongside the other processes.

Such definition focuses on three steps of language learning which one learner deals with during the process of obtaining of language. The first step includes situation when the learner faces the materials of language to be learned. In this step, the learner deals with obtaining the language materials as input. The second step includes those processes of organization of input as they must be organized neurologically and psychologically. The third step includes the processes which occur during what is considered as output.

Focus on Competence

Five years later, Tarone (1983) defined LLSs as "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language ... to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence" (p.67). In such definition, what is most focused is the competence in L2 which is the goal of language learning. Such focus on competence as a criterion in L2 obtaining process implies that in order to test what is developed and obtained in L2, competence can play the most important role. The second point in this definition is that linguistic and sociolinguistic elements function as two sides of L2 obtaining which one individual tries to develop. And progress in these two sides causes the development goal of L2 obtaining which is called "interlanguage". In other words, in L2 obtaining the learner tries to achieve the interlanguage competence.

Definition of O'Malley

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Another more applied definition regarding LLSs is the definition of O'Malley and his colleagues (1985a), which is "operation or steps used by a learner that will facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval or use of communication" (p.23). In such definition, as Rigney (1978) points out, LLSs are considered as performance. However, the concept of LLSs is expanded as steps. Moreover in this definition, LLSs are considered as instruments which help the learner. The main point that O'Malley and his colleagues emphasize is that the goal of LLSs is aid to do communication in L2. Such communication can be suggested in all of four language skills, in different levels of communication, and for various purposes. In this definition, the value of effect of LLSs is organized in three steps as obtaining L2 as input, organization of linguistic material neurologically and psychologically, and use of linguistic materials as output.

Cohen's Definition

Cohen (1998) defines LLSs as "the steps or actions selected consciously by learners either to improve the learning of a second language or the use of it or both" (p.5). In this definition, one of the most points is the consciousness characteristic of LLSs. Cohen believes that learners themselves select what LLSs must be used. The second point which is more interesting is the goal of use of LLSs which includes developing of the obtaining of L2 that involves all skills of language and use of L2 skills in order to use that language. Such use can be on different levels and for various purposes. It must bear in mind that the role of LLSs can be in the language classroom with formal instructions (to improve the learning of L2) and in out of classroom and in real situations (to improve the use of L2).

Comparisons

In the definition of O'Malley and Chamot (1990), the LLS concept is presented as "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them to comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p.1). In this definition, LLSs are presented as observable (behaviors) and non-observable (thoughts) actions which are processed in order to deal with the nature of language materials (comprehension), obtaining the materials of language (learn), and store such materials. In such definition, the main role of LLSs is suggested as an instrument to facilitate the process of language learning. Cohen and Chamot believe that the nature of LLSs is a body of special

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actions (which is varied from the other actions and can be classified in a particular category). In the definition of O'Malley and Chamot (1990), the goals that were suggested were expanded in the definition of Oxford (1990).

Oxford and Crookball (1989) define LLSs as “steps taken by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage and retrieval of information” (p.404). They believe that the process of LLSs is a systematic process which occurs in order to obtain, store, and use language materials. Such definition has common characteristics with the above-mentioned definitions.

Psychological Processes

From psychological approaches, there are three famous definitions regarding LLSs. The first one belongs to Ellis (1994), which is “mental of behavior activity related to some specific stage in the overall process of language acquisition or language use” (p.529). In this definition, LLSs are considered as somewhat internal (mental) actions which are not observed. They occur in some particular step as one step of systematic steps in order to obtain or use materials of language which are supposed to be learned. What is more focused in the definition of Ellis is that non-observable characteristic of LLSs and systematic process of LLSs.

In the second definition which belongs to Weinstein & Mayer (1986), LLSs are considered as “behaviors or thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learners' encoding process” (p.315). As the others, Weinstein & Mayer consider LLSs as observable (behaviors) and non-observable (thoughts) actions which are processed during obtaining of language materials by one individual. In this definition, encoding process is the goal in obtaining of language material which LLSs affect it.

The third definition belongs to Wenden (1998) who defines LLSs as “mental steps or operations that learners use to learn a new language and to regulate their efforts to do so” (p.18). Wenden considers LLSs as non-observable systematic performances which one individual uses to obtain one language which is supposed to be learned. In this definition, it is supposed that LLSs act as types of organizers which organize the process in obtaining of language materials.

Another pioneering researcher in the field of LLSs, Rubin (1987) defines LLSs as “strategies which contribute the development of the language system which learners construct and affect learning directly” (p.23). In this definition, there are three characteristics which are distinct from the other definitions. The first one, it is supposed that a language, which is must be learned, is a system. The second one, the learners themselves decide on the process of obtaining the language. And the last one is that there is the direct effect on obtaining language materials. Rubin believes that the goal of LLSs is development of obtaining language materials.

Bialystok (1978) presents “... “LLSs”.....are defined as optional means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language” (p.71). In this definition, LLSs are considered as optional instruments, activities, and performances which are used to obtain L2 through the immediate goal (competence). Bialystok believes that in the process of obtaining of L2 materials, there are two goals. The immediate goal is improving the competence in L2. And the second goal is L2 learning. In this definition, it is implied that LLSs affect L2 learning through the competence obtained in that language. Bialystok believes that learners choose LLSs which they like based on the situation they encounter. The last point is that in Bialystok’s definition (1978), the term “optional means” is an ambiguous term.

In 1989, Chamot and Kupper present another definition for LLSs as “techniques which students use to comprehend, store, and remember new information and skills” (p.13). As same as some of the above-mentioned definitions, there are three main steps in the process of language obtaining. But the main point, it is that Chamot and Kupper mention “skills” as what LLSs affect them during obtaining of language materials. Moreover the nature of LLSs in this definition is considered as techniques.

In another dominant definition in the field of second language acquisition, Cook (2008) defines LLSs as “a choice that learner makes while learning or using the second language that affect learning” (p.126). In such definition, LLSs are considered as the choice which one learner has. Such choice can be used during the obtaining or use of the material of L2. The goal of LLSs is the effect on the process of obtaining of language materials which are supposed to be learned.

Richards and Schmidt (2002) define LLSs as “the ways in which learners attempt to work out the meaning and uses, grammatical rules, and the aspects of the language they are learning” (p.301). In this definition, the aspects of language which must be learned are considered as the goal of the effect of LLSs. Richards and Schmidt believe that LLSs cause to affect the learning of concept the materials of language to be learned and their uses.

One of well-known belief about the nature of LLSs as Chamot (1994) argues, such strategies are mental process with few observable manifestation. Such belief is complementary for definition of Gu (2003) that is as “a series of actions a learner takes to facilitate completion of a learning task”.

Review of the above-mentioned definitions shows that the nature of LLSs are expressed as “special thoughts or behaviors” (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990, p.1), and “specific actions” (Oxford, 1990, p.8), and so on.

Moreover generally there can be many goals for LLSs , “help to comprehend, learn, or retain new information”(O’Malley & Chamot,1990,p.1), and “make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situation”(Oxford,1990,p.8).

3. Language Learning Strategy Theory

Like other theories, the theory of LLSs has evolved. In such theory, particular approaches, methods, strategies, techniques were developed.

The dominance of theories of Chomsky (1965, 1968), Selinker (1972), Krashen (1976) caused some type of revolution in second/foreign language teaching and learning. In addition, such revolution as a cognitive approach to language learning includes managing of language learning by learners. In such approach, teachability of LLSs is possible (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990). It must bear in mind that in cognitive approach, learning is an active and constructive process which focus on particular situations of learners that are varied from the situations which supposed in the other methods. In this way, such focus leads to emphasize on a special approach to one individual as a learner.

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There is possibility to have eclectic syllabus as a result of LLSs. In such way, there is claim that LLSs to be used eclectically as a wide complementary for the other theories, approaches, methods, and techniques.

4. The Classification Systems for Language Learning Strategies

However, a number of researchers attempted to develop a classification scheme of LLSs, but one of the important general problematic issues is the issue of typologies that have been formulated for classification of LLSs. For instance, sometimes one strategy belonging to one category can be classified under another category (Johenson & Johenson, 1998), or as Cohen (1998, p.12) states that they “are not clear-cut”. In such way, if there has not been unanimous consensus on definition of strategies, the same can be said for their classification. In this way, more exploring is needed on the nature of LLSs, their characteristics, uses, etc. But there is considerable progress has occurred in this field regarding the classification of LLSs (Ellis, 1994). And even it is clearly to find comprehensive taxonomies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Ellis; 1994; Oxford, 1990).

As Gould (1981) presents “Taxonomy is always a contentious issue because the world does not come to use in neat little packages” (p.158), there is not a logical and well-accepted system for describing of strategy (Oxford, 1994). In this way, finding a particular classification of LLSs as a universal basic classification which can be as a LLSs’ complete classification system is impossible. However, from point of view of extensive review of the literature, Oxford (1990) gathered extensive literature on LLSs and since the Oxford’s taxonomy is “perhaps the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies to date” (Ellis, 1994, p.539), related literature shows that the taxonomy of Oxford is the most widely accepted taxonomy.

There are many significant differences between Oxford’s taxonomy and the other ones. For example, firstly, Oxford classifies heterogeneous strategies into more specific categories (Ehrman, Leaver & Oxford, 2003); secondly according to O’Malley and Chamot (1990), Oxford’s strategy classification is an inclusion of every strategy that has up to then been cited in the learning literature; and thirdly Oxford’s taxonomy links individual strategies and groups of strategies with each of the four language skills (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). In this way, Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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Griffiths (2004) suggests Oxford's classification system of LLSs can be as a useful base for understanding LLSs. Such related literature support for the widely most-well accepted characteristics of Oxford's LLSs classification among the researchers of second/ foreign language teaching and learning leads the application of such classification in the most of studies in related field.

Based on the Oxford's taxonomy, two versions of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) were developed. The first one is used with foreign language learners whose native language is English, and it consists of 80 items. The second one is used with learners of English as a second or foreign language. It consists of 50 items. The review of related literature shows that the later one (SILL version with 50 items), enjoys wide currency among researchers in the related field. The SILL has been used in studies to correlate strategy use with various variables such as learning style, gender, L2 proficiency level, culture, task (Bedell & Oxford,1996;Bruen,2001; Green & Oxford,1995; Oxford, Cho ,Leung & Kim,2004; Nyikos & Oxford,1993; Oxford & Burry-Stock,1995; Sharp,2008 ; Shmais,2004;Wharton,2000). And it has used among learners of English with native speakers of different languages which include translated version of 23 languages such as Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Thai, Turkish(Oxford, 1990), and used in more than 120 dissertations and thesis (Lan, 2005).

Oxford and the other researchers are working on their classifications in order to be more developed. Such development is shown as developing new questionnaires or adoption in their previous questionnaires. For example, currently Oxford and her colleagues are developing a task-based questionnaire to complement the SILL (Oxford, Cho, Leung & Kim, 2004).

Oxford's taxonomy includes "direct" and "indirect" strategies, which is as a fundamental feature of Oxford's taxonomy (Ghasedy, 1998). Direct strategies are classified into three sub-categories that are:

Memory strategies: Memory strategies are specific devices (mnemonics) used by learners to make mental linkages, such as Using new word in a sentence in target language.

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Cognitive strategies: Cognitive strategies are devices to help learners in processing and using the language for learning, such as Writing notes, messages, letters or reports in target language. The goal of cognitive strategies is use of language.

Compensation strategies: Compensation strategies are intended to make up for missing knowledge while using the language, such as making guess to understand unfamiliar words in target language. In the case of compensation strategies, Ellis (1994) discusses that compensation strategies can be somewhat confusingly.

Indirect strategies include the three following sub-categories:

Metacognitive strategies: Metacognitive strategies include the planning, organization, evaluation, and monitoring of one's own language learning, which lead to coordinate own language learning, such as Pay attention while someone is speaking in target language.

Affective strategies: Affective strategies are used during learning of language in order to deal with emotions, motivations, and attitudes, such as Try to be relaxed while feeling of using target language.

Social Strategies: Social strategies are the ways of interacting with other people in the context of language learning, such as Asking questions in target language. In the case of communication and social interaction, Rubin (1975) points out successful learners strongly interesting in communication.

The comparison and analysis between Oxford's classification (1990) and the other LLSs classifications show that Oxford (1990) developed the strategy classification of O'Malley and Chamot, and expanded it to encompass 62 kinds of strategies. Moreover she broke down the social/affective category of O'Malley and Chamot (1990) in two categories, social and affective.

In 1978, Bialystok suggests a model that includes four types of strategies. These strategies are:

- a) Functional practicing, b) Formal practicing, c) Monitoring, d) Inferencing.

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The first one, functional practicing includes those strategies used for functional purposes. The second and third ones, formal practicing and monitoring, include those strategies that used in order to practice language in classroom. The last one, inferecing, refers to guessing from context.

Analysis based on type of uses of strategies shows that such model includes formal type of learning (formal practicing), real-life type of learning (functional practicing), cognitive and metacognitive aspects. These four uses can play a main role in language learning. Because these four types are as base in language learning which cover somewhat of the main system and process of language learning. In such way, such model can be as an acceptable model of language learning and base for development of particular methods and techniques in language learning. Analysis of the Bialystok's classification shows that there are some uncovered aspects in this model which can be as a gap of the model, in other words, comparison this model with the other models makes clearer that such model cannot cover all used aspects during language learning. For example the social and affective aspects were not included in this model.

Review of the related literature shows that the classification of Rubin (1987) is a well-known taxonomy in the related literature. Rubin's classification includes three types of strategies that are directly or indirectly related to learning. The first group is namely Learning strategies that includes two sub-categorizes cognitive and metacognitive strategies. This group is considered as directly to language learning. In the first group, cognitive learning strategies refer to the steps or process used in learning or problem-solving task, and metacognitive strategies are used to control or self-direct learning which include processes such as planning, and self-management.

In Rubin's classification of strategies, direct learning strategies directly cause to learning, and they include six types (clarification /verification, monitoring, memorization, guessing/inductive inferencing, deductive reasoning, and practice). Direct effect needs direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. Analysis of direct learning strategies shows that such strategies are somewhat fundamental base in the taxonomy of Rubin.

The second group is namely Communication strategies that are less related directly to language learning. This group focuses on the process of interaction such as speaking with Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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someone. This group is different from direct strategies in their nature of how much they are direct to the process of language learning. In such way, Rubin's approach to their nature cause to classify them as less direct strategies.

The third group is namely Social strategies which include strategies that learners practice their knowledge through them. They are considered as indirect learning strategies that are indirectly cause to learning, and they include two types (creating opportunities for practice, and production tricks). The social strategies indirectly related to the process of language learning in the classification of Rubin can be as complete strategies for what are called direct strategies to language learning.

Based on Rubin's approach, direct strategies alongside what are called indirect strategies cause to the process of language learning. The nature of these of strategies together can cover many opportunities for practice, and use of one language in real-life situations.

Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (1978) present a classification that includes five sub-categorizes. Such sub-categories are:

- a) An active task approach
- b) Realization of language as a system
- c) Realization of language as a means of communication
- d) Management of affective demands
- e) Monitoring of second language performance.

Such classification was developed based on good language learners' use of strategies.

Naiman and his colleagues provide their classification based on very applicable components in language teaching and learning. Such components are widely well-accepted in taxonomies of LLSs were presented by different researchers. In such way, their classification is more cover-able classification compare to the other classifications of LLSs. Such cover-able

characteristic of this classification includes both the strategies which are suggested in related literature alongside the general and specific characteristics of language learning.

Active task approach in language learning is one of the most applicable approaches in the field of language teaching and learning. Suggestion of this sub-category in this classification shows that this classification emphasizes on uses of L2 which is supposed to be learned by one learner. The second sub-category of this classification, realization of language system, can be some type of base to present whatever in L2 to be learned as some type of particular system. Such system leads researchers, syllabus designers and language teachers to conclude their research, develop their syllabus and present language classroom materials through methods and techniques which are designed based on the approach that language to be presented as a system. The third sub-category, realization of language as a means of communication, is a main goal in all four language skills. In such way, the importance of such sub-category is well-accepted.

The fourth sub-category, management of affective demands, can be a helpful and useful tool to manage language learning process in different situations and environments. For example, L2 learning process in the normal classroom environment can be considered based on this sub-category in order to have successful language learning. In such way, the language teachers can focus on this sub-category as strong and successful support for language learners in order to be better in language learning. Such sub-category is applied as various strategies.

The last sub-category, monitoring second language performance, can help learners of L2 to have some type of evaluation and organization regarding their language learning. Although such sub-category affects the process of L2 learning indirectly, but it is considered as a main component sub-category which overlaps the other sub-categories.

Such classification is only suggested as characteristics of good language learners; and poor language learners may develop their learning and use of L2 based on the results of research on good language learners. In other words, the process of L2 learning of good language learners is type of a model which is suggested for poor language learners to be used. Important point in such suggestion, it is that the same process of good language learners must be used without any change and adoption, or change and adaptation is needed. And the second point, in the case of Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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change and adaptation, what changes must be done. In such case, further research is needed to better understanding of this classification for researchers who suggest this classification.

Another classification is classification of Tarone (1980). Tarone (1980) proposes two strategy typologies: the first one is language use strategies (communication strategies, and production strategies), and the second one is Language Learning Strategies.

In the first sub-category of the Tarone's classification, language use strategies, one the most important goals of language learning is presented. Based on this sub-category, the methods and techniques are presented to teach language to learners cause to active aspect of language learning. In such way, strategies in this category are classified as strategies which are more used in active skills (vs. passive skills).

In second sub-category, LLSs, the goal is based on the input materials of L2. In this way, strategies which are classified in this sub-category are strategies which are used in order to develop the needed competence to use L2. Although there are some general concepts suggested in this sub-category, but the main goal as input of L2 materials for learners is focused. In such typology, Tarone believes that learners use the second one, Language Learning Strategies, in order to learn L2. This type of classification as a wide classification which includes many strategies that are used to learn, practice and use L2.

O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo & Kupper (1985b) amended the strategy classification of Tarone (1980).

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) suggest classification for LLSs that was developed based on interview and think-aloud methods, and it includes three sub-categories:

- a) Cognitive strategies
- b) Metacognitive strategies
- c) Social/Affective strategies.

In such a model, cognitive strategies include resourcing (finding and using appropriate resources), grouping, note-taking, elaboration of prior knowledge, summarizing, deduction/induction, imagery, auditory representation, and making inferences. In addition, metacognitive strategies include executive processes used in planning for learning (advanced organization, organizational planning, selective attention, self-management), monitoring (monitoring comprehension and production), and evaluating (self-assessment). The last one, social/affective strategies include questioning for clarification, using affective control to help in learning task, cooperation, and self-talk.

In such taxonomy, cognitive strategies refer to activities that learners do. Such activities include those direct actions which done by learners. Although these strategies overlap with strategies of the other sub-categorizes, but they have some common characteristics with each others, and some dissimilarities which make them different from the other sub-categorizes of the classification. What is more important point in cognitive strategies, it is that they are directly related to L2 learning more than the other sub-categories in which that they help learners in processing and using L2 for learning.

Alongside cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies play important role. Metacognitive strategies help learners to plan to do learn. Such strategies are indirectly affect learning of L2. They affect the whole process of L2 learning through planning, organization, evaluation, and monitoring L2 learning.

The last one, social/affective strategies facilitate interaction between learners and the others like teacher. Such strategies occur in context of L2 learning. This sub-category can be as a wide sub-category which includes two types of strategies, which are namely social strategies and affective strategies. Affective strategies are used during L2 learning in order to face with emotions, motivations, attitudes, and so on. And social strategies are the ways of interacting with other people in context of L2 learning. This sub-category is indirectly related to L2 learning.

O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) classification is not theory-based. They claim that their classification is based on the cognitive theories. In this way, their classification has been

accepted by many researchers. Moreover that in such taxonomy, LLSs can be described in terms of how and at what level learners process new information.

The metacognitive and cognitive categories in O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) classification correspond approximately with Rubin's indirect and direct strategies (Griffiths, 2004).

O'Malley and Chamot's classification is one of the most widely well-accepted classifications in the field of language teaching and learning. The most of strategies which are suggested in different taxonomies are included in this classification. In this way, this classification can be as somewhat general fundamental inclusive base to be applied as an accepted criterion in the related studies. However, Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) claim that O'Malley and Chamot did not provide reliability or construct validity for their taxonomy of strategy use.

There are some other sub-classifications, such as what brown (2001) suggests that there are two separate circles as communication strategies that include communication as output, and learning strategies as input. From some point of view, such circles can include total strategies which one learner uses in order to obtain and use the materials of L2. Based on the goal of a particular strategy, that strategy is included in one of these circles. However according to nature of strategies there is some type of overlapping among the strategies.

5. Methods to Asses Language Learning Strategies

The researchers came to conclusion that vast number of strategies has been reported to be used by language learners (Ahmed,1989; Cohen,1990) through measurement of various methods such as survey tools and written questionnaire (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Fan,2003), interview (Gu 2003; Parks & Raymond,2004), think-aloud or verbal reports (Goh,1998; Nassaji,2003), diaries or dialogue journal (Carson & Longhini,2002), recolective narratives (Oxford, Lavine, Felkins, Hollaway & Saleh, 1996). Such measurements are used in the single form of method (separately) or as component methods (single set of methods) based on nature and goals of research works. For example, Griffiths (2004) used self-report (SILL) and interview in order to find the

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relationship between LLSs and proficiency in her research work. Rubin (1975) did by means of observing students in classrooms, talking to good language learners, and eliciting observation from teachers. However, one of the main difficulties in the study of LLSs is direct observation of LLSs (Griffiths, 2004).

6. Conclusion

There is not a universal agreeable definition and classification for LLSs, but Oxford's definition and classification have received considerable attention in the related literature.

As it was shown in the above-mentioned dominant classifications in related literature, there are some similarities between these classifications in order to compare them as common strategies included in these suggested classifications, and dissimilarities between these classifications in order to contrast them as some type of gap in them. In addition, the two important points in such classifications, it is that interpretation of the included strategies in every one of sub-category in each of classification is varied depend on the researchers who suggest that classification; and the second one it is that number and type of strategies in each of sub-category in every one of classification is different. Moreover there is possibility in overlapping among sub-categories of classification of LLSs.

The important point regarding the definitions and classifications of LLSs is that the researchers amend their definitions and classifications based on the earlier definitions and classifications, and their definitions and classifications are resources of the following definitions and classifications.

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