REVIEW OF *TEACHING AND RESEARCHING LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES*

Teaching and Researching Language Learning Strategies Rebecca Oxford 2011 ISBN-13: 9780582381292 US $39.00 360 pp. Longman Upper Saddle River, NJ, USA	Teaching and Researching Language Learning Strategies Rebecca L. Oxford Applied Linguistics in Action Series Edited by Christopher N. Candlin & David R. Hall

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An exhaustive book, Oxford's *Teaching and Researching Learning Strategies* is an in-depth study of learning strategies in the acquisition of a second language. It is divided into four sections and nine chapters with sub-sections in each chapter that explore issues and types of strategies. One of the key issues addressed is the use of strategies for self-regulation to enable learners to become independent so that they can be in control of their own learning. Notably, Oxford's previous writings (1990) are echoed throughout this book, however this provides a fresh organization of ideas, detailed analysis of her research, and a demonstration of her knowledge of the wider research base on strategy instruction. The current book's contribution demonstrates concepts of the *meta or general level*, drawing heavily on learners' meta-knowledge.

The following review provides a brief synopsis of the topics of *meta-strategies and strategies* covered in chapters two and three; of theories and concepts from chapters five and six; and of mapping and further exploration in chapters seven and eight.

Chapter one elaborates on the three major traditions of learning theory and research, namely psychological, socio-cognitive and socio-cultural theories. It contains four sub-sections that both define and justify the need for strategic self-regulation. Although the concept of self-regulation is often synonymous with autonomous or discovery-based learning in which learning might take place through exploration, Oxford takes the concept further by arguing that the learner has control over learning in the sense that he or she manages her lessons without the teacher's aid. Self-regulation includes 'self-adjustment,' meaning that if something goes wrong or needs improvement, the learner may very well manage that unaided.

In chapter two, Oxford argues that learners need to develop skills from strategic learning that will enable them to develop an understanding of the task that can help them in the decision-making process. She explains cognitive dimensions and strategies for remembering and processing language. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of cognitive strategies, schema theories, and eight meta-cognitive strategies, including explicit examples of students' use of meta-cognitive strategies. A potential useful addition might have been examples in which students might have tried to use a strategy but with limited success.

In chapter three, Oxford introduces the use of strategies to manage affective aspects such as emotions or

motivations at a *meta* level. The affective dimension encompasses learners' emotions, beliefs, attitudes and motivation in relation to their emotive experiences in the L2 environment that effect behavioral issues rather than *schematic* issues discussed above. What follows then are strategies integrated into meta-strategies such as cognitive strategies within the meta-cognitive, affective strategies within the meta-affective and social strategies within the meta-social strategies. Again in this chapter, items are broken into discrete components and pinpoint which strategies are employed by students at the meta-level.

Chapter four deals with the component of meta-knowledge which deals with culture or socio-cultural interaction. This relates to how to get communication activities to take place within the *immediate context* concerning all cultural, social, cognitive and political aspects of an individual learner. The eight meta-strategies discussed here are the same ones discussed in the previous chapters as well, but these are related to *socio-cultural interaction* or *communication*. Also covered are familiar strategies discussed previously in the literature such as *paraphrasing, borrowing, code switching* and *avoidance tactics.* Oxford provides her definition of discourse and extends it by making it more inclusive and integrating within its boundaries both linguistic as well as socio-cultural/socio-political aspects.

In chapters five and six Oxford explores various cultural models, also discussed in her earlier work (e.g., Oxford & Crookall, 1989). Culture here has been deemed as a factor in strategy assistance (p. 176), which is also promoted by Holliday (2003), in that the teachers of L2 should be more cognizant of the learning strategies used in other cultures and at the same time should also introduce effective new ones. In this case, cultural strategies have been associated with *memorization*, but misunderstood by uninformed teachers as learning by memorization. As with Holliday, Oxford argues that teachers are encouraged to be more discerning of cultural differences in their teaching practices. A potential strategy would be to try and incorporate any strategies that are already prevalent in the learning cultures of the students, even if not in the teacher's repertoire.

In chapters seven and eight, Oxford reflects on current and future research in learning strategies, and in chapter nine explains what "intellectual geography" is and provides resources for further exploration. This chapter highlights how important mapping is for autonomous learners. It is essential because it gives them the proper direction as to how to reach the target outcome successfully. Such maps as demonstrated in this chapter are related to the strategic use of the cognitive dimension (i.e., tactics used for the development of schema and issues related to affective and socio-cultural interactive dimensions). This map is a record of the intellectual plan which would eventually enable learners to meet specific goals.

In a short review such as this, it is not always possible to discuss the book in its entirety, but overall the book is praiseworthy despite the potential limitations discussed. As an analytical study of learning tools or strategies, it provides sufficient insight into various components of meta-knowledge and self-regulation. It is comprehensive and takes into account all the disparate strands of issues and synthesizes them. Teachers can use the book as a resource with helpful guidelines, as strategy instruction is necessary so that learners are able to avail themselves of appropriate strategies according to their needs (e.g., age, culture, interests). In the lead-up to empowering them, what needs to be done then is to "conduct a strategy instruction or brainstorming session with students to raise meta-cognitive awareness or (MAR) to help them organize information and take ownership of it" (Oxford, 2011, p. 178).

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

With publications appearing in Computer Assisted Language Learning Special Issue, ISTE, and On-Call, Mehreen Ahmed has twelve years of experience writing and teaching English Literature and ESL in Bangladesh, Canada and Australia. She has two MA degrees in English (Dhaka University) and in Computer Assisted Language Learning (University of Queensland, Australia).

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