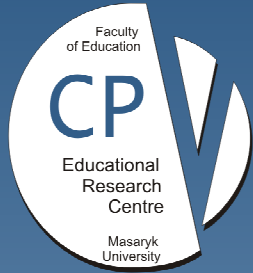


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# Foreign Language Learning Strategies

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- concept, classification, problems

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- use of strategies, factors influencing use of strategies, effect of strategies on achievement

## Discussion

- comparison of results over time, across age groups and countries

## Conclusion

- for instruction and research

# Theoretical background

Learning strategies

Strategic competency

Competency to learn

Strategic behaviour

Learning patterns

Learning style, cognitive style, learning techniques

Foreign language vs. second language

Language acquisition and learning strategies

Effect of strategies on achievement

Variables influencing the strategy choice

Individual differences in strategies

# Theoretical background

An intensive focus on learning strategies is connected with the development of cognitive psychology.

## Strategies are viewed as

- set of actions or steps taken by learners
  - to enhanced their learning,
  - to improve the development of their language skills (Oxford 1992)
- the way in which the learner selects, acquires, or integrates new knowledge (Weinstein, Mayer 1986)

## Problems in the research field of strategies

- problems with agreement on what strategies are („moving target syndrome“)
- strategies vs. techniques
- learner strategies (Ellis, Tarone) vs. learning strategies (Cohen, Oxford)
- conscious vs. unconscious
- problems with classification
- conceptual links between strategies and learning styles, personality and demographic variables

# Research on Strategies

The early research started with successful learners.

## Successful learners

- tend to apply strategies in an orchestrated way relevant to their own needs and characteristics of the task (Cohen 1990, O'Malley, Chamot 1990, Oxford 1990, Wenden, Rubin 1987).

## Less successful learners

- sometimes do not know what strategies they use,
- are aware of just a few non-communicative strategies (Nyikos 1987),
- employ strategies in a random manner (Vann, Abraham 1989).

# Development of strategy research

Early research	Current research
<p>1980s/1990s swung between two ends of a continuum (good - less successful learners)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•General patterns of desirable behaviour with high level of within subject variation</li><li>•Specific examples of behaviour with little scope for within subject variation, related to non-specific tasks.</li></ul>	<p>Recent work has focused on specific examples of strategic behaviour in the contexts of specific tasks and skills.</p>
<p>Earlier work suggested that a successful learner had a vast repertoire of strategic behaviour.</p>	<p>Why is it that certain learners are able to combine strategies more effectively than others?</p>
<p>Unproblematical linking strategies with achievement.</p>	<p>Independent variables (learning stage, beginning of learning, rate of progress, achievement level relative to peers etc.) affect or are related to the strategy deployment.</p>

# Taxonomy of language learning strategies I.

O'Malley (1985)

## Metacognitive strategies

- planning, thinking about learning process, monitoring, evaluating learning, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, functional planning, delayed production etc.

## Cognitive strategies

- repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note taking, deduction, recombination, imagery, auditory representation, key word, contextualization, elaboration, transfer, inferencing

## Socio-affective strategies

- cooperation, questions for clarification (Brown 1987)



# Taxonomy of language learning strategies II.

Rubin (1987)

direct – indirect strategies

Learning strategies

- Cognitive LS
  - clarification, verification; guessing, inductive inferencing; deductive reasoning; practice, memorizing; monitoring
- Metacognitive LS
  - planning, setting goals, self-management etc.

Communication strategies

- participating in conversation, getting meaning across, clarifying etc.

Social strategies

Stern (1992)

- Management and planning strategies
- Cognitive strategies
- Communicative-experiential strategies
- Interpersonal strategies
- Affective strategies

# Taxonomy of language learning strategies III.

Cohen, Weaver (2006) – Strategy comparison

## **Language learning strategies**

- Identifying material that needs to be learned
- Distinguishing the material to be learned from other material
- Grouping material for easier learning
- Practising
- Monitoring the results of their efforts

## **Language use strategies**

- Retrieval strategies
- Rehearsal strategies
- Communication strategies
- Cover strategies

## **Strategies by language skill areas**

- Listening
- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Vocabulary and translation strategies

## **Strategies by function**

- Cognitive
- Metacognitive
- Affective
- Social

# Taxonomy of language learning strategies III.

Direct strategies			Indirect strategies		
Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Creating mental linkages	Practising	Guessing intelligently	Centring your learning	Lowering your anxiety	Asking questions
Applying images, sounds	Receiving, sending messages	Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing	Arranging and planning your learning	Encouraging yourself	Cooperating with others
Reviewing well	Analysing, reasoning		Evaluating your learning	Taking your emotional temperature	Empathising with others
Employing action	Creating structure for input and output				

R. L. Oxford (1990)

# Research questions

- Is the SILL inventory working in Czech conditions?
- How do upper secondary students in the Czech Republic use FLLS?
- Are the results comparable to other countries?
- Do the results support the theory of FLLS?
  - Factors influencing the choice of FLLS?
  - Effectiveness of FLLS?
  - „A good language learner“ theory?
- Have the results changed compared to year 2004?
  - According to the Czech curricular reform?

# Method

SILL (Oxford 1990)

- Strategy Inventory of Language Learning
- one of the most widely used strategy inventory
- 6 scales

Examples of items

*„To understand unfamiliar words, I make guesses.“*

*„I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.“*

*„I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.“*

5-point frequency scale

# Reliability

Cronbach alpha 0,96

N = 1014 (Mis. 24 – casewise deleted)

Items 67 and 6 scales

Response „I don't know“ was included.

scales	coefficient Cronbach $\alpha$	number of cases	sum of items
memory	0,82	1030	10
cognitive	0,86	1028	19
compensatory	0,84	1033	8
metacognitive	0,78	1030	15
affective	0,71	1030	7
social	0,88	1030	8

# Data sampling

22 schools

22 – 73 students per school

Area of the South Moravia

Students of upper secondary comprehensive schools in the Czech Republic (grammar schools)

– Penultimate year of study

- e. g. third year of the four- year grammar schools (70 %)
- the seventh year of the eight-year grammar school (19 %)
- the fifth year of the six-year grammar school (11 %)

Data collection through instructed administrators

# Participants

## Number of respondents

- 1038

## Gender

- 657 women, 372 men
  - 9 respondents didn't answer

## Age

- 17 - 22 years old
- mostly 18 – 19
- data collection in 2006

## Year of birth

- 1984 (1 student), 1985 (3), 1986 (14)
- 1987 (449), 1988 (558)
- 1989 (3).



# Data analyses

Descriptive statistics

Kolmogorow-Smirnov normality test

Non parametric techniques

- Kruscal-Wallis H-test, Mann-Whitney U-test

Spearman correlation coefficient

Software

- Statistica 6

Missing data

- N differs depending on the analysis

Level of significance

- $p < 0,05$
- in most cases  $p = 0,00$

# Results

- Characteristics of participants and their learning
- Strategy use
- Variables influencing the choice of strategy
- Effect of strategy use on achievement
- Stability of results

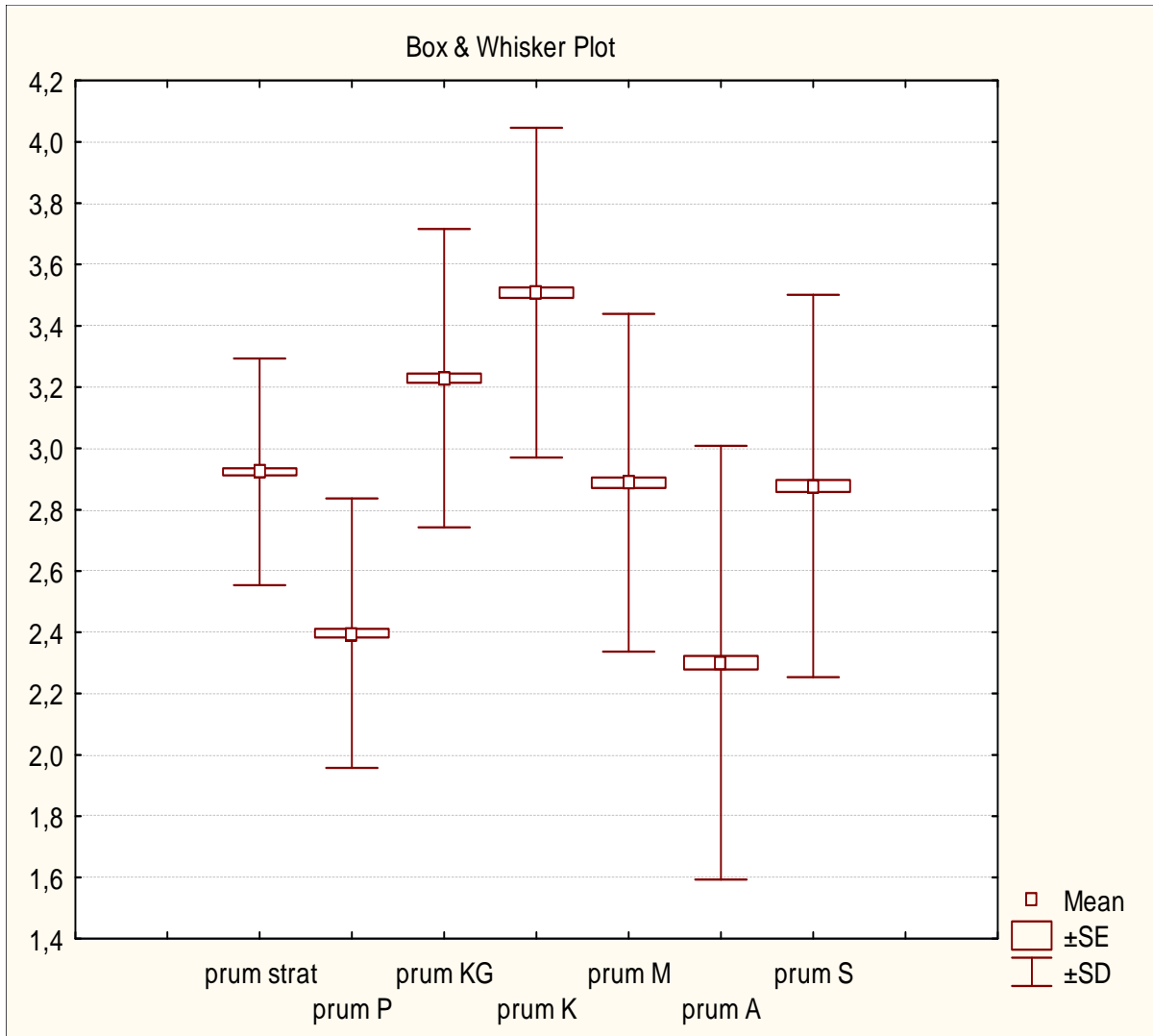
# Characteristics of participants

- Most of the students were studying 2 languages (61%), some 3 (31%)
- 98 % of students learned English, 72 % German, 27 % French, 15 % Spanish, 10 % Russian, 17 % Latin
- Almost everybody started studying the first foreign language before the age of 10.
- The strategies were assessed in a „preferred“ language of the students: 70 % of students proffered English, 20 % German

# Learning to learn. Competency to learn

- 37% of students reported that teacher never tells them how to learn.
- 39 % students reported that teacher never practises how to learn with them.
- 32 % of students wrote that they didn't know how to learn, 38% students only partly knew.
- 37 % said they were not good at languages.

# Strategy use



Strategies are at average used at the point 2,92 (N = 1033, SD = 0,37) on a 5-point scale (5 almost always).

The 6 groups of strategies are used significantly differently: ANOVA Chi-square (N = 1028, df = 5) = 2295,013,  $p < 0,00$ .

Compensatory strategies are most used, affective strategies are least used.

# Strategy use

## **Most used strategies**

(over 3, 5 on the scale)

Overviewing a set of materials  
Noticing and learning from errors  
Selecting topic (directing the communication to the themes with known vocabulary)  
Adjusting (simplifying) one's messages  
Guessing  
Using a circumlocution or synonym  
Highlighting  
Using of dictionaries and encyclopaedias  
Repetition  
Getting help (asking for the missing expression)

## **Least used strategies**

(under 1,5 on the scale)

Mind mapping  
Using physical responses or sensations

Over 2 on the scale were used:

Using mechanical techniques  
Using imagery (remembering by means of visual images)  
Planning and setting goals of learning

# Variables influencing strategy choice

## Gender

Girls used strategies more ( $R = -0,21, p = 0,00$ )

- Boys only used 2 strategies more than girls: combining of known phrases ( $R = 0,14, p = 0,00$ ), guessing ( $R = 0,08, p = 0,01$ ).

## Teacher

If teacher tells students how to learn, they use learning strategies more. If teacher practises, the relation is a bit stronger.

## Self-efficacy

If students report they learn effectively, they know how to learn, they use more strategies ( $R = 0,32, p = 0,00$ ).

If they stated they were good at the language, they used strategies more ( $R = 0,24, p = 0,00$ ).

## Language

Students learning English used more cognitive strategies. Students learning German used more memory strategies and social strategies than students learning English.

## Number of learned languages

The more languages students reported to learn, the more strategies were used ( $R = 0,15, p = 0,00$ ).

## Time of learning

No influence found, only by single strategies.

## Time of starting learning first language

The earlier they started, the more they used memory strategies and social strategies. The later they started, the more they used compensatory strategies

# Effect of strategies on achievement

## **Knowledge**

- The more the students applied strategies, the better knowledge was reported. Social strategies were the most relevant ( $R = 0,20$ ,  $p = 0,00$ ).
- There was a negative relation between knowledge and compensatory strategies.

## **School grades**

- The more the students used strategies, the better their school grade was.
- There was negative relation with affective strategies, which were most used by learners with worse grades.

## **Effectiveness of learning**

- The more the students used strategies, the higher the effectiveness of learning was.



# Discussion

## SILL application in the Czech Republic

SILL worked well and highly reliably in the Czech Republic.

- Some items seem to be culturally specific and not used in the Czech Republic (like writing diaries about language learning, mind mapping or employing action)

# Discussion

## Comparison with results for the Czech Republic from the year 2004

- Most used and least used strategies are similar.
- The most used group of strategies (cognitive) and the at least used (affective) are the same.
- On average, strategies were less used in 2004 (2,26) than in 2006 (2,92).
- Effect of strategies on achievement partly differs:
  - Effect on the learning effectiveness in both years (2004:  $R = 0,15$ ,  $p = 0,00$   $N = 437$ )
  - Effect on knowledge found in both years.
  - Effect on school grades found in 2006, in 2004 only for cognitive strategies. In 2006 negative effect for compensatory strategies, in 2004 for affective strategies.

# Discussion

## Comparison with results for the Czech Republic for children at the age of 10 and 14

Pupils use strategies most at the age of 10,  
less at the age of 17,  
and least at the age of 14.

The most and least used strategies are similar.

Variables influencing the strategy choice work across age:

- gender, number of acquired languages, teacher, good at language, I know how to learn, early language learning,

Effect of learning strategies on achievement works across age:

- school grade; knowledge (not for pupils at the age of 10)

# Discussion

## Comparison with other studies and countries

- The most used strategies are compensatory strategies, the least used ones are affective and memory strategies (Oxford 1987, Green, Oxford 1995, Bremmer 1999).
- Cognitive strategies show the best effectiveness (Oxford, Green 1995).
- Practising is the key strategy (Bialystok 1978,1979, Huang, van Narssen 1987, Oxford 1987).

# Discussion

## Support for FLLS theory? Controversies?

### **Gender**

- In many studies girls use more strategies and different strategies than boys (Oxford 1986, Oxford, Ehrman 1987, Oxford, Nyikos, Crookall 1987). Might be a socio-cultural determination. Sometimes men overdo women in some strategies.

### **Time of language learning**

- The influence is not found in all studies. Some influence is found (Oxford, Nyikos, Crookall 1987).

### **Attitudes and beliefs**

- Studies show the influence of self-concept, self-evaluation and self-efficacy, self-perception (Dahl, Bals, Turi 2005, Oxford, Nyikos, Crookall 1987, Wen, Johnson 1997)

### **Teacher expectations**

- Studies show that teacher expectations pronounced through teaching methods and examining determine the choice of strategies (Oxford 1990, 1994).

### **Instruction of the learning strategies**

- The results in this area are contradictory. May be because of methodological reasons. The simpler the strategies used by the learner, the more difficult it is to re-train the learner to use different ones (Brown et al. 1983).

# Conclusion

- When learning a foreign language, strategy use is unavoidable.
- Strategies on upper secondary comprehensive level in the Czech Republic are used unsystematically and there is a space for improvement. One of the reasons being the fact that 1/3 of the students admit not knowing how to learn.
- Results of the Czech Republic do not differ in basic aspect from results from other countries. And the SILL inventory might be used successfully in the Czech Republic.



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Thank you  
for your attention and questions

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