CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn;
The man who has learned how to adapt and change;
The man who has realized that no knowledge is secure,
That only the process of 'seeking' knowledge gives a basis for security.
(Rogers, 1969, p. 104)

The human capacity for learning is one basic characteristic that sets human beings apart from other species. Learning is the process through which one acquires knowledge, skills and attitudes. It cannot be denied that the ultimate aim of all learning is to help one become a life-long learner. Yet, most educational practices in the classroom still have a tendency to foster passivity and dependency on the teacher. We must bear in mind that the touchstone of effective learning is achieved when learners are able to manage their own learning, that is, they are able to plan, organize, monitor and assess their own performance.

In fact, there has been a growing consensus that education in the 21st century "requires paying attention to *learning*, not just covering the curriculum" (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 4). This means that educators now need to pay attention to both the product and the process of learning. It is here, that learning theories are especially important for educators to help them carry out investigations of the learning process as learning "is governed by complex, yet lawful principles" (Klein, 1996, p. 2). Brown

(1989) points out that questions such as: How do learners learn? Are there certain basic principles that apply to all learning acts? and Is one theory of learning better than another? are important questions that need to be answered in order to achieve an integrated understanding of human learning.

Theoretical Approaches to Learning and their Influence on

Second Language Acquisition

Not all theories can be expected to do everything.
With a few notable exceptions . . . most theories are
fairly limited descriptions of specific problems.
(Bialystok, 1990, p. 635)

Fisher (1995) reports that research into learning is rather like the old story of the blind men and the elephant. Each feels one part of the animal and thinks it is the whole animal. Hence, a number of learning theories have evolved and different schools of thought have made their respective contributions to the field of educational knowledge. Though there is no one single learning theory that educational psychologists can unanimously agree upon, they however, accept and agree upon the fact that learning occurs when an individual adopts or modifies new or existing behaviour which result in having some impact or influence on future performance and attitude.

It cannot be denied that these theories of learning have also influenced the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and English as a Second Language (ESL) more specifically. They have, without doubt, defined the theoretical background upon which classroom instruction is based. The field of ESL has seen the emergence of a number of

different paradigms. Given below is a brief discussion of the three most influential theories of learning that have influenced the learning of a second language.

Behaviouristic Approach

Kaplan (1991) notes that one of the forerunners in human learning is the behaviouristic approach put forward by B.F. Skinner. It is a theory called 'operant conditioning' - i.e. human behaviour can be explained in terms of the way in which simple stimulus-response (S-R Theory) connections were made. His technique called programmed instruction argued that educational instruction can be enhanced by the adoption of four simple procedures, viz.:

1. Teachers should make explicitly clear what is to be taught;

2. Tasks should be broken down into small, sequential steps;

3. Students should be encouraged to work at their own pace by means of individualised learning programmes;

4. Learning should be 'programmed' by incorporating the above procedures and providing immediate positive reinforcement based as nearly possible on 100 per cent success.

(Williams & Burden, 1997, pp. 9-10)

Brown (1989) notes that the behaviouristic views of learning were taken up widely by language teachers and were a great influence on the development of the audio-lingual approach to language teaching. Under this approach, language learning is

seen as a behaviour to be taught. The language learner is given tasks in small sequential steps. The structural pattern is presented as a 'stimulus' to which the learner responds, for example, by repetition or substitution. This is followed by 'reinforcement' by the teacher and a 100 per cent success rate is assured. Hence, the focus is that learners learn by "imitation, mimicry, constant practice and, finally, the new language habits become as fixed as those of our mother tongue" (Bell, 1981, p. 24).

The behaviouristic approach has a number of limitations. According to Brown (1989), many see the role of the learners as a passive one as they robotically respond correctly to stimuli. Learners are not actively engaged in analyzing the language or developing their own strategies to learn more effectively or initiating discussions or negotiating meanings. It shows that there is little concern for the cognitive processes of the learners. Recent work in the area of learning strategies has shown us that the conscious use of strategies can significantly enhance learning. Brown (1989) stresses that the strongest indictment against behaviourism lies in its emphasis on observable behaviour. In choosing to concentrate only on that which is observable, this theory of learning denies the importance of a basic element in the learning process, the sense that learners themselves seek to make meaning of their worlds, and the cognitive or mental processes that they bring to the task of learning.

Cognitive Approach

Cognitive psychology is concerned with the mental process. It deals with how the human mind thinks and learns. According to O'Tuel and Bullard (1993), in a

cognitive approach to learning, the learner is seen as an active participant of the learning process using various mental strategies to sort out the system of language through information processing. Among the things that might happen are understanding, thinking, reflection, analysis of experience, memorizing, retrieving or remembering. All of these enable the individual to experience insight, which is a key concept of cognitive theory. Insight occurs when a solution to a problem becomes obvious and the same solution can be used again in a similar or new situation.

Skehan (1998) in his latest book, "A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning", argues that the literature in SLA has focussed dominantly on linguistic and sociolinguistic concerns. He points out that the mere focus of language use does not necessarily contribute to the significant development of the analytical system of knowledge of the target language. He asserts that language learning is a cognitive process, which is linked to aptitudinal components and governed by memory functioning. Hence, more attention must be given to the cognitive processes that affect second language learning through the use of direct approaches that deal principally with meaningful communication either through inductive or consciousness-raising activities.

Kaplan (1991) points out that cognitive psychologists like Chomsky (1965) argue that people are born with an innate predisposition to acquire language and since language is not a behaviour but an intricate rule-based system, linguistics could offer a description of language. This led psychologists to explore the possibility of using logic to provide an analysis of human reasoning. This is to say that language learning is a matter of 'making sense' of the information that the brain receives through its senses.

Kaplan (1991) stresses that cognitive psychologists like Piaget (1966), Bruner (1961) and Ausubel (1968) all advocate explicit or conscious learning. These researchers emphasize that learners need to be actively involved in their learning so that they become self-directed in their endeavours to become autonomous learners. Kaplan (1991) notes that Piaget uses the term 'auto-regulation' while Bruner and Ausubel advocate 'discovery learning' and 'expository learning' respectively. Piaget points out that good pedagogy must present the learner with situations in which he can experiment learning actively in the broadest sense of the word. This means that the learner should be provided with opportunities such as experimenting out things to find out what happens, posing questions to seek own answers and comparing his findings with those of other learners.

Kaplan (1991) highlights that Bruner (1961) in advocating 'discovery learning' emphasized on the principle of 'learning-to-learn' through the active thinking process. Bruner stressed that the main content to be learned should not be given but must be self-discovered by the learner before he can incorporate it meaningfully into his own cognitive structures. Bruner claimed that through such a process, the learner learns to become an autonomous learner because he learns to think and learns how to learn.

Ausubel's (1968) 'expository learning' bears resemblance to the current 'explicit learning' or Wenden's (1987b) 'informed training.' In such a model of learning, the process of learning is not only limited to information obtained in an unconscious manner but more importantly, learning decisions are made conscious and obvious to learners through the use of tools such as learning strategies. Learners are informed and
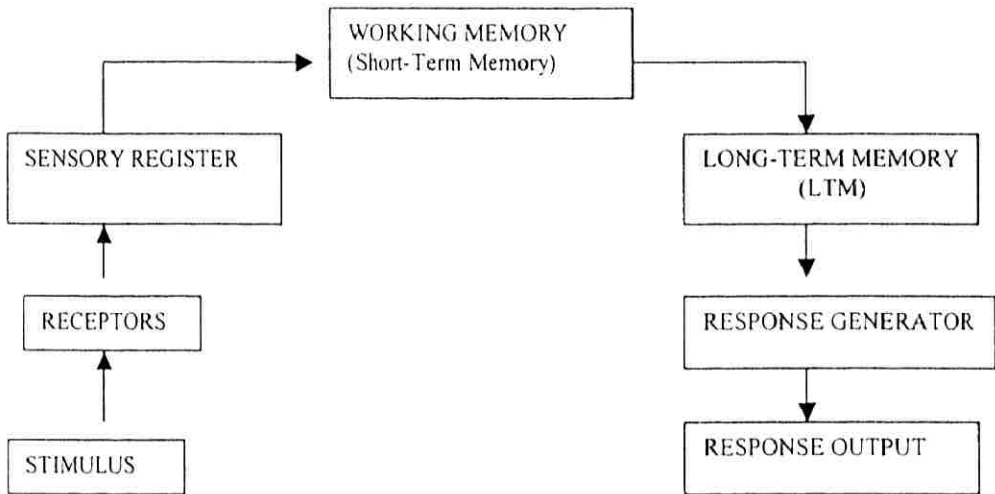
explicitly shown how, when and what strategies can be used to facilitate the learning process.

Since language is acknowledged as a cognitive complex process, a number of theories of second language acquisition (SLA) have been put forward. Researchers such as Bialystok and Ryan (1985), Faerch and Kasper (1983), McLaughlin (1987) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990) have put forward various aspects of cognitive theories to further understand SLA. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) suggest that the role of language learning strategies in SLA can be best understood by reference to this information framework of learning. It explains how information is stored in the memory and how new information is obtained.

Brown (1989) notes that information theorists draw upon the analogy of the brain as a highly complex computer. Since computers are capable of performing a number of similar things that human beings do (e.g. store, manipulate, remember information, solve problems and reason and use language), this interest in understanding the workings of the mind sparked a number of information-processing theories. They all,however, include the key elements of input, process and output of information.

According to O'Tuel and Bullard (1993), under the information-processing theory, a stimulus can be anything chemical, thermal, visual, auditory, internal or external. When a stimulus activates a receptor in the body, it sends an electrochemical charge to the central nervous system. It is next passed to the sensory register, which like a holding pad, holds onto the memory for a limited time only. Next, the working memory as the name implies - short-term memory works in tandem with the long-term

memory to accomplish the task or to generate a response. Given in Figure 1 is Gage's 1974 model taken from O'Tuel and Bullard (1993, p. 14).

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                      ┌─────────────────────┐
                      │  WORKING MEMORY     │
              ┌──────►│  (Short-Term Memory)│──────┐
              │       └─────────────────────┘      │
              │                                     ▼
  ┌───────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
  │ SENSORY REGISTER  │              │  LONG-TERM MEMORY   │
  │                   │              │       (LTM)         │
  └───────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘
              ▲                                   │
              │                                   ▼
  ┌───────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
  │    RECEPTORS      │              │ RESPONSE GENERATOR  │
  └───────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘
              ▲                                   │
              │                                   ▼
  ┌───────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
  │    STIMULUS       │              │  RESPONSE OUTPUT    │
  └───────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘
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Source: Adapted from O'Tuel, F. S. and Bullard, R. K. (1993). "Developing Higher Order Thinking in the Content Areas K-12." Pacific Grove, CA: Critical Thinking Press & Software. p. 14.

Figure 1. Information processing model

A growing body of research studies (Lachman, Lachman & Butterfield 1979; Shuell 1986; Weinstein & Mayer 1986) has shown that information is stored in two ways: short-term memory (active memory) and long-term memory (interconnected networks of sustained information). Weinstein and Mayer (1986) point out that in this cognitive paradigm, new information is acquired through a four-stage encoding process of 'selection', 'acquisition', 'construction' and 'integration'. Both 'selection' and 'acquisition' determine 'how much' is learned whereas 'construction' and 'integration' determine 'what' is learned. This four-stage encoding process in language learning has

also been put forward by researchers like Brown (1989) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990). A summary of this encoding process is presented in Figure 2.
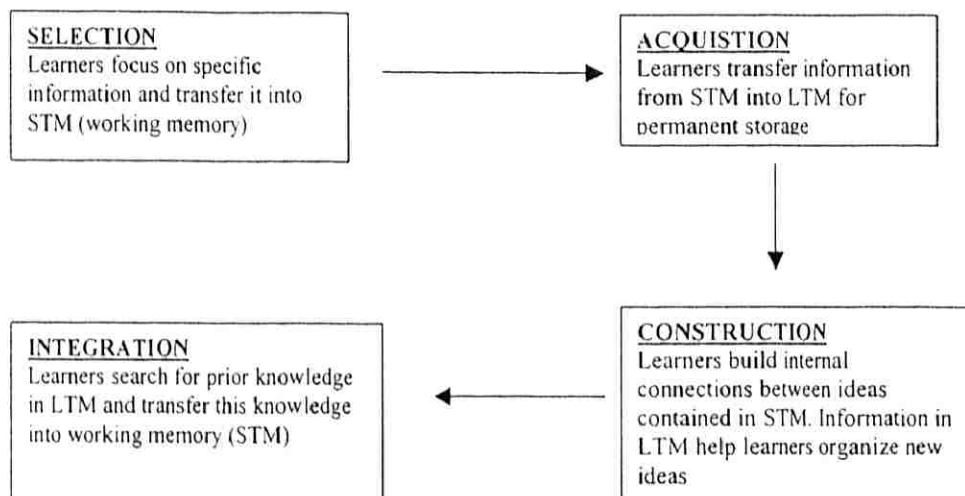
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┌─────────────────────────────┐                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ SELECTION                   │                    │ ACQUISTION                  │
│ Learners focus on specific  │  ───────────────►  │ Learners transfer information│
│ information and transfer it │                    │ from STM into LTM for        │
│ into STM (working memory)   │                    │ permanent storage            │
└─────────────────────────────┘                    └─────────────────────────────┘
                                                                  │
                                                                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ INTEGRATION                 │                    │ CONSTRUCTION                │
│ Learners search for prior   │  ◄─────────────    │ Learners build internal      │
│ knowledge in LTM and transfer│                   │ connections between ideas    │
│ this knowledge into working │                    │ contained in STM. Information│
│ memory (STM)                │                    │ in LTM help learners organize│
│                             │                    │ new ideas                    │
└─────────────────────────────┘                    └─────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 2 . Four-stage encoding process in language learning

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) report that this two-stage framework and four-mental processes have often been applied to language tasks such as problem-solving, vocabulary learning and forms of acquisition of knowledge. It emphasizes the conscious learning and analysis of the structure of the language and its grammatical rules. It also recommends that the conscious learning of rules must precede linguistic production.

Cognitive psychologists note that since a lot of language is not visible to the observer, it is difficult to ascertain as to what goes on in the minds of learners as they try to make sense and meaning of the target language. These researchers, however, believe that language processing is affected by three mental processes, viz.: the filter, the organizer and the monitor. Brown (1989) emphasizes that the first two processes

are subconscious whilst the third is a conscious process. He notes that since not everything that the learners learn is assimilated, the amount of language processed therefore depends on a number of factors such as learners' motivation, needs, attitudes and emotional state. These affective factors act as a 'filter' and determine the rate of learning acquired by the learner. The 'organizer' is a process whereby the learner tries to make sense of the target language by forming a hypothesis of his own regarding the rule of the target language. This is seen as the beginning of the acquisition process. As time goes on the learner continuously reviews and revises the hypothesis as more and more input is received. The 'monitor' which is the conscious part is where the rules and the grammar knowledge are stored. This is similar to Krashen's (1977) Monitor Model where the 'learning' process performs the role of 'editor' or 'monitor.' The 'monitor' acts in the planning, editing and correcting as perceived by the learner. This can only be achieved when the learner has had sufficient knowledge of the rules of the target language. A learner often uses this knowledge stored in the 'monitor' when he or she is called upon to complete a language task such as completing a grammar exercise.

Therefore, the cognitive approach view to second language acquisition can be seen as a product of an understanding of the syntactic structures of the English Language. It views learning a language as a process of recognition where the learner perceives new relationships among parts of a problem. O'Tuel and Bullard (1993) note that cognitive psychologists also argue that factors such as attention, schema, rule structures and memory (both short-term and long-term) are distinctive characteristics of learning. In fact, memory processes have been singled out as the basis for language

comprehension. Furthermore, the cognitive approach to SLA stresses that conscious or explicit learning must precede linguistic production (K. Kaur, 1992).

Humanistic Approach

The humanistic view of learning is another dominant theory of learning. According to Rogers and Freiberg (1994), humanism is generally associated with beliefs about freedom and autonomy and notions that learners are capable of making their own personal choices within the constraints imposed by heredity, personal history, and environment.

Rogers (1969), in his book "Freedom to Learn", argues that in order to truly learn, a learner must engage in whole-person learning. He points out that traditional learning focuses only on the cognitive dimension of learning or left-brain learning. Rogers believes that significant learning combines the logical (left-brain activity - LBA) and the intuitive (right-brain activity - RBA), the intellect (LBA) and the feelings (RBA), the concept (LBA) and the experience (RBA), the idea (LBA) and the meaning (RBA). This is to say that when we learn, we are whole, utilizing all our right-brain and left-brain capacities.

In short, the humanistic view of learning, according to Rogers, stresses the experiential or discovery component in learning and puts forward the 'person-centered' or 'client-centered' approach. The approach focuses on experience and emphasizes the uniqueness of the individual and the search for self-actualization. The focus is away from 'teaching' and towards 'learning'. In such a case, 'learning how-to-learn' is more

important than being 'taught' something from the 'superior' vantage-point of a teacher who decides 'what' and 'how' something should be learnt. The humanistic approach to learning puts forward concepts such as learner-centered classrooms, learner-centered curriculum, learning contracts, study skills and other concepts such as 'learning-how-to-learn.'

Nunan (1992) and Tudor (1996) suggest that humanistic psychology has had a strong influence on language education and it provided the rationale for some of the prominent methods in language learning and teaching. It was also a time when the field of SLA saw a number of 'designer' teaching methods such as Community Language Learning (CLL), the Silent Way, Suggestopedia and Total Physical Response (TPR). This era also saw the emergence of popular methods such as the Natural Approach postulated by Krashen and Terrel (1983) and the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT).

According to Richards and Rogers (1992), CLT continues to be a favoured approach even up today in many teaching and learning situations for ESL and EFL. They however, note that rather than a single approach, it has become an umbrella term for a wide range of activities. They cite Howatt (1984) in distinguishing between a 'strong' and 'weak' version of CLT. The weak version aims to integrate CLT techniques within existing methods by providing learners with opportunities to use English for communication purposes. The 'strong' version of CLT focuses on the unrehearsed use of language for performing authentic language tasks and it emphasizes that language is acquired through communication. These two versions are contrasted as 'learning to use English' and 'using English to learn it.'

It cannot be denied that the humanistic movement had a considerable effect on ELT (English Language Teaching) methodology. According to Williams and Burden (1997, p. 37), all these ELT methodologies have the following things in common:

1. They are firmly based on humanistic psychology rather than linguistics.

2. They all consider affective aspects of learning a language as important.

3. They are all concerned with treating the learner as a whole person and with the whole-person involvement in the learning process.

4. They all see the importance of a learning environment, which minimizes anxiety and enhances personal security.

Current Practice

Since researchers cannot agree upon a single theory that can be safely applied to language learning and teaching, current approaches no longer look into the traditional disciplines of linguistics and psychology (K. Kaur, 1992).

Today the onus is on teachers and researchers who are encouraged to look for insights in their language classroom for successful learning and teaching. This has led to the emergence of a movement towards eclecticism. According to Tarone and Yule (1989) eclecticism is "picking and choosing some procedures from one methodology, some techniques from another, and some exercise format from yet another" that will work well for a particular group of students (p. 10). They, however, caution that one cannot become an enlightened eclectic without effort or ignorance because eclecticism "places a great deal of responsibility on the part of the teacher's ability to choose

appropriate material and procedures according to some principle or set of principles" (p. 10).

Tarone and Yule (1989) highlight the fact that language teachers never seem to be quite satisfied with any one methodology probably because no two foreign language classes are ever the same. It is stating the obvious that no two people learn in exactly the same way and that what works for one does not necessarily work for the other. Yet it cannot be denied that a majority of classroom approaches often assumes just that. Skehan (1989) in his book, "Individual Differences in Second-Language Learning", argues that the findings from studies of individual differences (also known as Differential Psychology) have been "neglected in mainstream SLA research for too long" (p. 9). Therefore, if we want to fully understand the learning process, thought should be given to individual differences. Jonassen and Grabowski (1993) claim learner traits such as mental abilities, cognitive controls, cognitive styles, learning styles, personality traits, and prior knowledge are just some of the traits that motivate and enable a student to learn. Ehrman (1996) explains that it is this knowledge of research on individual differences that has shown that difficulties arise in SLA as a result of conflicts between students' learning and teaching methods.

Tudor (1996) notes that today, language learning and teaching are recognised as personal encounters. He points out that the affective domain emphasized by the humanistic and communicative movement in language teaching has taken primary importance to put learner-centeredness in the forefront. Teachers today realise that the full potential in learners can only be achieved if learners take full responsibility of their own learning so that they can be on the path to become autonomous life-long learners.

Nunan (1995) notes that when Allwright (1984, p. 3) asked the question, "Why don't learners learn what teachers teach?", it actually ought to be "Why don't teachers teach what learners want to learn?" (p. 155).

So what we see today is a roundabout shift in exclusive focus from the teacher to the learner and from 'teaching' to 'learning'. This increased concern for learner-centredness and focusing teaching on the learner becomes clearer with what Tudor (1996) calls a 'learner-centred approach'. It rests on the following two main principles:

1. the learner should be the principal reference point for decision-making with respect to content and form of teaching; and

2. this should be realised by a process of negotiation and consultation between the teacher and the learner

(Tudor, 1996, p. x)

The implication of such a perspective indicates that language teaching needs to acknowledge and work collaboratively with learners where each learner is a unique and complex individual with different learning goals and needs. Teachers should realize that teaching is no longer providing learners with a discrete set menu of knowledge and skills. More importantly, teaching should be seen as an educational endeavour where instruction would help equip learners to operate in "an informed and self-directed manner" which will empower them to be autonomous and life-long learners (Tudor, 1996, pp. xi-xii).

Learner-Centred Approach

If we allow the learner's innate strategies to dictate our practice and determine our syllabus, we may learn to adapt ourselves to his needs rather than impose upon him our preconceptions of how he ought to learn and when he ought to learn it.
(Corder, 1974, p. 27)

Hedge and Whitney (1996) note that the most discussed and frequently addressed SLA issue in conferences, language journals and articles "between 1988 and 1995 has been to do with learner empowerment" (p. 14). Wenden (1991) points out that the theories put forward by the cognitive and humanistic approaches has seen the learning environment tilting in favour of the learner. Murphy (1993) asserts that in a learner-centred approach learners are no longer passive organisms but "conscious, thinking beings" who have to be provided with opportunities so that they can take an active and participatory role in their learning experience (p. 12).

Tudor (1996) contends that there is no neat historical divide between the learner-centred approach and other approaches put forward by the school of humanistic language teaching. Nunan (1989) emphasizes that learner-centredness should be viewed as a logical development of CLT as the learner-centred curriculum still operates within the parameters established by CLT. However, by incorporating the active and participatory role of the learner, it enriches the knowledge base upon which programme development decisions are made.

According to McCombs and Whisler (1997, p. 9), a learner-centred approach is:

The perspective that couples a focus on individual learners
(their heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests,
capacities, and needs) *with a focus on learning* (the best available knowledge
about learning and how it occurs and about teaching practices that are most
effective in promoting the highest levels of motivation, learning, and
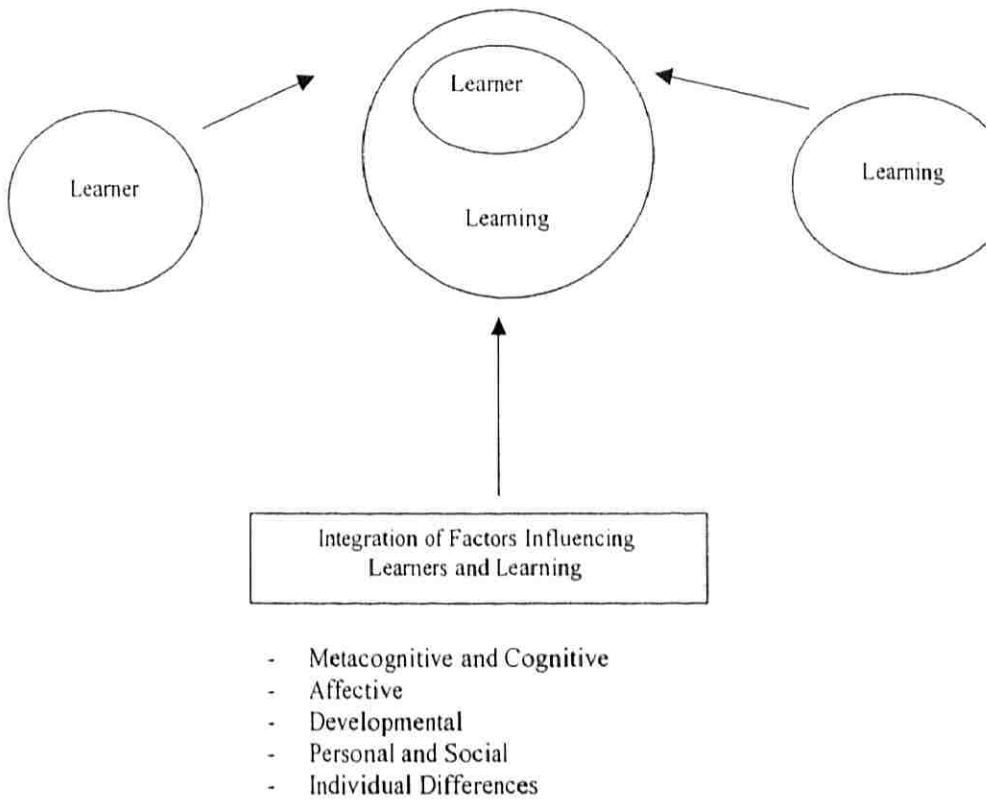achievement for all learners.
(italics included)

They claim that this definition coupled with the 12 principles about learners and learning in the "Learner-Centered Psychological Principles" document, which was prepared for the US Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education in 1993, lead to five fundamental conclusions about learners and learning. They refer to it as the 'premises' of a learner-centred model. These five premises can be summarised as follows:

1. Learners are distinct and unique and their distinctiveness and uniqueness must be taken into account if learners are to engage in and take responsibility for their own learning.

2. Learners' unique differences must be taken into account if all learners are to be provided with the necessary challenges and opportunities for learning and self-development.

3. Learning is a constructive process and occurs best when what is learnt is relevant and meaningful to the learner and the learner is actively involved in the learning process.

4. Learning occurs best in a positive environment where the learner feels appreciated, acknowledged, respected and validated.

5. Learning is a fundamentally natural process; learners are naturally curious and basically interested in learning about mastering their world. Although negative thoughts and feelings sometimes interfere with learning, this does not mean the learner needs 'fixing.'

(McCombs & Whisler, 1997, pp. 10-11)

The learner-centred model as put forward by McCombs and Whisler can be placed in a diagram to illustrate an integration of all this knowledge about learners and learning. Their model presented as Figure 3 on the next page shows that the learner-centred model focuses equally on the learner and learning. It clearly shows that the "ultimate goal of schooling is to foster the learning of learners; and learners learn best when *they* are an integral part of the learning equation" (McCombs & Whisler, 1997, p. 14).

- Metacognitive and Cognitive
- Affective
- Developmental
- Personal and Social
- Individual Differences

Source: McCombs. B. L. & Whisler, J. S. (1997). "The Learner-Centered Classroom
and School." San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. p. 12.

Figure 3 . Learner-centered model : A holistic perspective

Tudor (1996) emphasizes that in an ideal learning-centred context, decisions about 'what' to learn and 'how' to learn be made with reference to the learners and learners must be involved in the decision-making process. The awareness and ability of learners to make decisions about their own learning is often referred to as learner autonomy. He points out that learner autonomy and learner training for the past ten

years have become key issues in ESL teaching and learning. It has also moved language learning and teaching in a learner-centred direction in the following three ways:

1. It explicitly recognises the central role and importance of the language learner to take charge of his/her own learning;

2. It has pushed the language teaching profession to the development of pedagogical procedures whereby the language learner can be helped to become a confident, proactive participant in his/her own learning;

3. Finally, by focussing attention on both the learning process and learning products, it has generated interest in learner-specific factors, which influence learners' interaction with various aspects of language learning. This has resulted in a growing body of research in the field of learners' subjective needs such as individual differences and learning styles

(Tudor, 1996, pp. 27-28)

Learner Autonomy

You want him who was a slave yesterday to be a man?
Then begin to treat him always as a man and
the greatest step forward will already have been made.
(Gramsci, 1979 cited in Hammond and Collins, 1991, p. 25)

The quotation above speaks volumes to teachers who want to foster learner autonomy for life-long learning. Hammond and Collins (1991) stress that if teachers want to promote learner autonomy they must have trust in their learners and must be

sincere and serious about wanting them to take responsibility for their learning. They must also be willing to be 'equals' in the new partnership so that the learners can learn to take charge of their own learning.

So, what then is learner autonomy? Though learner autonomy has been one of the dominant topics in language teaching over the last two decades, one all encompassing definition has still to be achieved. Tudor (1996) declares that the main ambiguity surrounding the use of the term 'learner autonomy' that many readers are likely to come across is whether it refers to a certain 'mode of study' or a 'qualitative involvement' of learners when they study a language. He points out that:

> In the former sense, autonomy refers to various forms of independent
> or self-directed learning involving limited teacher intervention, generally
> outside a traditional classroom setting. In the latter, qualitative sense, autonomy
> relates to notions of awareness of learning goals, participation in decision
> making, and personal assumption of responsibility.
> (Tudor, 1996, p. 18)

He asserts that over time it is the second view of learner autonomy that has received more concern, and it is in this sense that the term will be used in this study. He notes that the reason for this shift in emphasis is clear. There may be some learners who may or may not wish to study in an independent manner and the learner's ability to make the decision and later to implement it effectively is dependent upon his/her strategic and attitudinal preparedness.

It is in this perspective that Holec (1981) defines autonomy as "an *ability*, 'a power or capacity to do something' and not a type of conduct, behaviour" (p.3). Autonomy is thus a term describing a potential capacity to act in a given situation - in this case, learning. He goes on further to point out that an autonomous learner is one

who is "capable of taking charge of his own learning and nothing more" (p. 3). This 'power' and 'capacity' is not inborn and therefore, must be acquired either by 'natural means' or formal learning.

Like Holec, Wenden (1991) too, views an autonomous learner as one who has "acquired the strategies and knowledge to take some (if not yet all) responsibility for her language learning and is willing and self-confident enough to do so" (p. 163). Little (1991) goes further and suggests that learner autonomy should be viewed as a "capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action" (p. 4). Lee and Morrison (1998) stress that underpinning this notion of learner autonomy is the "ability of the learner to take responsibility for the learning process and take initiative in making decisions central to the process" (p. 91). This includes setting and formulating learning objectives, organizing the learning by selecting relevant materials and designing appropriate learning tasks and monitoring and evaluating the learning process. Dickinson (1995) concludes that in the applied linguistics literature, "autonomous learners have a capacity for critical reflection and decision making, as well as the skills necessary to carry out a self-directed learning programme, i.e. the ability to define objectives, define contents and so on" (p. 167).

Ho and Crookall (1995) argue that the many different terms such as 'attitude', capacity', 'ability', pedagogical goal', 'a philosophy', 'a methodological choice' and 'notion' clearly suggest that autonomy cannot easily be defined "in a concrete and tangible method' (pp. 235-236). They claim that a look at certain kinds of knowledge, skills and attitudes could shed better light on what characterizes learner autonomy and autonomous learning. Benson and Voller (1997) go on to add that, "Monolithic

definitions of autonomy and independence have proved elusive, and it is perhaps more productive to speak of different *versions* of the concepts which correspond to different perspective and circumstances" (p. 13).

Since an all-encompassing definition has still to be achieved, it is perhaps prudent to take heed of what Benson and Voller as well as Ho and Crookall have to say. Taking a look at the characteristics of autonomous learners could perhaps shed more light to a better understanding of an autonomous learner.

Characteristics of Autonomous Learners

Skager (1984) highlights the fact that researchers (March, 1972; Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1969; and Skager & Dave, 1977) have noted that it is generally difficult to recognize the self-directed, independent or autonomous learners in action. He, however, reports that self-directed autonomous learners possess high self-esteem and self-acceptance. They portray an openness to experience and are willing to engage in new kinds of activities that may result in learning or goal setting. There is flexibility in their learning and this implies a willingness to change goals or learning mode and to use exploratory, trial-and-error approaches to problems. They counter failure positively by adaptive behaviour rather than withdrawal. More importantly, autonomous learners are self-directed and intrinsically motivated.

Little (1996) notes that a truly autonomous learner is one who can work independently and has the capacity to make and carry out the selected choices which govern one's actions. He emphasizes that this capacity depends on 'ability' and

'willingness'. He elaborates that ability depends on both knowledge about the choices and the skills required in carrying out the chosen alternatives. On the other hand, 'willingness' depends on one's motivation and the confidence to take responsibility for the choices required. Hence, he asserts that these four components (knowledge, skills, motivation and confidence) need to be present if a learner is to be successful in acting autonomously.

In addition to the above, Ho and Crookall (1995) point out that autonomous learners have the responsibility for working without supervision, choosing learning materials, setting both long-term and short-term objectives and prioritizing objectives. They also display good time management and are able to assess their own progress and evaluate their own learning programmes. They stress that all these characteristics indicate that autonomous learners are self-motivated, self-disciplined and most importantly disposed to take responsibility.

Holec (1987) further clarifies this when he points out that good autonomous learners are capable of assuming the role of manager of their learning. This means that they are capable of "making the whole range of decisions necessary to plan and carry out a learning program" (p. 146). Such decisions include choosing suitable learning objectives and deciding upon appropriate content and learning materials to accomplish the chosen learning objectives. It also involves making decisions as to the methods and techniques to be used in successfully completing the task. Finally, as a manager of the learning process, autonomous learners have the capability to monitor and assess the outcome of their own performance.

Dickinson (1993) concurred with the above-mentioned characteristics but emphasized that autonomous learners may not necessarily have external, observable features but they have the following five characteristics:

1. They understand what is being taught, i.e. they have sufficient understanding of language learning to understand the purpose of pedagogical choices;

2. They are able to formulate their own learning objectives (with or without collaboration with the teacher or as sometimes as an addition to what the teacher is doing);

3. They are able to select and make use of appropriate learning strategies (often consciously);

4. They are able to monitor their use of these strategies (they usually have a relatively rich repertoire of strategies and have the confidence to ditch those which are ineffective and try something new); and

5. They are able to self-assess or monitor their own learning

(Dickinson, 1993, pp. 330-331)

Justification for Learner Autonomy

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Sheerin (1997, p. 56) asserts that learning is more effective and meaningful "when learners are active in the learning process, assuming responsibility for their learning by participating in the decisions that affect it." This view is further reinforced by Pemberton, Li, Or and Pierson (1996) who succinctly sum up the essential arguments for autonomy:

Students who are encouraged to take responsibility for their own work,
by being given some control over what, how and when they learn, are
more likely to be able to set realistic goals, plan programmes of work,
develop strategies for coping with, and unforeseen situations, evaluate
and assess their own work and, generally, to learn how to learn from their
own successes and failures in ways which will help them to be efficient
learners in the future
(p.1).

A similar sentiment was voiced by Little (1991) when he argued that since the learner sets the agenda, "the learning should be more focussed and more purposeful, and thus more effective both immediately and in the longer term" (p. 8). Crabbe (1993) argues the justification for autonomy on the grounds of ideological, psychological and economic factors. On the grounds of ideology, he states that:

The individual has the right to be free to exercise his or her own choices,
in learning as in other areas, and not become a victim (even an unwitting one)
of choices made by social institutions. (p. 443)

Tudor (1996, p. 18) notes that on the grounds of ideology, Crabbe's argument shares the sentiments of the "humanistic movement's concern with responsibility, freedom of choice, intellectual development and self-actualisation."

On Crabbe's (1993) justification on psychological grounds, he points out that learners learn better when they are in charge of their own learning. In such a learning process, the resultant learning is often more meaningful, more permanent and more focussed. His third argument rests on logical and practical economic grounds, when he recognises that:

Society does not have the resources to provide the level of personal
instruction needed by all its members in every area of learning [so that]
individuals must be able to provide for their own learning needs"
(p. 433)

All the above reasons show that there is a growing body of researchers that foster and encourage the development of learner autonomy. Tudor (1996, p.19) notes that "no sensible teacher of today's age should want to or continue to maintain or foster dependency in her students."

Learner Autonomy in Language Learning

Nunan (1995) suggests that language learners do not learn what teachers teach because there is a mismatch between the pedagogical agenda of the teacher and the learner. He highlights that this mismatch has also been documented by other researchers such as Allwright (1987), Slimani (1992) and Willing (1988). Nunan (1995) points out that in a study, which he conducted in 1987, he noticed stark contrasts and mismatches when he compared the preferences of learners and teachers in selected learning tasks and activities in the Australian Adult Migrant Education Service Program. His study indicated that students gave low rating for pair work and students' self-discovery of errors. In contrast to this, the teachers gave these two items very high ratings. A detailed list of these findings is presented on the next page in Table 1.

Table 1

Teacher-Student Mismatches in the Learning Process Domain

Activity	Student	Teacher
Explanation to class	Very high	High
Conversation practice	Very high	Very high
Error correction	Very high	Low
Vocabulary development	Very high	High
Using cassettes	Low	Medium high
Student self-discovery of errors	Low	Very high
Using pictures, film, video	Low	Low medium
Pair work	Low	Very high
Language games	Very low	Low

Source: Nunan, D. (1995). "Closing the Gap Between Learning and Instruction."
 TESOL Quarterly,29, (1), p. 141.

Nunan (1995) claims that the above differences or gap between the teachers' and the students' perceptions can be narrowed by the implementation of a learner-centered approach to curriculum and pedagogy.

A similar view was echoed by Clarke (1991a, p.16) when he said that. "the learners' needs are of paramount importance and the learners' affective, cognitive and linguist needs should all play a part in determining the content and implementation of the syllabus."

Tudor (1996) notes that under the Adult Migration Education Program (AMEP) in Australia, three researchers (Brindley, 1984; Nunan, 1988 and Willing, 1988) managed to develop a coherent and comprehensive curriculum that was able to realize the principles of learner-centredness. Nunan (1988) suggests that to promote learner

autonomy, curriculum design should be seen as a negotiative process between teachers and students. In this view, the key decisions about 'what' will be taught, 'how' it will be taught, 'when' it will be taught, and 'how' it will be assessed will be made with reference to the learner. This later gave rise to Nunan's (1988) concept of the learner-centred curriculum, which put forward specific roles that learners could assume. These roles are presented in Table 2, which outlines the learners' various roles at the curriculum stage. The table represents the ideal situation in a learner-centred approach where the participatory role of the learner is seen in relation to curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation.

Table 2

Learner Roles in a Learner-Centered Curriculum

CURRICULUM STAGE	ROLE OF LEARNER
Planning	Learners are consulted on what they want to learn and how they want to go about learning. An extensive process of needs analysis facilitates this process. Learners are involved in setting, monitoring and modifying the goals and objectives of the programs being designed for them
Implementation	Learners' language skills develop through the learners actively using and reflecting on the language inside and outside the classroom. They are also involved in modifying and creating their own learning tasks and language data
Assessment and Evaluation	Learners monitor and assess their own progress. They are actively involved in the evaluation and modification of teaching and learning during the course and after it has been completed.

Source: Nunan, D. & Lamb, C. (1996). "The Self-Directed Teacher" New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 10.

Besides encouraging learners to play an active participatory role in planning, implementing and evaluating the learning process, Hiemstra (1996a) proposes that learners could perhaps be guided to assume some control in pacing their own learning. Learners can be given the opportunity to control the amount of time devoted to aspects such as teacher presentations, teacher to learner interactions, learner to learner interactions and individualized learning activities. Learners could also assume some control on the choice of the role or nature of didactic (lecturing) presentations, socratic (questioning) techniques to be used and facilitative (guiding the learning process) procedures.

Littlejohn (1985) goes on to add that besides being involved in the decision-making process of 'what' and 'how' to learn, learners must also be provided with opportunities for learner choice in the method and scope of study. The figure on the next page (Figure 4) displays how this choice can be provided in the following areas in course management on a gradual continuum. Littlejohn also gives examples as to how learner choice can be introduced in all classrooms with little difficulty but significant benefit.

For example, in terms of 'time' and goals', learners could be guided to devise their own project idea in consultation with the teacher and submit it on some agreed upon date. This could be achieved through the construction of learning contracts. To provide choice in 'mode' of study, learners could be given the option either to work individually or in small groups. With regards to 'content', learners could be given a choice in their reading materials. Instead of buying twenty books of a similar title and

getting learners to read through it chapter by chapter, teachers could perhaps buy twen

different titles. This would certainly provide choice for students.

Littlejohn (1985) contends that these suggestions do not involve major chang

but they provide teachers with the possibility of a more learner-centered approach. F

emphasizes that what is important is that teachers "must provide opportunities f

learner choice in the method and scope of study" (p. 261).

TIME	⟶	Time spent on the learning material and decisions about when study takes place
GOALS	⟶	The short-term and long-term objectives of learning
MODE	⟶	Grouping - in pairs/groups/alone/large classes activity- types of tasks and skill involved
CONTENT	⟶	Subject matter - story or information content of the learning material Linguistic content - structures, functions etc.
EVALUATION	⟶	By whom? When? In what form?
GUIDANCE	⟶	Degree and nature of help provided

Source: Littlejohn, A. (1985). "Learner Choice in Language Study." ELT Journal, 39,
(4) p. 255.

Figure 4 . Factors in course management

In his article, "Learners Dead or Alive", Clarke (1991b) stressed that an important element in the redefinition of the learners' role in the classroom would thus be to allow the learner to become, at least to a certain degree, a 'knower', an 'evaluator' or 'tester'. He puts forward some ideas as to how learners may be allowed to interact with, or negotiate with, the materials with which they have been provided, rather than remaining simply as passive recipients. For example, by getting different groups to do different tasks based on the same reading text, each group of learners can become an 'expert' on a certain aspect of the text. For that period of time "learners change their role and become 'knowers' or teachers who can offer positive contributions to the activities in the classroom" (p. 35).

One basic decision that has to be made in learner autonomy relates to the degree of learner direction to be aimed at. Johnson (1989) contrasts between two extremes. The first is the top-down approach and the other is the bottom-up approach. In the former approach, all learning decisions are made solely by the teachers with no reference or consultation with the target learners. The latter approach envisions a fully learner-centred approach where learning decisions are made through a process of consultation and negotiation between the teachers and the learners. Johnson notes that between these two extremes, lie a range of options, which combine different degrees of modalities between teachers and learners and what he refers to as an "integrated" approach.

In literature, there is general agreement that learners may be at different stages of becoming autonomous learners (Farmer & Sweeney, 1994; Sheerin, 1997 and Nunan, 1997). Farmer and Sweeney (1994) point out that "autonomy is not an absolute

but a relative term, and the degree of autonomy may vary from one context to another" (p.139). Nunan (1995, p. 149) points out that learner autonomy is "not an all-or-nothing concept" where the teacher hands over the power, responsibility and control to the students from day one. He asserts that it is usually well into the course before learners are capable of making informed decisions 'what' and 'how' they want to learn.

Both Nunan (1997) and Sheerin (1997) advocate the gradual step-by-step movement towards fully autonomous learners. Sheerin (1997) analyzed this range in degrees of autonomy through a model of activities involved in independent learning (Figure 5). The model of activities involved illustrates the range of factors from dependence to independence.

		DISPOSITION TO	
	1	◄— Analyze one's own strengths/weakness, language needs —►	I
D	2	◄— Set achievable target and overall objectives —►	N
E	3	◄— Plan a programme of work to achieve the objectives set —►	D
P	4	◄— Exercise choice, select materials and activities —►	E
E	5	◄— Work without supervision —►	P
N	6	◄— Evaluate one's progress —►	E
D		ABILITY TO	N
E	7	◄— Analyze one's own strengths/weakness, language needs —►	D
N	8	◄— Set achievable target and overall objectives —►	E
C	9	◄— Plan a programme of work to achieve the objectives set —►	N
E	10	◄—Exercise choice, select materials and activities —►	C
	11	◄— Work without supervision —►	E
	12	◄— Evaluate one's progress —►	

Source: Sheerin, S. (1997). "An Exploration of the Relationship between Self-Access and Independent Learning." In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.). "Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning." London: Longman. p. 57.

Figure 5 . Model of activities involved in independent learning

On the other hand, Nunan (1997) proposed a scheme of five levels for encouraging the gradual development of learner autonomy in relationship to the use of learning materials. He asserts that learners need to be systematically guided through a step-by-step journey to a point where they are able to make informed decisions about their own learning process. In his proposal (Table 3) he shows how learners can be guided to move gradually from awareness to the fully autonomous stage by the end of the pedagogical continuum.

He suggests that in a learner-centred approach, instructional goals should be made explicit to learners and learners should be involved in selecting, modifying, or adapting goals and content. If possible learners should also be allowed to create their own goals and generate their own content. He, however, cautions that learners should first be provided with adequate learner training. Learners must be trained to identify the strategies underlying pedagogical tasks and be encouraged to identify their own preferred learning styles and to experiment with alternative styles. Learners should also be provided with opportunities to modify, adapt, create, and evaluate pedagogical tasks and learning processes. Finally, learners should be encouraged to become their own teachers and researchers and active links should be created between the content of the classroom and the world beyond the classroom.

At this juncture, it is perhaps prudent to take note of Tudor's (1992) warning. He points out that though learner autonomy through a learner-centered approach has cast a new light on the role of language learners, it can be easily "forfeited by an over enthusiastic attempt to implement it with insufficient consideration of the human and pragmatic constraints operating in the target language learning situation" (p. 44).

Table 3

Autonomy: Levels of Implementation

LEVEL	LEARNER ACTION	CONTENT	PROCESS
1	Awareness	Learners are made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the course	Learners identify implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles / strategies
2	Involvement	Learners are involved in selecting their own goals and objectives from a range of alternatives on offer.	Learners make choices among a range of options
3	Intervention	Learners are involved in modifying and adapting the goals and content of the learning program.	Learners modify / adapt tasks
4	Creation	Learners create their own goals and objectives	Learners create their own tasks
5	Transcendence	Learners go beyond the classroom and make links between the content of the classroom and the world beyond the classroom.	Learners become teachers and researchers

Source: Nunan, D. (1997). "Designing and Adapting Materials to Encourage Learner Autonomy." In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.). "Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning" London: Longman. p. 195.

Conditioning Factors for Implementing Learner Autonomy

According to Tudor (1992), the kind or level of learner-centred approach that one chooses to adopt depends on two main sets of variables that are likely to influence the degree and nature of learner involvement in the programme. The first relates to the learners' readiness such as personal, psychological and experiential aspects and the second relates to the attitudinal and material constraints operant in the target learning situation. He presented these factors with a three-point evaluation scale for those interested in implementing a learner-centred approach. His proposed preparedness profile for a learner-centred approach is presented in Table 4.

The preparedness rating in Table 4 is measured based on the three-point evaluation scale of low, middle and high. Tudor (1992) points out that low ratings on the various conditioning factors would have two implications: (a) the target level of the learner involvement will be limited or reduced to certain sub-domains of the language-teaching process, and (b) a longer and more supportive lead-in period will be required (p. 33).

Given below is a brief discussion of Tudor's conditioning factors that he thinks are needed when considering the implementation of a learner-centred approach through learner autonomy programmes.

Table 4

Preparedness Profile for a Learner-Centred Approach

CONDITIONING FACTORS	PREPAREDNESS RATING		
	LOW	MIDDLE	HIGH

MOTIVATION
- Perception of need
- Clarity of learning goals

EXPERIENTIAL TRAITS
- Maturity
- Level of education
- Prior language learning experience

PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAITS
- Aptitude
- Intelligence
- Self-reliance

LINGUISTIC READINESS
- Entry level of competence
- Linguistic and cultural proximity of the TL

CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS
- Roles of teachers and learners
- Views of language learning

MATERIAL CONSTRAINTS
- Access to the TL
- Class size

INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS
- Need for comparability of results
- Scope for teacher development and support

* TL = Target Language

Source: Tudor, I. (1992). "Learner-Centredness in Language Teaching: Finding the Right Balance." System, 20, (1), p. 34.

The level of motivation among learners is said to be one of the most important factors to consider in implementing learner autonomy programmes. Various studies have shown that motivation is strongly linked to language learning (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1980 and Skehan, 1989). Dickinson (1995) cites that studies carried out by Deci and Ryan (1985) have shown that "motivation tends to be higher in learners who are interested in learning tasks and the learning outcomes for their own sake rather than for rewards that result from success" (p.168). He also stressed that learners who display high motivation achieve success. On the other hand, a low motivational level would indicate a low level of achievement and teaching will be an uphill struggle and a tedious task. Motivation can be achieved if there is a high personal perception of the target language and learning goals are clear.

Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (1978) conducted a study of successful language learners and concluded that the most successful learners are not those to whom language comes easily but are learners who display certain typical characteristics that can be said to be those related to motivation. A positive attitude towards tasks, need for achievement, high aspirations, goal orientation and perseverance are some of the characteristics seen in motivated learners.

Experiential traits include aspects such as maturity, level of education and prior language learning experience. Tudor (1992) stresses that a higher level of education and maturity would also help serve as enabling factors necessary for greater negotiation of learning goals and study formats between teachers and learners in a learner-centred approach. Furthermore, a prior language learning experience would mean that learners would have most probably developed a set of learning strategies and acquired an

experience of different methodologies that can help the learner in learning the new language.

Tudor (1992) suggests that the learners' psychological traits such as aptitude, intelligence and self-reliance are important factors that also need to be looked into before launching them into learner autonomy programmes. Skehan (1989) reveals that learners with a high level of intelligence and high language learning aptitude are certainly more likely to attain success. Self-reliance has obvious relevance to such an approach because active learner participation and responsibility in planning and decision making would mean learners are more comfortable to assume a self-directive role in their learning. Other psychological factors such as anxiety, risk-taking, field dependence, field independence, intraversion and extraversion will also exercise a certain amount of influence on the learners' needs and preferences.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Tudor (1992) assert that the active participation of learners in the development of their language programme would depend on their linguistic competency. If the level of competency is low, they cannot participate extensively in the planning of their learning programme. In addition, if the distance between the learners' target language (TL) and their first language (L1) is great, learners will take a longer time to feel at home and this would require a more teacher-driven programme at the initial stages.

Furthermore, the learner-centred approach rests upon the willing acceptance of learners of both the goals and its methodology. Preconceptions and culturally determined attitudes can play a significant role in the success of such an approach. Farmer and Sweeney (1994) highlight the cultural aspect. They declare that among

Hong Kong students there is a perception that "no teacher equals no learning" which may pre-dispose Hong Kong learners to a low level of autonomy (p. 138). This means that if learners come from a culture where the teacher is seen as an expert and provider of knowledge, this new learner-centred approach, which demands a student-teacher partnership in the collaborative development of learning goals and methodology may be rejected. Learners may view this as an 'abdication of responsibility', which can lead to confusion among learners. In cultures where language learning is viewed as 'hard work' or rote learning of rules, this new open flexible approach can be perceived as ineffective and vague among learners.

Tudor (1992) emphasizes that the learner-centered approach rests upon a methodology, which highlights conscious or discovery learning. Hence, access to the target language through the availability of authentic language teaching materials and interactive contacts with native speakers can have a substantial influence. He notes that a limited or 'input-poor' environment, would make learners more dependent on the teacher "both as a source of input and guide in goal-setting" (p. 39).

Finally, one needs to look into institutional constraints. Tudor (1992) points out that since the aim of the learner-centred approach is to get learners to personalize their study programme, it is likely that over time the learning programmes of different subgroups of a wider learning population may more or less differ substantially. In a learning environment where the outcome of learning is monitored functionally in terms of the learners' ability to function in the said target situation this is unlikely to cause any problems. Tudor realizes that the situation is somewhat different if at the national or institutional level there is a need for comparability of results especially if it refers to the

performance in an examination. In such a situation "the scope for learner-direction would be limited to accommodate the constraints derived from such examination demands" (p. 39).

The success of any approach rests upon teacher preparedness and hence, the scope for teacher development and support are important factors to be considered. The lower the ratings on teacher development the more discretion needs to be exercised regarding the degree and pace of the application of a learner-centred approach.

Tudor (1992) stresses that though all these factors influence the degree and nature of learner involvement in the programme, two conditioning factors i.e. 'motivation' and 'cultural expectations' play a more significant role even if all other factors are favourable. The chances of success of a learner-centred approach are slim if the "motivational levels are low" and the "basic principles of learner-centredness run counter to deeply ingrained preconceptions either of the learners or of the teaching body concerned" (Tudor, 1992, p. 41).

Myths and Realities on Autonomous Learning

Skager (1984) notes that many perceive that terms like 'self-directed learning' and 'autonomous learning' give the picture of an independent, 'intellectual Robinson Crusoe' or even a solitary individualistic, learner who prefers to work alone in the pursuit of highly personalized goals. He asserts that this perception is untrue as learning need not be independent or individualistic in order to be autonomous and self-directed. In fact, it is the motivation to 'choose' to learn, and to act on that choice, that

distinguishes the self-directed autonomous learner. The learning can be carried out independently, co-operatively or collaboratively in a group or even dependently at a computer terminal or under the guidance of a teacher. All these modes of learning, according to Skager (1984) are "manifestations of autonomous learning" (p. 8).

Another myth is that self-directed autonomous learning is another adult learning field as adults are naturally self-directed. Kerka (1994) points out that though adults may portray self-direction in their work and personal lives, not many adults can actually apply it to a learning situation. She cites three studies carried out by Robinson (1992), Richey (1992) and Ellsworth (1992). Kerka notes that the study carried out by Robinson (1992) showed that most of his adult college learners asked for explicit directions and assignments from distant tutors despite possessing high intrinsic motivation. Richey's (1992) four studies of corporate training indicated that self-directed learning was the least popular method among adult learners but younger adults were more favourable towards it. Meanwhile, Ellsworth's (1992) study suggested that learners in formal schooling institutions were more inclined towards self-directed autonomous learning when compared to older adults. Gremmo and Riley (1995) report that learner autonomy schemes carried out by secondary school teachers in Norway and observations carried out by Dam (1995) show that children benefit from self-directed learning schemes and autonomous learning is a 'perfectly viable approach' in those contexts.

Some people are under the impression that self-directed learning schemes such as autonomous learning and independent learning only work best for the highly intelligent and educated elite group such as postgraduate students. Research studies

have indicated that this in not true. Willing (1988) points out that the self-directed learning scheme adopted by the Australian Migrant Institute when working with migrants (majority boat people with low or no formal education) produced positive and satisfactory results. Gremmo and Riley (1995) note that other projects such as the Norwegian project, "Strengthening the Second Foreign Language" indicate that the self-directed learning scheme helps slow and below average learners to become more efficient learners.

In autonomous learning the role of the teacher shifts from that of an expert to that of a 'helper' and 'facilitator'. Some are under the impression that this new role is an easy way out for teachers to relinquish their teaching tasks. Tudor (1996) points out that though there is no denying that some educators may misuse the concept of 'autonomy' and 'independent learning' for their own benefit, in reality it is a more demanding role. Successful effective facilitators have to take a proactive role to establish a 'learning partnership' which can sometimes be painful and frustrating but is rewarding at the end to both learner and facilitator. This new role involves "negotiation, exchange of views, securing needed resources, and validation of outcomes" (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991, p. 14).

It is often assumed that self-directed learning schemes, which highlight learner self-assessment are incompatible with institutions which rely on examinations. Gremmo and Riley (1995) point out that where self-directed learning schemes were tried out in such institutions, learner self-assessment has been fruitful in two additional ways. Firstly, such learning schemes helped both teachers and learners to realize that self-assessment and examination / external certification are two separate processes.

Self-assessment is vital to the act of learning and learners learn to assess accurately and realistically. Examinations need not be abolished but can be integrated in the self-directed learning scheme making learners "fully aware of their objectives, conditions, criteria and expectations beforehand" (p.155). Secondly, the experiments led to a reappraisal of the concept of "examination". Now, in some institutions the final grade is a combination of both the teacher's evaluation and the learner's self-assessment.

Independent and autonomous learning are sometimes perceived by some as a western concept that may not be appropriate for the Asian culture which often views and respects the teacher as an expert. Krissanapong (1996) argues that this is untrue and goes on to stress that early education in Thailand was in fact both autonomous and determined by necessity. He claims that it was the introduction of western-style education of the 3Rs that saw the demise of autonomous learning in Thailand. Furthermore, there is evidence from both research and sayings of ancient and modern Chinese scholars backing this false myth that autonomy is a concept laden with western values that opposes the Asian culture (Jones, 1995). Pierson (1996, p. 49) quotes Chu Hsi (1130-1200 A.D.) a Chinese scholar who once said:

> If you are in doubt, think it out for yourself.
> Do not depend on others for explanation.
> Suppose there was no-one you could ask, should you stop learning?
> If you could get rid of the habit of being dependent on others,
> You will make advancement in your study

When Gardner and Miller (1997) surveyed 541 self-access centre users in Hong Kong, the results indicated "that Chinese learners had no difficulty with self-access learning and that it was an effective methodology for Chinese learners" (p. 44).

Willing's 1988 study in Australia indicated that the overall rating of attitude towards self-assessment among the Chinese learners was high. The Chinese learners depicted a 3.0 out of 4, where 4 was the highest approval rating.

Self-directed autonomous learning is sometimes taken to mean that it is an 'all-or-nothing' concept. Learning is either directed by others or fully autonomous. Researchers like Brockett and Hiemstra (1991), Farmer and Sweeny (1994) Nunan (1995) and Sheerin (1997) all agree that instead of extremes, a continuum exists. As learners possess different learning styles and approaches, they will find "differing needs for outside assistance, personal initiative and individual reflection in terms of their learning activities" (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991, p. 11). Self-directed learning is best viewed as a continuum and Nunan (1997) captured this continuum by demonstrating how learners could be guided through instruction from the stage of awareness to involvement, intervention, creation and finally to transcendence.

Investigating Learner Autonomy

Brookfield (1990) states that the attempt to study how learners 'learn-to-learn' requires the reflective domain. He adds that by being consciously aware of the cognitive and cultural processes, one can develop a better understanding of how learners learn and how they can be helped to learn more effectively. Research methods such as verbal self-report procedures, interviews, critical incidents, life histories, surveys and analysis of learners' written journals and diaries are about some of the many ways that researchers can investigate the development of how learners learn.

Interviewing is one of the most frequent investigative method used to analyze the development of learning in learners. Rubin (1975) and Naiman et al. (1978) used interviews together with other techniques to investigate how good learners learned a language. O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 94) note that the advantage with interview data is "the richness of the description obtained of the respondents."

Brookfield (1990) points out that the 1982 Morgan, Taylor and Gibbs' study used in-depth interviews to document learners' biographies in longitudinal studies of British Open University students' orientations to learning. Kitchener's 1986 (cited in Brookfield, 1990) used interviewing in the study of 'reflection in action' where learners were asked to explain and defend their judgements on problem-solving issues and how they came to know that their belief was true.

Education researchers like Gay (1981) and Seliger and Shohamy (1989) contend that interviews have been misused as some researchers often interpret the respondents' perceptions from within the researchers' own frame of reference. Yet, there are some that have tight interview schedules that reduces the interview to an artificially generated level of mechanics. Oxford (1990) however, adds that totally unstructured interviews can pose a difficulty as they would require the researcher to create own categories for analyzing and interpreting after the interview. She recommends semi-structured interviews. Gay (1981) stresses that an interview must allow genuine two-way traffic so that the subject feels that she/he is a partner and 'true conversationalist' and not a victim. Brookfield (1990) concludes that when interviews are used sensitively, this method of investigation provides for "an interactive exchange of perceptions between

researchers and respondents and can provide some in-depth analysis of how learners learn" (p. 334).

Cohen (1987) put forward three basic techniques of verbal self-report that can be used to tap the conscious mental processes involved in language learning. He called these 'self-report', 'self-observation' and 'self-revelation'. In the technique of 'self-report', learners report what they do, characterized by general statements like "When I have a word I really want to learn, I say it over to myself several times and try to associate it with some other word I already know" (p. 32). Self-observation, on the other hand, relates to either the introspective or retrospective inspection of language behaviour. While introspective refers to information while still in the short-term memory, retrospective can be immediate - i.e. after 20 seconds or within an hour after the event. 'Self-revelation' refers to the learner's report that provide 'think-aloud' or "stream-of-consciousness disclosure of thought processes while information is being attended to" (p. 33).

Oxford (1990) elaborates that the 'think-aloud' procedure (TAP) can be used with or without interviews. In a TAP, a learner is asked to perform a language task and to think aloud, describing what he or she is doing to accomplish the task. The researcher will record the respondent's general behaviour while the learner says aloud what she is doing. The data which is usually recorded on tape is usually unedited and unanalyzed. Tapes are then transcribed and analyzed to determine both the approach and strategies used by learners to learn or accomplish the task.

Analysis of written documents such as learning diaries, journals and life histories are effective methods for understanding how learners 'learn-to-learn.'

Researchers like Oxford (1990) and Brock, Yu and Wong (1992) contend that written materials such as diaries and learning journals are an excellent tool for reflection as they are simple to conduct and promote development of reflective teaching and learning. They are a form of self-report which allow learners to record "their thoughts, feelings, achievements and problems as well as their impressions of teachers, fellow students and native speakers" (Oxford, 1990, p. 198). Christensen (1981) advocates diaries and journals as they are tools for investigating the planning and evaluating of learners' personal learning and creativity in learning. Hatton and Smith (1995) however, caution that journal entries can sometimes be "altered to accommodate to the perceived expectations of the reader, rather than suit the writer's end" (p. 43). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) add that diaries have the disadvantage of "containing far more information than is needed for a straightforward analysis" (p. 94). They point out that this shortcoming can be addressed by giving respondents guidelines or directions to writing their diaries.

Another investigative method is the use of surveys. Surveys help gather systematic, written data like strategies that learners use to learn. The advantage offered by survey is that it "delimits the responses to information that is relevant" to the study (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 94). According to Oxford (1990), surveys can be either 'less-structured' or 'more-structured.' In less-structured or subjective surveys, less organization is provided to respondents in terms of responses required. They usually contain more open-ended questions. The advantage it offers is that more information can be obtained but the results may prove to be difficult to summarize especially if it involves a large population sample. In more-structured or objective surveys,

respondents are provided with more structured type or multiple-choice questions with standardized categories. Hence, they are easier to analyze but they lack the richness of information provided in open-ended questions. One well-known survey used in second and foreign language research on strategies used by learners in language learning is Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL).

Implementing Learner Autonomy

Tell me, I'll forget.
Show me, I may remember.
But involve me and I'll understand"
(Chinese proverb).

Sheerin (1989) notes that the early days of learner centredness and learner independence which were characterized by debates on terminology has today, seen a shift to a concern as to how we can develop effective mechanisms for allowing students greater autonomy. One practical way of guiding learners towards learner autonomy is through the development of learning contracts. The setting up of Self-Access Centres and Learner Training are two other common means of encouraging learner autonomy.

Learning Contracts

According to Hammond and Collins (1991), a learning agreement or a learning contract is "a detailed statement prepared by the learner, usually with support from a mentor or facilitator. It is developed after learning needs have been diagnosed" (p. 131).

It is hence a written document on how a particular activity will be undertaken so that learning goals can be achieved.

Several researchers (Anderson, Boud & Sampson, 1996; Hammond & Collins, 1991; Knowles, 1990 and Rogers & Freiberg, 1994) acknowledge that learning agreements prepare learners for life-long learning skills. They also stress that through learning agreements learners experience not only increasing learner autonomy, empowerment and control, but personal growth and increased self-esteem especially when they have succeeded in the learning experience. Learning agreements also encourage learners to work to meet their own identified learning needs, rather than follow a pre-determined course of studies. In addition to that, learning contracts help students to cope with the management of the learning process especially during the transition period when learners move from teacher-directed learning to self-directed learning so that learning can become a life-long process (Nackeeran, 2000). By using learning contracts, learners are "free to work in their own preferred learning styles, at their own pace, using sequencing which is personally meaningful" (Hammond & Collins, 1991, p. 138). Since learning contracts acknowledge individual differences, learning can be tailored to meet a learner's personal needs and goals.

Despite their advantages, learning agreements have also been known to present a number of limitations. Anderson, Boud and Sampson (1996) put forward some of the concerns that one may experience when trying to implement learning agreements. They highlight the point that learners are not always in the best position to judge what they need to learn, as many learners simply do not know what they do not know. Besides that, some learners may experience problems with their advisers and there are some

learners and members of the staff that may resist this new method of assessment. On top of that, the whole process is often very time-consuming and academic standards could fall if learners choose their own assessment.

Hammond and Collins (1991) argue that most of these limitations will be experienced only in the initial stages of implementation and these can occur due to inadequate orientation of learners and facilitators. Brookfield (1986) points out that "the ability to write contracts is a learned skill, and facilitators must spend considerable time helping students to focus on realistic and manageable activities" (p. 81).

Dickinson (1987) suggests that at the initial stage, the teacher should be present to provide help with the whole process especially with deciding how the learning task should be carried out, the kind of materials needed and how to assess achievement. At the beginning, learners' practice is restricted perhaps only to identifying objectives. Later, the task of contract completion can be simplified by dividing learners into small groups where "each group is provided with a sample contract and a set of questions against which the learners evaluate the contract" (p. 102). Such a move would not only help learners become more reflective in their approach but also gradually help them in the writing of their own learning contracts.

Nunan and Lamb (1996) point out that there is no limit to possibilities as to what a learning contract may look like. If a teacher is contemplating using contracts with learners, it is important to decide how much of the contract is going to be drawn up by the learner independently and how much will be completed collaboratively with the teacher. Here, some key questions such as, what are the learning objectives, what activities will help achieve the objectives, what is the appropriate time frame for

achieving the objectives and what resources will be needed, can contribute to the development of a contract.

A sample of a standard learning contract is presented in Appendix 4 of this study. The learning contract shown in Figure 6 below is an example of a completed learning contract. The framework for learning contracts can however be modified and adapted to suit the learners' learning needs.

			LANGUAGE SKILLS CONTRACT				
NAME	Djibril	GROUP Advanced			DATE 1 October		
Skill area for improvement – learning objectives	Proposed activities – what you are going to do	Proposed resources – what you are going to use	Target date for completion	Ways of demonstrating achievement – how you are going to test yourself		Tutor's initials	Date completed
1. Reading speed Improve speed from 100 w.p.m. to 120 w.p.m. without reducing comprehension	Timed reading of prepared passages	Reading speed builders Box IV, Level – blue	1 Nov	– Use test items in the card for comprehension and get >80% – Reach >120 w.p.m. on five consecutive cards			
2. Seminar discussion skills – Break into a discussion – Disagree politely with another speaker – State an alternative viewpoint	– Take part in oral skills option – Try to arrange additional discussions with friends – Practise during tutorials and seminars in other subjects	– Supplied by tutor – Try to get a native speaker to take part; watch TV news and discuss current issues; use newspapers – Supplied by tutor	1 Nov	– Judge reactions of other participants – do they look startled/irritated when I join in? – Do I convey my viewpoint? Do I manage to persuade people? Try to get native speaker to monitor my performance			
3. Essay writing – Improve my planning of essays – Writing essays	– Plan essays on many topics – Write one essay per week on one of the topics above	– Wallace Study Skills in English – Form self-help group from friends (tutor will help with this)	1 Nov	– Use guide in book – Self-assessment schedule – Ask tutor – Ask tutor – Self-assessment – Assessment by self-help group – Tutor to check some essays	Using criteria supplied by tutor		

Source: Dickinson, L. (1987). "Self-Instruction in Language Learning." London: Cambridge University Press. p. 100.

Figure 6 . An example of a completed learning contract

Self-Access Centres

According to Sturtridge (1992), a self-access centre (SAC) is "any system which makes materials available to language learners so that they can choose to work as they wish, usually without a teacher or with very limited teacher support" (p. 4). In a self-access system, learners are responsible for their own learning. They proceed at their own pace, determine when they want to learn, have their own objectives in learning, choose the task and media that suits them best, and also evaluate and monitor their own progress. Since individual differences are catered for, it is in a sense learner-centred in its approach to learning.

Sheerin (1997) clarifies that besides being learner centred, a self-access centre is also very much material centred, as the system's success depends heavily on the availability of interesting and relevant learning materials, which the learner can work with independently. Motteram (1997) points out that the creation of materials that truly reflect an autonomous learning philosophy is not an easy task. He stresses that with the wealth and bulk of text and information available on the Web, educators need to be extra careful as they could easily fall into the trap of simply replicating the status quo in a new format. Hence, it could easily be just another case of 'old wine in new bottles'. In fact, much of the early CALL material has been criticized for this. Jones (1995) notes that, what teachers do with the material is hence more important than the material itself.

According to Strutridge (1992), the answer behind the few successful SACs lies in the failure to prepare both staff and learners for the self-access approach. According

to O'Dell (1992), these problems can be somewhat alleviated through the use of induction materials for new members of the staff, counselling materials and holding regular staff seminars. Strutridge (1992) recommends that teachers be provided with training course on three types of skills: organizing skills, housekeeping skills and skills in facilitating learning.

On the other hand, steps must be taken to prepare learners to take charge and learn independently in an SAC. One way to achieve this is to provide learner development and support through learner training. The importance of learner training in self-access facilities is also well articulated by Barnett and Jordan (1991). They point out that the preparation, classification and indexing of materials will only lead learners to the water but the much more important next step is to encourage them to use it effectively. In implementing learner training, Strutridge (1992) recommends that teachers not only make learners aware of their learning needs but also encourage positive attitudes among learners to working independently in an SAC. He stresses that guidance must be provided to learners so that they can identify and set achievable objectives, monitor their own performance and become aware of their own learning strategies.

Learner Training

Authors like Benson (1995), Dickinson (1989) and Nunan (1995) emphasize that it is a mistake to assume that learners come into the language classroom with a natural ability to take full responsibility for their learning. In reality, very few people

are spontaneously self-directed. Hence, learners must be systematically educated in the skills and knowledge they need in order to make informed choices about what they want to learn and how they want to learn. Nunan and Lamb (1996) point out that this can be provided through instruction in learner training.

The objective of learner training is, therefore, to help learners to become aware of the factors that affect their learning and discover the learning strategies that suit them best. Learner training provides learners with the alternatives from which to make informed choices about their own learning so that they can become effective autonomous learners. It also "focuses the learners' attention on how to learn rather than what to learn" (Ellis and Sinclair 1989, p. 2). Oxford (1990) concurs with this view and adds that the aims of learner training are as follows: (1) to make learners more aware of the choices available in language learning; (2) to make language learning more meaningful; (3) to encourage collaboration and co-operation between teacher and learner, and (4) to facilitate learning and practice of strategies that encourage independence and self-directed learning (pp. 200-201).

According to Wenden (1991), the three main components of learner training are learning strategies, metacognitive knowledge and attitude strategies. Learning strategies are "mental steps or operations that learners use to learn a new language and to regulate their efforts to do so" (Wenden, 1991, p. 18). Rubin (1987) divides learning strategies into cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies refer to specific actions that contribute to the learning process whereas metacognitive strategies are used to "oversee, regulate or self-direct language learning" (p. 25).

Metacognitive knowledge includes 'beliefs, insights and concepts that they have acquired about language and the language learning process" (Wenden, 1991, p. 34). This knowledge provides learners with opportunities for reflection so that they can reassess and revise their knowledge to gain greater learner control and autonomy.

The final component in learner training is learners' attitude. This refers to the learners' role in the learning process and ability to learn. Teachers must realize that success can only be obtained if learners are committed and willing to take charge of their own learning. More importantly, learners must be motivated and capable of managing the learning process. According to Lake (1997), a negative attitude can be affected by prior experience in an educational system, which discourages learner autonomy. Other negative aspects include promoting teacher dependence, a lack of awareness of one's metacognitive knowledge and possessing low self-esteem and a sense of helplessness.

Ellis and Sinclair (1989) stress that learner training is related to the concept of learner autonomy because "it aims to provide learners with the skills and ability, that is strategies and confidence to take more responsibility for their own learning" (p. 3). Among second language educators and researchers, the approach where students are explicitly taught how, when and why strategies can be used to facilitate language learning tasks can be referred to as 'strategy training' or 'strategy instruction' (Chamot & Rubin, 1994). According to Oxford (1994b, p. 2), strategy training or strategy-based instruction is a learner-centred approach that has two major components:

1. Learners are explicitly taught language learning strategies to enhance language learning; and

2. Language learning strategies are integrated into everyday language class materials and may be explicitly or implicitly embedded into the language tasks.

Strategy Training

If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day,
If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.
(Confucius, 551 - 479 BC cited in Ellis and Sinclair, 1989, p. 2)

The age-old quotation above implies that once learners are provided with successful and systematic instruction, they could develop into self-sufficient or self-directed learners. Hence, for learners to be autonomous and self-sufficient, they must first be taught to 'learn-how-to-learn.' It cannot be denied that most teachers would concede that fostering their students with strategy training for learner autonomy is a desirable goal.

O'Malley and Chamot, (1990) point out that one unresolved issue in the instruction of learning strategies is whether instruction should focus only on learning strategy instruction or whether it should be integrated with classroom instruction in the language or content of the subject concerned. They cite studies carried out by Derry and Murphy (1986) and Jones, Palincsar, Ogle and Carr (1987) all of which are in favour of separate training programmes. They argue that learners will learn the

strategies better if they are made to focus solely on developing strategic processing skills rather than having to learn the content at the same time. Dansereau's (1985) Computer-Assisted Cooperative Learning (CACL) Program is an example of such a programme. It trains learners in primary strategies for comprehension / retention and for retrieval / utilization, and support strategies for planning, monitoring and concentration management.

On the other hand, researchers like Chamot and O'Malley (1987) and Wenden (1991) are in favour of an integrated strategy instruction programmme. They argue that when training is conducted in the context of the subject-matter / content, the relevance and the importance of the strategy is emphasized. It also gives learners a chance to practice strategies on authentic academic and language tasks and this would naturally facilitate the transfer of strategies to other new and similar tasks.

Another issue surrounding strategy instruction is whether instruction should be carried out implicitly (embedded instruction) or explicitly (direct instruction). Rubin (1987) stresses that the research into learner strategies rests on the assumption that both explicit and implicit knowledge can contribute to the learning process. The arguments for direct or embedded instruction has strong arguments for both sides. Direct instruction or informed instruction means learners are informed of the value and purpose of strategy training. On the other hand, in embedded instruction learners are presented with structured activities and materials. Learners are given ample opportunities to work on their own and practise until they discover some ability to observe and regulate their own use of strategy.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990), comment that early research on the training of learning strategies revealed that the embedded approach saw little transfer of strategy use to new tasks. Studies carried out by Brown, Armbruster and Baker (1986) and Palincsar and Brown (1986), have however, shown that adding the metacognitive component to training (that is learners are informed about the purpose and importance of the strategies) has helped learners maintain strategy use over time and aided in transferring strategies to new tasks.

A criticism of embedded strategy training or 'blind training' as Wenden (1987b) puts it, is that learners are left in the dark about the importance of the activities. Hence, learners will be unaware of the strategies they are using and this will not facilitate the development of independent learning strategies. According to Wenden (1986), effective strategy instruction should train learners about the 'how' and 'why' to do the following: i.e. use new strategies, evaluate the effectiveness of different strategies and decide when it is appropriate to transfer a given strategy to a new situation.

Language Learning Strategies

According to Porte (1995), learning strategy research tends to use the 'good' language learner as its touchstone. Research on successful learners initiated by researchers such as Naiman et al. (1978), Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) have not only identified language learning strategies (LLS) reported by successful students but also demonstrated that students do apply learning strategies and these strategies can be described and classified.

In SLA, a number of definitions of learning strategies have evolved. According to Wenden (1991), researchers have referred to strategies as 'techniques', 'tactics', 'potential conscious plans', 'consciously applied operations', 'learning skills', 'basic skills', 'functional skills', 'cognitive abilities', 'problem solving procedures' and 'language learning behaviors' (p. 18).

Lessard-Clouston (1997, p. 2) in his article "Language Learning Strategies - An Overview for L2 Teachers" points out that Tarone (1983) first defined LLS as "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language - to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence." Rubin (1987) notes that LLS "are strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affect learning directly" (p. 22). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) go on to define strategies as "the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p. 1). Oxford (1990) expanded on this definition when she said that LLS are "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p. 8). This definition includes the socio-affective aspect of language learning as she stresses that "language learning is indisputably an emotional and interpersonal process as well as a cognitive and metacognitive affair" (p. 11). Lessard-Clouston (1997) notes that a study of these definitions indicate that over time the early focus on the product of LLS on linguistic or sociolinguistic competence has now shifted to one which places a greater emphasis on the processes and the characteristics of LLS.

Although researchers have found difficulty in coming up with a uniform definition and terminology (e.g.'learner strategies' by Wenden and Rubin (1987) and 'learning strategies' by O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), there exist certain basic characteristics in the generally accepted perception of LLS. Lessard-Clouston (1997) emphasizes that LLS are learner generated as they are steps taken by learners to facilitate learning. Secondly, they "enhance language learning and help develop language competence, as reflected in the learner's skills in listening, speaking, reading, or writing the L2 or FL" (p. 3). Thirdly, as LLS are defined as behaviours, steps, techniques thoughts or mental processes, they may be visible or unseen. Fourthly, LLS are conscious behaviours that involve information and memory (vocabulary knowledge, grammar rules, etc.). In addition to the above, Oxford (1990) feels that LLS are not just the cognitive but also problem-oriented as they involve many aspects which are influenced by a variety of factors. Moreover, they are flexible, can be taught and "make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations" (p. 8).

In discussing the theoretical underpinnings and assumptions of LLS, Rubin (1987) points out that some language learners are more successful than others because they possess and often engage in a particular set a of cognitive and metacognitive behaviours. Early researchers in this field, such as Rubin (1975) and Naiman et al. (1978), put forward lists of strategies and other features presumed to be characteristics of all good language learners. For example, Rubin (1975) suggests that good learners are often uninhibited, willing and accurate guessers with a strong drive to communicate. They also focus on both form and meaning and are willing to take risks and make

mistakes. They take advantage of all practice opportunities and monitor their speech as well as that of others. Wenden (1991) notes that 'successful' or 'expert' learners have not only acquired LLS but possess the "knowledge about learning, and the attitudes that enable them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher" (p. 15). Holec (1987) adds that these learners are aware of the learning process and have hence learnt how to manage their own learning (i.e. they know 'how-to-learn'). Therefore, they are successful and autonomous.

On the other hand, studies (Porte, 1988 and Vann & Abraham, 1990) have shown that the 'poor learner' or the underachiever is not as inactive as might have been supposed. In fact, these learners do possess LLS but "these are often inefficient, underdeveloped or misdirected towards a particular task" (Porte, 1995, p. 144). These researchers say that there is potential for improvement for underachievers but they must be shown how to develop their current strategies and learn new LLS to enhance their learning. Researchers (Oxford, 1990 and Tudor, 1996) conclude that it can be assumed that once the strategies of good **language** learners are identified, they can be made available and used by less successful learners to enable them to learn a second language more effectively. Skehan (1989, p. 139) aptly summarizes this as follows:

> One of the main motives for the study of strategies is the hope that they are
> causative and that they can be trained. Discovering what the most effective
> strategies are, might allow them to be taught to less successful learners,
> thus enabling these learners to progress more quickly.

Taxonomies of Language Learning Strategies

Tudor (1996) notes that if learning strategies are to be taught and used as a tool for analyzing the learning process, then, it is necessary to have a categorization of learning strategies, which is "sufficiently broad to provide a meaningful level of insight into the cognitive and interactional processes that are likely to be set in motion by various pedagogical options" (p. 202).

Strategy classification systems are many and varied and Oxford (1990) notes that at this moment in time there is no complete agreement among researchers as to "whether it is, or ever will be - possible to create a real scientifically validated hierarchy of strategies" (p. 17). Oxford (1994b) further elaborates that there exist about two dozen second language strategy classification systems. She has divided them into the following groups:

1. Systems related to successful language learners (e.g. Rubin, 1975);

2. Systems based on psychological functions (e.g. O'Malley & Chamot, 1990);

3. Linguistically based systems dealing with guessing, language monitoring, formal and functional practice (e.g. Bialystok, 1981) or with communication strategies like paraphrasing or borrowing (e.g. Tarone, 1983);

4. Systems related to separate language skills (e.g. Cohen, 1990) and

5. Systems based on different styles or types of learners (e.g. Sutter, 1989).

(Oxford, 1994b, p. 3)

This proliferation of distinct strategy typologies clearly indicates that the research area of second language learning strategies lacks a coherent and well-accepted system for classifying these strategies. Both White (1995) and Tudor (1996) point out that most current research on language learning strategies that has been carried out use either the framework developed by Oxford (1990) or the classification scheme proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990). The next section will look into these two systems of classification.

O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) tripartite categorization of learning strategies is based on a number of studies carried out on ESL learners in the United States. Their classification has a strong foundation in cognitive psychology learning theories particularly in terms of metacognition in learning. Their framework saw the classification of 22 strategies into three main categories depending on the kind and level of processing involved viz.: metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies. This system of categorization is provided in Appendix 1.

They point out that their 11 cognitive strategies such as repetition, resourcing, grouping, note-taking, elaboration, summarization and transfer relate directly to the learning task. These LLS help learners interact with the target language materials and situations and help them manipulate and analyze the learning material for the language task. On the other hand, the 7 main metacognitive strategies such as planning, self-management, self-monitoring, problem identification and directed attention refer to strategies that involve learning and controlling learning through planning, monitoring and evaluating the learning process. These LLS engage learners to reflect or think about their learning. O'Malley and Chamot (1990), stress that learners "without

metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction or opportunity to plan their learning, monitor their progress, or review their accomplishments and future learning directions" (p. 8). The third category of social & affective strategies such as questioning for clarification, co-operation, self-talk and self-reinforcement involve the affective part of learning. It involves the management of feelings about language and language use when interacting with others.

On the other hand, Oxford (1990) claims that her taxonomy of LLS is based on synthesized earlier work on good language learning strategies carried out by researchers on each of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Her resulting classification strategy system suggests that good language learners use strategies in the following six broad groups: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social. These six subcategories emerge from two main categories of strategy i.e. 'direct' and 'indirect' strategies. Oxford's system of categorization is presented in Appendix 2 of this study.

The 'direct' strategies relate to the ways in which learners deal with and work with on the target language including the mental processing of the language. The 'indirect' strategies involve the general management of learning. Within the category of 'direct' strategies are memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. Memory strategies such as 'creating mental linkages' and 'applying images and sounds' help learners to store and retrieve new information. Cognitive strategies such as 'practising' and analyzing and reasoning' enable learners "to understand and produce new language by many different means" (Oxford, 1990, p. 37). Meanwhile, compensation strategies (like guessing or using synonyms) allow learners to use the target language for either

comprehension or production despite deficiencies and limited knowledge about the language.

On the other hand, indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective and social strategies. They are referred to as 'indirect' because they help, support and manage the language learning process in many different instances while working in tandem with direct strategies. Oxford (1990) stresses that indirect strategies are useful in virtually all language learning situations and are applicable to all the four basic language skills.

Metacognitive strategies help learners to coordinate their own learning process. Oxford (1990) points out that learners are often overwhelmed by the new target language with "unfamiliar vocabulary, confusing rules, different writing systems" all which "can make the learners lose their focus" (p. 136). She is of the opinion that these learners need metacognitive strategies such as centering your learning, paying attention, arranging and planning and evaluating learning to regain focus as to succeed in the new endeavour. Affective strategies such as 'lowering one's anxiety' and 'encouraging oneself', help learners regulate their emotions, motivations and attitudes towards the learning of the target language. Social strategies direct learners' interaction with other people (teacher, fellow students, proficient target language speakers, etc.) to help in the acquisition of the new language. Such strategies involve asking questions, cooperating with others and empathizing with others.

Tudor (1996) notes that one may see some interactions and differences between these two taxonomies. He elaborates that despite the differences between the two analyses, both categories "clearly agree to a substantial degree on the types of behaviours that can be classified under the general heading of learning strategies" (p.

207). Hence, both these systems can be viewed as valid and insightful. He, however, cautions that since research on learning strategies is still sparse, both these two categorization systems should be viewed with some degree of constructive reserve. Teachers must however realize that it is only through practical experimentation, that one can realize the full potential of strategies.

Effectiveness of Using Language Learning Strategies

Early researchers on LLS like, Naiman et al. (1978), Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) made lists of effective strategies that help learners to become good learners. In recent years, however, numerous studies have been carried out showing the effectiveness of using a variety of strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) cite a study carried out by Dickson in 1978 which illustrates that a skilful listener asks specific and relevant questions that elicit from the speaker the essential information. Another successful study in oral communication was carried out by Cosgrave and Patterson (1977). They conducted an experimental study where they verbally instructed children to ask questions. The results showed that children in the experimental group asked significantly more questions. The questions asked, increased from about 4 to about 12 for fourth graders, from about 1 to about 9 for second graders and kindergartners and from 1 to about 3 for preschool group.

Research studies also indicate significant improvements in vocabulary learning tasks presented in one-to-one training sessions. For example, in the study carried out by Cohen and Aphek (1980), 26 students who were studying Hebrew as a second language

were trained to recall new vocabulary words through paired associations over a period of several weeks. Results showed that this strategy training led to a better performance than using a different association or none at all. They also indicated a high success rate for recall of words learnt through associations.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) cite a number of other studies (Atkinson and Raugh 1975; Levin, 1981; Paivio & Desrochers, 1979 and Pressley et al, 1980) that report a high success rate when students were trained to use specific types of linking associations to cue the target word, such as keyword methods. For example, the study carried out by Paivio and Desrochers (1979) successfully trained their second language students to use paired associate techniques, which include the 'peg-word method' (where learners use a list of memorized cue words to learn vocabulary or grammatical categories).

Rubin (1987) reports that in the 1981 Rubin-Henze study, Henze reported that by paying conscious attention to learning strategies she was able to "focus on her learning" and the process of writing a diary indirectly helped her "evaluate her own learning strategies, enabling her in some cases to manipulate strategies so that she received the most benefit" (p. 16).

O'Malley and Chamot (1990), stress that strategy training studies on comprehension strategies in language learning have investigated reading comprehension more frequently than listening comprehension. For example, a study investigating reading strategies carried out by Hosenfeld, Arnold, Kirchafer, Lacicura and Wilson (1981) showed how they successfully taught a series of reading strategies to their high school French students. Moreover, strategy training carried out by Brown, Bransford,

Ferrara and Campione (1983) and Dansereau (1985) indicate an increase in students' performance after receiving strategy training in a wide range of reading comprehension and problem-solving tasks.

Experiments carried out by both Ellis and Sinclair (1986) reveal that learners who were involved in courses that focussed on both cognitive and metacognitive strategy development provided more positive feedback compared to learners in courses, which focussed on only one of these two aspects. They also note that the combination also made it easier for learners to transfer strategy training to other appropriate learning tasks in other settings.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) highlight that a number of second language learning strategy studies have also been undertaken by institutions such as CRAPEL in France and CALLA in USA. Oxford (1990) commenting on the effectiveness of using language strategies concluded that, "learning strategies are keys to greater autonomy and more meaningful learning" (p. ix).

Factors Influencing the Choice of L2 Learning Strategies

In implementing strategy training, Frohlich and Paribakht (1984) caution that we must take note of the "uniqueness and individuality of each language learning career" (p.71). Ellis and Sinclair (1989) add that each individual learner develops strategies and techniques, which best suits his or her own personal needs and personality. Numerous studies carried out by researchers (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Gardner, 1985; Politzer, 1983 and Oxford & Nyikos, 1989) illustrate that a number of factors influence and

determine the choice of strategies used among students learning a second or foreign language.

One of the main factors that influence the choice of strategy use is motivation. According to Gardner (1985), the "prime determining factor (in language learning success) is motivation because motivation along with attitudes, determines the extent of active personal engagement in language learning" (p. 85). Motivation also helps determine the frequency with which learners use strategies. In a study involving 1200 university students, carried out by Oxford and Nyikos (1989), results indicated that of all variables measured, motivational level was the most powerful influence on reported use of LLS. In the study, motivational level significantly affected the tendency of language students to use or not to use strategies in 4 out of 5 factors [i.e. formal rule-related practice strategies, functional practice (authentic language use) strategies; general study strategies, and conversational/input elicitation strategies]. Highly motivated learners use these strategies significantly more often than less motivated learners. In short, more motivated students tend to use more strategies than less motivated students, and the particular reason for studying the language was important in the choice of strategies (motivational orientation, especially related to career field).

Oxford (1993) contends that attitude also has a strong influence on language learning and hence, it is more likely to influence the choice of learner strategy use. Bialystok's (1981) study indicate that learners' attitude has a strong influence in the choice of language learning strategies. In fact, it is more influential than language aptitude. Wenden (1986) argues convincingly that if negative attitudes towards learner self-direction are not changed, any amount of training in LLS will not help. Oxford

(1994a) summarizes that both attitude and beliefs about language learning have a significant effect on the strategies learners choose. Learners with negative attitudes and beliefs often display poor strategy use or 'lack of orchestration of strategies'.

A third factor influencing strategy use is gender. Research studies indicate that females report greater overall strategy use than males (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Green and Oxford, 1995; Oxford and Nyikos, 1993 and Politzer 1983). In a study carried out by Ehrman and Oxford (1989) it was found that females portrayed a significantly greater use of language learning strategies when contrasted with males, in 4 categories [general study strategies, functional practice (authentic language use) strategies, strategies for searching for and communicating meaning, and self-management strategies]. According to Oxford (1993), this could be due to "women's stronger social orientation, stronger verbal skills and greater conformity to norms, both linguistically and academically" (p. 238). She, however, adds that though women significantly employ more language strategies than men, strategy training has shown that both men and women show distinct strategy strengths.

Research studies conducted by Politzer (1983), Oxford and Erhman (1995) and Tyacke and Mendelsohn (1986) indicate that the cultural background such as national origin or ethnicity is a key factor in the choice of language learning strategies. In a study carried out by Politzer (1983), he found that both Hispanics and Asians differed strongly in the kinds of strategies they employed for language learning. Hispanics showed a preference towards more social and interactive communicative strategies while Asians opted for greater rote memorization and rule learning. Tyacke and Mendelsohn's (1986) study also indicate that rote memorization and other forms of

memorization are more apparent among some Asian students than students from other cultural backgrounds. Oxford (1994a) comments that this is probably due to their previous school experiences or because certain cultures appeared to encourage or dictate such behaviours. Studies carried out by Russo and Stewner-Manzanares (1985) and O'Malley et al. (1985) reveal that Orientals respond less positively to strategy training when compared with Hispanics. Russo and Stewner-Manzanares (1985) cite Sutter (1987) who points out that the teacher could face opposition if he presented LLS that clashed with learners' initial strategy reference, especially those related to national origin or cultural background.

A fifth factor, tolerance of ambiguity, refers to the acceptance of confusing situations. A study carried out by Oxford and Erhman (1995) reveal that learners who display moderate levels of ambiguity are more likely to persist in language learning than learners with low tolerance of ambiguity. They also report that learners who were more tolerant on ambiguity used significantly more different strategies in some instances than did students who were less tolerant of ambiguity.

Another factor to consider is the degree of awareness. Oxford (1993) points out that metacognitive awareness also influences strategy use. What learners know about themselves and about their learning process (e.g. proficiency level and learning style) can affect their use of language learning strategies. Nyikos and Oxford (1993) cite studies (Nyikos, 1987 and Tyacke & Mendelsohn, 1986) which reveal that learners are generally unaware of the strategies they use and a majority of them use only a narrow range of strategies. On the other hand, Chamot (1987) discovered that even ineffective learners were aware of and used a number of strategies with the main difference being

that effective students reported a greater frequency and greater range of strategy employment. Oxford (1994a) attributed these conflicting results to the different research methods used.

White (1995) reports that learning environments or the mode of study can determine the choice of strategies. Her comparative study of the strategies used by students in a distance learning environment and conventional classroom environment showed that mode of study has a strong influence on metacognitive dimensions of strategy use, ahead of age and level of study. The distinctive use of strategies, particularly self-management strategies by distance learners contributed to the development of autonomy in language learning.

Oxford (1989) reports that other factors that determine the choice of strategies employed include factors such as age, second language level or aptitude, duration of course, language being studied, self-esteem, risk-taking abilities, personality characteristics, teaching methods and the nature of language tasks. These factors have great implications for strategy training. According to Oxford (1989), teachers must be sensitive to all these individual differences when carrying out strategy training.

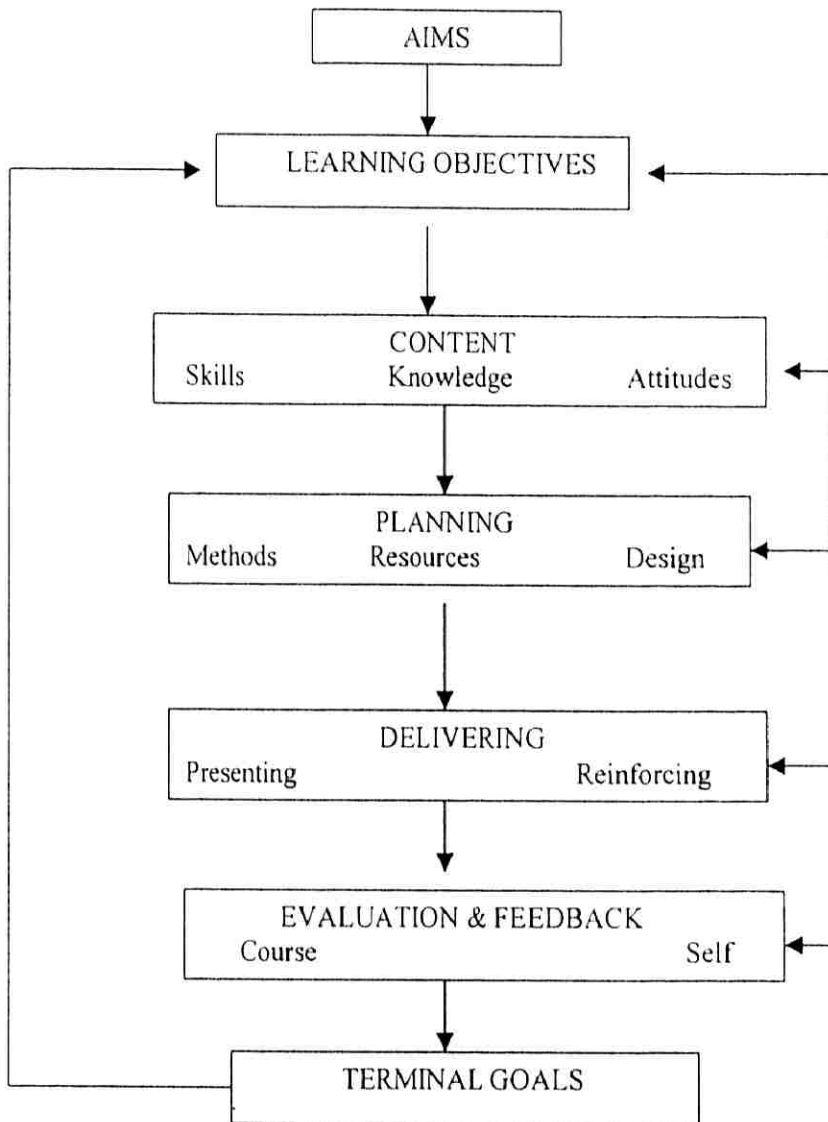## Guidelines on Strategy Training

It is true that one cannot be prescriptive when it comes to any form of instruction as each learning situation is unique in itself. The following criteria for learner training activities have been put forward by researchers such as Jones et al.

(1987), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990) and Wenden (1989 and 1991).
They are based on research for developing effective strategy instruction.

The first step in implementing a strategy-training programme is to determine the learners' needs and the time available. According to Newby (1992), a researcher in the field of training and management, "an identified training need pinpoints an area where change is required" (p. 39). Here, the trainer has to take into consideration his learners' needs, beliefs and attitudes. Then he has to assess his learners' current strategy use through the use of procedures such as 'think-aloud process', interviews, diary entries, and surveys.

The second step is to plan and design the training approach. At this stage, a number of tasks such as the aim and objectives of the training have to be taken into consideration. The aim represents a long-term goal whereas learning objectives are often referred to as performance and behaviourable objectives. Pont (1996) suggests that one ask the following three simple questions to define the objectives: What do you expect your students to be able to do, to know or have at the end of the course?

The planning and designing stage also involves making decisions as to the content of the programme and how the training will be implemented. According to Pont (1996), time invested in good planning would most certainly reap benefits in the training cycle. He put forward the systematic approach to the development of a course. The sequence is shown diagrammatically in Figure 7.

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │        AIMS         │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                               │
                               ▼
        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
   ┌───▶│            LEARNING OBJECTIVES              │◀───┐
   │    └─────────────────────────────────────────────┘    │
   │                           │                            │
   │                           ▼                            │
   │    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐    │
   │    │                  CONTENT                    │◀───┤
   │    │  Skills      Knowledge         Attitudes    │    │
   │    └─────────────────────────────────────────────┘    │
   │                           │                            │
   │                           ▼                            │
   │    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐    │
   │    │                 PLANNING                    │◀───┤
   │    │  Methods     Resources          Design      │    │
   │    └─────────────────────────────────────────────┘    │
   │                           │                            │
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   │    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐    │
   │    │                DELIVERING                   │◀───┤
   │    │  Presenting                   Reinforcing   │    │
   │    └─────────────────────────────────────────────┘    │
   │                           │                            │
   │                           ▼                            │
   │    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐    │
   │    │          EVALUATION & FEEDBACK              │◀───┘
   │    │  Course                            Self     │
   │    └─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
   │                           │
   │                           ▼
   │    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
   └────│            TERMINAL GOALS                   │
        └─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Source: Pont, T. (1996). "Developing Effective Training Skills - A Practical Guide
to Designing and Delivering Group Training." UK: McGraw Hill Int. p. 17.

Figure 7 . The systematic approach to the development of a course

Once the identified needs have been translated into clear objectives, the next step is to draft the outline of the content. Wenden (1991) asserts that training should be provided in learning strategies, metacognitive knowledge and attitudes. O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 100) point out that strategies selected for strategy training must be related to the needs and characteristics of the learners. They recommend that strategies that are helpful for most learners and transferable to a variety of language tasks be introduced. Wenden (1987b, p. 166) advises that the following be taken into account when integrating learner training with language training programmes:

1. Range and specificity - should a general orientation of all concepts and skills be provided or should the training focus on skills tied to specific language training objectives?

2. Autonomy of application - should opportunities be provided within the training sequence for the actual practice or application of the skills or should learners assume the responsibility to direct this aspect of training autonomously outside the classroom?

3. Learner's needs - how much time can learners set aside for formal language training? How compatible is a particular language training course with learners' linguistic needs? To what extent do they appreciate the relevance of learner training?

The third step of planning is often considered an important stage as it demands the preparation of training materials, methods and design of the training package. The preparation of training materials must take into consideration the aims and objectives of

strategy training and the kind of strategies that have been decided upon at the second stage of content identification. Today, as the interest in autonomous learning through learner training gains centre stage, a number of books and handbooks are easily obtainable from the market. These books provide good models and ideas of strategy training. They can be used as a point of reference for the preparation of learning material. Examples of such books include "Learning to Learn English" by Ellis and Sinclair (1989), "Self-Instruction in Language Learning" by Dickinson (1987), "Language Learning Strategies" by Oxford (1990) and "Learner Strategies for Learner Autonomy" by Wenden (1991).

Besides preparing learning materials, trainers also need to take into consideration the design of the programme. A good source of reference for strategy training during planning would be Ellis and Sinclair's (1989) "Learning to Learn English." Their learner training design provides a framework that consists of two stages: Stage 1- Preparation for Language Learning and Stage 2 - Skills Training. Stage 1 contains activities which develop metacognitive strategies such as planning for learning, self-assessment and monitoring. It also provides learners with opportunities to consider a variety of factors that affect their learning. Stage 2 contains a combination of metacognitive and cognitive strategies that are related directly to the specific learning tasks. This section involves learners working with the target language through various language tasks and materials. When planning a lesson, Ellis and Sinclair (1989) suggest that teachers start with language learning materials (i.e. language learning aims of the lesson) and learner training as the last item to be considered. They claim that such a move "prevents the learner training in Stage 2 from overriding the language learning

aims of a lesson and allows it to be derived naturally from and incorporated into language work" (p. 22).

The fourth stage, which is the delivery or implementation stage is the part when hopefully all the planning and preparation will fall into place. Wenden (1991) recommends informed training which refers to training that is "explicit and its value brought to the students' attention" (p. 105). Here the teacher should provide the rationale for the strategy and learners should be informed of the value and significance of each strategy. She adds that strategy training should also train students how to self-regulate the use of the strategy. Finally, strategy training has to be contextualized (training students to regulate the use of the strategy) and interactive (providing necessary guidance and scaffolding for students to practice until they are able to transfer it to new learning situations).

Oxford (1990, p. 206) adds that it is "important to relate cognitive strategy instruction to motivation." Hence, teachers need to consider the kind of motivation to build into their programme (grades or partial course credit for attainment of new strategies). Another point to consider is reinforcement. Here, the teacher should provide extension or enrichment activities that can help learners internalize strategies learnt and allow learners to experience success. Moreover, the teacher should make learners aware that failure could be attributed to the lack of effective strategies.

According to Dalziel (1994), the final stage (evaluation and feedback) evaluates the effectiveness of the training. He laments that despite all its benefits, evaluation continues to be arguably the most neglected area of the training cycle. Nadler (1986) points out that this is primarily because it is most often assumed to be negative and

destructive as it questions all aspects of the training and events and what it is worth. According to Pont (1996), evaluation and feedback should focus on both the whole as well as the part as each event and person. He stresses that evaluation often provides useful feedback for review to further improve the various stages in the training cycle.

Oxford (1994b) elaborates that strategy training should also "provide learners with a mechanism to evaluate their own progress, the success of their training and the value of the strategies learnt in multiple tasks" (p. 2). In addition to this, Wenden (1987b, p. 166) points out that in evaluating, one should consider the following:

1. Learner attitudes - has learners' appreciation of learner training changed?

2. Skill acquisition - has the learning skill been learned?

3. Task improvement - does the skill facilitate performance of the language task?

4. Durability - does the skill continue to be utilized?

5. Transfer - is the skill utilized in similar contexts?

The next step would be to review and revise the strategy training programme. Oxford (1990) states that like in any training effort, "the evaluation will suggest possible revisions to a number of aspects such as materials and activities" (p. 208). This leads back to Stage 1 - a reconsideration of the characteristics and needs of the learners in the light of the cycle of strategy training.

Wenden (1991), cautions that though most guidelines are often based on general research, teachers should make it a point to analyze and evaluate their own activities so that they can modify, adapt and expand on them. She emphasizes that it is only through

practical experimentation that teachers can hope to gain insights into learner training to further enhance strategy instruction.

Related Studies carried out in Malaysia

As mentioned in Chapter I (p. 27) of this study, there has been limited research carried out in the area of learner autonomy in Malaysia. The little research that has been carried out has not focussed on learner autonomy as in the management of the learning process but on aspects such as the use of language learning strategies and the setting up of self-access centres. Evidence of this is seen in past studies carried out by Malaysian researchers.

For instance, studies carried out by Chin (1996), Chandran-Pillay (1994) and Subrayan (1997) looked into the use of self-access centres to facilitate language learning. Chin (1996) looked into the TESL teacher trainees' perceptions towards a self-access centre (SAC) in a teacher training college in Kuching, Sarawak - a state in East Malaysia. Meanwhile, Subrayan's (1997) study investigated the effectiveness of English Language learning in an SAC in a teacher training college in Johor- a state located in the south of West Malaysia. Chandran-Pillay (1994) examined the rationale and procedures for setting up an SAC for the learning of English at a school of engineering. The study highlighted some major considerations for the setting up of an SAC, such as adequate staffing, well-organized materials and an evaluation system. It also provided guidelines on procedures for setting up and running an SAC.

There have also been a number of studies that have examined the use and effectiveness of learning strategies to facilitate learning. For example, Lee (1993) and Lam (1999) both looked into vocabulary learning strategies of ESL learners in their respective institutions of education. Rocky (1998) investigated the communication strategies in second language interaction in a fully residential school whilst Shamsulanuar (1997) examined the compensatory strategies for the learning of English among Malay students. Zurina (1999) investigated the use of metacognitive strategies by skilled and less skilled ESL readers.

Meanwhile, studies by Joseph (1998), S. Kaur and Che Lah (1999), Ma (1996) and Rosna and Sharifah Azizah (1994) investigated the kind of language learning strategies (LLS) used by the ESL students in various institutions of education. For example, Joseph's (1998) study examined the use of LLS among Form Four Malaysian students and the variables affecting their choice. She collected her data using Oxford's (1990) SILL Questionnaire. The findings of her study indicate that strategy use in English language learning is not a common practice among Form Four students. Social and cognitive strategies were the most frequently used strategies among students. However, students in urban schools used significantly more cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies compared to their peers in rural schools. Her findings also show that female students use more compensation and affective strategies compared to male students.

The studies carried out by S. Kaur and Che Lah (1999) as well as Rosna and Sharifah Azizah (1994) investigated the kind of LLS used by the ESL students in local Malaysian universities. Both these studies also used Oxford's (1990) SILL

Questionnaire as their main research instrument. S. Kaur and Che Lah's (1999) study investigated the LLS used by Malay students in USM (University Sains Malaysia). Rosna and Sharifah Azizah's (1994) study examined the use of LLS by students in UUM (University Utara Malaysia) and whether variables such as sex, race and programme of study influenced their choice of LLS. The findings of Rosna and Sharifah Azizah's (1994) study indicate that students used all six categories of LLS on a moderate scale. Metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used group of strategies. This was followed by the use of compensation, social and cognitive strategies. Their findings concurred with Joseph's (1998) findings which show that memory strategies are the least favoured group of strategies among students. Their study also indicates that though females tend to use a much wider range of strategies, there is no significant difference between strategy use between the two sexes. Race had a significant effect on affective strategies. Their study reveals that Malay students are "more passive and non-participative compared to Chinese and Indians" (p. 14). Finally, their study shows that there is no significant evidence to indicate whether the field of specialization has an effect on the selection of LLS among tertiary students.

Ng (1992) in her doctoral dissertation entitled, "Learning Strategies: A New Dimension in the Preparation of Instructional Materials for ESL" set out to rectify the dearth of ESL instructional materials that focussed on the teaching of learning strategies. After a process of validation, evaluation and subsequent modification, she put forward a package of instructional materials for teaching LLS in the Malaysian ESL classroom. She claims that her materials focus on the teaching of thoughtful inquiry and LHTL through training in the use of LLS.

Rohana (1983) in her doctoral thesis, investigated the impact of individualized learning and lecturing on student learning in a Malaysian context. Her experimental study involved a total of 250 teacher trainees and university undergraduates. The researcher used a set of individualized learning materials that she had prepared on an experimental group of 50 students. The rest of the 4 control groups comprising 200 students were taught by their respective lecturers. The findings of her study indicate that students involved in IL (individualized learning) were more inclined to adopt a self-orientated learning approach (SOL) while those in the control groups were inclined towards a lecture-oriented learning approach (LOL). Furthermore, IL students appeared to use a 'deep-level' approach in their learning compared to LOL who adopted a 'surface-level' learning approach. The lecturers also seemed to demonstrate different teaching styles in different modes. She notes that in IL, some of the lecturers were inclined to adopt a 'responsive' teaching style as opposed to a 'restrictive' one in the lecture situation. She concludes that by "adopting a composite teaching approach in which IL is the basic teaching method, teachers may develop a 'responsive' style of teaching which can lead and promote more effective student learning" (p. 365).

Another researcher who looked into individualized learning was Chan (1993). He investigated the effectiveness of individualized learning using a computer designed programme (ILCOM- Individualized Learning using the Computer) in the learning of some secondary school matrices in Mathematics. His findings indicated that though students in the ILCOM group had slightly higher post-test scores than students in the control group, the difference was not significant. Nevertheless, the low ability students in the ILCOM group had significantly higher post-test scores than the low-ability

students in the control group and this group of students had also slightly more positive attitudes towards using ILCOM than the high ability students. The high ability students, however, preferred to have more practice items than low ability students. Chan highlights the fact that given the proper guidance, students are capable of individual learning with computers.

A recent study carried out by Eliana (1999) looked at the effectiveness of the Learning How To Learn (LHTL) approach in a Malaysian secondary ESL classroom. The study investigated the Form Four students' view of LHTL and the effects of LHTL on student motivation, attitudes, confidence, awareness and abilities as well as test performance. The study used a questionnaire, pre and post achievement tests and interviews. Results showed that LHTL approach to the teaching of English has positive effects on students' motivation, attitudes, confidence, awareness and abilities as well as performance.

Role of the Teacher in Implementing Learner Autonomy

You cannot teach a man anything:
You can only help him to find it within himself"
(Galileo, 1564-1642. Cited in Collins Gem Dictionary
of Quotations, 1977, p. 206)

The above quotation clearly implies that we cannot teach our learners to become autonomous learners because at the end of the day it is the students themselves who have to explore within themselves as to what it is that they want to achieve. What teachers can do is perhaps to help and guide them towards their desired goals.

Tudor (1993) notes that "learner-centred teaching involves a parallel change in the teacher's role" (p. 22). Therefore, what is most important is that teachers must realize that they are catalysts that will help teach learners to empower themselves to achieve learner autonomy necessary for life-long learning. Oxford (1990) notes that the role of the teacher in a learner-centred context has to shift from the authority figure to that of a "facilitator, helper, guide, consultant, adviser, coordinator, idea person, diagnostician, and co-communicator" (p. 10). Little (1995) echoed this when he said that it has resulted in a shift in the role of the teacher from purveyor of information to facilitator of learning and manager of learning resources.

According to the Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995), being a facilitator means helping or "enabling other people to work in the way that suits them best" (p. 492). Tudor (1996) sees the role of the facilitator as that of being a helper. He points out that the word 'helper' is sometimes used in preference to teacher and others, to emphasize the helping role provided by the teacher. Dickinson (1987) lists down the following, as some of the characteristics of the ideal helper or facilitator based on research carried out by Tough in the late 1960s.

The ideal helper is a warm, caring and loving person. He is also a person who is willing to make time to help his learner fulfil his needs, goals and aspirations in language learning. He is friendly, supportive and encouraging and regards his learner as an equal. Such qualities will make the learner feel more relaxed and willing to work collaboratively in a relaxed atmosphere. The second group of characteristics sees the facilitator as one who has confidence in the learner's ability to plan, organize, monitor and assess his own learning. He will also not take away from him the control of

decision making. The third group of characteristics can be viewed in terms of professional knowledge and skills, i.e. carrying out learners' needs analysis, setting objectives, preparing materials and carrying out other management and administration procedures. The teacher's professional and pedagogical expertise will also be present in her role as learning counselor and by virtue of her professional training and experience, the teacher should counsel and guide learners towards autonomy.

Oxford (1990) notes that in acquiring the new role, teachers must not forsake all their old managerial and instructional tasks such as that of the traditional authority 'knower' (i.e. source of knowledge) and 'activity organizer' (set and direct learning activities). The new teaching capacities include identifying students' learning strategies, conducting learner training and helping learners become more independent.

Dickinson (1987) acknowledges that it would be rather impossible to find an individual who possesses all these desirable qualities and skills. Nevertheless, he proposes that in preparing a training programme, one can first look for tutors with some of these identified skills and qualities and then help the selected tutors to acquire as many of the above mentioned qualities as possible. More importantly, what is required are critically reflective teachers.

Nunan and Lamb (1996) emphasize that teaching will only improve if teachers take a proactive role and become critically reflective teachers. Altan (1997) points out that to become a critically reflective teacher, one needs to develop attitudes such an open-mindedness and other essential skills such as the ability to communicate and exchange ideas and engage in self-assessment. Brookfield (1995) adds that a number of cultural barriers must first be overcome before teachers can be truly reflective. He

recommends that the culture of silence be changed so that teachers are more willing to share and talk about their experiences, dynamics and dilemmas of the classroom that they all face. He concludes that if teachers are able to discard all these fears and barriers and willing to take a proactive and reflective role, they will no longer see themselves as 'victims of fate' but as confident facilitators in the teaching and learning process.

Nakhoul (1993) sums up that in a learner-centred teaching situation, the teachers need not be over-whelmed by their new roles because they are in reality not 'superfluous.' The teacher is still necessarily a "counsellor, advisor and expert and these roles are more, rather than less demanding, open-ended and deeply committing as they are" (p. 155).

Tudor (1996) asserts that in helping learners in their pursuit towards learner autonomy in a learner-centred approach, it is the teacher who is the catalyst to bring about the learners' self-awareness. Since they are in the best position to empower their students, it is only logical that these teachers be first guided to empower themselves. Therefore, this calls for a re-engineering of teacher training institutions. This has been put succinctly by Little (1995, p. 180) when he said:

> If we are to achieve large-scale progress in the promotion
> of learner autonomy we must now bring our focus of concern
> back to the teacher, and especially to the way in which we
> organize and mediate teacher education.