Chapter two

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

During the past decades, researchers in the area of foreign language learning isolated learner characteristics and cognitive strategies that prevent or help progress in learning another language. In spite of attempts to improve foreign language instruction, the fact that some adults are more successful in learning another language still remains.

Various theories have been forwarded to explain this discrepancy. Such theories concerned "foreign language aptitudes" consisting of social factors, teaching methods, intelligence and cognitive variables, and analytical language skills. These factors are believed to affect the adult learner rate of success in foreign language learning. Such research aimed to refine a model of foreign language learning that would promote more successful learning strategies among students who are learning English as a foreign language.

Though those attempts have enriched the insight of foreign language learning strategies, a concept about the combination of strategies among the successful EFL learners need to be constructed. There are several studies discussing learner-related variables that affect language learning such as in the work of Cohen (1990), Macintyre and Cardner(1989), Reid.J.M.(1987) and Ehrman and Oxford (1989). From these studies, variables identified as factors include motivation, learning styles, gender, and course level, language learning strategies, previous experience and cognitive variables. Of these variables, language learning strategies and cognitive styles are relevant to this study.

Language learning strategies are special ways and techniques that learners adopt to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. The cognitive style construct known as field dependence/field independence (FD/FI) is another factor, which plays an important role in the learning area. FI is one of the important factors in the advancement of foreign language in any learning environment. There is a growing body of literature that looks at FD/FI as an important factor in learning foreign languages, some believe that the field dependent learners are more successful than field independent learners because they choose better and more effective strategies for learning and generally they are considered good and successful language learners.

The literature review of this study is organized into three sections. The first part discusses cognitive styles (field dependence /field independence) and studies that explicitly discuss it at different levels and across different cultures. The following section pertains to learning strategies and the final part discusses the variance that influences the choice of language learning strategies.

2.2 Cognitive style

The term "cognition" is vague. In the non technical context, it refers to any mental process. In a more technical sense, however, cognition concerns the problem solving abilities of humans. Cognitive style refers to preferred ways individuals choose to perceive, organize, analyze or recollect information and experiences. Educators and psychologists have identified a number of different cognitive styles, some of which will be discussed for their effect on choosing learning strategies when learning a foreign language. Moreover, scholars claimed that some cognitive styles developed naturally and many are learned in schools, sometimes as a result of direct tuition, but more often as a result of repeated exposure to certain types of problems that require specific types of strategies. In this regard Le Francoise (1991:120) points out that:

> *Our intellectual functioning is guided by complex, highly personal strategies.These strategies govern how we pay attention, how we analyze, synthesize, and recall. In a sense ,they result from the development of the elusive capabilities involved in learning how to think ,to create ,to discover, and to remember*

There are various definitions for cognitive style. Brown (1987:105) defines cognitive style as the unstructured relationship between the common style for learning and the specific solution which we choose for the problem in personality cognition. This link or relationship is called cognitive style.

Some psychologist and educators suggest that cognitive styles are relatively stable in adults. This view is challenged by Brown (1987) because some people believe that cognitive styles are fixed behaviors in adults. This view is questioned because it suggests that individuals show their interest toward only one style, when different contexts will cause different styles in individuals. From their point of view, an intelligent and successful learner is bio-cognitive and is able to cover both ends of the cognitive styles pole. As stated earlier, the above view is highly subjective and therefore in depth scientific studies are required. Cognitive style has been defined by Witkin et al.(1971:3) as :

"Characterises self-consistent mode of functioning which individuals show in their perceptual and intellectual activities."

In addition, Wittrock (1987:90) claimed that cognitive style is the consistent way that an individual chooses for perceiving, analyzing and perceptualizing information. In this research, the meaning of the cognitive style by Wittrock would be the main focus because it will describe the concept clearly and make it easy for the reader to understand.

In other words, an individual examines components of a stimulus, to access information for processing strategies that are acquired and stored earlier, and recognize or reassemble these experiences in order to discover a solution. Chastain (1988) believes that cognitive styles refer to the individual's tendency to use their talent in particular ways for learning. These stylistic preferences in manner of thinking are believed to affect human functioning in a number of areas.

In related research of cognitive style, the emphasis has been on the adoptive functions of cognitive processes in the psychological statutes of the individual. This emphasis leads to a search for connections and consistencies from one psychological area to another and also finding similarities across many psychological areas. In the view of Rubic Mansouri (1986:22-23) the essential characteristics of cognitive style can be enumerated in general, as follows:

1. Procedural /Formal

Cognitive styles are concerned with the form rather than the content of cognitive activity. They refer to individual differences in how we perceive, think, solve problems, learn, relate to others, etc. The definition of cognitive styles is thus cast in terms of "process".

2. Pervasiveness

"Cognitive styles are pervasive dimensions. This characteristic has important implications for the educational setting. Reflecting their pervasiveness, cognitive styles carry a message about what we traditionally call "personality". To explain more about the characteristic of pervasiveness of cognitive styles, Witkin et al. (1997, p.15) asserts, "the pervasiveness of cognitive styles also means that they can be assessed by nonverbal (perceptual) methods. This is a feature, which also stems from the origin of cognitive style work in the laboratory. To the extent that perception can be assessed by objective, controlled techniques, perceptual performance may be used as a measurable "tracer" for identifying an individual's cognitive style."

3. Consistency

"A third characteristic of cognitive styles is that they are stable over time. This does not imply that they are unchangeable; indeed, some may easily be altered. In the normal course of events, however, we can predict with some accuracy that a person who has a particular style one day, will have the same style the next day, month and perhaps even years later." (Mansouri, 1993:22-23)

4. Polarity

With regard to value judgments, cognitive styles are bipolar. This characteristic is of particular importance in distinguishing cognitive styles from intelligence and other ability dimensions. With cognitive styles, on the other hand, each pole has adaptive value under specific–circumstances and so may be judged positively in relation to these circumstances. (Mansouri, 1993:22-23)

Meanwhile, research on an educational application of cognitive styles is still in its early stages. The result of other research in this area shows that a cognitive style approach is useful to a variety of educational areas. In psychological literature, a number of different cognitive styles have been discussed for their role in second language acquisition and foreign language learning.

Cognitive styles are typically discussed as if they were polarities; in reality, humans show a tendency towards one pole or the other, with their scores on cognitive style tests arranged along a continuum between the poles. If the researcher wanted to list all the strategies that all the scholars and linguists and educators have found it would be a very long list. However, recently only a few of the possible number of cognitive styles have received the attention of the foreign language researchers.

The following are proposed models of dual cognitive styles that the researcher pinpoints in dichotomies, but the researcher discusses FD/FI in depth due to several reasons. Firstly, FD/FI is the most mentioned dichotomy of cognitive style in foreign language. Secondly, FD/FI currently has the clearest implication for educational issues and finally, FI/FD is the focus of this study.

2.2.1 Prospect models of dual cognitive styles

1. Field independence /Field dependence

2. Analytic / Relational

3. Serialist / Holistic

4. Verbal / Imaginal

5. Reflective /Impulsive

6. Aural /Visual

7. Sequential-successive /Simultaneous –synthesis

8. Convergent /Divergent

9. Broad category /Narrow category

10. Tolerance of ambiguity /Intolerance of ambiguity.

2.3 Field dependent /Field independent cognitive style

The theoretical basis of the field dependent /independent cognitive style was in fact far from language teaching and testing. Witkin's (1971) discussion, which got the attention of L2 researchers, was about the take-off disorientation of World War II pilots and had no relation with the above disciplines.

Griffiths and Sheen (1992) in their review of literature of field dependence/ independence revealed that first mention of this issue came from observations of World War II pilots suffering from confusion when they wanted to take off. These pilots found it difficult for them to gauge the actual size of the landmark and most of the time the result of this difficulty was fatal.

The nature of difficulty mentioned made some researchers look at this view from individual perspectives. At first, such studies were done in the laboratories with complicated equipment and tests. Witkin and Goodenough (1981:9) refer to the body adjustment test (BAT) for the study of perception.

> In the BAT, the subject is seated in a small tilted room that could be displaced clockwise or anti clockwise; his own chair could be displaced by the experimenter in a similar fashion, independently of the room. When given the task of adjusting the chair(and therefore his own body)from an initially tilted position to the upright, with the surrounding room in tilted position to the upright, some subjects aligned the body with the tilted room, and in that position reported that they were sitting perfectly straight. Clearly, such subjects were using the external visual field as the primary referent for perception of the upright, essentially to the exclusion of sensation from the body. At the opposite extreme of the performance range were subjects who brought the body close to the true (gravitational) upright. It seemed equally evident that for these subjects it was the body, which served as the primary referent for perception of the upright.

Later, researchers replaced other complex geometrical frames to categorize individuals' differences in their perception. Psychologists and educators have identified many different cognitive styles by referring to particular ways of processing information.

A field dependent learner is more person–oriented, and should do better with interaction–based learning. Field dependence /Field independence as a cognitive style is defined by Witkin. et al. (1977:71) as the level that an individual distinguishes the parts of a field separately from the main context and the degree that individual can achieve the things logically.

Brown (1987:105) defines field dependence as "your ability to perceive a particular, relevant item or factor in a field of distracting items." Furthermore, he points out that "field" may be perceived or theorized in relation to a set of thoughts, ideas, or feelings from which the task is to perceive specific relevant subsets. People are called field independent if they are more analytic, and learn effectively when confronting a body of material to be assimilated.

Brown (1987:105) states field dependent style as having the tendency to be reliant on the whole content to the extent that the items, which are implanted in the content, cannot be achieved easily. However the total field can be achieved more clearly as a whole unit. Goodenough (1976) Witkin Moor, Goodenough and Cox (1977) believe that the individual who has strong uttered cognitive ability is pertinent to evaluate the field when it is arranged and to propose the format on environment that lacks a natural organization.Field independent persons appear to experience the detail of "a field" as separate elements and they can alter the field or context when necessary to accomplish a task. In contrast, field dependent persons make less use of the mediational strategies of analyzing, structuring, hypothesis testing and inferencing. They are likely to use the field as they find it and make less use of the surrounding information to solve a particular problem(Rubin:1981).

Similarly, Chappell and Roberts (1986) reveal that a field independent individual will solve the problem systematically but the field dependent person will do that generally. In a problem solving situation, a field independent person analyzes the problem in detail but a field dependent person is not aware of it and will eventually lose the situation.

Viewed along this line, the development of a field dependent style has positive effects; you perceive the whole picture, the larger view, the general configuration of a problem or ideas or events. It is clear that some degree of field dependence and independence is necessary for most of the cognitive and effective problems we face. There are certain factors like age, sex, and culture, which can affect field dependent and field independent styles. For Western society, field dependence/independence follows a developmental curve. Witkin et al. (1971:9) believes that in Western society, children became gradually more field independent until the age of fifteen and after this age until thirty field dependency will be reduced slowly. In addition, men are also shown to be more field independent compared to woman.

Field dependence/independence may also prove to be an invaluable tool for differentiating child and adult acquisition. The child who is field dependent may have cognitive style advantages over the more field independent adult. Krashen Stephan (1981) has suggested that children are more likely to apply strategies of acquisition but adults prefer to adopt more monitoring or learning strategies.

The distinction between acquisition and learning could be well explicated by the field dependence /independence dichotomy. Field dependence /Field independence have also been found to relate to social and cultural variables. Witkin et al. (1971:14) comparing the Hopi children in Southwest United States with American children found that Hopi children showed more tendencies to be field dependent than American children. Similarly, Ramirez, M., and Castanda, A.(1974:212), reported in Witkin.et al. (1977) found out that Mexican American children from traditional families are more field dependent than Mexican American children from non-traditional families.

From these and other studies, which have been reported in Witkin et al. (1977) of field dependence and independence in other cultures, it can be concluded that in cultures where technology played an important role and individual freedom was stressed, the children were more field independent. Conversely, in cultures with more elaborate social structures tend to have children who are field dependent. Regarding educational and vocational preferences of field independent/dependent individuals Witkin and Goodenough (1976:39) admitted that:

> *"Field independent people in their expressed preferences and actual choice are likely to favour educational vocational domains which call for cognitive restructuring skills which are abstract rather than social in context, and which don't require others for their conduct. e.g.[Mathematical, Experimental Psychology, Carpentry, Architecture and Forestry]. Field dependent people on the other hand are likely to favour domains, which are social in context and require involvement with others but doesn't especially emphasize cognitive restructuring skills,(e.g elementary school teaching, clinical psychology, rehabilitation, counseling and personal management ."*

There is also some evidence that people may do better in consistence with their standing on the field dependence/independence dimension. For example, a study by Quinlan and Blatt (1972:74) showed that students who did well in "psychiatric student nursing" tended to be field dependent whereas students who did well in surgical nursing tended to be field independent. In addition to what has been said so far, it should be mentioned that there are positive and negative characteristics to both FD/FI. A field independent person is able to distinguish a part from a whole, to concentrate on something (like reading a book in a noisy bus), to analyze and separate variables without the interference of other variables. On the other hand, being too field independent can back fire, because cognitive "tunnel vision" forces you to see only the parts and fail to see their relationship to the whole, "you cannot see the forest for the trees "as the saying goes.

To give a summary to the discussion of FD/FI cognitive style in this part, the researcher would like to provide a brief conclusion of the notions mentioned earlier. The psychological construct FD/FI has been interpreted as the contrastive tendency to rely respectively, on either external or internal frames of reference in perceiving, organizing, analyzing, or recalling information and experience. With regard to personality, a field dependent person tends to rely more on others, to be more skilled in interpersonal relations, but a field independent person tends to be self-reliant. There is a gradual increase in field independence through childhood, but from the mid-teens through adulthood an individual's FD/FI remains relatively stable. The maturity of a field independent style is related to the type of society and home in which the child is reared. As Goodenough, et al. (1981:84) states:

"Agrarian or authoritarian societies which are highly socialized and have strict rearing norms tend to produce more field dependent persons,societies which are more relaxed raring practices tend to produce more field independence."

Some related studies have shown that a field dependent individual is more interested to use the data, which has been provided by others (Birmingham 1974, Oltman, Goodenough, Freeman, Witkin, 1975). Supporting the evidence from the social studies that field independent people rely more on their internal referent in interpersonal behaviour is the evidence that they learn more efficiently than field dependent people under conditions of natural motivation (Fitz, 1970, Steinfield, 1972).

Beyond the influence of cognitive style on student learning style and vocational interest, it is believed that cognitive style provides a basis for instructional preferences among teachers. Although some researches have been done in actual classroom situations, the teaching strategies that FD/FI teachers prefer are different from one another. Teachers are different in showing their interest in communicating with the students. Jacqueline Hansen and Charles Stansfield (1989) assert that FD teachers can be accepted by students who are attending to goal oriented tasks, and who are willing to have a group discussion in a warm and personal setting. FI students on the other hand are willing to have the class aimed at learning structure directly and they prefer an environment in which direct relationship (face to face) between the teacher and the student is limited.

Besides looking at the students or teacher's style, which can be considered as one of the effective variables in education, there are other factors that affect learning. One of these factors is the interactive effect of a teacher's stylistic match or mismatch

which is believed to affect learning. A study done by Jacqueline Hansen and Charles Stansfield (1989:264-267) imply that when the degree of matching between student and teacher is high, they understand each other better, feel more comfortable with each other and can communicate easily, and this can benefit the social interaction.

Some researchers suggest that there is the third group which is called field intermediate group (FIM). They believe this group of learners carries the characteristics of both field dependent and field independent groups. They are somewhere between this two mentioned groups. Meng and Patty (1991) defined FIM as subjects who scored within one half standard deviation of the mean are considered to be field intermediate.

Yore and Shymnasky (1980) categorized the students into three cognitive style groups according to their scores in their GEFT test. They stated that the subjects who score between 0-9 are field dependent, 10-13 field intermediate and those who score between 14-18 are considered as field independent.

2.4 Individual Differences, which are related to Field Dependence/Independence

The field dependence /independence cognitive control is closely associated with other cognitive styles and controls in researches done by (Goodenough and Karp 1961, Riding &Dyer, 1983, Williams, 1980, Wilborn, 1981) showed that, and among these are:

Analytical Reasoning: FD/FI loaded heavily on the analytical factor that was represented in the Wechsler Intelligence Test, including Block Design, Object Assembly, and Picture Completion tasks, which require individual to separate items from their context.

Introversion /Extroversion: Field independent individuals are driven by internal motivations; they are more introverted. Field dependents are more sensitive to others, so they tend to be more extroverted.

Ambiguity Tolerance: There is a negative correlation between FI and ambiguity tolerance, especially under stress. Those who are field independent are less affected by ambiguity and uncertainty in the learning environment because they are more likely to impose their own structure. Field dependents feel uncomfortable with the unconventional.

Levelling /Sharpening: Field independents ignore details that do not support their conceptualization, so they may tend to be levelers. Field dependents are more attentive to detail and may tend to be sharpeners.

Risk Taking /Cautiousness: Field independents may welcome non-standard approaches and they are greater risk takers. Field dependents often rely on standard approaches and are less likely to take risks.

Formal Operational Reasoning: Students classified as formal operational (based on Piaget's classification of formal, abstract logic) were more field independent than field independent

Hemispheric Laterality: Neurological theories hold that the right and left sides of the cerebrum specialize in different cognitive functioning. Neurologically based research has tied FD/FI to hemispheric laterality (O'Conner & Shaw, 1978). For instance, handedness and ear preference (highly lateralized functioning) are related to FD/ FI (Pizzamiglio, 1974). Eye dominance (also neurologically lateralized) is also related to FD/ FI (Oltman & Capobianco, 1967).

2.5 Characteristic Differences in Field Dependence /Independence

Based on research findings and theories forwarded by various researchers such as Witkin, Moor, Goodenough and Cox (1977), Joan Jamieson (1992) the table below summarizes the differences between FD and FI learners.

Field Dependent	Field Independent
Global	analytic
Accepts structure	generates structure
Extremely directed	internally structured
Attentive to social information	inattentive to social cues
Conflict resolvers	philosophical, cognitive
Sociable and gregarious	individualistic
Affiliation oriented	distant in social relationship
Interpersonal	intrapersonal
Needs friendship	reserved, aloof
Conventional, traditional	experimental
Influenced by the salient features	generates own hypothesis
Factually oriented	conceptually oriented
Acquires unrelated facts	acquires information to fit conceptual scheme
Accepts ideas as presented	represents concepts through analysis
Influenced by format /structure	less affected by format/structure
Gets feeling /decisions from others	impersonal orientation
Sensitive to others	insensitive to social undercurrents
Affected by stress	ignore external stress
Relying on internal orientation	relying on external orientation

2.6 Field independence / Field dependence and language learning

Theories of learning try to explain the way people learn and what common characteristics there are in all learning. While all human inherited the potentialities of learning, every individual approaches a problem or learns a set of factors from a unique perspective. One of the major reasons for the above statement is due to cognitive variations in learning a foreign language that are employed by individuals and are labeled under three major titles (Brown, H.D. 1987:79).

1. Processes

2. Strategies

3. Styles

2.6.1 Processes

"According to Brown process is the most general of the three concepts. All human beings engage in certain universal processes. Just as we all need air, water, and food for our survival, so do all human of normal intelligence engage in certain levels or types of learning. Process then is a characteristic of every human being." (Brown, H.D. 1987:79)

2.6.2 Strategies

Strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. They are contextualized "battle plans" that might vary from moment to moment or day to day or year to year.

Strategies vary intra-individually; each of us has few numbers of possible ways to solve a particular problem and we choose one or several of those in sequence for a given problem. Therefore, strategies are often conscious steps or behaviors used by learners to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and the use of new information. (Brown, H.D. 1987:79)

2.6.3 Styles

"Style is a term that refers to consistent and rather enduring tendencies or preferences within an individual. Styles are those general characteristics of intellectual functioning (personality type, as well) that especially pertain to you as an individual that differentiate you from some one else." Brown, H.D. (1987:78-79)

Regarding what has been said so far, the question of "How does all this relate to language learning" might be raised. According to H.D. Brown (1987:86) two conflicting hypotheses can be proposed.

First, it can be said that field independence is closely related to classroom learning that involves analysis, attention to details and mastering of exercises, drills and other focused activities. Recent research is supportive of such a hypothesis. Naiman et al.(1987) found in a study of English speaking eighth, tenth and twelfth graders who were learning French in Toronto that field independence style with languages success as measured by both traditional, analytical, paper–and–pencil test and by an oral interview (Cited in Brown 1988). Abraham (1985) found the second language learners who were field independent performed better in deductive lessons and those with field dependent styles were more successful with inductive lesson design.

The second hypothesis proposed by Douglas Brown (1987:106) is that field dependent people will, by virtue of their empathic social outreach and perception of other people, be successful in learning second language communicatively. No one seems to deny the plausibility of this hypothesis but little evidence has been gathered to support it. The principal reason for the dearth of such evidence is the absence of a true test of field dependence.

The two hypotheses could be seen as paradoxical: how could field dependence be most important on one hand, and field independence equally important? The answer to this paradox would appear that clearly both styles are important. The two hypotheses deal with two different kinds of learning. One kind of learning implies natural, face to face communication, the kind of communication that occurs too rarely in the average language classroom. The second kind of learning involves the familiar classroom activities: drills, exercises, tests, and so forth. It could be well that "natural" language learning in the "field" beyond the constraints of the classroom type of learning requires, on the other hand, field independent style.

Although psychological researchers have conceived field independence/field dependence as a realistic stable construct, logically and observationally field dependence/ independence are complete variables within one person. Depending upon the context of learning, individuals can vary their usage of field dependence or field independence. If a task requires field independence, individuals may invoke their field independent styles; if it requires field dependence they will invoke the appropriate style. They may be incorrect in assuming that learners should be either field independent or field dependent. It is more likely that learners have general inclinations but given a certain context, they can exercise a sufficient degree of an appropriate style.

The burden on the teacher is to understand the preferred styles of each learner, to sow the seeds for flexibility in the learners. Thus, instruction could be individualized for the best outcome in the classroom environment.

2.7 Language learning strategies

In a language learning situation, a learner tries to handle the learning task in the most efficient way by using certain strategies. These strategies are intended to facilitate the acquisition, storage and retrieval of information. Although different people use different kinds of strategies for the same task, but the matter of fact is that people actually use strategies for learning regardless of their different degrees of effectiveness in learning.

The word language learning strategy has been defined by many researchers. Wenden and Rubin (1987:19) stated the language learning strategies as "....any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information." Richards and Platt (1992:209) believed that language learning strategies are "intentional behaviors and thoughts used by learners during learning so as to better help them understand, learn, or remember new information."

According to Stern (1992:261), "the concept of learning strategy is dependent on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional direction and learning techniques." All the learners use the language learning strategy whether intentionally or unintentionally in order to develop the new information and to perform the learning task in the learning environment such as classroom setting.

Faerch Claus and Casper (1984:67) defined learning strategies as "an attempt to develop linguistic knowledge in the target language." Weinstein and Mayor (1986) defined learning strategies as *"behaviors* [italics added] that a learner engages in during learning and that are intended to influence the learner's encoding process".

Chastain (1988:164) believed that particular learning strategies are applied with the goal of influencing "the learner's motivational or effective state, or the way in which the learner *chooses, prefers, classifies* or *understands* new knowledge." Oxford and Nyikos (1989:241) defined learning strategies as behaviors, which are used by the learner to assist him in better learning, storing and recovering the information.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) defined learning strategies as particular ways or abilities which the learner adopts to analyze the information for the purpose of better understanding and making better use of it. Ellen Bialystock's (1985:256) definition of learning strategies was based on the belief that progress in language learning depends on the learner's increasing competence in two skill components:

> *"the ability to analyze knowledge into explicit structural categories....and the ability to select and apply information in the solution to specific problems, particularly under constraints such as time or distracting context".*

Bialystock (1986:289) thus defined learning strategies as the actions employed by the learner intentionally or unintentionally to show the real ability of the learner in analyzing the linguistic issues or the related things to this area but under specific related conditions.

Kouraogo (1993:165) quoted in Wenden (1987:6-7) conceptualized learning strategies in three aspects relating to:

1. The language learning behaviors that learners actually engage in to learn and regulate the learning of a second language.

2. What learners know about the strategies they use.

3. What they know about aspects of their language learning, e.g. about personal factors facilitating L2 learning and about general principles to follow for successful learning (Kouraogo.1993:165)

In learning situations, classroom acts as problem solving environment in which learners face new information and there are difficult tasks given by their teachers. The learner tries to find out the best way to handle the learning task, that is, using language learning strategies.

2.7.1 Identification and classification of second language learning strategies

Research on language strategies began with the works of Naiman, et al. (1987) and Rubin (1975) who tried to figure out the characteristics of successful language learners, and "good language learner strategies". The good language learner, according to them, is a willing and accurate guesser or has a strong inner drive to communicate with others, is often uninhibited in the interactions language, focuses on both form and function (communication), practices, monitors his/her own speech and that of others, and pays attention to meaning. The research in the area of a good language learner continued to guide the different identification and classification of learning strategies. Here is the brief review of the mentioned studies.

In a study done by Wong–Fillmores' (1976) quoted from Skehan (1989) with five Mexican ESL students. He came up with three social strategies as well as five cognitive strategies. He believed that using a few selected formulas can help the learners to continue participating in activities which supplied suitable environment for the learning of new material.

Wong-Fillmore (1976) highlighted the social aspects of learning and suggested that social strategies are very important in language learning because they provide learners with appropriate context and suitable exposure to the second language. Wong–Fillmore's (1976) classification quoted in Skehan (1989) is shown in the Table 2.1.

Table 2.1   Wong-Fillmore's cognitive and social strategies

Social strategies	Cognitive strategies
1. Join a group and act as if you understand what is going on, even if you do not.	1. Assume what people are saying is relevant to the situation at hand. Metastrategy :guess
2. Give the impression ,with a few well-chosen words / that you speak the language	2. Get some expression you understand, and start talking
3. Count on your friends for help	3. Look for recurring parts in the formulas you know
	4. Make the most of what you have got
	5. Work on the big things first: save the details for later

Source: Adopted from Skehan (1989:74)

The first category designed by Rubin was directed to cognitive strategy and recommends considerable scope for self awareness in the learning process. According to Rubin (1981) these are direct strategies which emphasized on-the-spot learning(learning which takes place in the learning environment) , This category contained clarification /verification, monitoring, memorization, guessing, inductive /deductive reasoning and practice.

The second classification by Rubin contained the strategies which affect the learning task indirectly and according to him, these categories with subcategories are mainly for out of class activities. This classification entails strategies such as creating practice opportunities, and using production tricks such as communication strategies. The above-mentioned classification was arrived at after fifty hours of classroom observation, analysis of self-reports and daily journal entries. Rubin (1989) reported in Skehan(1989) strategy list is shown in the Table 2.2.

Table 2.2   Rubin's classification for learning strategies (1989)

Strategies contributing directly to learning

Clarification / Verification ───────────▶ strategies which learners use to verify or clarify their understanding of the new language, e.g., asking for examples of how to use a word /expression; putting a word in a sentence to check understanding; paraphrasing a sentences to check understanding;

Monitoring ───────────▶ strategies which learners use to notice errors, to make a correction or to determine a solution, e.g., correcting errors ,to make a correction or to determine a solution, e.g., correcting errors in own/other's pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, and grammar; noting sources of own errors;

Memorization ───────────▶ strategies which focus on the storage and retrieval of language, e.g., taking notes with examples; finding associations (semantic, visual, auditory, kinetic); using devices such as writing out/reading several times;

Deductive reasoning strategies ───────────▶ learners use to look for and use general rules, e.g., inferring grammatical rules; comparing native and target language to see similarities and differences, noting exception to the rules;

Table 2.2 continued

Practice strategies   ——————————➤ which contribute to the storage and retrieval of language while focusing on accuracy of usage, e.g., experimenting with new sounds; using a mirror for practice; drilling self on words in different forms;

Guessing /inductive   ——————————➤ inferencing strategies which use previously obtained linguistics or conceptual knowledge to derive semantic meaning, speakers' intention, or linguistics form,e.g.,using clues from surrounding phrases or sentences, from syntactic structure, from context of discourse, ignoring difficult words;

Strategies contributing indirectly to learning

Creating opportunities for practice ——————➤ strategies that afford learners opportunities to be exposed to and practice the target language e.g., initiating conversation with fellow students, teachers, native speakers, listening to TV /radio, attending movies; spending extra time in the language lab;

Production tricks   ——————————➤ strategies related to communication that allow learners to remain in the conversation, e.g. , using circumlocution and paraphrase to get a message across; using synonyms, gestures, or using a cognate,repeating sentence for understanding.

Adopted from Rubin (1981:124-126) & Skehan (1989:78-79)

Another classification was proposed by Naiman, et al. (1978) who collected case studies of learners in schools by interviewing (biographical interviews and discussion of strategies that the students would use in hypothetical setting) and observing them over extended periods. In his classification there are five major categories for learning strategies. Each major strategy was linked with a number of minor subcategories. The classification by Naiman et al .is shown in Table 2.3

Table 2.3 Classification of the language learning strategies by Naiman et al (1978)

Learning strategy classification	Specific substrategies
Active task	1.Responding actively to learning opportunities or seeking preferred learning environment and exploring them. 2. Adding related language learning activities to the regular classroom program. 3.Engaging in a number of practice activities
Realization of language as a system	1.Analyzing target language to make inferences referring back to native language and making effective across-lingual comparisons at different stages of language learning 2.Effective cross –lingual comparisons at different stages of language learning
Realization of language as a means of communication and interaction	1.Emphasizing fluency over accuracy 2.Seeking communicative situations with target language speakers 3.Attempting to find out social-cultural
Management of affective demands	1.Coping with effective demands in learning
Monitoring second language performance	1.Constantly revising second language systems by testing their inferences(guesses)and by asking native speakers for feedback

Study done by Wenden (1983) opened a new dimension to the understanding of the learning strategies. She examined the strategies conducted by adult foreign learners to guide their learning task. Her work on self –directed learning was within the category of what O'Malley et al. (1985) called metacognitive strategies. She classified three general classification of self –directing strategies:

1. Knowing about language: relating to what language and language learning involved

2. Planning: relating to the what and how of language learning

3. Self-evaluation: relating to process in language learning and the learner's response to the learning experience.

The findings of the Wenden study (1983) provide clear insights about metacognition in second language learning, such as: their metacognitive knowledge and how they plan their language learning. The most suggestive classifications for language learning strategies are provided by Oxford (Ellis, 1994). Oxford (1990) suggested a new taxonomy. The classification done by Oxford is shown in (Figure 2.1) below.

Figure 2.1 Overview of Oxford strategy system
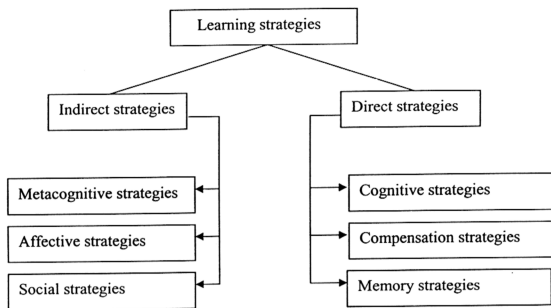
Oxford classified the strategy systems in two major categories, direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies "directly involve the target language in the sense that they require mental processing of the language" (1990:37). She classified the direct learning strategies to three main groups. Each of these groups approaches the language differently and for different functions.

a.   **Memory strategies**. They entail the mental processes for receiving the new information into memory store room and for regaining it when required.

b.   **Cognitive strategies.** Processing the target language and finding the link between new information and the former knowledge to enable them to classify and analyze it.

c.   **Compensation strategies.** Assist the learners to overcome their deficiencies in their existing knowledge and abilities.

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Indirect strategies, "provide indirect support for language learning through focusing, planning ,evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and empathy and other means"(Oxford,1990:151). She classified the indirect strategies as below:

a. **Metacognitive strategies.** They help the learner to direct their own learning and handling their learning task.

b. **Affective strategies**. Assist the learners in gaining control of their emotions and attitudes related to learning.

c. **Social strategies.** Ways to achieve learning by using question, asking for cooperation and being culturally aware

In Oxfords' (1990) strategy system each of these six strategies was categorized into two levels, the first level containing 19 strategy sets, while the second level contained 62 specific strategies. Except for those studies that I had mentioned earlier, other researches have been conducted in this area with the different objects and for different tasks. Taren (1997) discussed the communicative strategies of second language learners. She classified several communication strategies that were used by learners in conversations, and she identified five strategies: avoidance, paraphrase, conscious transfer, appeal for assistance, and mime.

Hansenfeld (1977) provided the list for reading strategies utilized by successful and unsuccessful second language learners. Some of the strategies such as keeping the context of the passage in mind while reading, reading in broad phrases, skipping unimportant words/and using the context as a source of clause to decode unknown words.

Another research by Cohen and Ophek (1981) found out the strategies that learners employed to handle their vocabulary learning task. In their research, they identified seven categories that the students employed in memorizing the words. The results showed that learners used combinations of different types of strategies and conducting these strategies assist them to overcome their problem in vocabulary learning.

Huang (1984) discussed the learning strategies in oral communication conducted by Chinese EFL learners. This study explored a large number of learning strategies of a functional or formal nature. She listed the learning strategies as: Functional strategies (using the target language for communication) including: willingness to talk a lot, thinking in English, speaking with other students. These mentioned strategies were considered as predictors for learners' success in the development of oral communicative abilities. The researchers also elicited six strategies as affecting successful language learning and they are:

1. Finding a set of learning preferences and selecting language situations that allow those preferences to be used;

2. Becoming actively involved in the language learning process;

3. Developing an awareness of language both as a formal system of rules and as a means of communication;

4. Constantly extending and revising individual understanding of the target system;

5. Gradually developing the new language into a reference system and learning to think in it.

6. Addressing the effective demands of language learning.

Stern (1975) developed a list of strategies used by the successful language learners. He arrived at this list based on observation and intuition. The characteristics of the successful language learner included a personally relevant learning style, positive learning strategies, and an active approach to learning, technical understanding of how to tackle a language, a sustained search for meaning, willingness to practice and to experiment, self –monitoring and development of the language as a medium of thought. These efforts demonstrated that students do apply learning strategies while learning a second language and these strategies can be described and classified.

Although the above-mentioned studies contributed a lot in identifying a number of purposeful approaches to language learning, the classifications were significantly different and did not have any basis in the theories of second language acquisition or the theories of cognition. In cognition theory, learning strategies are studied in the framework of information processing model, such as the model by McLaughlin, Rossman and McLeod (1983). This model includes an executive or metacognitive function, an operative or cognitive processing function, and a concern for the influence of social and affective processes on learning. Therefore, depending on the type of processing involved, learning strategies are divided into these categories.

1. *Metacognitve strategies*, O'Malley and Chamot (1990:44) defined metacognitve strategies as "higher order executive skills that may lead to planning for, monitoring, or evaluating the success of a learning activity. They mentioned four processes in metacognitive strategies. They are as follows:

a) Selective attention for especial aspects of a learning task, as in planning to listen for key words or phrases;

b) Planning the organization of either written or spoken discourse;

c) Monitoring or reviewing attention to a task, monitoring comprehension for information that should be remembered or monitoring production while it is occurring; and

d) Evaluating or checking comprehension after completion of a receptive language activity or evaluating language production after it has taken place.

(O'Malley and Chamot, 1990:44)

2. *Cognitive strategies*. These strategies involve "interacting with the material to be learned, manipulating the material mentally or physically, or applying a specific technique to a learning task"Chamot, et al. (1987:18). They include rehearsal, organization, inferencing, summarizing, deduction, imagery, transfer, and elaboration O'Malley& Chamot (1990).

3. *Social /affective strategies*. These strategies "represent a broad grouping that involves either interaction with another person or ideational control over affect" O'Malley &Chamot(1990:45). Oxford and Crookall (1989:404) give separate definitions for social and affective strategies: "affective strategies *are* techniques like self reinforcement and positive self talk which help learners gain better control over their emotions, attitudes, and motivations related to language learning. Social strategies *include* actions involving other people in the language learning process. Examples are questioning with peers, and developing empathy". For a detailed classification scheme for these three strategies along with their subdivisions (See Appendix E).

The information processing theoretical framework provided the basis for later studies in learning strategies. O'Malley, et al.(1985) and Chamot, et al. (1988). Chamot, O'Malley and their colleagues conducted some of the most elaborate learning strategy studies, using think aloud interviews, and developed detailed classifications schemes for learning strategies. A study by O'Malley, et al. (1985) was carried out with the aim of:

a) Identifying the range of learning strategies used by high school students on language learning tasks.

b) Determining if strategies could be defined and organized with existing strategy classification frameworks.

c) Determining if strategies varied depending on the task (vocabulary learning , pronunciation and oral drills) or the proficiency level of the students.

Three data collection procedures, student interview guide ,teacher interview guide, and classroom observation, were used to gather information on strategies used by seventy high school age ESL students, mostly native speakers of Spanish from central America, south America, or Puerto Rico. Seven metacognitive strategies, fourteen cognitive strategies, and two social strategies were identified. Beginning level students were found to be more using cognitive and metacognitive strategies than intermediate level students. Both beginning and intermediate level students used more cognitive strategies (especially repetition, note taking, and imagery) than metacognitive ones. Social /affective strategies such as cooperation and questioning for classification were not used as frequently as the other two types of strategies. Strategies used for the language learning tasks were as follows: the highest frequency was that of vocabulary (16.6 percent of all the strategies reported). It was followed by pronunciation (13.8 percent), oral drills (11.4 percent), and operational communication (9.9 percent).

In conclusion, the researchers confirmed the distinction between metacognitive, cognitive and social strategies, questioned the distinction made between learning and acquisition, arguing that students can benefit from learning about strategies outside and inside the classroom. Another study conducted by Chamot, and his colleagues consisted of three phases, descriptive (Chamot, et al.1987), longitudinal (Chamot et al.1988a, 1988b), and course development (O'Malley et al .1985b). The descriptive study aimed at:

a) Finding out whether Spanish and Russian students at the high school and college level use the same strategies identified in the classification scheme developed before.

b) Determining differences in strategy use between beginning level and intermediate and advanced level students.

c) Identifying the range and variety of strategies.

The data were collected from sixty-seven high school Spanish students and thirty- four college Russian students using the General Interview Guide (describing nine types of learning tasks and asking about the strategies to do them). After the analysis of data, the same major categories of strategies (metacognitive, cognitive, and social /affective strategies) emerged although some strategies were added to the classification scheme and provided some modification to it. Successful students used learning strategies more often and had a wider repertoire of learning strategies than did unsuccessful students. In metacognitive strategy use, both Spanish and Russian students predominantly reported using more planning strategies, such as selective attention, organizational planning, and self-management. Among the cognitive strategies, the traditional techniques of repetition and translation were used more compared to other strategies. Students rarely reported social or affective strategies.

In the longitudinal study of learning strategies used by foreign language learners (Chamot et al., 1988), participating students were drawn from beginning, intermediate and advanced levels of language study. Their learning behaviors were investigated longitudinally for four semesters, allowing the researchers to note changes in strategy use. Among the aims of the study were:

a) Investigating the cognitive processes revealed by students of Spanish and Russian as they worked on different foreign language tasks

b) Describing the range and frequency of strategies used for different tasks.

c) Identifying differences in strategy use between successful and unsuccessful students.

Forty Spanish students (27 effective and 13 ineffective) and thirteen Russian students (8 effective and 5 ineffective) participated in think aloud interviews on an individual basis. The result of this study served to refine the researcher, definition and classification of learning strategies and their understanding of the factors affecting performance on different language tasks, and showed the differences between successful and unsuccessful students in terms of strategy use. In terms of differences in strategy use, the results showed that successful learners used a greater variety of strategies and used them in ways that facilitated the language task. However, unsuccessful students not only had fewer strategy types but also applied them inappropriately.

Oxford and Nyikos (1989:293) derived five main factors from the analysis responses to a questionnaire called SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) which contained statements of 121 language learning strategies. The factors were:

Factor one, *formal rule related strategies* …..such as using structural knowledge, finding similarities between languages, generating and revising rules, and analyzing words.

Factor two, *functional precise strategies* … such as attending foreign films, seeking native speakers for conversation, imitating native speakers for conversation, initiating foreign language conversations, and reading authentic material in the new language, all requiring language practice in natural settings outside the classroom.

Factor three, resourceful *independent strategies*. . . involving:

a) Independent manipulation of foreign language material in order to embed it in memory, listing related words, making up sentences and exercises, using mnemonics, elaborating sentences, using a tape recorder.

b) Independent use of certain metacognitive actions (planning, self–testing, self reward).

Factor four, general *study strategies* …. including such all purpose techniques as studying hard, ignoring distractions, being prepared, organizing, and using time efficiently.

Factor five, *conversational input elicitation strategies* including…..requesting slower speech, asking for pronunciation correction, and guessing what the speaker will say.

Oxford and Nyikos (1989:293), table 2.4 summarizes the frequency of use for each of the five strategies (See table 2.4). The frequency of use of language learning strategies indicated that university students use those strategies that are related to "traditional, structure–oriented, discrete–point foreign language instruction environment

geared toward tests and assignments" (p.293). Strategies, which involved extracurricular effort to communicate in the new language (functional practice strategies) and required working independently on mnemonic and metacognitive aspects (resourceful, independent strategies), were mostly shunned by the students. In general the only area of communicative involvement of the students with moderate frequency "was in conversational input elicitation strategies, which did not necessarily demand any outside of class involvement with native speakers of the foreign language." Oxford and Nyikos (1989:294).

Table 2.4 Extracted Factors and Their Frequency of Use

Factor Number	Factor Name	Average Frequency of use of Strategies in This Factor	Rank Order of Usage
1	Formal rule –related practice strategies	Medium to High	1
2	Functional Practice strategies	Low to Medium	5
3	Resourceful ,independent strategies	Low to Medium	4
4	General study strategies	Medium to High	2
5	Conversational input elicitation strategies	Medium to High	3

Source: Oxford and Nyikos; The Modern Language Journal, 73 (3), (1989:293)

Another classification scheme for learning strategies has been proposed by Oxford (1990). She divided learning strategies into six groups .This classification scheme is based on the factor analysis of responses given to a questionnaire used to assess the frequencies of the used of strategies, SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning).There are two versions of the SILL ,one for foreign language learners whose native language is English (80 items)and the other for learners of English as a second or foreign language (50 items). The strategies included in the SILL have been classified into six groups:

1. *Affective strategies,* for anxiety reduction, self–encouragement and self reward.

2. *Social strategies,* such as asking question, cooperating with native speakers, and becoming culturally aware.

3. *Metacognitive strategies,* for evaluating one's progress, planning for language tasks, consciously searching for practice opportunities, paying attention, and monitoring errors.

4. *Memory–related strategies*, such as grouping, imagery, rhyming, moving physically, and reviewing in a structured way.

5. *General cognitive strategies*, such as reasoning, analyzing, summarizing, and practicing (including but not limited to active use of the language).

6. *Compensatory strategies,* (to make up for limited knowledge), such as guessing meaning from context and using synonyms and gestures to convey meaning Green &Oxford (1995:264-265), (See Appendix E).

2.7.2 Language learning strategies for advanced learners

There are enough studies to show that during the second language learning processes the learners use learning strategies. The findings of a study by Wenden (1986a), who did semi–structured and taped interviews with part time ESL learners of Colombia University, revealed that they planned and took appropriate steps to cope with the language learning processes. During the interviews, the learners mentioned activities like watching television; reading advertisements, listening to the radio and speaking to native speakers of the target language (TL).The activities described by the learner in this search can be categorized as 'social' and 'communicative' strategies. These strategies may have helped to achieve the TL.

Another strategy, which the learners used in the study, was the 'Metacognitvie' strategy. They used 'Metacognitive' strategies such as self-analysis and evaluation of their learning progress to regulate their learning. Another recent study by Pikard (1995) found that language learners sought authentic input of the TL from the environment. Besides reading and watching both television and plays, they employed the target language to communicate with native speakers to assist their learning of the English language. Cohen and Aphek (1981) discovered that the subjects in their study used language learning strategies, too, when handling language tasks. The subjects of the study were seventeen learners (nine beginners, six intermediate and two advanced) learning vocabulary in an intensive Hebrew program at Bradeis University in Jerusalem. The learners showed that they used language learning strategies to suit their Hebrew vocabulary learning tasks. In this study, the researcher Cohen and Aphek (1981) mainly focused on the language learning strategies, mostly used by the learners while doing different tasks in vocabulary learning within a hundred days. The research findings revealed that the subjects used language learning strategies, which are 'straight memorization' or memorization through association also known as 'mnemonic'.

At the beginning, learners showed more tendencies to the words, which are separate from the context because the distributing factors are minimum. They improve their vocabulary by making a word list and memorizing it. But in the advanced stage, they learn the words within a passage to overcome their learning difficulties. The researchers Cohen and Aphek (1981) specified eleven categories of association used by learners which are shown in table 2.5.

Table 2.5 The strategies used by students intending to learn the Hebrew language

1.associating Hebrew words with English words with similar sound	Hebrew words like : 1.*Memaher* means 'he hurry' **to** *hare* and *lazuz* which means 'to move' to 'snooze'.
2. associating part of the a word to an English word by sound and meaning	Hebrew words like : 1.*benatayim* means 'meanwhile', *ben to beyn* to between and tayim to time.
3.associating sound and meaning to an English phrase	Hebrew word like : 1.*benatayim* to 'been a long time'
4.associating Hebrew words with other Hebrew words by sound	Hebrew words like : 1.*tsava* means 'army' to *tsena* which means 'leave' and *rexov* means 'street' to *raxok* which means 'far'.
5.associating Hebrew words to proper names.	Hebrew words like : Maxane which means 'camp' to mane (the street that the Jacob Hiatt Institute is on).
6.associating Hebrew words to another language (English)through meaning .	Hebrew words like : *Tox* means 'inside' to *tuchus* (*yiddish for back side*)
7.associating by structure	Hebrew words like: Livened means 'before' to *Lifamin* means 'sometimes'.*seder* means 'order' to Lesader means 'to order'.
8.associating by one or more letters	Hebrew words like : *Masait* means truck by [m] in that , Vehicles often begins with [m] in Hebrew.
9.associating with frequently seen sign.	Hebrew words like: *Loatsor* means 'to stop' with the sign atsor means 'stop' in buses.

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Table 2.5 continued

10-associating with the place in the text where the word or phrase appeared.	
11-associating by making a mental picture of the word.	

<div align="right">Cohen and Aphek (1981)</div>

2.8 Beliefs about language learning

Human beings are characterized with beliefs: beliefs about their religion, beliefs about their society, beliefs about themselves, beliefs about others, and beliefs about what they do. These beliefs are different, but the fact is that beliefs influence the way they see the world, the way they see other people, the way they see themselves, and the way they see what they do. Here, we are concerned with the effect of the beliefs on how people do something; more specifically, the effect of the beliefs on how people view and learn foreign language. (Horwitz, 1987, Wenden &Rubin, 1987).

2.9 The Importance of Learner Beliefs

Foreign language learning, as an instance of human activities, is no exception from what was said above. Horwitz (1987:293) showed that "students arrive at the task of language learning with definite preconceived notions of how to go about it". Students come to the class with a variety of preconceptions and expectations about the language to be learned, how it is best learned, how long it will take to learn, the classroom environment, and the teachers' role. Some regard the teacher as the primary source for learning, while others prefer to develop skills for more independent learning. Learner beliefs are mostly affected by culture and the environment in which they have been.

Students are regularly exposed to opposing views and notions about language learning which are, how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment" Horwitz (1987:4).Skehan (1991:283) describes learning style briefly with this more recent definition: "a general predisposition, voluntary or not, towards processing information in a particular way" (p.288).

Comparing learning styles with learning strategies, Oxford and Lavine (1989:203) stated that "in contrast to language learning style, learning strategies are specific behaviors or techniques that students use, sometimes consciously, to improve their own progress in internalizing, storing, retrieving and using the target language"(p.203).

Learning styles are thus the general approaches to learning, while learning strategies are the specific actions used by the students to improve their learning. Unlike learning styles, learning strategies can easily be modified through training

(Ehrman &Oxford, 1988).The use of language learning strategies by learners is likely to be a direct reflection of the individual's learning style.

2.10 Variables affecting the choice of language learning strategies

Language learning strategies, as a learner variable, interact with other variables to influence the outcome of language learning for better or worse. Different researchers have identified some of these variables and have determined their effects on the choice of language learning strategies. They include proficiency level, gender, age, previous language learning experience, motivation, years of studying English and cultural background (ethnicity).

2.10.1 Language Proficiency

Several studies have shown that the proficiency level of students has progressed when they used different strategies. In research done by Bialystoks' (1981), she found the differences in use of strategies as the learner proficiency level advanced in the target language. As the language learning process advanced, the use of formal practice with forms and rules became less and less but there was no limitation shown in using functional practice with authentic and communicative language. Other studies done by Oxford and Nyikos(1989) supported Bialystok's finding that the use of communication-oriented strategies are more significant among foreign language learners who have been learning English for a minimum of four or five years compared with learners who were less experienced. Chamot et al. (1987) also found that the use of cognitive strategy decreased and the use of metacognitive strategy increased as the foreign language course level advanced but social affective strategy use remained low across all course levels.

Some other findings from the research done on proficiency and strategy use (Ehrman andOxford, (1989); Tyacke and Mandelson,(1986), reported in Oxford (1989) revealed that in general, successful language learners used more and better learning strategies than poor learners did. Oxford (1989) believes that there are two explanations for this:

1. Language learners might spontaneously use new and efficient language learning strategies as they become more advanced.

2. The nature of the task requirements itself might change as course level advanced for example the task might become more practical and learners might try to modify the relevant strategies to the task requirements.

2.10.2 Gender

Several studies have shown gender as one of the variables which affect language learners' choice of language learning strategies (Ehrman and Oxford, 1995).The results of their studies showed that learners of different sexes employed different language learning strategies in their approach in learning another language. Moreover, many of these strategies studies were SILL based studies (Oxford and Ehrman, 1989, Oxford and Nyikos, 1989).

In the area of adult language learners Ehrman and Oxford (1989) found out that the use of the learning strategies among females is remarkably more than males. In other studies done with university students, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) mentioned that females used a wider range of language learning strategies compared to their male course mates. Green (1989, reported in Oxford, 1989) found the same finding related

to gender. They also assert that males used strategies less than females in terms of strategy groups. Wen and Johnson 1991 (reported in Oxford, 1993) guided their research on relationship between strategy use and language proficiency with 242 tertiary–level Chinese students majoring in English. Even though their focus was not on gender difference in strategy use but their research showed that part of the differences in language proficiency was related with gender differences in strategy use.

Even though this study did not focus on the gender differences choosing language learning strategies because all the subjects are females but it must be mentioned that gender is one of the important factors which can affect the choice of learning strategies. The findings of earlier researches suggest that the males are inferior in strategy use compared to the females.

In summary, by looking at all the studies that have emphasized gender differences, it is clear that females used language learning strategies more often than did males. In none of the mentioned studies it was stated that males used learning strategies significantly more often than did females. For the purpose of summarizing the findings of research on gender differences, Oxford (1989:238) suggested "the conclusions might be associated with women's greater social orientation, stronger verbal skills (including proper rule usage), and greater conformity to norms, both linguistic and academic".

2.10.3 Job

Some studies have shown that people's jobs will affect the strategies they choose. In a study done by Oxford and Nyikos, (1989) they experienced that university students majoring in human, social science or education used two different types of independent strategies and functional strategies (as in authentic language use). They used these two strategies more than students majoring in other areas. In another study done by Politzer and McGroarty (1985), they found social science or humanities majors tried to adopt the learning strategies which assisted their acquisition and development of communicative competence but engineering sciences students preferred those strategies involving the development of linguistics competence.

2.11 The language learning strategies of the good and poor learners

Several researches have found that language learning strategies can be distinguished and taught to the learners (O'Malley and associates, 1985, Naiman and associates, 1978). For the purpose of helping foreign and second language learners to become proficient in the target language, it seems necessary to consider the language learning strategies adopted by good and poor language learners. This part will review studies which have been done on language learning strategies that both good and poor language learners employ to learn a language.

One of the earlier studies in language learning strategies was conducted by a group of Canadian researchers (Naiman, Frohlich, Tedesco, and Stern,1987). This study was based on thirty-four interviews and it explored five major language learning strategies. They were:

1) Active task approach

2) Learning a language as a system

3) Looking at the language as a way for communication and interaction

4) Managing the effective ability for learning

5) Monitoring

Naiman et al. (1978) added more specific language learning strategies to the list, some of them were:

- Following the rule, which has been written in grammar books and textbooks.

- Metacognitive strategy like listening to the radio, watching television, reading newspapers, comics and professional articles.

- Repeating the things after the teacher

- Memory strategy such as using tables to memorize the unfamiliar words

- Communicative strategy like communicating with a native speaker of the target language.

The subjects in the study done by Naiman, et al. (1978) were adult language learners from a university environment. This study was considered a study of language learning strategies of good learners as the subjects selected were university students. The findings showed some of the language learning strategies used by good language learners. However, they did not compare the use of language learning strategies between 'good' and 'poor' language learners. They concentrated on learning strategies which the poor language learners chose and therefore there might be a possibility that poor language learners employed similar language learning strategies as good language learners.

In another study, Vann and Abraham (1990) looked at language learning strategies employed by unsuccessful ESL learners. The subjects were Mona a twenty-year old high school graduate and Shida a twenty–nine year old who completed her college studies in Saudi Arabia. Vann and Abraham (1990) collected data by using thinking aloud, self-report protocols, and task products. They used different tasks such as interviews, verbs exercise, cloze tests, and compositions to find the related strategy to each one of them.

The researcher revealed that these learners used a significant number of language learning strategies just like successful (good) learners do. The problem is they are unable to accurately match the learning task with the appropriate language learning strategy.In the same line Lee Kooi Chong (1993) also discussed the language learning strategies adopted by 'good 'and 'poor' language learners. Lee (1993)categorized 'good' and 'poor' language learners based on their lower secondary

examination (P.M.R).The subjects of this study were one hundred and fifty–seven learners from various national secondary schools (Sekolah Kebangsaan) where the medium of instruction is in Bahasa Malaysia and national type secondary school (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan) where the medium of instruction is in Mandarin. The results of the study by Lee (1993) confirmed that 'good' language learners showed more interest in using strategies such as 'inferencing', 'mnemonics', 'elaboration' and 'guessing'. The poor language learner rarely used such a language learning strategy. O'Malley, Chamot, Kupper and Russo Manzanares (1985) did a similar study using the same techniques. They compared the language learning strategies adopted by beginner and intermediate ESL learners in a high school in the US. All the subjects of this study except for five Vietnamese were Spanish native speakers from South America, Central America, and Puerto Rico.

The result revealed the differences which existed in the choice of language learning strategies employed by the intermediate and beginner group of the language learners, even though both groups were not proficient in the TL. The beginners group seemed to use more language learning strategies than the intermediate group. In contrast the intermediate group of learners used more cognitive strategies compared to the beginner group. Both groups show their tendency for using 'translation strategy' while learning the TL, where they looked for equivalent words or phrases through their mother tongue while learning the target language.

Since the subjects in this study were not proficient in the English language, they showed greater use of language learning strategies like 'repetition', 'note-taking', 'asking questions for classification' and 'cooperation' which the researcher believed is not effective for their language proficiency achievement. In the same line, subjects in Lee's (1993) study were deficient in 'self regulatory learning strategy' and they did

not use learning strategies like 'inferencing', and 'oral' or 'communicative practice' of the TL, even though it can help them to improve their language proficiency while doing their tasks.

Generally, the findings of the studies (Naiman and associate, 1987; O'Malley, 1985; Lee Kooi Chon, 1993) showed that 'good' or 'successful language learners' utilized many language learning strategies to help them in their learning processes. Besides having a wide range of language learning strategies to choose from, they also need to be proficient in using a sufficient number of learning strategies in order to learn the language successfully. The subjects in the Vann and Abraham study (1990) were not successful in language learning even though they employed a broad range of language learning strategies. They lacked the ability to match each learning strategy with the related learning task, which is the more important step in learning.

As Garner (1988) aptly claimed, language learners need to know that knowing the strategies is not enough when they have a learning task unless they know *how* and *when* to use these strategies. For the purpose of being an efficient and independent language learner, students must be skilful in using language learning strategies and finding proper links between the learning strategies and the learning task.

However, knowing the language learning strategies of successful learners is not sufficient to assist the learners to learn efficiently. In order to provide suitable instruction, teachers of L2 need to identify and realize the individual differences such as gender, aptitude, age and background as well as situational differences like teaching methods, learning and teaching environments, language learned and duration of study.

Individual and situational differences, may affect learners choice of the language learning strategies which may influence learners performance in the target language. The learners of the second language must notice that some factors may affect their selection of the language learning strategies.