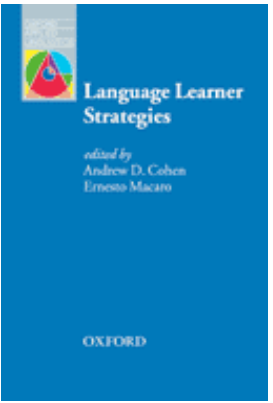| Language Learner Strategies: 30 Years of Research and Practice			
Author:	Andrew D. Cohen & Ernesto Macaro, Eds. (2007)		
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I still remember the first time I approached learning strategies in the mid-nineties as a PhD candidate. I discovered a new universe and I became aware of how much specialized literature was already available for me to review. I also gradually realized how deep the roots of this field were, dating back, at least, to 1975 with Rubin's description of the good language learner.

The editors emphasize in their introduction that this volume celebrates thirty years of research on learning/language learner strategies (LLS) and show us what the path to follow in the coming future might look like. This collection is the outcome of a series of experts' meetings held in Oxford in June 2004.

The book is divided into twelve chapters within two parts. Part I includes chapters 1-7 and provides, in general terms, a theoretical framework and discussion of issues and terminology that serve as groundwork for applying the theory, the core of part II. Chapters 8-12 review empirical research on the development of strategies linked to the four skills and acquiring vocabulary. Following the articles are the editors' conclusions, notes on the authors, a bibliography, and an index.

Even though the book is a collection of chapters contributed by twenty-six different authors and edited by two experts, this reader felt he was reading a single block of knowledge rather than a series of isolated papers put together for publishing purposes. The editors themselves feel proud

of the cohesion they sought to achieve. In their introduction, they say their book is *different* because of the way it was written: teamwork that translates into co-authored chapters (except for one), an anonymous peer-review process, and the adoption of systematic review guidelines that minimize subjectivity and biased interpretation of existing literature.

Chapter 1, "Claims and critiques," is a successful revisiting of the history of strategies and their implications for the most recent approaches to language learning. Research on LLS reaches back to the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the notions of the "good language learner" and the "communicative approach" were coined almost at the same time.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 incorporate new perspectives by offering an account of recent research on LLS: the results of a survey initially constructed and circulated at the Oxford meeting and a literature review that focuses on individual variables.

"Research methods in strategy research: re-examining the toolbox," the fifth chapter, focuses on using introspection or thinking-aloud protocols, no doubt the most complex procedure for collecting LLS data. Through a review and analysis of recent studies, a number of issues have emerged about collecting research data: (a) training the study subjects to verbalize what is going on in their minds while applying strategies to solve the tasks; (b) the choice of language–L1 or L2–to report their repertoire of strategies, and (c) the variation in the selection of strategies according to the context where they are used. For all those teachers and researchers who carry out their job in a "foreign language" context—mine, for instance—the possibility of using the subjects' L1 when collecting data correlates positively with the amount and richness of information provided by the informers.

Grammar strategies are presented in chapter 6 as the "second Cinderella," an allusion reflecting the lack of attention that has been paid to this inventory of strategies. The concluding lines of this chapter call for further research in this direction so that a theoretical framework of grammar strategies may be developed.

The seventh chapter functions as a bridge connecting the theory outlined in Part I to the review of empirical LLS research on language skills and pivots on the relevance and need for strategy based-instruction (SBI).

Chapters 8-12 are a review of research on using strategies to acquire the four skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) as well as learning vocabulary. A claim is made for "systematic reviewing" of research literature in place of traditional narrative reviewing. The authors argue that a fixed system avoids any chance of a reviewer's biased interpretation and ensures comprehensibility and reliability to the review process.

These final chapters also reveal an imbalance in research work among the four language skills, with the chapter on writing in the lead position owing to the abundance of investigations carried out in the last twenty-five years on what the authors label "writing process." The relevance of

Part II comes not only from the extensive and systematic review of the research literature but from the lines of future research it opens for each of the skills; for instance, how have good listeners arrived at the stage of using a broad array of strategies, why don't some listeners make use of prior knowledge, and what type strategy instruction should be followed to improve listening skill (pp. 184-185)?

Language Learner Strategies is atypical, in a positive way, in that some of the most valuable sections of the book are presented through a non-print source; that is, the review of research on the different skills (because of its extensiveness and format) is available as a set of appendices on the publisher's website (http://www.oup.com). These appendices incorporate a plethora of research studies that, to tell the truth, are not easily accessible to a novice researcher and, therefore, something to be grateful for.

On the whole, the editors should feel satisfied with their achievement, not only for having orchestrated a structured and coherent book instead of a disparate collection of articles, but also for including a type of commentary not always found among researcher accounts; for example, the gratitude expressed by one of the contributors to her graduate students for the long hours spent on the internet retrieving references (p. 273) or the editors' plea for a more fruitful relationship between researchers and practitioners that could transform research findings into better instruction and learning (p. 277).

Even though Cohen and Macaro's book might sometimes prove dense for a newcomer to the profession, it provides a substantial agenda for future scholarly work (which, by the way, some of the newcomers might be enticed to join in). The editors' final words are offered in the same spirit when they say that their and their contributors' book should be envisioned *more as an opening than as a point of closure.*

References

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