

Maria Luisa Pérez Cavana, Chris Edwards

Developing the Language Learning Support Dimensions (LLSD) from research into second language acquisition and informed by the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI)

1. Introduction

One of the abiding challenges for teachers is to improve ways of bringing learners into the subject and into study: enabling them to approach the particular modes of learning in ways that enhance their success. Both the literature and experience tell us that those studying a second language have some distinct and specific needs that are often not met. These have been described within a set of characteristics associated with the ‘Good Language Learner’ and have been identified and studied in numerous research studies in the field of second language acquisition over the last thirty years (Ehrman/Oxford 1995; Dörnyei 2005; Griffiths 2008).

There are, of course, other ways of characterizing learners and their approaches to learning. One that has been developed and extensively trialed is the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI). Through a large evidence base this instrument has been demonstrated to be a robust indicator for assessing the relevant categories related to learning dispositions that can be developed to enhance capacity for learning. This inventory and its seven dimensions of learning power were developed and described in 2004 (Deakin Crick et al.) and have been in constant use since.

When the seven dimensions of learning power within ELLI are considered alongside the characteristics of the Good Language Learner there appears to be common coverage. The focus of this paper is thus to explore the correspondence between these seven dimensions and the characteristics of the so-called ‘Good Language Learner’ (Rubin 1975; Stern 1975; Naiman et al 1978). This

paper considers the implications of the outcomes of this study particularly for empowering the new language learner.

This paper also describes an attempt to develop a tool grounded in research and useful to students beginning their learning journey in a second language. Whilst the theory of second language acquisition and learning develops becoming increasingly fine grained, the practical tools that students and their teachers have at their disposal to learn a second language are very thin on the ground. Through an exploration of two independently developed sets of concepts and ideas about learning this paper proposes a simple model that is intended to provide most effective support to second language learners, particularly at their early stages of taking up this challenge. The model does not intend to supersede or replace either of those it is based on. Rather, it intends to highlight the best areas to focus on for success through this initial stage of learning.

This paper is inspired by the original idea from the “Good Language Learner” studies that there are some characteristics, attitudes and modes of strategy use of language learners that account for their success in language learning. It further integrates relevant findings and theory-based constructs that Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has produced over the last thirty years.

The proposed Language Learner Support Dimensions (LLSD) are framed in a learner-centered pedagogy and they aim at the development of relevant factors to increase the efficiency in language learning.

The Language Learner Support Dimensions (LLSD) are a facilitating instrument to:

- Raise awareness of the factors that (positively or negatively) influence language learning
- Enable individuals to reflect on their progress and development
- Empower students to take control of their learning process

Language learning is a very complex process as clearly stated by H.D.Brown:

“Learning a second language is a long and complex undertaking. Your whole person is affected as you struggle to reach beyond the first language into a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling and acting. Total commitment, total involvement, a total physical, intellectual, and emotional response, are necessary to successfully send and receive messages in a second language.”

(Brown 2007: 1)

that envisages our LLSD work as promising and worthwhile to be further developed.

References

- Acton, W. (1979): *Second language learning and perception of difference in attitude*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan.
- Albert, A. / Kormos, J. (2004): Creativity and narrative task performance: An exploratory study, in: *Language Learning*, 54 (2), 277-310.
- Angelil-Carter, S. (1997): Second language acquisition of spoken and written English: Acquiring the skeptron, in: *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 263-287.
- Bloom, B.S. / Engelhart, M.D. / Furst, E.J. / Hill, W.H. / Krathwohl, D.R. (1956): *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals. Handbook I: Cognitive domain*, (B. S. Bloom Ed.), New York: David McKay Company, Longmans.
- Brown, H.D. (1980): The optimal distance model of second language acquisition, in: *TESOL Quarterly*, 14, 157-164.
- Brown, H.D. (2007): *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, New York: Pearson Education.
- Budner, S. (1962): Intolerance of ambiguity as a personality variable, in: *Journal of Personality* 30: 29-50.
- CARAP project <http://carap.ecml.at/Keyconcepts/Competencesandresources/tabid/2685/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>
- Chamot, A. (2001): The role of learning strategies in second language acquisition, in: Breen M.P. (ed.), *Learner contributions to language learning: new directions in research*, 25-43, Harlow: Longman.
- Chapelle, C. / Roberts, C. (1986): Ambiguity tolerance and field independence as predictors of proficiency in English as a second language, in: *Language Learning*, 36, 27-45.
- Deakin Crick, R. / Broadfoot, P. / Claxton, G. (2004): Developing an Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory: The ELLI Project, in: *Assessment in Education*, 11(3), 247-273.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005): *The Psychology of the Language Learner*, New York/ London: Routledge.
- Edwards, C. / Hush, M. (2009, 17-19 June): *Supporting Self-Reflection in Students Learning at a Distance*. Paper presented at the Learning in Higher

- Education - How Style Matters. European Learning Styles Information Network, Bulle-en-Gruyère, Switzerland.
- Edwards, C. / Perez Cavana, M.L. (2012): Developing Approaches to Enhancing the Orientation and Success of Language Learning in Higher Education, in: Charlesworth, Z.M. / Cools, E. / Evans, C. (eds): *Individual Differences, Proceedings of the 17th Annual Conference of the Education, Learning, Styles, Individual Differences Network*, Brno.
- Ehrman, M. (1993): Ego boundaries revisited: Toward a model of personality and learning, in: J. Atlatis (ed.) *Strategic interaction and language acquisition: Theory, practice and research* (331-332). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Ehrman, M.E. / Oxford, R.L. (1995): Cognition plus: Correlates of language learning success, in: *Modern Language Journal*, 79(1), 67.
- Ehrman, M. (1996): *Understanding Second Language Learning Difficulties*, Thousand Oaks: London/ New Delhi.
- Ely, C. (1989): Tolerance of Ambiguity and the Use of Second Language Strategies, in: *Foreign Language Annals*, 22:5, 445.
- Griffiths, C. (ed.) (2008): *Lessons from Good Language Learners*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Guiora, A. / Beit-Hallami, B. / Brannon, R. / Dull, C. / Scovel, T. (1972): The effects of experimentally induced changes in ego states on pronunciation ability in second language: An exploratory study, in: *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 13.
- Kramsch, C. (1993): *Context and Culture in language teaching*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lantolf, J. / Pavlenko, A. (1995): Sociocultural Theory and second language acquisition, in: *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 15, 108-124.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. / Long, M.H. (1991): *An introduction to second language acquisition research*, Harlow: Pearson.
- Lave, J. / Wenger, E. (1991): *Situated Learning. Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacIntyre, P. / Dörnyei, Z. / Clément, R. / Noels, K. (1998): Conceptualising willingness to communicate in a L2: A situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation, in: *Modern Language Journal*, 82, 545-562.
- MacIntyre, P. / Baker, S. / Clément, R. / Conrod, S. (2001): Willingness to communicate, social support and language-learning orientations of immersion students, in: *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 23, 369-388.

- McCroskey, J.C. / Baer J.C. / Baer, J.E. (1985): Willingness to communicate: the construct and its measurement. Paper *Presented at the annual convention of the Speech Communication Association, Denver.*
- McCroskey, J.C. / Richmond V.P. (1987): Willingness to communicate, in: McCroskey, J.C. / Daly, J.A. (eds): *Personality and interpersonal communication*, 129-156, Newbury Parc, CA: Sage.
- McCroskey, J.C. / Richmond, V.P. (1991): Willingness to communicate: A cognitive view, in: Booth-Butterfield, M. (ed.): *Communication, cognition and anxiety*, 19-37, Newbury Parc, CA: Sage.
- Naiman, N. / Fröhlich M. / Stern, H.H. / Todesco, A. (1978): The Good Language Learner, in: *Multilingual Matters*.
- Norton, B. / Toohey, K. (2001): Changing Perspectives on Good Language Learners, in: *TESOL Quarterly* 35(2): 307-322.
- Norton Peirce, B. (1995): Social identity, investment, and language learning, in: *TESOL Quarterly* 29(1), 9-31.
- Ottó, I. (1998): The relationship between individual differences in learner creativity and language learning success, in: *TESOL Quarterly*, 32 (4), 763-773.
- Oxford, R. (1990): *Language Learning Strategies: What every teacher should know*, New York: Newbury House.
- Oxford, R. (2011): *Teaching and researching: Language Learning Strategies*, (Applied Linguistics in Action), Harlow: Pearson.
- Rogoff, B. (1994): Developing understanding of the idea of communities of learners, in: *Mind, Culture and Activity*, 1, 209-229.
- Rubin, J. (1975): What the „Good Language Learner“ Can Teach Us, in: *TESOL Quarterly*, 9(1), 41-51.
- Runco, M.A. (2004): Creativity., in: *Annual Review of Psychology*, 55, 657-687.
- Schumann, J. (1976): Second Language Acquisition: The pidginization hypothesis, in: *Language Learning* 26, 391-408.
- Small, T. / Deakin Crick, R. (2008): *Learning and Self-Awareness: an enquiry into Personal Development in Higher Education*, University of Bristol: Bristol.
- Stern, R. (1970): *Perspectives on second language teaching*, Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Stern, H.H. (1975): What Can We Learn from the Good Language Learner?, in: *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 31(4), 304-318.

Sternberg, R.J. (2002): The theory of successful intelligence and its implication for language-aptitude testing, in: P. Robinson (ed.), *Individual differences and instructed language learning*, Amsterdam: John Benjamin.

Dr. Maria Luisa Pérez Cavana, Faculty of Language Studies, Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, UK, Maria-Luisa.Perez-Cavana@open.ac.uk.

Chris Edwards MSc, The Institute of Educational Technology, Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, Chris.Edwards@open.ac.uk.