



## THE ANALYSES OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND LANGUAGE USE STRATEGIES

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**Abstract.** *This article explores the conceptual and practical differences between language learning strategies and language use strategies in second language acquisition (SLA). While a general consensus exists regarding the classification of language learning strategies, typically categorized as cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective, the debate surrounding the nature and categorization of language use strategies continues. Scholars like Andrew Cohen advocate for a clear distinction between the two, identifying language use strategies as those employed during real-time communication, such as compensatory tactics, retrieval practices, and image-maintenance behaviors. Conversely, Rebecca Oxford's integrated approach views language use strategies as embedded within broader learning categories. This article examines both perspectives, analyzes their theoretical underpinnings, and discusses implications for language teaching and learner development. Ultimately, the article advocates for a flexible instructional model that equips learners with both learning and use strategies, promoting autonomy, adaptability, and communicative competence.*

**Key words:** *language learning strategies, language use strategies, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social, communication, cover, retrieval and rehearsal strategies*


### Introduction



In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), much research has focused on identifying strategies that learners employ to successfully master a new language. These strategies are broadly categorized into two interconnected but distinct areas: **language learning strategies** and **language use strategies**. While language learning strategies have achieved a relative consensus in categorization and application among scholars, language use strategies remain a subject of ongoing debate and theoretical division. Notably, researchers such as Andrew Cohen have advocated for the clear separation of the two, while others like Rebecca Oxford view them as inseparably intertwined within broader strategic categories.

This article explores the key distinctions and overlaps between language learning and language use strategies, analyzing different scholarly perspectives and highlighting the implications for teaching and learner autonomy.

**Language learning strategies** refer to the thoughts, actions, and behaviors that learners consciously or semi-consciously employ to improve their acquisition of a target language.



(TL). These strategies are typically **goal-directed**, **teachable**, and **purposeful**, and are often categorized into cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective domains.

Rebecca Oxford's (1990, 2012) taxonomy provides one of the most widely accepted frameworks for language learning strategies. According to Oxford, these strategies include:

- **Cognitive strategies:** manipulating the language through reasoning, analyzing, summarizing, or practicing.
- **Metacognitive strategies:** planning, organizing, and evaluating one's own learning.
- **Social strategies:** learning through interaction with others.
- **Affective strategies:** managing emotions, motivation, and attitudes.

These categories support the learner in navigating the complex process of internalizing a language and gaining control over their learning experiences. The focus is clearly on building the **foundational competence** required to communicate effectively in a second language.

**Language use strategies**, on the other hand, refer to the strategic actions taken **after** a certain level of language proficiency has been acquired. These are strategies that learners use when they **actively apply** their language skills in real-world or communicative situations. According to Cohen (2009, 2012), language use strategies should be distinctly categorized from learning strategies and include the following:

1. **Communication strategies:** These help learners convey meaningful messages, especially when they lack complete knowledge of the TL. They include:


- *Avoidance or reduction strategies:* Skipping difficult words or simplifying messages.
- *Achievement or compensatory strategies:* Using gestures, synonyms, or guessing meanings.
- *Stalling or time-gaining strategies:* Pausing with fillers to buy time for recall.
- *Interactional strategies:* Requesting clarification or repetition during conversation.

2. **Retrieval and rehearsal strategies:** These involve calling up stored language knowledge and practicing TL structures in real-time conversations.

3. **Cover strategies:** These help learners project a positive image of TL ability, sometimes masking gaps in knowledge. For example, learners may use practiced phrases fluently to appear more competent.

Cohen's framework underscores that language use strategies serve different purposes than learning strategies and should be recognized as such in pedagogical design.

The debate is more than theoretical, it has significant implications for teaching. If we adopt Cohen's model, teachers might design separate lessons for practice (use strategies) and skill-building (learning strategies). This could help learners become more aware of their real-time communication behaviors and develop adaptive strategies for interactions.



On the other hand, Oxford's integrated model allows teachers to introduce strategies fluidly within classroom tasks, emphasizing the synergy between communication and learning. This approach might resonate better in environments focused on holistic development rather than isolated skills.


In either case, educators must teach learners not only **what strategies exist**, but also **how to evaluate their usefulness** based on individual differences (age, background, personality), task complexity, and the interactional environment. As Macaro (2006) notes, it's not the quantity of strategy use that predicts success, but the **personal orchestration** of those strategies.

### Conclusion

Language learning and language use strategies both play essential roles in the acquisition and application of a second language. While the field remains divided over whether these strategies should be viewed as separate or integrated, the most effective pedagogical practices recognize the value of both perspectives.

Cohen's distinctions offer clarity and specificity, particularly in communicative settings where performance is assessed. Oxford's integrated view emphasizes the natural overlap between learning and using language, promoting a fluid and adaptive learning environment. Eventually, helping learners become **strategic, reflective, and flexible** users of language, whether they are acquiring new knowledge or applying existing skills, should remain the central goal of language education. By equipping learners with a broad repertoire of both learning and use strategies, educators can empower them to take ownership of their language journey and thrive in real-world communication.

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