

Abstract

Learner strategies have been recognised to play a significant role in affecting learning outcomes. The present study aims to provide a comprehensive picture about the learner strategies of Hungarian secondary grammar school learners in the 10th and 11th years of their studies, in an attempt to uncover what kind of foreign language learning is reflected in their strategy use. Building on previous research conducted in a variety of contexts into learner strategies, this paper presents findings about the overall strategy application, and about the application of various strategy groups by the subjects under study, as well as about the factors that are hypothesised to affect strategy choice. Of the wide range of factors that research has shown to have an impact on strategies, the effect of proficiency level, success with language learning, gender, perceptual preferences and the style of teaching has been examined.

To answer the main question of the study, that is, what kind of foreign language learning is reflected by the subjects' strategy use, research involving more than 120 secondary learners and their English teachers has been conducted. Learner strategy use has been examined through data collected by the use of various self-reporting questionnaires. Parallel to these, observations were carried out in the English classes of the learners involved, with the aim of finding out what kind of foreign language teaching is typical in the light of the tasks normally assigned, and to reveal how the teachers' way of conducting classes instigates the choice of various learner strategies in and outside of the classroom. A further objective was to see what sensory learning style preferences the style of teaching accommodates, and if it is appropriate to learners' sensory preferences. Sensory preferences of the learners involved have been assessed by the application of a perceptual learning style assessment survey. Teachers' views on the ways their learners learn, on the state of foreign language education in Hungary, and on the importance and possibilities of enhancing student learning have been elicited by interviews.

The findings of the research suggest that the secondary grammar school learners under study a fairly limited repertoire of strategies, therefore they need to be taught strategies as well as the ways of adopting the right ones in order to promote their learning. For this to happen, teachers need to be trained in the ways of providing learner strategy instruction. The paper outlines what the findings imply for the foreign language classroom and for teacher training, both at pre-and in-service levels, and offers suggestions as to what directions learner strategy research could take in the Hungarian context.

The conclusion of this paper is that the situation of foreign language teaching and learning in Hungary would benefit from a better attention on training learners in the use of effective strategies. For this, room should be created in teacher training courses where teachers are made aware of their roles in enhancing student learning, and prepared for the task of providing learner strategy instruction in an informed fashion.