7. CONCLUSION

After 40 years of LLS research we are still not clear “What the "Good Language Learner" Can Teach Us”, whether the good language learner only deploys effective strategies or rather deploys strategies effectively, and whether strategies are integral for learning or “nice to know” (also see Macaro, 2006, p. 325). Apart from LLS, other individual difference factors have been shown to play much more significant roles in explaining academic achievement and language proficiency. Thus LLS use may simply be too individual to be assessed easily through established self-report instruments. Learners may use tailored strategies adapting them to their learning environments and the good language learners “may have adopted their own effective strategy and thus do not adopt the wide range of strategies” found in strategy questionnaires and inventories (Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997, p. 354).

Learning strategy research in educational psychology has been implemented into the larger frame of SRL. The fuzzy nature of the LLS construct however needs to be further scrutinized if we want to include it in other more comprehensive frameworks. SRL itself however is in need of a solid theoretical foundation before other concepts can be implemented. Learning strategies may have benefit for SRL and vice versa, they should however also be considered independently of this framework to understand them better. Despite the abandonment of strategy research in psychology the concept is nevertheless ubiquitous in the field of language pedagogy. The German EFL curriculum lists strategies as a means to assist learning as well as to foster learner autonomy and current EFL school books in Germany provide learning strategies in skills boxes and provide learning methods to assist the learning process. The present study however does not provide evidence that strategy use greatly benefits learners. The study demonstrated that employing a large number of strategies with high frequency does not help language learning but rather impedes language proficiency. The study also showed that individual difference variables had an impact on strategy use. Three variables were shown to affect the amount of strategies employed: gender, self-efficacy and CLIL / EFL. Based on the SILL, CLIL students used fewer LLS than their EFL peers whereas girls and students with high levels of self-efficacy employed more LLS.

The success of CLIL streams with regard to language proficiency was underlined by significantly better grades and test results. Students in these classes however also reported a
higher SES, scored higher on the cognitive functions test and were younger. Although not every school selects students for CLIL streams, there seems to be a certain “selection” bias which influences who chooses or is chosen for CLIL classes.

In conclusion, while positive effects of LLS use on language proficiency could not be found, this study shows that much more attention in research and teaching practice should be drawn to the potential of self-efficacy to foster L2 learning. Students’ beliefs in their own abilities most strongly predicted their English grades and C-Test scores and are therefore highly important. Self-efficacy should be investigated from early stages in language learning onwards to assess its stability and development over time, including assessments of what impacts self-efficacy most.