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## Editorial: In Honour of Rebecca L. Oxford's Contributions to Language Learning Strategies, Language Teaching, and Peacebuilding

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### <sup>1</sup>Introduction

I first got to know Rebecca when I was researching a topic for my own PhD back in the 1990s. As anyone who has trodden this path will know, trying to find something novel, feasible, and about which one can be sufficiently excited to sustain the enthusiasm through the hours of work involved, is no easy ask. Then I came across an article on language learning strategies by John Green and Rebecca (1995) in a journal which had recently arrived in the Auckland Institute of Studies (AIS) library, where I was working at the time, and I knew this was it. I wrote to Rebecca asking for permission to use the *SILL* (*Strategy Inventory for Language Learning*) in my thesis, permission which she unhesitatingly gave, and which resulted in the completion of my thesis some years later (Griffiths, 2003). She also invited me to join her on conference presentations, a number of which we have done together in many places around the world in the years since. There have also been a number of joint publications, such as the special issue on language learning strategies with *System* (2014).

In the mid-90s, the *SILL* was still quite new, having only been published in the groundbreaking book *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know* in 1990. Although it has been criticized in the years since (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005; Woodrow, 2005), at the

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time that it was published it represented a major leap forward in strategy research, and it has been enthusiastically employed by numerous researchers since it first appeared. Attempts to address the issues raised have continued until the present day, with a recent work in progress on a diagnostic inventory by Rebecca, Peter Gu, Pam Gunning and Teresa Hernandez-Gonzalez being reported in this special issue.

Given the early interest in strategies, it is, perhaps, not surprising that several of the submissions to this special issue are on the topic of the strategies applied to language learning. Of these, Carisma Nel investigates reading strategy instruction within a mixed reality simulation environment, Robbie Lee Sabnani considers the use of strategy instruction to enhance learners' speaking skills, and using the metaphor of a strategy symphony, Višnja Pavičić Takač explores the use of strategy orchestration to complete writing tasks successfully. In addition, however, to the strategies themselves, it is also well acknowledged that strategies do not operate in a vacuum. In particular, a major contributing variable is the individual differences of the learners themselves, and several of the authors in this special issue have ventured down this path. Pursuing this line of inquiry, Yijie Li, Chuang Wang and Hailah Saleh Al-Hamed investigate the relationships among strategies, proficiency and attitude, while Muhannad Abuzaid looks at relationships among strategies, proficiency and gender. Zia Tajeddin, Ali Malmir and Imam Khomeini investigate the use of pragmatic strategies according to experience and gender, and Zoe Gavriilidou, Lydia Mitits and Karen Chanagkian explore the use of strategies by heritage language speakers.

A strong interest of Rebecca's which has developed in more recent years has been the promotion of peace (e.g., Oxford, Perez, & Schultz, 2023). Those who have pursued this theme in the present special issue include Amir Rahimi and Hamid Allami who investigate teachers' ideal peacebuilder identity, and Yasemin Kirkgöz who presents a case study aimed at introducing peacebuilder philosophy into language teacher education.

Beyond a doubt, Rebecca's enthusiasm and commitment to the cause have been instrumental in the ongoing promotion of strategy research and practical application to the field of education over more than 30 years. Although she has now retired from active teaching, her interest in the cause of peace shows every sign that her energy will continue to be applied to this vitally needed area.

In conclusion, perhaps it is fitting that I allow Rebecca herself the last words, taken from a recent personal communication:

For me, research, writing, publishing, presenting, and teaching have the purposes of creating and sharing knowledge; expanding educational opportunities and success to all students; improving lives and fostering caring and peace in the world; overcoming boundaries of culture, gender, age, religion, and politics; and deepening our understanding of self and others. For me, this work has a strong element of love and spirituality. Many of the special issue contributors share my philosophy, I believe (Oxford, 2023).

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