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RESEARCH PAPER

Language Learning Strategies: An Overview Classification in the Context and Effectiveness

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ABSTRACT

Learning strategies are steps taken by learners to enhance their learning. Active use of language learning strategies helps learners in control of their own learning by developing language skills, increasing confidence, and motivation in the target language learning process. Strategy instructions improve learners' independent learning and autonomous learning and help learners to take responsibility for their own language learning. The more strategies a learner uses, the more the learner feels confident, motivated, self-efficacious, and successful. More strategic language learners advance along the proficiency continuum faster than less strategic ones. The study found that the students preferred to use cognitive, metacognitive, memory, social, and Compensation strategies most, whereas they showed the least use of affective.

Introduction

The essential idea in this paper is that language learning strategies are fundamental components of educational modules, as bridges between competence (what you have got to memorize to do) and handle (what you ought to go through to reach that result). In today's world, the global spread of English is "unprecedented and unparalleled" Seidlhofer. (2011). English has developed to be an important language for universal communication in different domains, hence picking up the status as a lingua franca.

The Specific modifications involving general factors will influence the rate and level of target language achievement. But how does their influence operate? One possibility is that they affect the nature and the frequency with which individual learners use learning strategies. According to cognitive learning theories, learners are active participants in the learning and teaching process rather than passive recipients.

English Language abilities have been recognized nearly all around the world as basic abilities to be successful in a globalized society. From a young age,

children spend numerous hours each day and weeks learning English and regularly go to private English foundations and institutes to progress their English language skills. In current years, studies on language learning strategy training and learner autonomy have verified that language learning strategies (LLS) can be instructed to language learners and that learner autonomy together with motivations for language learning can lead to successful language learning outcomes e.g., Ho, & Crookall. (1995); Keene, & Zimmermann. (1997); Kim. (2013).

Over the past four decades, researchers have recognized a number of cognitive, affective, and sociocultural factors as suggestively contributing to this variation in second language acquisition Brown. (2000). From this body of research, language learning strategies LLSs consistently have emerged as a particularly significant variable. Oxford's classification includes six groups of strategies: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

Review of Literature

Theoretical Background

Language learning strategies can be defined as "strategies that contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affect learning directly" (Rubin. 1987, p. 23). O'Malley, and Chamot. (1990) described learning strategies as "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p. 1). It has been recognized that language learning strategies not only endorse language learning and improve learner-directed learning. Therefore, research on language learning strategies can produce perceptions that can better monitor language learners.

Many previous studies on LLS were carried out to categorize what kinds of learning strategies are effective for language learning generally for second language learning. O'Malley and his colleagues (O'Malley, et al. (1985); O'Malley, & Chamot. (1990) among others observed the use of strategies by learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) and categorized these strategies into three groups: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies are used to plan for learning, reflect on the learning process, and monitor one's production or comprehension. Cognitive strategies are engaged while learners carry out explicit learning tasks. Socio-affective strategies are concerned with social arbitrating activity in communications with others. As such, some of the socio-affective strategies can also be indicated as communication strategies.

Researchers like O'Malley, and Chamot. (1990), and Oxford, and Ehrman. (1995) declare that as long as the learners make use of the strategies in a well-organized way, the strategies will have an effect on their language performance, accomplishment, proficiency, and autonomy beliefs. Thus, it is necessary for the learners to use learning strategies in their language learning process. Active and effective language learners are usually people who know how to operate learning techniques according to their language needs." The concept of learner autonomy has been reiterated by Madrid (2000), who asserts that, "awareness is not enough; learners need awareness with a purpose." According to Hsiao, & Oxford. (2002),

"strategies are the L2 learner's tool kit for active, conscious, purposeful, and attentive learning, and they pave the way toward greater proficiency, learner autonomy, and self-regulation" (p. 372).

Language Learning Strategies Defined

Within English as a second language or English as a foreign language education, a number of definitions of LLS have been used by authors in the field. Early on, Tarone. (1983) defined an LLS as "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language -- to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence" (p. 67). Rubin. (1987) later wrote that LS "are strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affect learning directly" (p. 22). In their seminal study, O'Malley, and Chamot. (1990) defined LLS as "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p. 1).

Finally, building on work in her book for teachers Oxford. (1990), Oxford. (1992/1993) says, "...language learning strategies – specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their growth in developing second language skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability". (Oxford. 1992/1993, p. 18) From these definitions, a change over time may be noted: from the early focus on the product of LLS (linguistic or sociolinguistic competence), there is now a greater emphasis on the processes and the characteristics of LLS. At the same time, we should note that LLS are distinct from learning styles, which refer more broadly to a learner's "natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills" Reid. (1995, p. viii), though there appears to be an obvious relationship between one's language learning style and his or her usual or preferred language learning strategies.

Classification of Language Learning Strategies

Many classifications of language learning followed the first work on language learning strategies, which created a lot of interest in the field of second language learning. Also, there are several alternative taxonomies of language learning have been used to classify behaviors and actions. The researchers have focused on how successful or good language learners try to learn and tried to identify what strategies worked for them to find which strategies are effective for language learning.

Stern. (1975), investigated strategies used by good language learners, and the identified strategies include: Planning strategy (a personal learning style or positive learning strategies), active strategy (an active approach to the learning task), empathic strategy (a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers), formal strategy (technical know-how about how to tackle a language), experimental strategy (a methodical but flexible approach, developing the new language into an ordered system and constantly revising it), semantic strategy (constant searching for meaning), practice strategy (willingness to practice), communication strategy (willingness to use the language in real communication), monitoring strategy (self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use), and

internalization strategy (developing a second language as a separate reference system and learning to think in it).

Rubin. (1981), investigated the learners' use of language learning strategies in both ESL and EFL contexts. She noted two distinct actions by learners. The first was "actions permitting learning", which she classified as 'indirect" strategies. The latter of the two actions were classified as "actions that contribute directly to learning or direct strategies". According to Lan. (2005, p.21), "Rubin's model was based on her observation of language learners, particularly the good language learners." Bialystok. (1978), as cited in Lan. (2005), classified language learning strategies under four distinct strategies. Of these, the first called functional practicing relates to performing a function, such as completing a transaction at a store or asking for directions. The other two strategies classified as formal practicing and monitoring are utilized by students in a formal classroom context for practice, verbal drills, and noting errors. The fourth strategy is inferencing, which as the term implies refers to guessing and arriving at answers through context clues. Bialystok's framework encompasses the cognitive and metacognitive elements of language learning. However, her model does not take into account social and affective strategies, which play a crucial part in language learning strategy use.

O'Malley. & Chamot. (1990) developed three types of strategies, namely metacognitive strategies (selective attention, planning, monitoring and evaluating learning activity), cognitive strategies (rehearsal, organization, inferencing, summarizing, reducing, imagery, transfer, and elaboration), and social/affective strategies (cooperation, questioning for clarification, and self-talk). The taxonomy is given by Oxford. (1990), classified second language learning into six categories. Oxford formulated her taxonomy under two broad heads of direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies included memory, cognitive, compensation strategies, and indirect strategies encompassed metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

Wenden. (1991) proposed two main kind of learning strategies: cognitive strategies (select information, comprehend, store and retrieve information) and self-management strategies (monitor or manage learning process such as regulatory skills or self-directed learning skills). Another commonly used language learning strategy inventory designed by Cohen and Chi (2004) is the Learning Strategy Use Inventory. The inventory is divided into listening, vocabulary, speaking, reading, writing, and translation sections to measure strategy use.

Direct Strategies

a. Memory Strategies: These strategies enable the transfer of information to long-term memory and recalling it for communication.
b. Cognitive Strategies: Used for creating mental models, revising and receiving, and generating messages in the target language, these are mental strategies utilized by students for making inferences out of what they have learned.
c. Compensation Strategies: These strategies enable students to overcome the difficulties of communication by referring to body language and making logical guesses.

Indirect Strategies

a. Metacognitive Strategies: These are the strategies that allow the students to plan, organize and evaluate their own learning process.
b. Affective Strategies: These strategies help learners control their feelings, motivation, and attitudes associated to learning.
c. Social Strategies: These strategies are helpful for communication with others.

Table 1
Represents the major classifications of language learning strategies.

Researcher	Classification			
Stern (1975)	Planning strategy	Active strategy	Empathic strategy	Formal strategy	Experimental strategy
	Semantic strategy	Practice strategy	Communication strategy	Monitoring strategy	Internalization strategy
Rubin 1987	**Direct strategies**		**Indirect Strategies**	
	Learning strategies		Communication strategies	Social strategies
	Cognitive strategies	Metacognitive strategies		
O'Malley & Chamot (1990)	Cognitive strategies		Metacognitive strategies	Social/Affective strategies
Oxford (1990)	**Direct strategies**		**Indirect strategies**	
	Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Wenden (1991)	Cognitive Strategies		Self-Management strategies	

Material and Methodology

Participants

The survey is applied to students who study at Cyprus International University. Those students have different nationalities. All of them are Ph.D. students of different years in the ELT department, who have already known six types of language learning strategies. There are 6 males and 5 females which are 11 in total.

Table 2
Demographic description of participants

Description	NO	Percentage
Gender		
Female	5	45.45%
Male	6	54.54%
Level of Studies		
1st year (Ph.D. students of ELT)	7	63.63%
2nd year (Ph.D. students of ELT)	4	36.36%
Nationality		
Afghanistan	1	9.09%

Korea	1	9.09%
Libya	5	45.45%
Nigeria	2	18.18%
Pakistan	2	18.18%
Department		
English Language Teaching	11	100%

The Research Question

Among the six LLSs, which ones are the most effective in language learning?

In this study quantitative method was employed. It was face to face survey, the question was written on the whiteboard and the participants wrote the answers on a separate page. That survey was used to collect quantitative data from the respondents from students in the classroom. The data from the findings were descriptively analyzed by using a calculator to find the percentage of language learning strategies' effectiveness for the students.

For the eventual determination of the current study LLSs list of six direct and indirect strategies advanced by Oxford in 1990. There is measuring demographic characteristics by means of a classification scale and information about such as gender, level of studies, nationality, and department type are included. The direct strategies contained the memory strategy, the cognitive strategy, and the compensation strategy. The indirect strategies contained the metacognitive strategy, the affective strategy, and the social strategy.

Findings

Table 3. shows the effectiveness of language learning strategies among graduate-level students. Regarding its percentage of effectiveness, first, the cognitive strategy used by 10 students which included 90,90%, second, the metacognitive strategy used by 7 students which included 63.63%, third, the memory strategy used by 5 students which included 45.45%, next, the social strategy used by 4 students which included 36.36%, after that, the compensation strategy used by 2 students which included 18.18%, and finally, the affective strategy used by none of the students which included 0%.

Table 3
Shows the effectiveness of language learning strategies

No	Strategies	Number of Students	Effectiveness	Percentage
1	Memory	11	5	45.45%
2	Cognitive	11	10	90.90%
3	Compensation	11	2	18.18%
4	Metacognitive	11	7	63.63%
5	Affective	11	0	0%
6	Social	11	4	36.36%

Discussion

The aim of this study is to examine the levels of effectiveness of language learning strategies employed by graduate students of English language teaching. To find the answers, the levels of effectiveness of language learning strategies used by graduate students of English language teaching, the difference between the LLSs among the graduate students were examined. The findings indicated that students have used memory, metacognitive, cognitive, social, and compensation strategies were used effectively, but the affective strategy level of effectiveness is below the average.

Conclusion

This research paper has provided a brief overview of language learning strategies by investigating their background and brief information about the classification of relevant works. It has also outlined some ways that LLSs have been used and offered by graduate students in the class. It has also raised two important issues, posed questions for further LLSs research, and noted the effectiveness of these strategies among the high-level students. In my opinion, using of LLSs are not only encourages learners in their language learning but also helps teachers reflect on and improve their students of English language learning. The finding that learners at the graduate level report more strategy use than pupils indicates that learners at different levels have different needs in terms of teacher interference in the learning process, and strategy assistance can enhance learners' self-efficacy and autonomous learning and support learners to take accountability for their own learning. Finally, English Language capabilities have been recognized as necessity and usefulness nearly all around the world as basic abilities to be successful in the universal civilization.

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