

The Effect of Foreign Language Strategies Students Use on Their Achievement in Learning English

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Abstract: In this study, the researcher investigated the types of the foreign language learning strategies secondary and high school students use and the effect of these strategies on their English achievement. In the study Young Learners' Language Strategy Survey was used as the data collection instrument. The survey includes statements about the strategy use of learners on reading, listening, writing, speaking, translation and vocabulary knowledge in the target language. 255 public secondary and high school students from the 8th to 12th grades were asked to complete the questionnaire. The students' English proficiency was between pre intermediate to intermediate based on the number of English hours they had been taking starting from their 4th grades in public school curriculum. The findings of the study revealed that there was a strong correlation between students' language learning strategies use and their English achievement. Based on the study findings, it can be said that raising awareness of English learners' on their use of diverse strategies may help them to improve their language competency.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Foreign Language Learning Strategies (LLS), Learning English as Foreign Language (EFL).

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decades, a significant shift has occurred in the education field, eliminating the great emphasis on the teacher and teaching and turning it to the learner and learning. The pedagogic focus shifts to student-centred approaches in foreign language instruction and its active role in learning a new language from the teacher-centred approaches in giving instructions to teach the language, which happened after a large amount of research on the strategies of learning new languages (Oxford, 1990; O'Mally & Chamot, 1990).

All foreign language learners use different strategies subconsciously or consciously when they process new information or perform tasks in the classroom. According to Chamot (2019), learning strategies are procedures that can facilitate a learning duty. Shi (2017) defined learning strategies as steps students use to improve their knowledge. While according to Macaro (2003), strategies contain an action, a goal and a learning situation. Oxford (1990) defined a language learning strategy (LLS) as specific behaviours, actions, techniques or steps that learners use consciously to improve their learning progress in developing foreign language skills. Nguyen (2008) refers to language learning strategies (LLS) as students' attempts to figure out the easiest and quickest way to solve what is required whenever they face complex tasks or new input related to a foreign language.

Nowadays, it is widely recognized that learning strategies have become one of the key factors that aid students in learning a foreign language effectively (Montaño-gonzález, 2017). Learning strategies are better combined with the traditional school curriculum, where students try to be qualified to use these strategies (Magogwe & Oliver, 2007).

Strategies have unique benefits during the foundation stages of solving the unfamiliar task of a foreign language. Understanding (LLS) from educators supports students to be more productive learners (Lee, 2010). A foreign language is a language studied in an environment where it is not the primary vehicle for daily interaction and where input in that language is restricted (Oxford, 2003). Since language learning strategies can be, to some extent, taught, it is worth studying to figure out the type of learning strategies the language learners employ during their learning of a foreign language and the likely instruction effects of the use of these language learning strategies on the students' achievements; the learners achievements scaled through the learners' school exams grades.

1.1. Significance of the problem

As there are various methodologies of learning a foreign language that learners can employ, the primary purpose of this study is to find out the strategies that support students the most to become higher achievers. Concerning the teachers, they may encourage their students to try new language learning strategies that might help them to improve their language skills. Thus, teachers' awareness on the more frequently used LLS with students would be beneficial for a more effective instruction. Another major aim of the study is to find out the correlation between EFL students' academic achievement and their use of listening, reading, speaking, writing, translation and vocabulary learning strategies.

1.2. Research Questions

The present study aims to answer the following question:

1. What language learning strategies do the secondary and high` school students use in their studies of English?
2. What is the correlation between the school students' academic achievement in English and the language learning strategies they use?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definitions of Language Learning Strategies (LLS)

There are many definitions by key figures for Language Learning Strategies (LLS). One of the earliest researchers in the field emphasizing on LLS was Joan Rubin in 1970s. In her research on the likely characteristics of good language learners she defined the language learning strategies as the techniques and devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge (Rubin, 1975). According to her, some of the strategies that seem to be significant are the following:

- 1) The good guesser may be a good language learner.
- 2) He is always willing to appear stupid, his focus is on communicationg and getting the message.
- 3) He tries his knowledge by creating sentences.

Rubin (1987, p. 19) later elaborated her LLS definition and wrote “language learning strategies are strategies that contribute to the development of the language systemwhich the learner constructed and affect learning directly”.

Stern (1975 in Naiman & et al., 1996) differentiated the term “strategies” from “techniques” and defined the the first one as “general, more or less deliberate approaches” while the second one was defined as “more specific, observable forms of language learning behavior”. With regard to those consideration, Stern (1975 in Naiman & et al., 1996) came up with a list of strategies employed by good language learners. These strategies were listed as follows:

1. Planning Strategy: a personal and positive learning strategy.
2. Active Strategy: An active approach to the learning task.
3. Empathic Strategy: A tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and its speakers.
4. Formal Strategy: Technical know-how of how to tackle a language.

5. Experimental Strategy: A methodical but flexible approach, developing the new language into an ordered system and constantly revising it.
6. Semantic Strategy: Constant searching for meaning.
7. Practice Strategy: Willingness to practice.
8. Communication Strategy: Willingness to use language in real communication.
9. Monitoring Strategy: Self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use.
10. Internalization Strategy: Developing L2 more and more as a separate reference system and learning to think in it.

Brown (2007, p. 119) gave one of the latest definitions for the concept as “the specific methods of approaching a problem or task, the methods of operation for achieving a particular end and the planned designs for controlling and manipulation specific information”

Finally, from these definitions, a change over time may be noted: from the early focus of linguistic and sociolinguistic competence; there is now a greater emphasis on the process and characteristics of LLS. With this, it is good to note that language learning strategies are distinct from the style of learning that refer to a learner’s “consistent and rather enduring tendencies preference” (Brown, 2007, p.119). However, there appears to be an obvious relationship between one’s language learning style and the preferred language learning strategies.

2.2. Classification of Language Learning Strategies:

There are hundreds of various, but often interrelated, LLS. As Oxford (1990) stated a fairly detailed list of language learning strategies in her taxonomy, it is useful to summarize these various taxonomies here.

Oxford (1994) divided almost two dozen L2 strategy classification systems into the following groups:

- 1) Systems related to successful language learners (Rubin, 1975);
- 2) Systems based on psychological functions (O’Malley & Chamot, 1995)
- 3) Linguistically based systems dealing with guessing, language monitoring, formal and functional practice (Bialystok, 1981) or with communication strategies like paraphrasing or borrowing (Tarone, 1983);
- 4) Systems related to separate language skills (Cohen, 1990); and
- 5) Systems based on different styles or types of learners (Sutter, 1989).

Other researchers had similar taxonomies describing the behaviors and habits of good language learners. Stern (1975 in Cohen & Macaro, 2011) listed the top ten strategies of the good language learner. These are:

1. A personal learning style or positive learning strategies.
2. An active approach to the task.
3. A tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers.
4. Technical know-how about how to tackle a language.
5. Strategies of experimentation and planning with the object of developing the new language into an ordered system and/or revising this system progressively.
6. Constantly searching for meaning.
7. Willingness to practice.
8. Willingness to use language in real communication.
9. Self monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use.
10. Developing the target language more and more as a separate reference system and learning to think in it. (Cohen & Macaro, 2011, p. 11-12)

The list that Stern presented in 1975 is criticized for being conceptual and speculative rather than being based on empirical investigation. Cohen & Macaro (2011) stated that Stern's main source for these strategies was his own experience as a teacher, together with a review of relevant literature.

Rubin (1987) had divided her strategies into two groups (Direct and Indirect), O'Malley and Chamot (1995) identified 15 strategies which they divided them into three main categories. They labeled them as Metacognitive Strategies, Cognitive Strategies and Social/affective Strategies. Although some elements of the two taxonomies are similar, by separating Social strategies out into a group of their own, O'Malley et al. highlighted the role of interactive strategies in language learning, an important insight, especially at a time when the communicative approach to language teaching and learning was gaining wide acceptance (Griffiths, 2008).

2.3. Direct Learning Strategies:

The strategies the students use directly to deal with the new language to process and store the new English language information are called the direct strategies. The direct strategies are divided into memory, cognitive, and compensation.

2.4 Indirect Learning Strategies:

The strategies the students use indirectly to deal with the new language to process and store the new English language information are called indirect strategies. The indirect strategies are divided into affective, metacognitive, and social groups.

A. Using Language Learning Strategies (LLS) in the classroom:

Many teachers integrate and experience learning approaches while teaching; it should be necessary that language learning strategies can be taught through some direct instructions at time when learners will transfer and maintain these instructions to new tasks if necessary (Saleh, 2012).

According to Ellis and Sinclair (1994), learners can achieve their learning goals by concentrating their attention on the process of learning; on the methodology, they follow to learn rather than what they learn.

Saleh (2012) suggested that before practising the LLS in the classroom, the teachers have to carry out the following:

Taking into their consideration the learners' needs, aptitude, interests and attitudes, teachers have to consider students' attitudes and motivations concerning the learning of the new language and, at the same time, the improvement of the existing languages, Saleh (2012).

Take into consideration their teaching method and ways to enhance the learners' LLS. All choices of strategies should be derived from the needs of those learners, and different strategies with various levels must be applied for difficulty Saleh (2012).

Take into consideration the preparation activities and materials used in training learners on the strategies Saleh (2012).

Take into their consideration how these strategies must be trained by learners of second language strategies Saleh (2012).

B. English Achievements:

According to Anderson, Krathwohl, & Bloom (2001), learning achievements could be defined as a procedure of activity to involve whether the instructional objectives of a program are completed.

Meanwhile, according to Syah (2003), learning implementation is the pattern of deeds, values, understandings, attitudes, appreciation and skills. Therefore, education and teaching were uttered to progress if the changes in the student have to be the result of the learning procedure they practised. Thus, it could be summarized that the students achieve learning accomplishment after attending a certain learning program and as a form of realization of instructional objectives either in the form of behaviour change, attitude, knowledge, and skill.

C. Factors Influencing Learning Achievement:

Numerous factors impact student fulfilment. The factors that affect student fulfilment by Suharsimi involve age, maturity, health, fatigue, mood, motivation, interests, study habits, family, school, society, nature, and physical environment (1990: 21).

According to Syah (2003: 144) the factors that impact student fulfilment include soundness, sense of hearing, eyesight, fatigue, intelligence, the attitude of students, students' interest, motivation of students, teachers, administrative staff, classmates, building school and its location, student residence and the location, learning tools, state of the weather, used students' learning time, strategies and methods of student learning.

According to Walgito (2004: 151) the factors that impact student fulfilment comprises physical health, fatigue, motivation, interest, concentration, natural curiosity, self-confidence, self-discipline, intelligence, memory, place, learning equipment, atmosphere, time learning and social. Based on the above description, it is known that factors affecting student achievement can be grouped into internal factors and external factors students. In more detail, these factors can be described as follows:

First, the internal factors is factors that originates from within self-esteem, which consists of physiological aspects, such as: the soundness sense of hearing, eyesight, fatigue. Where the psychological factors are involved into the psychological factors, among others, mood, motivation, interests and study habits, intelligence level, student attitudes, student aptitude, interests of students, discipline.

Second the external factors, namely the factors originating from outside the self-esteem, which contain of the social environment, which belong to the social environment, among others are teachers, administrative staff and classmates who can influence students' learning spirit, family and community. There is non-social environment, which belong to the environment nonsocial both physical and non-physical involve a school building and its location, student residence and the location, learning tools, weather and time that used student learning. In addition, provided the many factors that impact student fulfillment, so for this study to examine things more deeply, in this study the researcher will focus research on aspects of student discipline, the learning environment of students and teachers to teach variations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

A sample in the study is students of a public school in Turkey, Istanbul, from the eighth grade to the twelfth grade. Those students have different English levels and start to learn the English language in the fourth grade as this is the Turkish State Education System at public schools. In this study, the selection of the sample was randomly based. The participants in this study included only male students, and the number of participants in the study was 255 participants.

3.2. Data Collection

Data collection in this study was carried out according to a questionnaire for a random sample of students in general education. Some of the students were surveyed by sending it to them via the WhatsApp application, and others were distributed to them with papers because everyone had no mobile devices. The questions of the questionnaire consisted of (6) parts, which included listening strategies that contained (18) questions, a vocabulary strategy that contained (7) questions, a speaking strategy that consisted of (13) questions, a reading strategy that consisted of (15) questions, and finally, translation strategies that contained (5) questions. The criteria for the answers in questioner was by placing a plus sign (+) if the statement describes what student like, blank sign () if the statement somewhat describes what student like, and a minus sign

(-) if the statement does not like student.

3.3. Data Analysis

In this study, descriptive analysis was used descriptive analysis using advanced analysis tools like SPSS according to the requirements of the study, which aims to make a comparison between groups through visualization technique. Then the data was entered into Excel to compare the students' scores in the school's English exam with their learning strategies.

3.4. Ethical considerations:

Initially, to carry out this study, approval was obtained from the authorities of secondary schools' administration for male only, as well as the students' voluntarily consent to answer the questionnaire. Beside there are some difficulties that are faced concerning the levels of English language exam questions are different from one teacher to another because not all classes have the same teacher and therefore the students' scores do not fully reflect the level of the students. The second

difficulty is the length of the survey questions, so we needed to distribute it over two days in some classes so that the student would not get bored and choose randomly. The principle of confidentiality and privacy was used in collecting data from the participants.

3.5. Data Analysis:

Descriptive analysis was used in the social statistics program (SPSS), and the Excel program was used to draw the graphs. Therefore, in this research, many tools have been applied to gather data, like detailed questionnaires about each learning method. Also, the latest exam results for each student have been collected using the questionnaire from many schools. The questionnaire asked each student about how students valued and adapted strategies for learning the English Language with a range from 0 to 10. There are many questions in the survey for the listening strategy to cover ways of adapting the listening skill; for example, there is listening from radio, TV, music or movies in the listening skill part. Each method includes about seven types (more or less), so I used to take the average for each method type, and the result of each will be from 0 to 10.

After I mapped and merged the data for each student exam result and their questionnaire (total average types only for each learning method), I put the students in three groups (A, B and C) to do comparing analysis method and descriptive analysis using advanced analysis tools like SPSS and Qlikview.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Group of high marks achievement among the students valued the advantage of listening with 91% that the types of listening improved the language levels of students.

1. Group of high marks achievement among the participants valued the advantage of vocabulary with 89.5 %. Despite that, we find students who fail in the exam valued the advantage of vocabulary with 62.5 % So the writing may improve the language level of students but maybe not.
2. Group of high marks achievement among the student disvalued the advantage of speaking so we can't say that the speaking can improve the English language level for the students.
3. Group of high marks achievement among students valued the advantage of reading with more than have but also non passed students valued the advantage of it with more than have so we can say that you must read to improve your language but the advantage of it can be different from one to one
4. Group of high marks achievement is the one that valued the advantage of writing with 59%.
5. As total average of all learning methods no one of Group A valued the advantage of all learning strategies with 7 percent or more out of ten. and 20% of them valued the advantage of all learning strategies with less than 7 to 5 percent out of ten, and 80% of them valued the advantage of all learning strategies with less than 5 percent out of ten.
6. As total average of all learning strategies 84.78 % of Group B valued the advantage of all learning strategies with 7 percent or more out of ten. and 15.22% of them valued the advantage of all learning strategies with less than 7 to 5 percent out of ten, and none of them valued the advantage of all learning strategies with less than 5 percent out of ten.
7. A total average of all language learning strategies for the group of high marks achievement students did not rely heavily on the English language learning strategies. Despite that, we find students who fail in the exam rely heavily on the English language learning strategies.
8. A total average of all language learning strategies 5.91% of all students valued the advantage of all learning strategies with 7 percent or more out of ten. and 31.10 % of all students valued the advantage of all learning strategies with less than 7 to 5 percent out of ten, and 62.99 % of all students them valued the advantage of all language learning strategies with less than 5 percent out of ten.

5. CONCLUSION

Our major objective was to examine how LLS can affect students' foreign language learning process and enable students to learn the language. Due to the current research analysis, it has been identified that English language learning methods may improve the learners' language; despite they may not, it depends on each learner's self-learning and comprehension ability.

Due to the discussion above, the researcher concluded that language learning strategies play an important role in English achievements. The lack of motivation could affect the weakness of strategies used by the students in learning English, as the results showed listening skill is the most practical skill with most of the high exmas' grades achievers. The other factors might be affected by the selection of strategies to learn English by the students.

Literature has revealed that students with more frequent foreign language learning strategies (LLS) use have better opportunities to become more proficient language learners. It has been pointed out that more proficient students engage in a wider range of strategies and select learning strategies dependent on learning tasks.

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