Journal of Education and Human Development
December 2022, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 53-58
ISSN: 2334-296X (Print), 2334-2978 (Online)

Published by American Research Institute for Policy Development
DOI: 10.15640/jehd.v11n3a5
URL: https://doi.org/10.15640/jehd.v11n3a5

Libyan University Students' Language Learning Strategy Use and Their Language Achievement

Randah Jibreel Alashhab Barnous[1] & Mehmet Ali Yavuz[2]

Abstract

A common phenomenon of continuous innovations in the field of ESL or EFL is learner-centred education. One of these innovations increasingly catching the attention of researchers is Language learning strategies. However, as researchers carry out studies in this area, and as the pool of diverse findings rises, further gaps are opened, calling for research interventions. This is basically because of the broad nature of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) with their context-mediated influences. On this background, the present research intended to investigate the extent of relationships between LLSs and university students' achievement in Libya. The population of the study included 571 students from the Department of English at the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education, and from all the departments of the Faculty of Medical Technology. 309 subjects were randomly selected from the population. The instrument of data collection was the SILL (strategy inventory for language learning, adopted from Oxford (1989). Data analysis was done using t-tests. The findings revealed that memory strategy and cognitive strategy both have significant impacts on the foreign language achievement of the learners, while the use of compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies do not significantly impact the achievement of EFL learners.

Keywords: Language Learning Strategies, achievement, Libya, significance.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my family. Making them proud is one of my priorities. It is a pleasure for me to dedicate this article to my father's soul.

1. Introduction

The English language has been consistently gaining global acceptance. Its usability in global commerce, sports, and especially technology has made it a common language, thereby compelling countries which initially had no legal recognition for it to begin to do so. In Libya, English is officially recognized as a foreign language. Successive governments in Libya buttress this English prominence in Libya as the value increases on the global stage. As a result, LLSs have been receiving wide attention in the field of research. Lately in the 20th century, particularly from the 1970s onwards, there was a diversion of interest in approaches to language teaching and learning that pay more attention to the teachers to the ones that emphasise the learners. This means a shift from teacher-centred classroom activities to student-centred activities. Teacher-centred approaches place all the responsibilities on the teachers. However, the learner-centred approach considers the learners to be more responsible for their learning. (Chan, 2014; Koksal & Ulum, 2016).

The emergence of communicative language teaching can be described as a new vista in language learning. It makes the learner more responsible for their learning process. LLSs, therefore, serve as a toolkit that enables the learners to be in control of their learning. Research on LLS is very crucial because it produces insights that can better guide language learners (Lee & Heinz, 2016).

LLSs are objective-focused steps that learners take consciously to enhance their language learning (Chan, 2014). There is no doubt that responsibilities make learners more accountable for the learning process.

[1] Cyprus International University, Nicosia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Email address: www.randahbarnous@gmail.com, Telephone number: 00905488676856
[2] Cyprus International University, Nicosia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Email address: www.mehmetayavuz@gmail.com, Telephone number: 00905338478254

Although defining LLS has remained difficult mainly because of its growing versions and the need for contextual adaptation (Jones, 2016), yet, it is common that LLS is learner-centred, thus making it very relevant in modern language studies. Modern language studies are shifting attention from the teacher as the controller of the teaching methods to learners with their self-regulated techniques that enhance their language learning. According to Zare (2012), certain learners appear to be successful not minding the methods employed by the teacher, while others lack such abilities. These abilities can be better understood from the point of view of LLSs. The LLSs are categorically grouped into two by Oxford (1990) as follows:

1- The direct LLSs include:

i. Memory strategies: These, according to Chikiewicz (2015), involve creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well; employing action.
ii. Cognitive strategies: These involve practising, receiving and sending messages, analysing and reasoning; creating a structure for input and output.
iii. Compensation strategies: These include guessing intelligently, and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing.

2. On the other hand, the indirect strategies include:

i. Metacognitive strategies: These involve centring one's learning, arranging and planning one's learning; evaluating the learning process and its outcomes.
ii. Affective strategies: These include anxiety management, self-motivation, and emotional temperature regulation.
iii. Social strategies include questioning, relating well to others, and having empathy with them.

1.1 Problem description

Researchers have always sought to know the factors that influence the choice of LLSs that learners make in language learning. In literature, it is found that the most sought ones among these factors are gender, age, and motivation. There seems to be scanty research on the context of learning and the span of the learning process as factors influencing the learners' choice of LLS. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by assessing the relationship between Language Learning Strategies and university students' achievement in Libya, in consideration of those factors such as gender, age, the context of learning, and the span of the learning.

1.2 Significance of the study

This study is significant in a quite number of ways. Firstly, EFL learners especially in Libya are to benefit from it greatly. It is one thing to learn the English language; it is another thing to use it for communicative purposes. Secondly, to the teachers, it will help make their EFL instruction strategy-based. This is the best way to go in order to make the instruction successful. Finally, this research will contribute to growing the economy of Libya. When EFL learners become more competent in communication; their chances of employment increase.

1.3 Objectives

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the extent of the relationship between Language Learning Strategies and university students' achievement. This is expected to be achieved by answering the question: "How does Language Learning Strategy use impact university students' EFL achievement in Libya?"

1.4 Research Question

1. What are the effects of strategy use on foreign language achievement?

a. Does the memory strategy use have an impact on foreign language achievement?
b. Does the cognitive strategy use have an impact on foreign language achievement?
c. Does the compensation strategy use have an impact on foreign language achievement?
d. Does the metacognitive strategy use have an impact on foreign language achievement?
e. Does the affective strategy use have an impact on foreign language achievement?
f. Does the social strategy use have an impact on foreign language achievement?

2. Literature Review

Heider and Hemayati (2017) compared how marine engineering students and Iranian EFL learners use LLSs. 30 EFL learners and 43 Marine Engineering (ME) students participated in the study. A questionnaire of vocabulary was administered to the participants. The frequency of use of the strategies was calculated using the MS-Excel software package. Also, the t-test was used through the IBM SPSS statistics software package (version 22). The findings revealed thus (a) EFL learners used memory strategies more frequently to enhance their vocabulary acquisition. (b) Both groups were good at using verbal repetition. (c) Both EFL and Marine Engineering students.

Perea (2019) explored how university students learn Spanish using LLSs. The participants were university students from a South African university. The quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire, (Oxford's 1985 version of SILL). The qualitative data were obtained through interviews. The quantitative data were analysed using Spearman's correlation coefficient, a non-parametric statistical test. The qualitative data were analysed descriptively. The study found that employing metacognitive strategies enhanced language achievement in Spanish beginners' courses at the university.

Ipek and Yesilbursa (2017) carried out a study on "LLSs use of university preparatory school students". The research sought to find out the following: (1) LLSs used by learners of EFL, (2) whether there is a difference(s) between learners in using strategy, and (3) the relationship that exists between strategies used by the learners' academic achievement. There were 188 male and 277 female students who participated in the study. An instrument for data collection was SILL as propounded by Oxford (1990). After a thorough analysis, the findings revealed the following, (i) Significant differences exist between the LLSs use of learners of English, (ii) Successful language learners use mostly "social and metacognitive strategies".

Beirovi, S., Brdarevi-eljo, A., and Polz, E. (2021) investigated the relationship between Language Learning Strategies and Academic Achievement among 206 Bosnian and Herzegovina high school students. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), developed and validated by Oxford (1990), was used to collect data. The measure consists of 50 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale. According to the findings, cognitive techniques are strong positive indicators of students' achievement in foreign language learning, whereas memory and affective strategies are major negative predictors.

Anita Habók, Andrea Magyar, and Gyöngyvér Molnár (2022) set out to investigate the relationship between students' English achievement and language learning strategies at the university level in Indonesia. This study included 15 students from the English major department. Students' GPAs and SILL questionnaire scores were used to collect data. The questionnaire was created online, and available for a week. The testing of hypotheses revealed that there is no link between students' language learning strategies and their English achievement. When it comes to learning English, students preferred cognitive and metacognitive strategies, while compensating strategies are the least preferred.

3. Method

This is a descriptive cross-sectional survey, the population included 571 students of English Departments from the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education, and those from other Departments such as the Faculty of Medical Technology of Bani Waleed University, Libya. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 309 students from the population as participants in the study. The instrument for this study was the "Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)", version 7.0 adopted from Oxford (1989). This was with due permission from Oxford. The student questionnaire included five Likert-type scale questions and fifty multiple-choice questions. Thereafter, the outcome of the inventory was correlated with the average of participants' results of the 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 academic sessions (with due permission from the authorities of the university). As for the procedure for data collection, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was administered to the participants by some research assistants from the university. It was administered to them on the 23rd of April, 2019, and was retrieved within two weeks. With an introduction letter, the authorities of the departments involved in the study from the Faculties of Arts, Education, and Medical Technology were approached in order to obtain the students' 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 session results. For data analysis, a t-test was utilized.

4. Results

The research question has sub-questions. The data obtained from the answers to these questions were analysed by means of the T-test calculator at the significance level of 0.05.

4.1 Analysis of the Research Question

What are the effects of strategy use on foreign language achievement?

a. Does the memory strategy use have an impact on foreign language achievement?

Table 1: Foreign language achievement according to the memory strategy use

Groups	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	T	P	Level of Significance
Group 1: Lower-level Memory strategy users	104	61.07	14.02	2.68	0.0077	P < 0.05*
Group 2: Higher-level Memory strategy users at a higher level	205	65.59	14.00			

In Table 1, the mean of the achievement exam results of the first group is 61.07, with a standard deviation of 14.02, while the mean of the achievement exam results of the second group is 65.59, and the standard deviation is 14.00. The P-value is 0.0077. This means that when the exam results are considered, there is an extremely significant difference between EFL learners who make use of memory strategy more and those who use it less, implying that memory strategy has a significant contribution to the participants' achievement.

b. Does the cognitive strategy use have an impact on foreign language achievement?

Table 2: Foreign language achievement according to the cognitive strategy use

Groups	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	T	P	Level of Significance
Group 1: Lower-level cognitive strategy users	37	55.30	14.89	4.120	0.0001	P < 0.05*
Group 2: higher-level cognitive strategy users	272	65.26	13.64			

The results in Table 2 reveal that the mean and the standard deviation of the participants (EFL learners) from the first group in the achievement exam is 55.30 and 14.89 respectively. For the second group, the mean is 65.26 while the standard deviation is 13.64. The P-value is 0.0001, indicating that the cognitive strategy makes a significant difference.

c. Does the compensation strategy use have an impact on foreign language achievement?

Table 3: Foreign language achievement according to the compensation strategy use

Groups	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	T	P	Level of Significance
Group 1: Lower-level compensation strategy users	58	64.27	13.14	0.12	0.90	P < 0.05*
Group 2: Higher-level compensation strategy users	251	64.02	14.39			

As shown in Table 3. The mean of the achievement exam results of the first group is 64.27 and the standard deviation is 13.14. As for the second group, the mean is 64.02 while the standard deviation is 14.39. The P-value is 0.90. The meaning of this is that there is a statistically insignificant difference between high-level compensation strategy users and low-level compensation strategy users in terms of their language achievement. This shows that the use of compensation strategies is an important factor in learners' English language achievement.

d. Does the metacognitive strategy use have an impact on foreign language achievement?

Table 4: Foreign language achievement according to the metacognitive strategy use

Groups	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	T	P	Level of Significance
Group 1: Lower-level metacognitive strategy users	29	60.51	12.37	1.43	0.15	P < 0.05*
Group 2: Higher-level metacognitive strategy users	280	64.44	14.28			

Table 4 shows that the mean of the low-level metacognitive strategy users' achievement results is 60.51 and the standard deviation is12.37. As for the achievement results of the high-level metacognitive strategy users, the mean is 64.44 and the standard deviation is 14.28. As the P-value is 0.15, which is higher than the critical value, there is no significant difference between the two results.

e. Does the affective strategy use have an impact on foreign language achievement?

Table 5: Foreign language achievement according to the affective strategy use

Groups	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	T	P	Level of Significance
Group 1: Lower-level affective strategy users	73	63.93	15.43	0.09	0.93	P < 0.05*
Group 2: Higher-level affective strategy users	236	64.11	13.75			

Table 5 shows the mean and standard deviation of the EFL learners' achievement exam results of the first group as 63.93, and 15.43 respectively whereas the second group's mean is 64.11, and the standard deviation is 13.75. The P-value for this result is 0.93, and this being higher than the critical value shows that affective strategy makes no significant difference in the students' achievements.

f. Does the social strategy use have an impact on foreign language achievement?

Table 6: Foreign language achievement according to the social strategy use

Groups	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	t	P	Level of Significance
Group 1: Lower social strategy users	50	66.93	14.69	1.57	0.12	P < 0.05*
Group 2: Higher social strategy users	259	63.52	14.00			

As displayed in table 6, the mean of the achievement exam results of the first group is 66.93 and the standard deviation is 14.69, while the mean of the second group is 63.52, and the standard deviation is 14.00. The P-value is 0.12. Again, this outcome indicates that the difference is not statistically significant.

4.2 Summary of Findings

1. The use of memory strategies has a considerable impact on EFL learners' achievement.
2. Cognitive strategy impacts significantly the achievement of foreign language learners.
3. A compensation strategy has no significant impact on EFL learners' achievement.
4. The employment of metacognitive strategies has no effect on the achievement of foreign language learners.
5. The use of affective strategies does not have any significant impact on the foreign language achievement of the learners.
6. The adoption of social strategies has no impact on the accomplishment of foreign language learners.

5. Discussion

This study was successful in determining how the various LLSs affect students' performance in EFL. This result contradicts the findings of Anita Habók, Andrea Magyar, and Gyöngyvér Molnár (2022), who discovered no link between students' language learning practices and English achievement.

The findings of this study show that memory strategy, which is one of the direct strategies according to Oxford (1990) has a significant impact on the achievement of EFL university students in Libya. It supports the findings of Heider and Hemayati (2017), who discovered that EFL learners employed memory strategies more frequently than other strategies to consolidate the meaning of new words. On the other hand, memory strategies were revealed to be substantial negative predictors of students' achievement in foreign language learning by Beirovi, S., Brdarevi-eljo, A., and Polz, E. (2021).

This study finds out that cognitive strategy, as one of the direct strategies, has a considerable impact on the participants' EFL achievement. The findings are consistent with those of Beirovi, S., Brdarevi-eljo, A., and Polz, E. (2021), who found that cognitive techniques are substantial positive determinants of students' achievement in foreign language learning. Furthermore, Chikiewicz (2015) asserted that cognitive strategy assists learners in developing communication abilities. In contrast, the outcome of this study conflicts with the finding of Perea (2019) who found that metacognitive strategy has a strong positive link with university students' achievement in a beginner course in Spanish. Ipek and Yesilbursa (2017) also revealed that the use of social and metacognitive strategies has an impact on the achievement of language learners.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that the memory and cognitive strategies are significantly related to students' EFL achievement; while others such as metacognitive, compensation, social, and affective strategies may be important, they do not significantly affect the students' EFL achievement. The pedagogical implication for this is that teachers should lay more emphasis on some LLSs than others should. Students should be encouraged to master LLSs, especially those that significantly affect their achievement.

7. References

Anita Habók, Andrea Magyar, & Gyöngyvér Molnár (2022). Investigating the Relationship Among English Language Learning Strategies, Language Achievement, and Attitude. Front. Psychol. 13:867714. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.867714

Bećirović, S., Brdarević-Čeljo, A., & Polz, E. (2021). Exploring the Relationship Between Language Learning Strategies, Academic Achievement, Grade Level, and Gender. Journal of Language and Education, 7(2), 93-106. https://doi. org/10.17323/jle.2021.10771

Chan, L. C. (2014). Language learning strategies of Macao nursing students: an embedded mixed methods study. Asian Englishes, 16 (3) 189-208

Chiklkiewicz, K. (2015). Direct language strategies in the theory by Rebecca Oxford in English vocabulary acquisition at the age group of 11-12 year old. World Scientific News, 1 179-206

Heidar, D. M. & Hemayati, M. S. (2017). A comparative study of vocabulary learning strategies used by marine engineering students and Iranian EFL learners. RELP 5 (1) 61-72

Ipek, O. F. & Yesilbursa, A.A. (2017). Language learning strategy use of university preparatory school students. International Journal of Educational Sciences, 16 (1-3) 60-66

Jones, A. H.(2016). The discourse of language learning strategies: towards an inclusive approach. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 20 (8), 855-870

Koksal, D. & Ulum, O. (2016). Language learning strategies of Turkish and Arabic students: a cross-cultural study. European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching, 1(1) 122-143

Lee, J. & Heinz, M.(2016). English language learning strategies reported by advanced language learners. Journal of International Education Research-Second Quarter, 12 (2) 67-76

Moshen, A. S. (2014). Teaching English as a foreign language in Libya. Scientific Research Journal (SCIRJ), 2 (11) 2201-2798

O'Malley, J.M., Chamot, A. U., Stewner-Manzanares, G., Russo, R.P. & Kupper, L. (1985). Learning strategy applications with students of learning as a second language. TESOL quarterly 19 (3) 557-584

Oxford, R. L. (1990). Language learning strategies: what every teacher should know. New York: Newbury House/Harper & Row.

Oxford, R. L. (1990). Language learning strategies: what every teacher should know. New York: Newbury House/Harper & Row

Oxford, R.L. (1989). Use of language learning strategies: a synthesis of studies with implications for strategy training. System, 17 (2), 235-247

Oxford, Rebecca L. & Judith Burry-Stock (1995) "Assessing the use of language learning strategies worldwide with the ESL/EFL version of the Strategy Inventor for Language Learning (SILL), System, Vol.25, No.1, 1-23

Perea, L.L. (2019). How Spanish is learnt matters: university students' use of language learning strategies. Language Matters: https://doi.org/10.1080/10228195.2018.1527859

Zare, P. (2012). Language learning strategies among EFL/ESL learners: a review of literature. International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2 (5) 162-169