

WHAT GOOD LANGUAGE LEARNERS DO TO LEARN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Dyanthi Tigarajan ¹,

¹SMK Bandar Tun Hussein Onn 2

dyanthiz77@gmail.com

Melor Md Yunus ²,

^{2,3} Faculty of Education,

University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

¹ melor@ukm.edu.my

Azlina Abdul Aziz ³

^{2,3} Faculty of Education,

University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

² azlinal1@ukm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

The level of English proficiency among Malaysian students today, is a much discussed issue and is of great concern among secondary school English Language teachers. Studies have shown that some students are able to perform better in their school and national assessments despite having the same exposure to the language in their classrooms. One of the underpinning factors highlighted for this scenario is students' inability to employ appropriate language learning strategies in their language learning. The aim of this study is therefore to identify the features of successful language learning strategies in learning the different language skills and its pedagogical implications to the teacher. In this study, 30 form 4 proficient students from SMK Bandar Tun Hussein Onn 2 Selangor, were the participants of a survey to identify the highly preferred and the least preferred strategies to learn English. Their responses based on the questionnaire revealed that the compensation & metacognitive strategies were the most preferred while the least preferred strategy is the social strategy. Findings and discussions of the study will further be elaborated in the paper in view of its significance to the teachers as well as students as autonomous learners.

Keywords: Good language learning strategies, Good language learners

1.0 Introduction

The world of teaching is going through a shift from teacher centeredness to being more student centered. Gone are the days when the teachers are expected to drill meaningless exercises that bore half the students to death. Times have changed and so have teaching trends. Students these days are expected to be more autonomous in their learning as it is seen to be of help especially in "having the capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action" (Little, 1991:4). Learners today are expected to assume greater responsibility and take charge of their own learning, but at the same time the teachers' presence is seen as a facilitator who monitors and guides the students with their progress.

It is the job of the teacher then, to explicitly teach and familiarize them with the different learning strategies that can be employed in learning a language. Learning strategies are the conscious thoughts and actions that individuals use to accomplish a learning goal (Chamot, 2004). Strategic learners have knowledge about their own thinking and learning approaches, and the ability to orchestrate the strategies that best meets the demands of their own learning strengths. Although there is no set of strategies appropriate for all learners, students need to learn how to apply strategies according to what actually works for them in learning the various skills of a language and this is when the teachers play a role in teaching learners to be aware of their learning strategy preferences.

2.0 Problem Statement

The PT3 English Language examination is designed in such a way that it provides assessment of the candidates' grasp of the four skills of the language. They are required to sit for two papers. One tests their reading and writing skills, while the other tests their listening and speaking skills. It is interesting though to see students obtain different scores for different papers, as it demonstrates their inability to perform equally in all four skills.

Based on an analysis of the 2014 PT3 English Language results in my school, the scenario of varied language abilities exists amongst students, despite having similar exposure to the language in and out of the classroom. The fact that students are not able to score equally in both the papers of the recent PT3 paper brings us to wonder if language learning strategies play a role in providing students better knowledge and ability to communicate using the different skills. By finding out their language learning strategies in the four skills, teachers may understand better, what methods work effectively to teach the various skills and will be more able to provide suitable lessons for students with varied language learning abilities.

One of the area of research in Language Learning Strategy (LLS) is on Good Language Learners (GLL). Although a lot has been said about the GLL (eg. Naiman et al, 1975, Mohamed Amin Embi, 1996; 2000), not much is known about GLL in the

secondary school contexts especially in the urban areas. Hence, there is a need of a study to identify strategies used by secondary school students to improve their English language skills.

This paper therefore hopes to find out the language learning strategies that are applied by successful language learners of my school, in the four skills – reading, writing, listening, speaking as well as vocabulary & grammar. The findings is hoped to help identify suitable strategies to improve the various skills and also highlight the features of successful language learners as well as its pedagogical implications to the teacher.

3.0 Research Objectives

1. To identify language learning strategies employed by successful language learners in an urban secondary school to improve:

- i) writing skills
- ii) reading skills
- iii) listening & speaking skills
- iv) grammar
- v) vocabulary

4.0 Research Question

1. What are the language learning strategies employed by successful language learners in an urban secondary school to improve:

- i) writing skills
- ii) reading skills
- iii) listening & speaking skills
- iv) grammar
- v) vocabulary

5.0 Literature Review

The increased interest towards language learning strategies and good language learners has been around since the 1970s. “In most research, studies done on language learning strategies to identify what good learners do to learn a second or foreign language has been the main issue” Zare (2012). Rubin, Wenden and Oxford are among the key researchers in this field of study.

Definitions

Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies according to Oxford (1989:8), are ‘specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations’. Rubin and Wenden (1987:6) view them in terms of ‘behaviors learners engage in to learn and regulate the learning of a second language’. ‘Strategies play an important role as they promote and facilitate language learning’, and act as ‘problem solving mechanisms’ that aid the complex learning processes.’ Ignacio (1996)

Wenden (1987) states that ‘learning strategies are the various operations that learners use in order to make sense in their learning’. Likewise, Williams & Burden (1997) say that when learners are involved in a learning task, they have several resources which they use in different ways to finish or solve the task. Therefore this can be termed learning strategy. Rigney (1987) and Rubin (1987) define LLS as behaviours, steps or techniques that language learners apply to facilitate language learning. Oxford (1990) also asserts that language learning strategies includes cognitive, emotional and social aspects that enhances learners’ language learning proficiency and self confidence.

What is derived from these definitions would be that language learning strategies encompasses actions, behaviors, techniques, methods, and operations that are involved in obtaining success to facilitate, regulate, and boost confidence in learning a particular language. These are further classified into several categories.

Good Language Learner

The good language learner is assumed to be those who employ good language learning strategies in achieving successful language learning. Although teachers and researchers are of the opinion that there is ‘no single method of language teaching and research findings would mark the success in language learning’ Brown (2007), it was realized that some learners seemed to be successful regardless of methods or teaching techniques. Zare (2012) Rubin (1975) Stern (1975) and Rubin & Thompson (1994) described “good” language learners in terms of their personal characteristics, styles, and strategies. They believe that good language learners:

1. Take responsibility of their own learning.
2. Organize information about language.
3. Are creative and try experimenting its grammar and words
4. Create opportunities for practice inside and outside of the classroom
5. Learn to live with uncertainty by not getting confused and by continuing to talk or listen without understanding every word.
6. Use memory strategies to recall what has been learnt
7. Make errors work for them and not against them

8. Use linguistic knowledge, including knowledge of the first language, in learning a second language
9. Use contextual clues to help them in comprehension
10. Learn to make intelligent guesses
11. Learn chunks of language as a whole and formalized routines to help them perform "beyond their competence"
12. Learn to use certain tricks to keep the conversation going
13. Learn to fill gaps in their own incompetence
14. Learn different styles of speech and writing to vary their language with relevance to the formality of the situation.

In summary, the list entails the fact that good language learners are generally self-reliant, ready to work independently, take charge of their own learning as they are motivated, enthusiastic and have a positive view of the target language. They are also normally active participants in class who are not afraid to make mistakes and practice as much as they can.

However, the important thing to realize about this list is that good language learners do not necessarily use the same language strategies. Even if they do, they may not use them for the same purposes nor in the same way. Rubin (1975) Therefore students need to learn how to apply strategies according to what actually works for them as research has proven that students benefit from learning about their language learning strategies.

Classification of LLS

Based on the various definitions of language learning strategies, it is clear that it not only can be defined in several ways, but can also be categorized in many ways to identify features of good language learners.

O'Malley & Chamot (1985) classifies LLS into three categories. Metacognitive, Cognitive and Socio affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies refer to planning, thinking, observing, correcting and evaluating learning. Cognitive strategies involve direct manipulation of the material itself. For example, repetition, note taking, elaboration and inferring for information. Socio affective strategies are applied when learners interact with others of close relationship in cooperative learning and questioning for clarification. Brown (2007)

Rubin (1987) also classifies LLS into three categories. They include Learning Strategies, Communication Strategies and Social Strategies. The Learning Strategies are divided into cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Rubin suggests that there are 6 major cognitive learning strategies. They include clarification, verification, guessing, inductive inferencing, deductive inferencing, practice, memorization and monitoring. On the other hand, metacognitive strategies are used to supervise, control or self-direct language learning. It involves planning, prioritizing, setting goals and self-management. According to Rubin (1987), Communication Strategies place emphasis on the process of communication to get meaning across or to clarify something. The strategy is to make use of one's linguistic or communicative knowledge to maintain a conversation. The Social Strategy helps one to practice their knowledge of the language, as it offers exposure to the target language that leads to indirect learning.

Oxford (1990) divided learning strategies into two major classes. They are the direct strategies and the indirect strategies. The direct strategies are those that 'directly involve the target language and requires mental processing of the language. Meanwhile, the indirect strategies are strategies that support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language. Amin (2010) The direct strategies are further subdivided into memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies. The indirect strategies are divided into metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. The direct strategies that Oxford refers to include remembering and retrieving important or new information via mental linkages (memory strategies), understanding and producing the language via identification, retention and retrieval of elements of language through practice and analysis (cognitive), and using the knowledge despite language gaps through intelligent guessing (compensation). The indirect strategies refer to the pre-assessment, planning and evaluation of language by coordinating, planning, organizing and evaluating their own cognition (metacognitive), taking emotional temperature to reduce anxiety for self-encouragement (affective) and interacting with other learners for clarification or cooperating and empathizing with others (social strategies).

Unlike the above classifications of language learning strategies, Mohd Amin Embi (2000), has divided the strategies into three. They are, Classroom, Out of Class and Exam Language Learning Strategies. What is meant by classroom learning strategies is by paying attention in class, attentively listening to teacher's speech, reading over class work, seeking clarification from friends and discussions with friends in class. Out of Class Language Learning Strategies include conversing in English with friends and teachers outside of school or looking for opportunities to learn English beyond what is learnt in class. Lastly the Exam Language Learning strategies include reading over notes or exercises, studying grammar books, memorizing essay formats or doing previous exam papers. Amin (2010)

Put simply, language learning strategies refer to 'the methods which learners use to intake, store and retrieve information during the learning process.' Chen (2010) In other words, language learning strategies refer to how learners develop ways that will enable them to learn and remember information and how this knowledge is best used when learning a language. The classification of the strategies have made it clearer, in the sense that we can consciously identify which methods involve the cognition and which are driven by self-motivation. It also helps us identify the strategies that are intentionally carried out as well as unconsciously done in the process of language learning. These classifications also aid in determining the strategies that are used not only for language learning but also the strategies in which they can be employed for successful academic achievement in the language learnt.

It is then up to the learner to decide on the preferred strategy to ensure the success of language learning, as research has proven that as learners become more aware of their learning strategy preferences, they may be motivated to extend repertoire of language strategies. This way, the learners may gain new insights into how to control the language learning process. Cohen, Weaver & Li (1996)

6.0 Methodology

6.1 Research Design

The research design for this study is quantitative. I chose to carry out the study using this method because it is an excellent way of finalizing the results of the most favored and least preferred learning strategies of good language learners. After statistical analysis of the results, a comprehensive answer is reached and the results are legitimately discussed, using descriptive data analysis to identify its implications and relevance to the teaching and learning of language, using the most effective learning strategies.

6.2 Population

The selected students are from my school, SMK Bandar Tun Hussein Onn 2, Cheras Selangor, which is an urban high performing school. The participants of this study are well exposed to the English Language as most of them come from English speaking backgrounds. They live close to the city centre and many of their parents are highly educated overseas graduates, who have been able to provide at least pre-school education for their children in English speaking countries like the UK, New Zealand and Australia, while they furthered their studies abroad or have had to temporarily migrate due to career advancement. The majority of the participants of this study therefore are mostly fluent in English because of the early exposure to the language, and predominantly communicate in English.

6.3 Sample

The samples of this study are 30 Form 4 students who had received As for both the written and oral English Language papers in the 2015 PT3 examination. All participants are students I teach who belong to the same class, which is the first form 4 science class. They are a random selection that is not gender specific. However, because my school is a co-ed school, I considered having both genders in my sampling criteria. The participants of the study consist of 4 males and 6 female students. They are all aged 16 and have a good command of the language in both their written and spoken ability.

The study is done based on purposive sampling. The selected 30 samples represent the good language learners of my school. **Besides their academic excellence, they were also selected based on my judgment of their good language learning strategies observed in class.** The sample being investigated is quite small. This is because the main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which will best enable the researcher to answer the research questions. The samples are therefore selected based on their characteristics of good language learners, in order to help determine specific language learning strategies that can be successfully employed to learn the different language skills in the English Language. However, the samples being studied may not be representative of the population, as the samples of this study are only 30 Form 4 students of the best science class. Never the less, the study would help me as a teacher for this particular class, to aid my teaching decisions in my attempt to help other less successful learners to obtain a better grasp of the language in the various skills.

6.4 Procedure

The participants completed a questionnaire consisting of items representing the different learning strategies that is used to learn the different skills. All participants received standard instructions on how to complete the survey. They were informed that the study was not a test, there were no right or wrong answers, they were not required to reveal their identity and that their responses were confidential and of utmost importance to this study. They were given the questionnaires all at the same time in their classroom, and were given half an hour to complete it. Just before they started, the students were given a few minutes to go through the items to allow clarification of meaning of words, phrases and statements that they found unclear or had doubts with. This was to ensure that students provided genuine responses with good understanding of what is required by the item response. They were also reminded not to discuss with their friends as the survey required genuine personal responses to the items in the questionnaire. The entire procedure lasted about 50 minutes.

Once completed, the responses were tabulated and analyzed using the mean for each item selected for each skill. The highest mean for the items responded to, from each skill is taken as the most favorable strategy, while the lowest mean is considered the least preferred strategy.

6.6 Instrumentation

The basic instrument of the study was a self scoring paper and pencil survey in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of items adapted from Oxford's (1989) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0 and Language Strategy Use Inventory by Cohen, Oxford & Chi (2005). The study used a self report questionnaire to assess the students' language learning strategies. The questionnaire consists of 84 items for students to respond to based on different language skills. The items are categorized according to the main skills in language learning; listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary and grammar. Each skill is represented by 12 items for students to respond to using the 5 point likert scale. From 'Always true' (5) being the highest and 'Never true' (1), the lowest on the scale.

Items in both the SILL and Language Strategy Use Inventory enables the researcher to find out learners' variety and frequency of learning strategies of the various language skills. SILL by Oxford is divided into six categories; 'memory strategies, social strategies, affective strategies, metacognitive strategies, compensation strategies and cognitive strategies under the direct and indirect strategies.' Amin (2010) Language Strategy Use Inventory on the other hand seems similar but has its items categorized according to the different skills; listening, speaking, vocabulary, reading, writing and translation.

So, Cohen et al's (2005) concept of categorizing the items according to the 4 skills, was adapted and merged with Oxford's items by listing them under each skill according to the six strategies. Two more elements; Vocabulary and Grammar were also added to the sections in the questionnaire. The selection of items from Oxford's SILL was carefully done, by ensuring that there was a variety of strategies to choose from the 12 items provided for each skill. The questionnaire is divided into 6 parts that represented the 6 skills which comprised of Listening, Speaking, Vocabulary, Reading, Writing and Grammar strategies. 2 items representing each of Oxford's 6 learning strategies comprised the 12 items for each skill in the questionnaire. Therefore, the items representing the 6 strategies (cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, compensation strategies or social strategies) were used as a means to study the students' preference of strategies, that are employed in successfully learning the various language skills. Besides that, a number of items were also rephrased to ease students' understanding.

The items of the questionnaire would therefore be able to allow analysis of the most favored strategy and least preferred strategy to learn each skill, in a systematic manner. It would also ease the task of pointing out if the direct or indirect strategies are favored, since the questionnaire items are selected with careful attention to this element that is emphasized by Oxford's (1989) language learning strategy classification

6.7 Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was performed by tabulating the percentage for the items that represents the 6 learning strategies in the questionnaire. The percentage enabled the analysis of the items respondents selected and eased the process of identifying the most preferred and least preferred strategy. In order to further ease the identification of this, the responses of the likert scale was categorized as: (1)-(Never True) and (2) – (Usually Not True) into Low use. (3) – Somewhat True is categorized as medium use and (4) – Usually True and (5) (Always True) is categorized as High Use. The percentage obtained is then transferred into a chart. From here the highest percentage for the low use category is assumed as the least preferred strategy and the highest percentage for the high use category is assumed as the most preferred strategy to learn a particular skill.

7.0 FINDINGS

Data Analysis

1. Listening Strategies

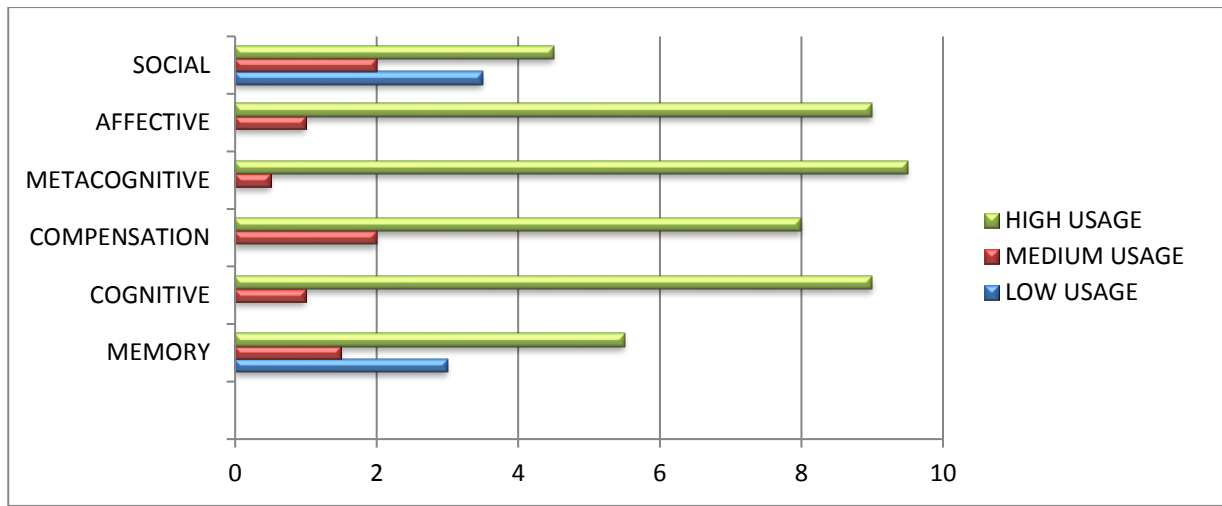
Tabulation of mean for each strategy selected by respondents based on the questionnaire

TABLE 1 Mean representing strategy used to learn Listening Skills

| STRATEGIES | LOW USAGE | MEDIUM USAGE | HIGH USAGE |
|---------------|-----------|--------------|------------|
| Memory | 30% | 15% | 55% |
| Cognitive | - | 10% | 90% |
| Compensation | - | 20% | 80% |
| Metacognitive | - | 5% | 95% |
| Affective | - | 10% | 90% |
| Social | 35% | 20% | 45% |

The highest percentage of 95% in the chart above under the high use category reveals that the strategy **most preferred** by the respondents to learn listening skills is the **metacognitive strategy**. The item referred to is 'looking for people to talk to in English to understand better'. Interestingly, the **least preferred** strategy is the **social strategy**. This is shown by the highest mean score on the low use category, which is 35%. That is 'asking for help from English speakers to understand better.' The strategy that is used at a medium frequency is **memory strategies** (15%).

CHART 1 Strategies used to learn Listening Skills



2. Speaking Strategies

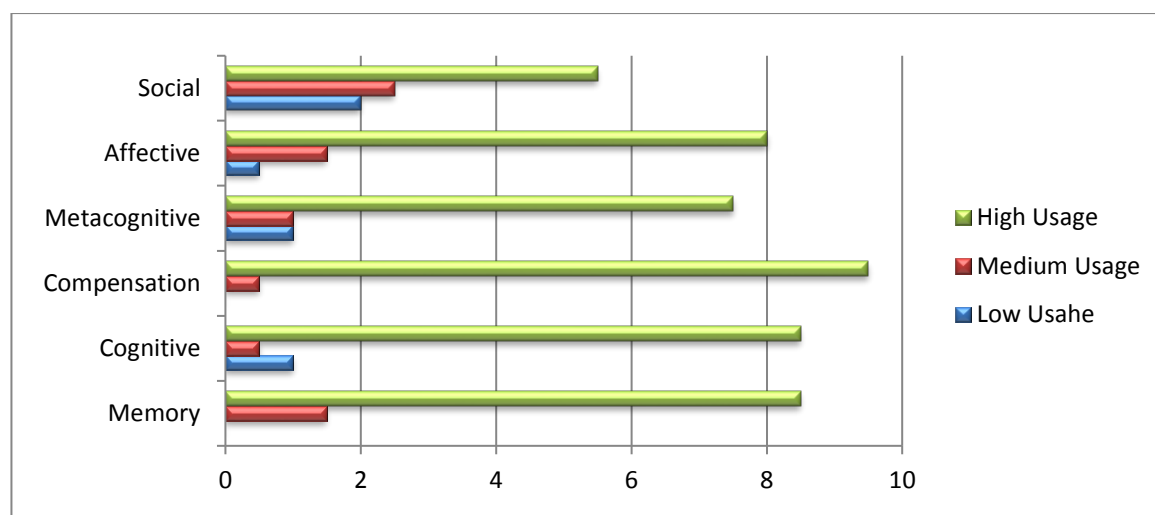
Tabulation of mean for each strategy selected by respondents based on the questionnaire

TABLE 2 *Strategies used to learn Speaking Skills*

| STRATEGIES | LOW USAGE | MEDIUM USAGE | HIGH USAGE |
|---------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| Memory | - | 15% | 85% |
| Cognitive | 10% | 5% | 85% |
| Compensation | - | 5% | 95% |
| Metacognitive | 10% | 10% | 75% |
| Affective | 5% | 15% | 80% |
| Social | 20% | 25% | 55% |

The highest percentage 95% in the chart above, under the high use category, reveals that the strategy **most preferred** by the respondents to learn speaking skills is the **compensation strategy**. The item referred to is 'When I can't think of a word, I use a phrase that means the same'. The least preferred strategy for speaking is the **social strategy** like what was least preferred for listening. This is shown by the highest mean score on the low use category, which is 2.0. That is 'I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.' However, the strategy that is used at a medium frequency is also the **social strategy**. This indicates that the strategy is least preferred but within a smaller percentage, as there are others who find it somewhat helpful in learning speaking skills.

CHART 2 *Strategies used to learn Speaking Skills*



3. Vocabulary Strategies

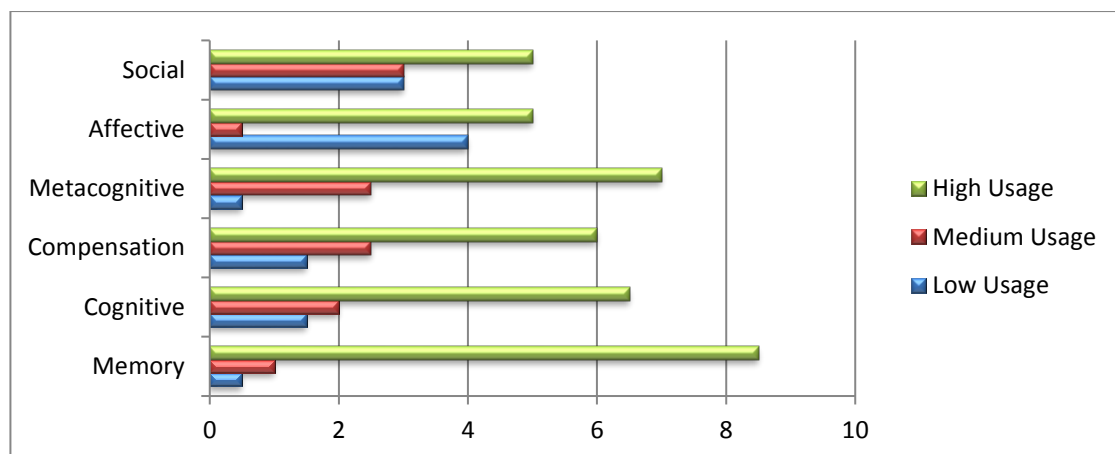
Tabulation of mean for each strategy selected by respondents based on the questionnaire

TABLE 3 Strategies used to learn Vocabulary

| STRATEGIES | LOW USAGE | MEDIUM USAGE | HIGH USAGE |
|---------------|-----------|--------------|------------|
| Memory | 5% | 10% | 85% |
| Cognitive | 15% | 20% | 65% |
| Compensation | 15% | 25% | 60% |
| Metacognitive | 5% | 25% | 70% |
| Affective | 40% | 5% | 55% |
| Social | 30% | 30% | 40% |

The highest mean score 40% in the chart above under the low use category, reveals that the strategy **least preferred** by the respondents to learn vocabulary is the **affective strategy**. The item referred to is 'I encourage myself to use new English words learnt although I am not sure'. The **most preferred** strategy for speaking is the **memory strategy**. This was represented by the item 'I think of relationships between what I already know and new words I learn in English'. This is shown by the highest mean score on the high use category, which is 85%. Interestingly, there are two strategies that are used at a medium frequency. The selected items under these strategies are 'If I can't think of a word in English, I use a word or phrase that mean the same thing' and 'I try to find out how to speak better in English'. The respondents somewhat prefer learning vocabulary using the **compensation and metacognitive strategies**. This is because, under the medium use category, there are two highest mean scores; 25%.

CHART 3 Strategies used to learn vocabulary



4. Reading Strategies

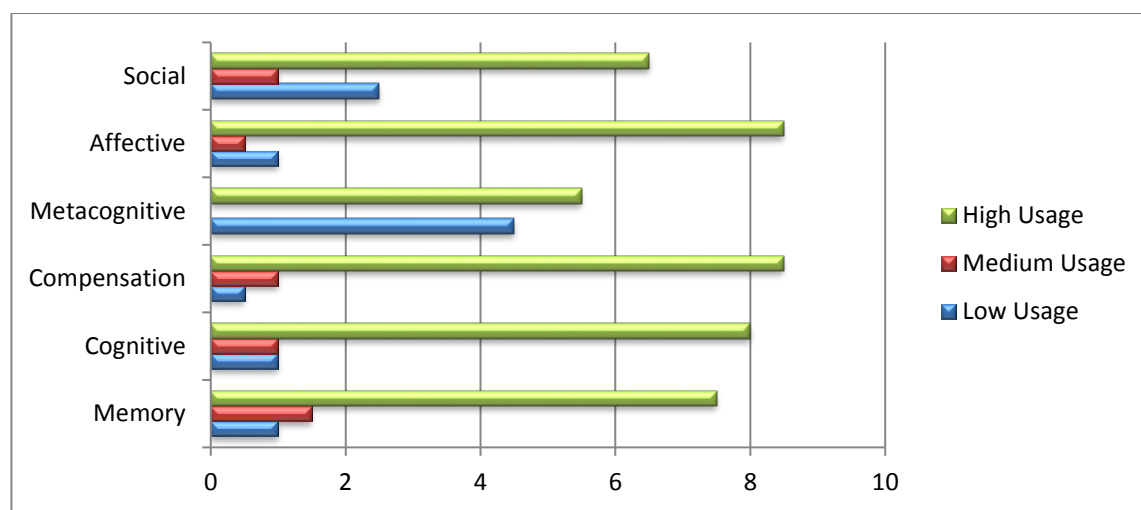
Tabulation of mean for each strategy selected by respondents based on the questionnaire

TABLE 4 Strategies used to learn Reading Skills

| STRATEGIES | LOW USAGE | MEDIUM USAGE | HIGH USAGE |
|---------------|-----------|--------------|------------|
| Memory | 10% | 15% | 75% |
| Cognitive | 10% | 10% | 80% |
| Compensation | 5% | 10% | 85% |
| Metacognitive | 45% | - | 55% |
| Affective | 10% | 5% | 85% |
| Social | 25% | 10% | 65% |

The highest mean score 85% in the chart above under the high use category, reveals that there are 2 strategies **most preferred** by the respondents to learn reading skills. They are the **compensation strategy and the affective strategy**. The item referred to is 'I read in English without having to look up the meaning of the word' and 'I encourage myself to read books in English even if I am afraid of not understanding what I read.' The least **preferred** strategy for reading is the **metcognitive strategy**. This was represented by the item 'I plan my schedule so that I have enough time for reading'. This is shown by the highest mean score on the low use category, which is 45%. The respondents somewhat prefer learning reading skills using the **memory strategy**. This is represented by the selection of the item 'I use new words I learnt in English so I can remember them.' The mean score for this category is 15%.

CHART 4 Strategies used to learn Reading Skills



5. Writing Strategies

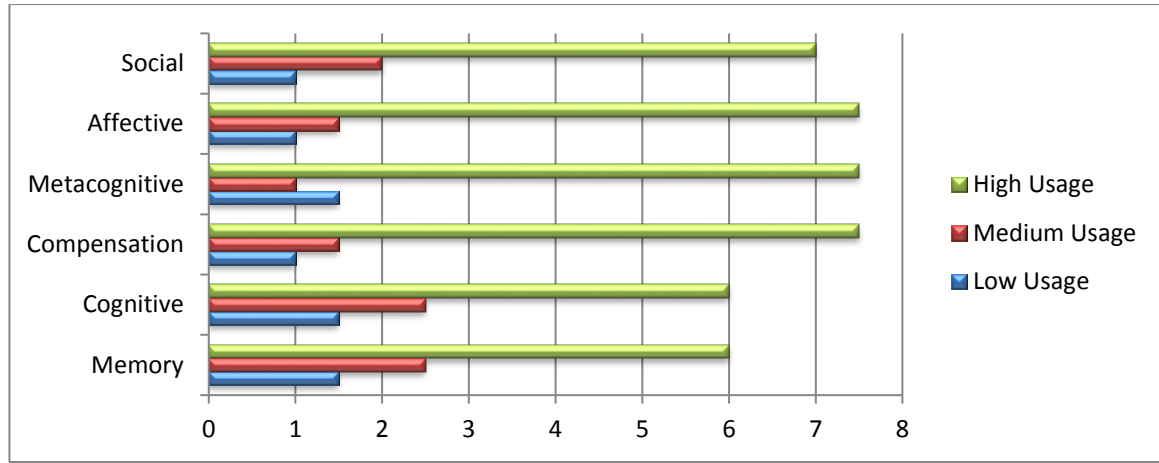
Tabulation of mean for each strategy selected by respondents based on the questionnaire

TABLE 5 Strategies used to learn Writing Skills

| STRATEGIES | LOW USAGE | MEDIUM USAGE | HIGH USAGE |
|---------------|-----------|--------------|------------|
| Memory | 15% | 25% | 6 |
| Cognitive | 15% | 25% | 6 |
| Compensation | 10% | 1 | 7.5 |
| Metacognitive | 15% | 1 | 7.5 |
| Affective | 10% | 1.5 | 7.5 |
| Social | 10% | 2 | 7 |

The data collected for this skill is interesting as there are more than 1 preferred / least preferred strategy. The highest percentage **75%** in the chart above under the high use category, reveals that there are 3 strategies **most preferred** by the respondents to learn writing skills. They are the **compensation strategy, metacognitive strategy and the affective strategy**. The item referred to are 'I make up new words when I don't know the right way to write what I want in English', 'I try to find out how to be a better writer' and 'I encourage myself to write in English even when I am afraid to make mistakes'. There are also 3 **least preferred** strategies for writing. They are the **memory strategy, cognitive strategy and also metacognitive strategy**, which is shown by the percentage of 15%. Since the mean score suggests that the metacognitive strategy is also a high use strategy the smaller mean value under the low use category indicates that only a small number least prefer this strategy to learn writing skills. This was represented by the item 'I often review what I learnt to write in class', 'I write new English words several times' and 'I try to find as many opportunities as I can to write in English.'

CHART 5 Strategies used to learn Writing Skills



6. Grammar Strategies

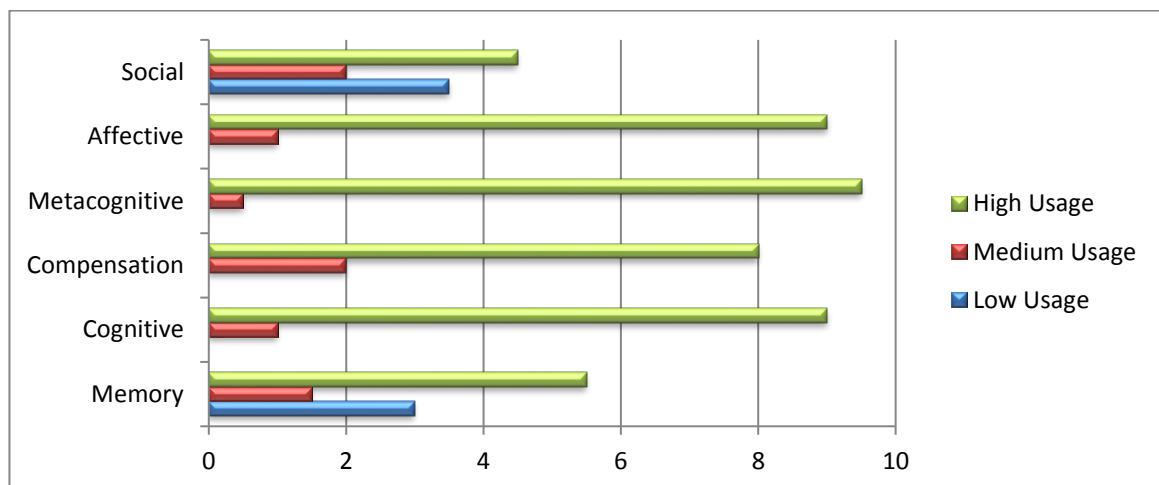
Tabulation of mean for each strategy selected by respondents based on the questionnaire

TABLE 6 Strategies used to learn Grammar

| STRATEGIES | LOW USAGE | MEDIUM USAGE | HIGH USAGE |
|---------------|-----------|--------------|------------|
| Memory | 30% | 15% | 55% |
| Cognitive | - | 10% | 90% |
| Compensation | - | 20% | 80% |
| Metacognitive | - | 5% | 95% |
| Affective | - | 10% | 90% |
| Social | 35% | 20% | 45% |

The highest percentage **95%** in the chart above under the high use category, reveals the strategy **most preferred** by the students to learn grammar is the **metacognitive strategy**. The item referred to is 'I notice the mistakes I make in grammar and use that information to help me do better'. The **least preferred** strategy for learning vocabulary is the **social strategy**, which is shown by the mean score 35%. The item selected for this is 'I ask English speakers to correct me when my grammar is incorrect.'

CHART 6 Strategies used to learn Grammar



Strategy Use Summary

TABLE 7 Strategy use summary

| SKILLS | HIGH USE | LOW USE |
|---------------|--|--|
| 1. LISTENING | METACOGNITIVE (95%) | SOCIAL (35%) |
| 2. SPEAKING | COMPENSATION (95%) | SOCIAL (35%) |
| 3. VOCABULARY | MEMORY (85%) | AFFECTIVE (40%) |
| 4. READING | COMPENSATION (85%) & AFFECTIVE (85%) | METACOGNITIVE (45%) |
| 5. WRITING | COMPENSATION(75%), METACOGNITIVE (75%) & AFFECTIVE (85%) | MEMORY (15%), COGNITIVE (15%) & METACOGNITIVE(15%) |
| 6. GRAMMAR | METACOGNITIVE (95%) | SOCIAL (35%) |

In this study, the learners displayed the preference to use all of the 6 learning strategies in learning the different skills of the English language. In summary, there seems to be an average of high preference for the compensation and metacognitive strategies to learn the different skills of the language, while the social strategy is the least preferred strategy. This interestingly reveals a combination of both the direct and indirect strategies used in unison. The high use of the compensation strategies, interestingly implies the preference of the learners to be more independent and autonomous learners, who probably learn best through communicative activities, as described in the theory of communicative competence. Griffiths & Parr (2001) Krashen's believe that language cannot be learnt but can only be acquired through natural communication is somewhat relevant in this finding. The students possibly learn better when they are given natural contexts within which learning takes place, without incurring a stressful environment rather, promoting fun and enjoyable ways and means to learn language. The metacognitive strategies that students prefer, implies their preference to learn from errors. That is, by organizing and evaluating their learning. This is developed by the inter language theory. Griffith & Parr (2001) Corner (1967) asserts that 'language errors made by students indicate the development of underlying linguistic competence, and reflect the learner's attempt to organize linguistic input.' Selinker (1972) in Griffith & Parr (2001) also agrees that learner errors are evidence of 'positive efforts by the students to learn a language'. The metacognitive strategy therefore could be an evidently contributing factor for these students' success in their language learning.

From the analysis of the above data, the findings reveal that learners use varied strategies to learn the different skills of the language. There also seems to be mutual preference for more than one strategy that is mostly used to learn a particular skill. This suggests that learners do not have an ultimate strategy that works in grasping a particular skill of a language. The strategies are used in complement of each other, to achieve the desired goals of the skills learnt. This finding thus supports Oxford's (1990) concept of a mutual support network among various kinds of L2 learning strategies. This finding also suggests that the students do not necessarily use the same strategies for the same purposes nor in the same way. The fact that the mean scores for one of the least preferred strategy for the writing skills (metacognitive), is also recorded as the highly used strategy to learn writing, reveals that not all the students use the same strategy to learn writing skills. Nevertheless the fact that the mean score for the high use of the metacognitive strategy in learning writing skills in comparison to the mean score of it being also the least used strategy reveals a big difference of 7.5 : 1.5. The higher mean score implies a higher frequency that prefers the strategy.

It can therefore be summed up that for the most part, the respondents being proficient learners, have demonstrated preference to learn the language via compensation strategies that imply less dependence on teacher input, and more experimental. It perhaps gives them better ability to grasp the different concepts and knowledge of the language better because of self discovery, and autonomy in learning. The fact that there is a high usage of the metacognitive strategy also poses the possibility for the nature of their characters as academically motivated, proficient students, as a contributing factor for autonomy in learning, as preference is given to plan and organize their needs and purpose for learning the language.

8.0 Implications

The study conducted has 2 implications for classroom practice: assessing students' language learning strategies, and teacher's roles in assisting their students' identification of LLS

Assessing student's language learning strategies

The study reveals that assessing students' language learning strategies leads to greater understanding of what students need and how to cater to their needs in language learning. When an assessment of their preference for learning strategies is done, not only the teacher, but students will also become more aware of their learning preferences. This in turn could trigger better involvement among students in the learning process. Knowing how and what works for them, may encourage more successful outcomes of the learning process. Allowing students to reflect on their own learning process to be aware of what criteria influence their learning is important. Ignacio (1996). Students need to learn how to apply strategies according to what actually works for them. This in turn, calls for teachers to be able to assess students' learning strategies and be able to teach learners to be more aware of their language strategy preferences. Some of the things teachers may do to implement this is by, raising their awareness of the use of different strategies, training them to use specific strategies, giving them opportunities to use new strategies and giving them new activities to which they can transfer these strategies. Research has proven that students benefit from learning about their language learning strategies because it has a profound impact on the success of their language learning.

Teacher's roles in assisting their students' identification of LLS

The role of the teacher today has transformed from being instructors / managers who dictate what goes on in the classroom to being facilitators of learning. Ignacio (1996) Teachers should be encouraged to discover 'the perspective beliefs of their own students and then translate this knowledge into teaching strategies with the purpose of enabling learners to approach second language learning autonomously and successfully'. Horwitz (1988) & Wenden (1991). Teachers can identify and assist students in first recognizing their preferred language learning strategies by

- i. observing students' responses in class
- ii. making them write language diaries
- iii. getting them to complete questionnaires
- iv. interviewing them.

By doing this, teachers will be helping the students to maintain their motivation, autonomy and confidence to keep on going and try to accomplish the goal of learning the target language. Zare (2012)

The new role of the teacher based on the findings of this study would be:

- i. maximizing students' involvement in the teaching and learning process within authentic contexts, where students can learn language naturally, using varied learning strategies
- ii. raising awareness with respect to their strategies and coaching them on using the best ways to learn the different skills of the language
- iii. providing students with resources or lessons that allow them to use their preferred strategies

It can therefore be concluded that teachers need to incorporate LLS into their teaching methods and approaches, train the students to apply the right strategies and encourage them to use the strategies as frequently as possible in the best way they can, to achieve success in language learning.

8.0 Conclusion

It can therefore be concluded that there is no one strategy that is identified as the most effective in learning a skill. Whether they are direct or indirect, the strategies are seen to be used mutually to learn language, as the strategies complement each other. Knowing how to use the strategies in unison, allows better language learning. However, this study reveals that there is no need for equal frequency of use of the strategies, as every learner uses the strategies differently to suit their learning style preference. Although the findings were discussed in terms of low and high use, there is only a small percentage of students who demonstrate less preference for some of the strategies. This in turn implies for the teacher not to avoid using the least preferred strategy, but to find ways to encourage the learner to learn using the least preferred strategy for better learning. The teacher therefore plays a vital role in assessing students' LLS, by assisting them to identify their LLS, as it is an important key in allowing the teacher to make pedagogical decisions that best fits the learners.

References

- Brown, D.H. (2007) *Principles of Language Learning & Teaching* (5th Eds.) Pearson:Longman
- Chamot A.U (2004) Issues in Language Learning Strategy Research and Teaching. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 1 (1):14-26
- Chien,K.L (2010) *An Overview of Language Learning Strategies* ARECLS 7, (132-152)
- Cohen, Oxford, R. & Chi, J. (2005) *Learner Strategy Use Inventory*. Available online at <http://www.carla.umn.edu/about/profiles/cohen.html>
- Ignacio,M. (1996) *The Imprtance of Language Learning Strategies in Foreign Language Teaching* Cuadernos de Filologia Inglesia (pp103-120)
- Little, D. (1991) Learning as a dialogue: The dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy. *Autonomy, Self direction and Self Access in Language Teaching and Learning: The History of Indea*, (29) 175-181.

- Melor, et al (2013) *Malaysian Gifted Students' Use of English Language Learning Strategies* English Language Teaching; Vol. 6, No. 4, (97 – 109)
- Mohamed Amin Embi (2000) *Language Learning Strategies: A Malaysia Context* Penerbit UKM: Bangi
- Moskowitz, G.(1973) *Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Class*. Rowley Mass: Newbury House
- Naiman, N. Frohlich, M., & Todesco, A. (1975). The good Second Language Learner. *TESL Talk*, 6,58-76
- O'Malley,J. & Chamot, A. (1985) *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge
- Oxford, R. (1989) *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)version 7.0 (ESL/EFL)*
- Oxford, R. (1990) *Language Learning Strategies: What every Teacher Should Know* Newburry House: New York
- Rubin, J. & Thompson, I. (1994) *How To be A More Succesful Language Learner* Heinle & Heinle: Boston
- Rubin, J. (1975) *what the Good Language Learner can Teach us*. *TESOL Quarterly* 9,(41-45)
- Rubin, J. (1987) *Learner Strategies: Theoretical Assumptions, research history and typology*. In Wenden & J. Rubin (eds), *Learner Strategies in Language Learning* (pg 15-30) Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall International
- Wenden, A & Rubin, J. (Eds.) (1987) *Learner Strategies in Language Learning* Prentice Hall: New Jersey

APPENDIX

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY SURVEY

Please circle the statements in terms of how each of them describes the way you learn the English Language. The numbers from 1 to 4 represent your response.

- 1 = NEVER TRUE of me
2 = USUALLY NOT TRUE of me
3 = SOMEWHAT TRUE of me
4 = USUALLY TRUE of me
5 = ALWAYS TRUE of me

LISTENING STRATEGIES

What I do to listen and understand the English Language

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A1. I connect the sound of an English word and an image or picture to help me remember the word | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A2. I use rhymes to remember new English words | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B3. I use the English words I hear in different ways | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B4. I listen to English radio stations in for pleasure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C5. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C6. To understand unfamiliar English words that I hear, I make guesses | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D7. I listen attentively when someone is speaking in English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D8. I look for people whom I can talk to in English to improve my ability to understand them better. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E9. I don't become afraid when I hear unfamiliar words or phrases | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E10. I am not afraid to seek clarification of words or phrases I don't understand | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| F11. If I don't understand something I hear in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| F12. I ask for help from English speakers when I don't understand what someone is saying. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

* Add anything else you do _____

SPEAKING STRATEGIES

What I do to speak in English

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| A1. I use new English words when I speak so I can remember them | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A2. I connect the sound of an English word and an image of the word to help me remember the word | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B3. I try to talk like native English speakers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B4. I practice saying the sounds of English words | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C5. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C6. If I can't think of a word in English, I use a word or a phrase that means the same thing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D7. I try to find out how to speak better in English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D8. I notice my mistakes when I speak and use that to help me speak better | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E9. I try to relax when I am afraid to speak in English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E10. I encourage myself to speak in English even when I am afraid of making mistakes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| F11. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |