Learning to Learn: Strategopedia

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Abstract: The majority of the people use English now is non-native speakers. The reason for that is English internationally plays a significant role in many areas such that international relations and diplomacy, science, engineering, the entertainment industry, education, banking, medicine and so on. Also, it acts as a bridge that binds the cultures, traditions and new ideas. In this respect, language teachers have always been in search of the new techniques, strategies, approaches, methodologies and so forth. One of the key themes anticipated by the researchers is Strategopedia which is defined as 'Learning to Learn'; in other words, teaching language learning strategies to the learners so as to make them independent learners. Since some of the students do not recognize these strategies, they may not facilitate their own learning process, or they apply to inappropriate strategies that do not match with their learning style. This study aims to find out the most or the least used language learning strategies by the English Language Teaching Department third-year students at a private university and reveal a needs analysis of language learning strategy teaching. Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Version 7.0 (ESL/EFL) which has been used in many academic studies was distributed to the students. Then, the data were evaluated in the SPSS software program. The results will pilot the teachers in terms of designing the courses, material selection or strategy teaching guidance.

Keywords: Learning to Learn, Language Learning Strategies, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), Strategopedia

1. Introduction

> "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day.
> Teach him how to fish and he eats for a lifetime."

Language teachers have always been in search to update their field knowledge, enhance their teaching way, and find new techniques to engage the students more in learning process due to the rapid changes in technology, personal interests, learner's demands, new trends in education and so forth. However, the matter of learner aspect has been neglected or given little attention over years and ignoring that the point was indicated in multiple studies (Dansereau, 1978; Tarone & Yule, 1989; Larsen-Freeman, 2001 as cited in Griffiths, 2003). Teaching the language learning strategies makes the students more independent to generate their learning environment, pursue language learning and overcome learning inefficiency.

2. Literature Review

Rubin (1975) defines strategy as the systems or devices which a student may use to get information. It was discovered that the learners who apply to strategy made more progress rather than the ones who do less (Kyungsim & Leavell, 2006 as cited in Griffiths & Oxford, 2014). "Learning strategies are the various operations that learners use in order to make sense of their learning" (Wenden, 1987, p. 7-8)**.**

There is still no agreed definition of language learning strategies. Oxford's definition is used most frequently by scholars (Ellis, 1994). "Oxford's categorization was one of the first proposed and is arguably the best known" (Rodgers, 2000, p. 9). "Oxford (1990) posits the six kinds of strategies. Such strategies include, at the most basic level, memory tricks, and at higher levels, cognitive and metacognitive strategies for learning, thinking, planning, and self- monitoring" (Oxford, 1990 as cited in Rodgers, 2000, p. 9). It was described that language strategies as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques" in order to enable the learners to foster their learning process (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992, p. 63 as cited in Oxford, 2003). Some of the students are blind to use the foreign language learning strategies knowingly in order to accelerate the learning process and make it more efficient (Nyikos & Oxford, 1993 as cited in Oxford, 2003). Experienced teachers make the learners recognize L2 strategies and instruct them on how to use these strategies (Oxford, 2003). In order to analyze the evolution of second language acquisition for many years, ESL/EFL language learning strategies have been a study subject in academic studies. The second/foreign language learners utilize the various language learning strategies which are considered as the instruments augmenting the learning effectiveness. It is stated that successful learners comparing to the low achievers have made great progress in language learning applying learning strategies. The students choose the most suitable strategies consciously to make the learning process more fruitful (Božinović & Sindik, 2017).

The studies on language learning strategies began in the second half of the 1970s. The researchers preliminarily concentrated on the foreign language learning propensities for prospering learners. The previous researchers emphasized the description and categorization of the learners' learning patterns. It was reported that proficient language learners are more capable to foster their learning capability (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975 as cited in Tam, 2013)

If the language learners select the most suitable learning strategies that correspond to their learning styles intentionally, those strategies turn into a helpful toolbox for dynamic, and purposeful self-control of learning. Learning strategies are categorized into two major classifications as direct and indirect strategies. There are three parts under direct strategies: cognitive, compensation, memory-related strategies while metacognitive, affective, and social strategies belong to indirect strategies (Oxford, 2003). Oxford's (2003) six classifications of L2 learning strategies are identified as in the following:

- *Cognitive strategies* facilitate to operate the language materials in explicit ways "e.g., through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, reorganizing information to develop stronger schemas (knowledge structures), practicing in naturalistic settings, and practicing structures and sounds formally" (p. 12).
- *Metacognitive strategies* are occupied for controlling the whole of learning process such as recognizing someone's learning style choices and demands, foreign language task designing, material choosing and arranging, organizing a study area and a timetable, assessing task

achievements, inspecting the mistakes and assessing the accomplishments of each kind of learning strategy.

- Memory-related strategies enable the learners to make the connection between the foreign language elements or concepts to another one yet it does not certainly include deep understanding. Numerous memory-related strategies help the students gain and restoring information systematically.
- *Compensatory strategies* enable the learners to contrive of lost knowledge like inference from the passages in reading and listening courses, focusing on missing word, employing synonyms in order to enhance speaking and writing, utilizing body languages and break words for speaking.
- *Affective strategies* relate to the feelings, describing someone's psychological state and nervousness level, awarding yourself for your achievements, and using deep breathing or positive self-talk.
- *Social strategies* aid the students to cooperate with others and perceive the foreign language culture while they are busy with the language itself. Some of the examples of these strategies are questioning of confirmation or clarification for complicated aspects, having a conversation with a native speaker, demanding assistance during the language tasks and discovering social and cultural patterns.

Learning strategies contribute to Strategopedia which is predicted as one of the future topics of language learning by many scholars. Language learners are accepted as the starter of the learning activities by the most clearly learner-centered approach. In order to prepare the students for this new approach, students have been equipped with suitable language learning strategies to be able to take on self-learning responsibility so learner training (LT) has emerged. The assertion of Strategopedia in language teaching methodology was outlined by Holec (1995) who advocates that "to teach the learner to learn, that is to enable him to carry out the various steps which make up the learning process, is considered the best way of ensuring that learning takes place" (Rodgers, 2000, p. 8). According to the several researches, language learning strategies can be instructed to the students and they may implement those strategies in the tasks. Learning Training (LT) is supposed to be a primary methodology subject considering the growing significance of learning training in textbooks or course design (Rodgers, 2000).

The most efficient strategy instruction seems to contain showing the usage, evaluation and transmits it to the other relevant tasks and circumstances so that the strategy may be convenient. It cannot be stated that the given strategy is good or bad; it is basically impartial until the setting of its exploiting is exhaustively regarded. Some of the conditions that make a strategically beneficial: 1. the strong connection of the strategy to the second language task, 2. the harmony of the strategy and the learner's learning styles' choices to one degree, and 3. The capability of the students to apply the strategy and link it to the related ones (Oxford, 2003). Strategies which meet the stated circumstances "make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990, p. 8, as cited in Oxford, 2003).

The purposes of the study are:

1. To find out the most or the least used language learning strategies by the English Language Teaching Department third-year students at a private university.

2. To reveal a needs analysis of language learning strategy teaching.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

25 English Language Teaching department third-year students at a private university in Iraq (KRG) were the participants of the study.

3.2 Materials

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) survey created by Oxford (1990) has been applied by numerous researchers. That tool which has various versions for the learners of different languages has been utilized widely to obtain and examine the information of non-native language learners (Chamot, 2004). Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Version 7.0 (ESL/EFL) which has been translated to other languages was utilized in numerous studies to gain data for its reliability and validity (Oxford, 2003). There are six subscales including direct and indirect strategies in the survey. In part A, there are nine items for memory-related strategy, fourteen items for cognitive strategy in part B, six items for compensatory strategy in part C, nine items for metacognitive strategy in part D, six items for affective strategy in part E and six items for social strategy in part F. 5 point Likert scale was used to assess the items from "Never or almost never true of me" (1) to "Always or almost true of me" (5).

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The researcher distributed SILL survey to the students in a classroom atmosphere and collected the papers when they finished all items. She transferred the data in SPSS statistics data editor and assessed the foreign language learning strategy use.

4. Results

Data of the participants (n=25) were analyzed statistically using the SPSS statistics data editor. The total mean of language strategy use of the students was 3.4289 and it was presented with standard deviation and Cronbach's Alpha in Table 1. The reliability factor of the survey was .942 in the study. Regarding the threshold for the factor should be higher than .70, it is possible to state that the items in the survey have high consistency.

Table 1: Overall mean and standard deviation of language learning strategy use of all participants with items reliability

N	Valid	25
	Missing	0
Mean		3.4289
Std. Deviation		1.22899
N of Items		50
Cronbach's Alpha		.942

Social strategies in part F among six subscales have the highest mean (*M*=3.7600) of language learning strategy use, whereas memory-related strategies in part A have the lowest mean (*M*=2.8685) which showed the students need to be boosted for using these strategies.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of subscales of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

	N Valid	Missing	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memory Strategies	25	0	2.8685	1.26883
Cognitive Strategies	25	0	3.3878	1.25471
Compensation Strategies	25	0	3.3866	1.13936
Metacognitive Strategies	25	0	3.6355	1.22621
Affective Strategies	25	0	3.5333	1.25653
Social Strategies	25	0	3.7600	1.22832

Table 3 presents the least and the most means of the items of each subscale. The results of connecting the sound of new vocabulary, a picture or photo of the word to enable them to recall the vocabulary, starting communication in FL / SL, using synonyms, focusing on the speech while one is talking, overcoming the fears of making mistakes while talking or asking for repetition when one does not understand are at the maximum level among other items in the subscales. Besides, referring to the visual aids such as flashcards for vocabulary practice, trying to find patterns in FL / SL, reading in FL / SL without looking up every new word, trying to create time for reading in FL / SL, keeping a diary in FL / SL, or practicing FL / SL with the other students is at the minimum level.

Table 3: Minimum and maximum statistics in SILL

Statements	Subscale	Mean	%
I connect the sound of a new SL / FL word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.	Memory	3.6800	73.6
I use flashcards to remember new SL/ FL words.	Memory	2.9200	58.4
I start conversations in the SL / FL.	Cognitive	3.8000	76.0
I try to find patterns in the SL / FL.	Cognitive	3.1200	62.4
If I can't think of an SL / FL word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	Compensatory	3.6000	72.0
I read SL / FL without looking up every new word.	Compensatory	3.1200	62.4
I pay attention when someone is speaking SL / FL.	Metacognitive	4.0000	80.0
I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in SL / FL.	Metacognitive	3.2000	64.0
I encourage myself to speak SL / FL even when I am afraid of making mistakes.	Affective	3.8400	76.8
I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.	Affective	3.2000	64.00
If I do not understand something in SL / FL, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	Social	4.0400	80.8
I practice SL / FL with other students.	Social	3.4800	69.6

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the research illustrate that the majority of the students employ social strategies at most whereas they utilize memory-related strategies at least. It appeared that most of the students do not recognize the strategies related to L2 tasks. It could be concluded from the results, teachers should make a plan to help their students develop memory-related, cognitive and compensation strategies in strategy

training parts of the lessons. In the meantime, they should train their students according to their specific goals or personal learning preferences.

In a nutshell, learners should be taught the learning strategies in order to learn autonomously and make the learning process more efficient. Thus, they will not just depend on the teacher-centered system or classroom, yet they will explore new learning ways, be more fruitful and get satisfied with their own efforts. Presumably, they will overcome to extinguish learning inefficiency and facilitate their language learning process.

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