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INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES ON SELF-EFFICACY AMONG MALAYSIAN MASS COMM UNDERGRADUATES

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Abstract

According to Gahungu (2007), learners' use of learning strategies can influence their language learning ability and affect their self-efficacy. There are 6 strategies namely memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. Self-efficacy is a skill that is not already embedded in the self of a learner. It is generated and developed. Past researches have shown the relationship between language learning strategies and learners' self-efficacy. This study aims to look into detail on students' preferences of strategies and how those strategies affect their level of proficiency in second language acquisition. The result of this study will show interesting findings on how language learning strategies influence self-efficacy.

Keywords

Language Learning Strategies, Self-Efficacy

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

There has been much attention drawn to the influence of language learning strategies on self-efficacy in the recent years (Wong, 2005). Over the past two decades, researchers have attempted to identify and categorize the construct of language learning strategies of an excellent learner (Stern, 2002 in Wong, 2005). Those researchers tried to draw the focus and tried to identify the construct by observing and identifying second learner aptitude in learning second language and how they acquired it throughout their learning process. They found that the learners' preferences in learning style are very much related to their choice of learning strategies (Chen, 2009).

Oxford identified the six main construct of learning strategies namely memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. These constructs are prominent and are used in the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) which studies the learners' preferences of learning strategies and its association with second language acquisition.

1.2 Research Question

- What are the preferred language learning strategies of the learners?
- What is the relationship between the strategies used and self-efficacy?

1.3 The influence of strategies to language learning

One of the most prominent people in the field of language learning strategies is Rebecca L. Oxford. In defining language learning strategies, she went back to the Greek etymology of the word 'strategy' as strategy or 'strategia' in Greek which meant generalship of the art of war and it involved management of troops and ships in a planned campaign. As in the learning process, it is defined as step taken by students to enhance their learning (Gahungu, 2007).

Oxford (1990) viewed these strategies as important for the language learning as learners who use them are more active, more involved and self-directed. These strategies help in the

development of communicative competence of the learners. These are the proof on how language learning strategies help learners in learning second language.

There are numerous definitions of language learning strategies. Rubin, (1994) defined language learning strategies as ‘strategies that contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affect learning directly. R. Oxford et al., (1990) described language learning strategies as steps taken to facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information. These views and definitions are in line with the view by O'Malley & Chamot, (1990) where they viewed learning strategies as ‘the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information’. However, Holec (1981) included one more view where he emphasized that learning strategies can foster learner autonomy in language learning. This is the base of an agreement where other researchers agree that strategies can also assist learners in promoting their own achievement in language proficiency (Gahungu, 2007; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; R. Oxford et al., 1990)

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language learning strategies

In classifying the constructs and elements of language learning strategies, researchers refer to the theory developed by Rebecca L. Oxford in 1990. Oxford was one of the first pioneers to set the elements of language learning strategies in detail, (Gahungu, 2007). Oxford came out with the concept of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning or SILL. In SILL there are six elements identified by Oxford as language learning strategies and they are memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. Details of the elements are as below:

2.2 Memory strategies

It is a skill of grouping, associating and using imagery that has high functions that it serves to help students store and retrieve new information. This is a direct approach where the learner takes full control of own learning strategies of memorizing the form and function, vocabularies and sentence structure.

2.3 Cognitive strategies

It is a skill of highlighting, analyzing and summarizing message which enable learners to understand and produce a new language from their own understanding and by many different

means. It is how students acquire and understand the knowledge and the use of reasoning and thought process in producing the language. It involves conscious ways of tackling learning.

2.4 Compensation strategies

It is a skill of guessing synonyms that allow learners to use the language despite their gaps in knowledge. This depends on the ability of the learner in understanding and articulating their thought of understanding and overcoming limitations in language learning.

2.5 Met cognitive strategies

Is a skill in control of planning, arranging, organizing, focusing, and evaluating own learning? It allows the learner to control their own cognitive through planning, monitoring and evaluating own learning.

2.6 Affective strategies

Is a deep breathing and having a checklist of own. It helps learner to be in control of their feelings, motivation and attitude related to language learning. It defines how a learner drives self in learning second language. It enables learners to control feelings, motivation, and attitudes related to language learning.

2.7 Social strategies

Is the act of mingling with others as in asking questions and cooperating with others. It facilitates learner to have a drive in learning to learn with others in discourse situation and facilitating interaction, often in a discourse situation.

2.8 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy was originally defined by (Bandura, 1977) as a specific type of expectancy concerned with a person's belief in his or her ability to perform a certain action or set of behaviours required in producing an outcome. Bandura (1997) later expanded the definition to include more characteristics. He includes more input by viewing self-efficacy as people's beliefs about their abilities to be in control of anything that are prone to affect their lives, and their beliefs in their capabilities to put together the motivation, cognitive resources, and other action needed to control task demands (Gahungu, 2007). From this definition, it can be understood that self-efficacy is not about the skills individual poses in accomplishing a task, but with judgments and self-perception of what individuals can do with whatever skills they have (Gahungu, 2007). Bandura (1997) discusses that efficacy is not a fixed ability but a generative

capability. Meaning, it is a skill that is not already embedded in the self of a learner rather, it is a skill that needs to be generated and developed.

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and Sampling

The population was students from the Faculty of Mass Communication of University Technology MARA (UiTM). The sample was 109 Mass Communication students. They were approached depending on their availability to answer the questionnaire. Convenient sampling was used to randomly choose 100 to 150 respondents

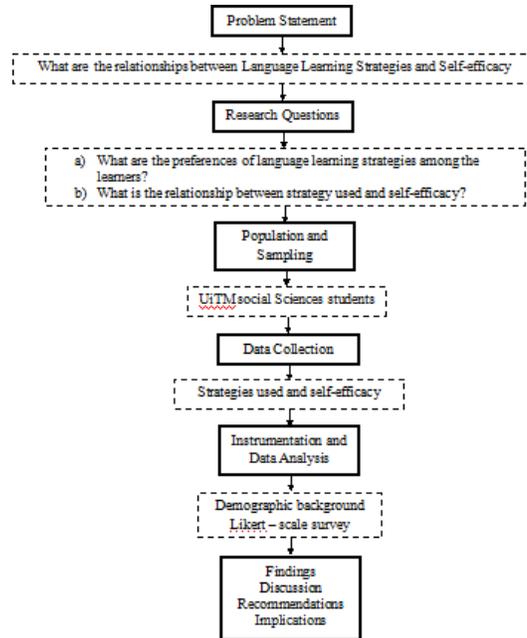


Figure 1: Research Approach Paradigm

3.2 RQ1: What are the preferred language learning strategies among the learners?

Table 1: Mean Values for Six Learning Strategies

Memory	Cognitive	Communication	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
3.2416	3.5092	3.3914	3.7217	3.2141	3.6300

On the whole, the most preferred learning strategy is metacognitive. This is shown by the highest mean value of 3.7217 as compared to the others. Affective strategy appeared to be the least preferred learning strategy by the respondent, with the mean value of 3.2141.

3.3 RQ2: What is the relationship between the strategies used and self-efficacy?

Table 2: Correlation Values between Strategies Used and Self-Efficacy

	Memory	Cognitive	Communication	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Self-Efficacy	0.400*	0.611*	0.325*	0.540*	0.122	0.469*

* - correlation is significant at 5% level

On the whole, memory, cognitive communication, metacognitive and social is the strategies that have shown a significant correlation with self-efficacy. Cognitive strategy was reported to have the highest correlation value of .611, followed by metacognitive strategy with the value of .540, social strategy with .469 and memory strategy with the value of .400. The lowest value of significant correlation is .325 for communication strategy.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Summary of findings

In answering the first research question, it was found that metacognitive is the most preferred language learning strategy of all. Metacognitive is a strategy in which learners are in control of their own learning. Learners plan, arrange, focus, and evaluate their own learning process. This finding shows that respondents from the Faculty of Mass Communication is aware and in control and able to manage their own learning process well. They are viewed as having good plan and goal in managing their learning and acquiring the language. It also shows that they organize their efforts in order to achieve the goal while observing own progress. It is indirectly affecting the way they learn. Another strategy that is significant and reported to have the second highest responses from the respondents is the social strategy. This is understandable as Mass Communication programme requires learners to mingle and mix with others. Through this expectation, respondents learn and are more exposed to the language in the context of their learning and specific purposes. This finding is similar with Wong (2005) in which she found pre-service teacher appeared to be relying and seek help from colleague and friends. This shows how a community works and affects one's way of learning.

As for the second research question, it was found that there is a positive and significant relationship between language learning strategies and self-efficacy. When the strategies are being analyzed individually, it was revealed that only the affective strategy showed negative relationship with self-efficacy. This may be related to what (Hamid, 1992) has echoed in his study where Malaysians as a whole is a shy community and this reflects on how one applies and employs strategies in learning. This finding is on par with what was found by Wong (2005) in her study where she also found that there are moderate correlations between language learning strategies and self-efficacy.

4.2 Implication of the study

From the findings, it can be concluded that the application of learning strategies in the learning process is not as solemn as it should be. The respondents' responses showed that they do not have enough knowledge on learning strategies and the application portrayed in the responses merely represent how they normally learn, without enough knowledge to actually make full use of those strategies. Thus, there is a need for the strategies to be introduced and taught in the classroom for the benefit of all English language learners. It is believed that if learners have a better understanding of these strategies, they would be able to apply it in the process of language learning and ultimately be more competence in English language.

4.3 Future research

This study documented the language learning strategies and investigated language self-efficacy and the relationship between these two variables. A replication of this study involving respondents from other educational institutions in Malaysia would provide further information and knowledge for the generalizability of the findings. Further investigation should be carried out to identify the reasons for the application and lack of responses in some of the strategies as those strategies would definitely do good in improving their command of English.

Next, the contributing factors that might affect learners' preferences that were included in this study were restricted to language proficiency, exposure to English language and usage of English language in context. Hence, there is a need for future study to cover on the same variable and to look at other contributing factors. The findings would contribute more in understanding of what some of the factors are and how those factors affect learners' preferences and application of learning strategies, thus explore on the relation of it with self-efficacy.

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