Advances in Language and Literary Studies
ISSN: 2203-4714
Vol. 5 No. 5; October 2014

Language Learning Strategy Use among Iranian Engineering EFL Learners

Naemeh Nahavandi
University Putra Malaysia
E-mail: naemeh.nahavandi@gmail.com

Jayakaran Mukundan (Corresponding author)
University Putra Malaysia
E-mail: jayakaranmukundan@yahoo.com

Doi:10.7575/aiac.alls.v.5n.5p.34
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.alls.v.5n.5p.34

Received: 13/06/2014
Accepted: 13/08/2014

Abstract

The present study aimed at understanding the language learning strategy use of Iranian EFL learners' about learning a foreign language. The main purpose of the study was to understand if there was any relationship between proficiency level, gender and extra education in language institutes and strategy use. To achieve this end, 369 engineering students were selected based on random sampling in Azad University of Tabriz, Iran. Data were collected using two questionnaires: a demographical questionnaire and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). ANOVA, LSD & t-test were used for analyzing the data. The results of the study indicated highest mean average of metacognitive (M=3.57), followed by social (M=3.27), cognitive (M=3.12), compensation (M=3.07), memory (M=2.89) and affective (M=2.84) strategies. Furthermore, the results indicated a significant difference among learners' strategy use, proficiency level and extra education in language institutes. Nevertheless, no significant difference was found between learners' strategy use and gender. The study ended with some pedagogical implications.

Keywords: Iranian EFL engineering learners, SILL

1. Introduction

Individualism, where individual values and differences were recognized and respected, burgeoned during second half of the twentieth century. The shift of attention from considering human beings as physical identities to considering them as totality of physical, cognitive and affective variables has changed the way education is considered. The studies related to individual differences in learning are well documented (Brown, 2007; Dornyei, 2007, 2009; Hong-Nam and Leavell, 2007; Ellis, 2012; Skehan, 1989). It has been more than three decades that researchers have tried to establish a direct relationship among different individual factors and measures of L2 learning. Language learning strategies, being an essential key factor in language learning have attracted lots of attention these days due to the cognitive revolution from behaviorism to cognitive science in psychology. (Nahavandi &Mukundan, 2014). The attention on the characteristics of a good language learner (Rubin & Thompson, 1994; Stern, 1975) and a shift of interest from the teacher to the learner (Ellis, 2012; Nahavandi, 2011; Nahavandi & Mukundan, 2012) as well as shift of focus from product oriented learning to process oriented one (Nahavandi, 2013; Nahavandi & Mukundan, 2013a, Nahavandi & Mukundan, 2013b; Nahavandi & Mukundan, 2013c), has directed the attention to learning strategies that individual learners apply during the learning process (Wenden, 1991). To put it in another way, the main concern of the second or foreign language researchers has been on how the learners process new information and the kinds of strategies they employ in learning, understanding, or remembering these information. For Palmer & Goetz, (1988) learners' knowledge of their learning influences the way and the result of their own learning. Furthermore, as Nisbet & Shucksmith, (1986) claim learners' understanding of learning strategies affects their choice of strategies. Although there have been numerous studies in strategies of learning, to date, to the researcher's best knowledge, no comparative study was found on a sample of non-English major students majoring in fields other than English. Besides, no related study was found researching whether university students in Iran with and without extra education in language institutes differ with each other in terms of their strategy use or not. Thus, the present research attempts to fill this gap by investigating Iranian students majoring in fields other than English, hoping that such a study might provide useful information in Iranian context.

2. Background of Study

As it was mentioned before, during past thirty years, there has been a plenty of research on the role that learning strategies play in second or foreign language learning. For Oxford (1990) "learning strategies are important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement" (p.1). Many researchers believe that learning strategies can enhance learners' autonomy in learning a language (Holec, 1981) which in turn can assist them to promote their own achievement in language proficiency (Bremner, 1998; Griffiths, 2003; Chang, 2010; Lee, 2008;

O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, & Küpper, 1985). Thus, it is claimed that learning strategies can help learners to more become efficient in learning and using a language.

Strategies have been defined as conscious techniques for achieving goals and are shown to mediate cognitive changes. For Oxord (1990) language-learning strategies 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"(p.8). For Chamot & Kupper (1989) learning strategies are "techniques which students use to comprehend, store, and remember new information and skills" (p.13). Lots of effort has been made to classify the strategies that learners use (Rubin, 1981; Cohen, 1998). O`Malley and Chamot (1990), classify the use of strategies based on a three-way distinction between cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective learning strategies. Studies in learner strategies fall into two basic categories of descriptive studies and intervention studies. Descriptive studies define features of a good language learner (Reiss, 1985; Vann & Abraham, 1990) and the total number of strategies that learners or group of learners utilize. Intervention studies, on the other hand, deal with the process of learner training by teachers or researchers to decide whether it is feasible to bring about any change in the learners' strategy use or not (Ghabanchi & Meidani, 2012).

Although there are many researchers researching strategies for language learning, Oxford's approach (1990) is useful as she uses a simple taxonomy dividing strategies into two major groups of direct and indirect strategies (Fotos, 2001). In her classification, each category is divided into subcategories showing the especial strategies fitting under the labels. Direct strategies relating directly to learning or producing the target language are subdivided into memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. All of these strategies include conscious manipulation of the target language structure. For example, memory strategies include retrieving and storing new information, while cognitive strategies include practicing new language items, analyzing new material, and organizing structure for new material. Besides, compensation strategies include overcoming missing knowledge of a target language. Indirect strategies are the ones which enable the students to control learning, helping direct strategies to occur and/or increase their successful application. Indirect strategies include: metacognitive strategies for managing the cognitive process, affective strategies for controlling emotions in language learning and developing motivation, and social strategies for interacting with others and collaborative creation of meaning (Fotos, 2001) . For Ellis (1994) O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) and Oxford's (1990) systems have been evolved from strong theoretical roots describing metacognitive and cognitive strategies in a more explicit and clear way compared to earlier work.

Some researchers (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Khamkhien, 2010; Deneme, 2008; Fuping, 2006; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995) have studied some learner specific variables such as different learning contexts, language proficiency, age, gender ,cultural and educational backgrounds, motivation, anxiety, attitude, aptitude, autonomy, beliefs about language learning, self-rated language proficiency, which can influence learners' language learning strategy use.

2.1 SILL research in EFL Contexts

Lots of studies have been conducted on strategies of learning in EFL context (Bilaystok, 2001; Hashemi, 2011; Nikoopour, AminiFarsani & Neishabouri, 2011; Oh, 1992; Rubin, 1981; Sheorey, 1999; Wong, 2005; Zare, 2010). In the Iranian EFL context, Zare (2010) examined the pattern and frequency of strategy use among Iranian undergraduate students. The results showed that they are medium strategy users. Hashemi (2011) investigated the effect of gender in the strategy use of Iranian EFL students. His study results showed that female students are more frequent users of affective and compensatory strategies compared to their male counterparts. The study done by Nikoopour, et.al (2011) showed that Iranian MA TEFL students o use metacognitive strategy more than other strategies. In the most recent study, Salahshour, Sharifi, & Salahshour (2013) studied the relationship between language learning strategy use, language proficiency level and learner gender with 65 high school students. The results of their study indicated that Iranian high school learners were medium users of strategy with gender and proficiency level playing a significant effect on their use of strategies.

Although as mentioned above, some studies have been conducted on Iranian EFL students, to researcher's best knowledge, no study has been done on a sample of non-English major students majoring in fields other than English. Besides, no study was found comparing university students in Iran with and without extra education in language institutes. Thus, the present research attempts to fill this gap by investigating Iranian students majoring in fields other than English and extra education in language institutes.

3. The Study

Generally speaking, the present study aimed at understanding the strategy use of Iranian engineering EFL learners. Based on the objectives of the study the following research questions are raised:

1) What are the language-learning strategies of Iranian engineering EFL learners? Are there any similarities or differences in the use of learning strategies among them?

2) Does gender affect the use of language learning strategies significantly?

3) Does self-rated proficiency level affect the use of language learning strategies significantly?

4) Does extra education in language institutes affect the use of language learning strategies significantly?

3.1 Participants

403 Iranian engineering EFL learners studying general English course in Azad University of Tabriz, Iran during the academic year of 2013 were selected based on random sampling. The selected respondents were given a demographical questionnaire together with (SILL), Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. Only 369 complete questionnaires out of 403 were fed into SPSS for analysis. The respondents' age ranged from 18-41with the average mean of 19.04. Considering extra education in language institutes 196 (53.1) were students with extra education while 173 (46.9) were students without extra education. Considering their gender, 213 were male (57.7) and 156 were female (42.3) students. Considering their self-rated proficiency level, 106 (28.7) were beginners, 209 (56.6) were intermediate and the rest 54 (14.6) were advanced students.

3.2 Instruments: Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Oxford (1990) developed SILL in order to measure the frequency of use of the language-learning strategies of adult learners learning a foreign language. It has been the most widely used instrument tested and translated in many countries for identifying strategies that EFL/ESL learners use in learning a second or foreign language (Brown, 2001). Oxford developed two different versions of SILL, one for native English speakers learning a foreign language containing 80 items (Version 5.0) and another for ESL or EFL learners containing 50 items (Version 7.0). In her classification, she groups learners' different strategies into memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Being a self-report questionnaire, the 50 items in SILL are grouped into six categories of memory (9 items), cognitive (14 items), compensation (6 items), metacognitive (9 items), affective, motivation (6 items), and social (6 items) strategies. The SILL uses a five-point Likert-scale system for each strategy ranging from 1 to 5 (1= never true of me to 5 = always true of me. The language use is divided into three levels of high, medium and low usage. The mean of high usage varies between 4.5 to 5 or usually used with a mean of 3.5 to 4.4. The mean of medium usage varies between 2.5 to 3.4. And the mean of low usage varies from 1.5 to 2.4 or never used with a mean of 1.0-1.40. Studies on the SILL have reported high reliability (above .90).

3.3 Procedure

Since the respondents were EFL students studying general English course at the university, the given SILL questionnaire was translated into Persian language. Then, the translated questionnaire was checked by a Persian language lecturer in Tabriz Azad University to ascertain that the items retained their meaning. Next, it was back translated into English by a second Persian lecturer to test for inaccuracies and ambiguities. In order to calculate reliability of the items, a pilot study was carried out with 30 pre-intermediate students at Jahad-e -Daneshgahi institute. After checking the reliability, and getting permission from the dean of engineering faculty, the translated questionnaire was administered and the respondents were given 25 minutes to fill up the questionnaire. The researcher herself was present in data collection procedure, therefore assistance and guidance was provided in case of any ambiguity or problem in understanding the questionnaire items. Respondents were ascertained about the confidentiality of their information.

4. Results of the Study

Minimum, Maximum, Mean, Std. Deviation, Variance, Skewness, and Kurtosis were calculated for all the variables. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was used to test the normality of data for SILL. As the significant level was bigger than 0.05, parametric statistics was used.

Table 1. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	N	Normal Parameters[a,b]		Most Extreme Differences			Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Absolute	Positive	Negative		
Memory	369	2.8853	.59140	.051	.051	-.048	.987	.285
Cognitive	369	3.1177	.63886	.052	.034	-.052	1.005	.265
Compensation	369	3.0723	.69345	.069	.058	-.069	1.326	.059
Metacognitive	369	3.5709	.78482	.093	.049	-.093	1.792	.053
Affective	369	2.8356	.67146	.076	.076	-.049	1.457	.062
Social	369	3.2715	.88670	.068	.059	-.068	1.308	.065
SILI	369	3.1358	.55479	.053	.040	-.053	1.023	.246

4.1 Overall Strategy Use

The responses of participants in each group (High, Medium, and Low Usage) have been brought up in Table 6. As can be seen from the tables, Iranian engineering EFL learners are medium users of strategies. Taking into the consideration the six factors of SILL, they are also medium users of memory (58%), cognitive (55.3%), compensation (50.9%), affective (52%) strategies but high users in metacognitive (59.3%) and social (43.4%) strategies.

Table 2. SILL

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low Usage	47	12.7	12.7	12.7
	Medium Usage	215	58.3	58.3	71.0
	High Usage	107	29.0	29.0	100.0
	Total	369	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Memory

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low Usage	91	24.7	24.7	24.7
	Medium Usage	214	58.0	58.0	82.7
	High Usage	64	17.3	17.3	100.0
	Total	369	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. Cognitive

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low Usage	59	16.0	16.0	16.0
	Medium Usage	204	55.3	55.3	71.3
	High Usage	106	28.7	28.7	100.0
	Total	369	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Compensation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low Usage	62	16.8	16.8	16.8
	Medium Usage	188	50.9	50.9	67.8
	High Usage	119	32.2	32.2	100.0
	Total	369	100.0	100.0	

Table 6. Metacognitive

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low Usage	41	11.1	11.1	11.1
	Medium Usage	109	29.5	29.5	40.7
	High Usage	219	59.3	59.3	100.0
	Total	369	100.0	100.0	

Table 7. Affective

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low Usage	100	27.1	27.1	27.1
	Medium Usage	192	52.0	52.0	79.1
	High Usage	77	20.9	20.9	100.0
	Total	369	100.0	100.0	

Table 8. Social

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low Usage	68	18.4	18.4	18.4
	Medium Usage	141	38.2	38.2	56.6
	High Usage	160	43.4	43.4	100.0
	Total	369	100.0	100.0	

4.2 Descriptive Statistics for all six Factors of SILL

The results of the study showed that the highest mean average among the six components of SILL about language learning was metacognitive (M=3.57), followed by social (M=3.27), cognitive (M=3.12), compensation (M=3.07), memory (M=2.89) and affective (M=2.84) strategies. See table 1 for more information.

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Memory	369	1.56	4.22	2.89	.59	0.02	0.13	-0.44	0.25
Cognitive	369	1.57	4.64	3.12	0.64	-0.12	0.13	-0.35	0.25
Compensation	369	1.50	4.67	3.07	0.69	-0.10	0.13	-0.47	0.25
Metacognitive	369	1.67	5.00	3.57	0.78	-0.52	0.13	-0.34	0.25
Affective	369	1.33	4.83	2.84	0.67	0.19	0.13	-0.13	0.25
Social	369	1.00	5.00	3.27	0.89	-0.13	0.13	-0.55	0.25
SILI	369	1.72	4.66	3.14	0.55	-0.38	0.13	-0.12	0.25
Valid N (listwise)	369								

4.2 Comparing Components of SILL through t-test

Independent t-test was used with the test value of 3 in order to understand the use of strategies in language learning. The results of t-test indicated that strategies of cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, and social are significantly higher than average. Means are higher than 3, and significant level is <0.05. However, the use of memory & affective strategies are significantly lower than average, and significant level is <0.05.

Table 10. One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Memory	369	2.89	0.59	0.03
Cognitive	369	3.12	0.64	0.03
Compensation	369	3.07	0.69	0.04
Metacognitive	369	3.57	0.78	0.04
Affective	369	2.84	0.67	0.03
Social	369	3.27	0.89	0.05
SILI	369	3.14	0.55	0.03

Table 11. One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Memory	-3.726	368	.000	-.115	-.1753	-.0542
Cognitive	3.539	368	.000	.118	.0523	.1831

Compensation	2.002	368	.046	.072	.0013	.1433
Metacognitive	13.974	368	.000	.571	.4906	.6513
Affective	-4.703	368	.000	-.164	-.2331	-.0957
Social	5.881	368	.000	.271	.1807	.3622
SILI	4.701	368	.000	.136	.0790	.1926

4.3 Ranking SILL based on all six components

Friedman Test was used in order to rank amount of strategy use. The overall mean as well as mean of all ranks of variables were calculated, the variable with the lowest use receiving lowest rank. Based on the results, Chi-square = 387/95, df = 5, and level of significance was 0.000. As level of sig was < 0.05, it could be concluded that there was a significant difference between mean of variable ranks. Means of SILL from lowest to highest are: affective, memory, compensation, cognitive, social and metacognitive.

Table 12. Friedman Test

	N	Mean	Mean Rank	Chi-square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Memory	369	2.89	2.80	387.954	5	.000
Cognitive	369	3.12	3.49			
compensation	369	3.07	3.35			
Metacognitive	369	3.57	4.97			
Affective	369	2.84	2.58			
Social	369	3.27	3.81			

4.4 Comparing SILL based on gender & self-rated proficiency level

MANOVA was used in order compare SILL with gender and self-rated proficiency level. Wilks' Lambda approach was used to analyze gender in two levels and proficiency in three levels of elementary, intermediate and advance levels. The results of the study indicated that the effect of gender was not significant (sig > 0.05) meaning, there was not any significant difference between male and female students in their SILL. However, the effect of proficiency level was significant (sig < 0.05). The interaction between gender and proficiency level was significant. The results showed that affective & social strategies among females were significantly higher than males (sig < 0.05). But there wasn't any significant difference between males & females in the use of other strategies. There was a significant difference between use of strategies, (except memory strategy) and different proficiency level, (sig. <0.05). The interaction between gender and proficiency level was only significant in memory strategy.

Table 13. Descriptive Statistics

		Gender								
		Male			female			Total		
	proficiency level	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Memory	Beginning	2.5912	.57679	78	3.0278	.59997	28	2.7065	.61151	106
	Intermediate	2.9078	.59697	106	3.0043	.57037	103	2.9553	.58462	209
	Advanced	3.0728	.53557	29	2.8400	.44914	25	2.9650	.50657	54
	Total	2.8143	.60585	213	2.9822	.55856	156	2.8853	.59140	369
Cognitive	Beginning	2.7244	.54614	78	2.8367	.76038	28	2.7540	.60818	106
	Intermediate	3.1152	.63065	106	3.3370	.54906	103	3.2245	.60080	209
	Advanced	3.3793	.63346	29	3.4629	.39130	25	3.4180	.53207	54
	Total	3.0080	.64228	213	3.2674	.60473	156	3.1177	.63886	369
Compensation	Beginning	2.7714	.71880	78	2.9762	.78004	28	2.8255	.73728	106
	Intermediate	3.0157	.69978	106	3.2686	.65022	103	3.1404	.68600	209
	Advanced	3.3218	.53067	29	3.2600	.40848	25	3.2932	.47466	54

	Total	2.9679	.70702	213	3.2147	.65006	156	3.0723	.69345	369
Metacognitive	Beginning	3.1595	.85909	78	3.3254	.77272	28	3.2034	.83676	106
	Intermediate	3.6583	.73346	106	3.7249	.71398	103	3.6911	.72296	209
	Advanced	3.8238	.62114	29	3.8311	.72869	25	3.8272	.66655	54
	Total	3.4982	.80930	213	3.6702	.74117	156	3.5709	.78482	369
Affective	Beginning	2.5598	.62186	78	2.8036	.83031	28	2.6242	.68740	106
	Intermediate	2.8176	.64715	106	3.0000	.63828	103	2.9075	.64773	209
	Advanced	2.8793	.57889	29	3.0800	.71544	25	2.9722	.64732	54
	Total	2.7316	.64006	213	2.9776	.68916	156	2.8356	.67146	369
Social	Beginning	2.7543	.88140	78	3.1250	.89767	28	2.8522	.89659	106
	Intermediate	3.3286	.86632	106	3.4854	.80342	103	3.4059	.83760	209
	Advanced	3.5000	.75198	29	3.6600	.80289	25	3.5741	.77275	54
	Total	3.1416	.90488	213	3.4487	.83185	156	3.2715	.88670	369

Table 14. Multivariate Tests

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	Wilks' Lambda	.972	1.716	6.000	358.000	.116	.028
p.level	Wilks' Lambda	.870	4.289	12.000	716.000	.000	.067
Gender * p.level	Wilks' Lambda	.941	1.851	12.000	716.000	.037	.030

Table 15. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	Memory	.635	1	.635	1.939	.165	.005
	Cognitive	1.227	1	1.227	3.536	.061	.010
	Compensation	1.102	1	1.102	2.460	.118	.007
	Metacognitive	.405	1	.405	.717	.398	.002
	affective	2.764	1	2.764	6.448	.012	.017
	Social	3.325	1	3.325	4.687	.031	.013
p.level	Memory	1.349	2	.674	2.061	.129	.011
	Cognitive	16.407	2	8.203	23.634	.000	.115
	Compensation	6.546	2	3.273	7.305	.001	.039
	Metacognitive	15.056	2	7.528	13.331	.000	.068
	Affective	3.876	2	1.938	4.521	.011	.024
	Social	17.135	2	8.567	12.076	.000	.062
Gender * p.level	Memory	3.761	2	1.881	5.746	.003	.031
	Cognitive	.307	2	.154	.443	.643	.002
	Compensation	1.062	2	.531	1.185	.307	.006
	Metacognitive	.232	2	.116	.205	.814	.001
	Affective	.056	2	.028	.065	.937	.000
	Social	.713	2	.357	.503	.605	.003

Table 16. Multiple Comparisons LSD

Dependent Variable	(I) proficiency level	(J) proficiency level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Cognitive	Beginning	Intermediate	-.4705*	.07025	.000
		Advanced	-.6639*	.09850	.000
	Intermediate	Beginning	.4705*	.07025	.000
		Advanced	-.1935*	.08994	.032
	Advanced	Beginning	.6639*	.09850	.000

		Intermediate	.1935*	.08994	.032
Compensation	Beginning	Intermediate	-.3149*	.07982	.000
		Advanced	-.4677*	.11191	.000
	Intermediate	Beginning	.3149*	.07982	.000
		Advanced	-.1529	.10218	.136
	Advanced	Beginning	.4677*	.11191	.000
		Intermediate	.1529	.10218	.136
Metacognitive	Beginning	Intermediate	-.4878*	.08960	.000
		Advanced	-.6238*	.12564	.000
	Intermediate	Beginning	.4878*	.08960	.000
		Advanced	-.1360	.11471	.236
	Advanced	Beginning	.6238*	.12564	.000
		Intermediate	.1360	.11471	.236
Affective	Beginning	Intermediate	-.2833*	.07807	.000
		Advanced	-.3480*	.10946	.002
	Intermediate	Beginning	.2833*	.07807	.000
		Advanced	-.0647	.09994	.518
	Advanced	Beginning	.3480*	.10946	.002
		Intermediate	.0647	.09994	.518
Social	Beginning	Intermediate	-.5537*	.10043	.000
		Advanced	-.7219*	.14082	.000
	Intermediate	Beginning	.5537*	.10043	.000
		Advanced	-.1682	.12858	.192
	Advanced	Beginning	.7219*	.14082	.000
		Intermediate	.1682	.12858	.192

4.5 Comparing SILL based on extra education in language institutes

In order to compare SILL between those with/without extra education in language MANOVA was employed using Wilks' Lambda approach. The results of the study indicated that the effect of group was significant (sig < 0.05). On the whole, SILL among extra education students were more than the other group. The results of univariate showed that, the use of all strategies among extra education group was significantly higher than no education group (sig < 0.05).

Table 17. Descriptive Statistics

	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Memory	No education	2.7489	.64362	173
	Further education	3.0057	.51342	196
	Total	2.8853	.59140	369
Cognitive	No education	2.8885	.66892	173
	Further education	3.3200	.53650	196
	Total	3.1177	.63886	369
Compensation	No education	2.9143	.74873	173
	Further education	3.2117	.60936	196
	Total	3.0723	.69345	369
Metacognitive	No education	3.3327	.82789	173
	Further education	3.7812	.68048	196
	Total	3.5709	.78482	369
Affective	No education	2.5896	.59049	173
	Further education	3.0527	.66500	196
	Total	2.8356	.67146	369
Social	No education	2.9422	.84595	173
	Further education	3.5621	.81944	196
	Total	3.2715	.88670	369

Table 18. Multivariate Tests

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Group	Wilks' Lambda	.828	12.543	6.000	362.000	.000	.172

Table 19. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Group	Memory	6.060	1	6.060	18.132	.000	.047
	Cognitive	17.105	1	17.105	47.169	.000	.114
	Compensation	8.132	1	8.132	17.677	.000	.046
	Metacognitive	18.483	1	18.483	32.584	.000	.082
	Affective	19.709	1	19.709	49.474	.000	.119
	Social	35.309	1	35.309	51.012	.000	.122

5. Discussion

Iranian EFL students utilized different language learning strategies. On the whole, Iranian EFL learners are medium users of strategies. Taking into consideration the six factors of SILL, they are also medium users of memory (58%), cognitive (55.3%), compensation (50.9%), and affective (52%) strategies but they are high users in metacognitive (59.3%) and social (43.4%) strategies.

Here, strategy use among Iranian EFL learners has been brought up in descending order from most to the least used ones and the possible rationale for the results is given. For Iranian EFL students, the six underlying factors determined to be of the greatest importance during the language learning process were metacognitive (M=3.57), followed by social (M=3.27), cognitive (M=3.12), compensation (M=3.07), memory (M=2.89) and affective (M=2.84) strategies. Among the six categories of strategies, the metacognitive strategies were used more than other ones. Furthermore, the results showed that the effect of gender was not significant (sig > 0.05). However, the effect of proficiency level and group (with/without extra education in language institutes was significant (sig < 0.05). On the whole, strategy use among extra education students was higher than the other group (sig < 0.05).

Considering the use of metacognitive as the most dominant strategy, the results of the present study is in line with Hong-Name and Leavell (2007), Nikoopour (2011), Oh (1992), Salahshour, et.al (2013), Sheorey (1999), and Vossoughi and Ebrahimi (2003). Furthermore as social strategy was ranked the second frequently used strategy, the results contradicts with the findings of Polizter & Chamot (1990), whose findings showed that Asian second language learners utilize more language rules and rote learning and less communicative strategies.

Considering gender differences in language-learning strategy use, most of the studies have reported higher use of strategies by females than males. The results of the present study contradict with the studies by (Bacon, 1992; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Green and Oxford, 1995; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Politzer, 1983; Salahshour, et.al (2013);Vandergriff, 1997) in which females showed more frequent use of learning strategies than males. Besides, the results of the present study contradict with Tran (1988) and Wharton's (2000) whose research reported higher use of strategies by males than females. However, the results of the present study is in line with Al-Otaibi, (2004) who reported that gender did not affect the use of language-learning strategies significantly. For some researchers, gender difference in strategy use can be the result of genetic predispositions to certain kinds of behaviors such as reflective thinking related to metacognition or socialization, related causes such as social roles, culturally-specific behaviors, learning styles, language learning experience, socialization, life experience and verbal aptitude, all of which may in turn influence language learning in the classroom.

Considering proficiency level, some studies have investigated the relationship between self-rated proficiency level and strategy use, reporting different findings. Oxford & Nyikos (1989) state that the higher the proficiency level, the greater the strategy use is. For Wharton (2000), the relationship between proficiency level and strategy use is "two-way" with proficiency affecting strategy use and vice versa. The result of the present study is in line with Oxford & Nyikos (1989), Salahshour, et.al (2013), and Wharton (2000), meaning the more proficient the learners are, the higher they use the strategies. Considering extra education in language institutes, to date, no related study was found.

6. Conclusion & Implications of the Study

The present study was an attempt to understand the strategy use of Iranian EFL learners' along gender, different proficiency levels and extra education in language institutes. The results of the study indicated that Iranian EFL learners were medium users of strategies. For Oxford (1990) "language learning strategies encourage greater overall self direction" and "……self-directed students gradually gain greater confidence, involvement, and proficiency" (p.10). Therefore, in order to assist the Iranian EFL learners to be high users of strategies and to be more self-directed teachers can add language learning strategy instruction into the curriculum and give opportunities for students to try using language learning strategies on especial learning tasks. As (Su & Duo, 2012) claim it could be a good idea if teachers could encourage students in trying different language learning strategies, and understanding their own personal set of language learning strategy combinations. Therefore, in order to gain success in language learning they may apply them frequently and successfully in different language situations. Considering extra education in language institutes, use of learning strategies were more among extra education group. As Nahavandi & Mukundan (2014) claim the differences in use of strategies between these two groups can be due to vastly different educational environments. Private language

institute students "possess certain skills, strategies, understandings or beliefs that may enable them to approach the process of language learning more effectively than those studying in a university" (p.178). Based on the obtained results the following pedagogical implications can be made. First, by understanding strategy use of Iranian EFL learners', teachers and educators can better understand the situation of EFL learners in Iran and they can raise awareness of EFL learners to select and use more appropriate strategies at different stages of learning. This in turn can increase the teachers' awareness of respecting individual differences among language learners. Teachers can train their students to utilize appropriate strategies for a specific purpose or a specific skill area. Furthermore, they can encourage them to use the strategies as frequently as possible in order to improve their language skills (Zare, 2012).

Syllabus designers and material developers can incorporate modifications into books, activities, and tasks that not only increase the use of learning strategies, but also provide opportunities in using such strategies. Nevertheless, caution is required in interpreting the results of the present study to other populations with different ethnic, linguistic, or educational backgrounds

References

Al-Otaibi, G.N., (2004). *Language learning strategy use among Saudi EFL students and its relationship to language proficiency level, gender and motivation*. Doctoral Dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA.

Bacon, S. M. (1992). The relationship between gender, comprehension, processing strategies, and cognitive and affective response in foreign language listening. *Modern Language Journal, 76*, 160-178.

Bialystok, E. (2001). Metalinguistic aspects of bilingual processing. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics 21*, pp. 169-181.

Bremner, S., (1998). Language learning strategies and language proficiency: Investigating the relationship in Hong Kong. Asian Pacific Journal of Language in Education 1 (2), 490–514.

Brown, D. H. (2007). *Principles of language learning & teachin*g. (5th Eds.). Pearson: Longman.

Chang, C. (2010). *Language learning strategy profile of English as foreign language learners in Taiwan: A comparative case study.* Crane Publishing Co. Ltd.

Chamot, A. U., & Küpper, K. (1989). Learning strategies in foreign language instruction. *Foreign Language Annals, 22*, 13-24.

Cohen, A. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. London: Longman.

Deneme, S. (2008). Language learning Strategy Preferences of Turkish Students. *The Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies,* 4(2), 83-93.

Dornyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences second language acquisition.* Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Dornyei, Z. (2009). *The psychology of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Ehrman, M.L., & Oxford, R.L. (1989). Effects of sex differences, career choice, and psychological type on adult language learning strategies. *Modern Language Journal*, *73*(1), 1–13.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. (2nd ed.) London: Sage publications.

Ellis, R., (2012). Language Teaching Research & Language Pedagogy. Wiley-Blackwell.

Fotos, S. (2001). Cognitive approaches to grammar instruction. In Celce Murcia, 3rd Ed. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language.* Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle. Odlin (1994). *Perspectives on pedagogical grammar.*

Fuping, X. (2006). The Impact of Strategy Training on Reading Comprehension. *CELEA Journal,* 29(4): 36-42.

Ghabanchi, Z. &Meidani, E. N. (2012). Beliefs about language learning and strategy use: the case of Iranian non-English majors. *World Journal of English Language, 2* (1), 21-30.

Green, J. M., & Oxford, R. L. (1995). A closer look at learning strategies, L2 proficiency, and gender. *TESOL Quarterly, 29*, 261-297.

Griffiths, C. (2003). Patterns of language learning strategy use *System 31*, pp. 367-383.

Hashemi, M. (2011). The impact of gender on language learning strategies of Iranian EFL learners. International Journal of Academic Research, 3(2), 280-285.

Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Hong-Nam, K., & Leavell, A.G. (2007). Language learning strategy use of ESL students in an intensive English learning context. *System, 34*, 399–415.

Khamkhien, A. (2010). Factors Affecting Language Learning Strategy Reported Usage by Thai and Vietnamese EFL Learners. *Electronic Journal of foreign Language teaching*, 7(1): 66-85.

Lee, K.R., & Oxford, R.L. (2008). Understanding EFL learners' strategy use and strategy awareness. *The Asian EFL Journal,10*(1), 7–32.

Nahavandi, N. (2011). The effect of task-based activities on EFL learners' reading comprehension. In Mukundan, J., Nimehchisalem, V., Menon, S., Jin, Y.J., Roslim, R., Leong, A., Mohamad, A. & Philip, A. (Eds.). (2011). *ELT Matters 5* (pp.56-69). Petalingjaya, Malaysia: Galaxy.

Nahavandi, N., & Mukundan, J. (2012). Task-based Language Teaching from Teachers' Perspective. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature, 1*(6), 115-121, doi:10.7575/ijalel.v.1n.6p.115.

Nahavandi, N. (2013). Task-based activities in reading comprehension classes: Task-based language teaching & learning. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.

Nahavandi , N. & Mukundan, J. (2013a). Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender & Different Proficiency Levels. *Language in India*. 13(1), 133-161.

Nahavandi , N. & Mukundan, J. (2013b). Iranian EFL Engineering Students' Motivational Orientations towards English Language Learning along Gender and Further Education in Language Institutes. *International Journal of Linguistics, 5(1),* doi:10.5296/ijl.v5i1.2684**.**

Nahavandi , N. & Mukundan, J. (2013c). Task-based cycle in reading comprehension classes. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 1 (6), 115-121, doi:10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.2n.2p.107.

Nahavandi , N. & Mukundan, J. (2014). EFL Learners' Beliefs about Language Learning along Gender, Further Education in Language Institutes & Different Proficiency Levels. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 3 (1), 170-180, doi:10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.3n.1p.170

Nikoopour, J., Amini Farsani, M., & KashefiNeishabouri, J. (2011). Language Learning Strategy Preferences of Iranian EFL Learners. *Proceedings of ICSSH*, Singapore, 2, 360-364.

Nisbet, J. &. Shucksmith. J.,(1986). *Learning Strategies***.** London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Oh, J. (1992). Learning strategies used by university EFL students in Korea. *Language Teaching, 1*(3), 1-53.

O'Mally, J. M., & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

O'Malley, J.M., Chamot, A.U., Stewner-Manzanares, G., Kupper, L. & Russo, R.P. (1985). Learning strategies used by beginning and intermediate ESL students. *Language Learning 35*(1), pp. 21-46.

Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Oxford, R. L., & Burry-Stock, J. A. (1995). Assessing the use of language learning strategies worldwide with the ESL/EFL version of the strategy inventory for language learning (SILL). *System, 23*(1), 1-23.

Oxford, R. L., & Nyikos, M. (1989). Variables Affecting Choice of Language Learning Strategies by University Students. *Modern Language Journal, 73*, 291-300.

Palmer, D. J. & Goetz, E. T. (1988). Selection and use of study strategies: the role of the studier's beliefs about self and strategies, in C.E. Weinstein, E. T. Goetz, and P. Alexander.

Politzer, R., (1983). An exploratory study of self-reported language learning behaviors and their relation to achievement. Studies in Second Language Acquisition 6, 54–65.

Reiss, M. (1985). The good language learner: Another look. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 41*, 511-523.

Robinson, P., ed.(2002). *Individual differences and instructed language learning*. Amsterdam, John Benjamins.

Rubin, J. (1981). Study of cognitive processes in second language learning. *Applied Language Learning, 11*, 118-131.

Rubin, J., & Thompson, I. (1994). *How to be a more successful language learner* (2nd ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Salahshour, A., Sharifi, M., Salahshour, N. (2013).The relationship between language learning strategy use, language proficiency level and learner gender. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 70, pp.634 – 643

Sheorey, R. (1999). An examination of language learning strategy use in the setting of an indigenized variety of English. *System, 27,* 173-190.

Skehan, P.(1989). *Individual differences in second-language learning*. London: Edward Arnold.

Stern, H. H. (1975). What can we learn from the good language learner? *Canadian Modern Language Review, 31*, 304-318.

Su, M. , & Duo, P. (2012). EFL learners' language learning strategy use and perceived self- efficacy. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 27*(3), 335-345.

Tran, T.V., (1988). Sex differences in English language acculturation and learning strategies among Vietnamese adults aged 40 and over in the United States. Sex Roles 19, 747–758.

Vandergrift, L. (1997). The Cinderella of communication strategies: Reception strategies in interactive listening. The Modern Language Journal, 81, 494-505.

Vann, R. J., & Abraham, R. G. (1990). Strategies of unsuccessful learners. *TESOL Quarterly, 24*, 177-198.

Vossoughi, H., & Ebrahimi, A. (2003). A comparative study of language learning strategies employed by bilinguals and monolinguals with reference to attitudes and motivation. *IJAL*, 6(2), 117-132.

Wenden, A.L. (1991). *Learner strategies for learner autonomy*. London: Prentice-Hall International.

Wharton, G. (2000). Language learning strategy use of bilingual foreign language learners in Singapore. *Language Learning, 50*(2), 203-243.

Wong, S. L. (2005). Language learning strategies and language self-efficacy: investigating the relationship in Malaysia. *RELC Journal*, *36*(3), 245-269.

Zare, P. (2010). An Investigation into Language Learning Strategy Use and Gender among Iranian Undergraduate Language Learners. *World Applied Sciences Journal.* 11 (10): 1238-1247.

Zare, P. (2012). Language Learning Strategies Among EFL/ESL Learners: A Review of Literature. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science.* 2 (5).pp.162-169.