

Exploring Language Learning Strategies of Saudi EFL learners at Shaqra University, Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Among the effective learning tools that enhance the L2 learning process, learning strategies are considered the most vital and essential techniques could be used by the learners for improving their L2 achievement. The current study explored the preferred language learning strategies for group of Saudi EFL learners in Shaqra University, Saudi Arabia. The sample of the study included 60 male undergraduate students enrolled in English department in 2019 academic session. The sample responded to the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire by Oxford. Results were analyzed using SPSS program. Findings showed that the sample used almost all strategies in an average level. The findings showed that social strategy was used most frequently by this group of students followed by metacognitive strategy. Both strategy categories used with high range according to Oxford scale. While the rest of the strategies fell in the average range, compensation, cognitive, affective, except for the memory strategy which was used with low range. Based on the findings of the study, it is implied that training programs are suggested in this case to explain to the students the importance of using all LLSs as much as possible without focusing on one particular strategies and neglecting the others.

INTRODUCTION

Recently there has been a great and prominent shift from focusing on the teaching process into the learning process, that is, the study of language learning strategies (LLSs henceforth) started to rise and flourish due to the paramount significance of these aids on enhancing the academic achievements (Bremner, 1998). Research into LLSs started in the 1960s and the main focus has been on understanding the LLSs used by the successful learners and what used by unsuccessful ones. It was proved that almost all LLS are used by most of the EFL but with variant levels and educational domains. The usage of LLSs vary based on different reasons including but not limited to gender, educational background, attitudes and others (Brown, 2001; Shmais 2003; Afshar, H. S., Tofighi, S., & Hamazavi, R. 2016; Hismanoglu, M., & Hismanoglu, S. 2011).

Previous research showed that learners learn differently regardless of the amount of the instruction they receive or the amount of time they spend learning (Brown, 2006; Richard & Rodger, 2014). Thus, the question which arose based on these facts is how the individual characteristics and strategies affect their learning process (Cohen, 1996; Light-

bown & Spada, 2013). According to Oxford (1989), there are many variables could influence the learning process and the most prominent variables are learning strategies and styles. Due to the shift of research from teacher to students center, researchers start to explore and describe the prevailing behaviors and thoughts of second or foreign language learners (Ellis, 2008; Griffiths, 2008). Hence, LLSs have received great attentions by various researchers and defined differently as shown in the next section.

Due to the importance of LLS in the life of EFL learners various definitions have been put forward by various researchers. For example, Oxford (1990) defines LLS as the techniques and approaches employed by learners to enhance their L2 learning process. Wenden (1991) defines LLS as mental steps used by the learners to learn new language and regulate their efforts to improve the learning efforts. Further, Richards and Platt (1992) defines it as an intentional behaviours used by the learners during the learning process to help them organise, remember and process the new information, while Griffiths (2008) consider it and conscious activities taken by the learners to regulate their learning process.

Hence, this study will try to find out the preferred learning strategies employed by English majors from Shaqra University, Saudi Arabia. Figuring out the LLSs utilized by those students hope to enable us understand some of the reasons of their academic weaknesses and consequently raise the awareness of the weak students about the advantages of using these LLSs. Based on the academic achievement and the teachers experience in this university, English major students are found to be weak in English and their academic accomplishment is very poor. Some researchers have explained that the level of Saudi EFL learners is weak and the outcomes are unsatisfactory (Al-Seghayer, 2005; Khan, 2011; Rabab'ah & Bulut, 2007). Thus, this study is an attempt to find out those students' LLSs in order to understand their insight cognitive learning process.

LLSS TAXONOMY

Various researchers (O'Malley et al 1985; Rubin 1987; Oxford 1990; Stern 1992) have categorized LLSs into various categories. Most of these categorizations reflect approximately the same classification of LLSs. These taxonomies will be explained chronologically in the following sections to give a clearer idea about them.

O'Malley et al. (1985) Classification of LLSs

O'Malley et al explain that there are three main strategies that the learners use to learn the second language. These strategies are shown below:

Metacognitive strategies

Instances of these strategies are terms to express executive functions, strategies which require planning for learning, and thinking about the learning process as it is taking place. Apart from that, these strategies also support the process of monitoring one's production or comprehension, and evaluating the learning process after an activity is completed. Advance organizers are considered among the main metacognitive strategies. In addition, it is also possible to include directed attention, selective attention, self-management, functional planning, self-monitoring, delayed production and self-evaluation.

Cognitive strategies

Cognitive strategies are more limited to a specific learning task and they involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself. The following strategies are considered as the most important cognitive strategies. These strategies include: re-sourcing, translating, grouping, note-taking, making deduction, recombining, imagining, auditioning, representing, key-wording, contextualizing, elaborating, transferring and inferring.

Socio affective strategies

Socio affective strategies mainly depend on communication with others. It can be said that these types of strategies are

related with social-mediating activities and transacting with others. Asking questions for clarification and eliciting new information from others and cooperation can be considered as the main socio affective strategies.

Rubin's (1987) Classification of LLSs

Rubin (1987) points out that there are three types of strategies used by the learners that contribute directly or indirectly to the process of language learning. These strategies are:

Learning strategies

They are of two main types, being the strategies contributing directly to the development of the language system constructed by the learners:

I. Cognitive learning strategies

These strategies refer to the steps and operations used in learning or problem-solving that requires direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. Rubin identified six main cognitive learning strategies contributing directly to language learning. These are as follow,

- a. Clarification/verification
- b. Guessing/inductive inferring
- c. Deductive reasoning
- d. Practice
- e. Memorization
- f. Monitoring

II. Metacognitive learning strategies

Metacognitive strategies are used to oversee, regulate or self-direct language learning. They involve different processes like planning, prioritizing, setting goals and self-managing.

Communication strategies

According to Rubin, these strategies are less directly related to language learning since their focus on the process of participating in conversation and getting meaning across or clarifying what the speaker intended. These strategies are used by speakers when faced with some difficulties due to the fact that their communications end, or when confronted by the other speaker.

Social strategies

Social strategies are those activities that learners engage in which afford them opportunities to be exposed to and practice their knowledge. These strategies contribute indirectly to learning since they do not lead directly to obtaining, storing, retrieving and using of language. However, they still provide the learners with exposure to the target language.

Oxfords (1990) Classification of LLSs

Oxford explains that the aim of the learning strategies is to develop communicative competence. She divides learning strategies into two main classes, direct and indirect which are further sub divided into six groups. According to Oxford's

system, metacognitive strategies help learners to regulate their learning, while, affective strategies are concerned with the learners' emotional requirements like self-confidence.

Cognitive strategies are the mental strategies learners use to make sense of their learning, while social strategies lead to increased social interaction with target language. Memory strategies are those used for storing information and compensation strategies help learners to overcome the knowledge gap among speakers and lead to continuity of the conversation. The taxonomy of LLSs as proposed by (Oxford 1990) is shown below:

Direct strategies

- I. Memory
 - a. Creative mental linkage
 - b. Applying images and sounds
 - c. Reviewing well
 - d. Employing action
- II. Cognitive
 - a. Practicing
 - b. Receiving and sending messages strategies
 - c. Analyzing and reasoning
 - d. Creating structure for input and output
- III. Compensation strategies
 - a. Guessing intelligently
 - b. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing

Indirect strategies

- I. Metacognitive strategies
 - a. Centering your learning
 - b. Arranging and planning your learning
 - c. Evaluating your learning
- II. Affective strategies
 - a. Lowering your anxiety
 - b. Encouraging yourself
 - c. Taking your emotional temperature
- III. Social strategies
 - a. Asking questions
 - b. Cooperating with others
 - c. Empathizing with others

Stern's (1992) Classification of LLSs

According to Stern there are five main LLSs. These are as follow:

Management and planning strategies

These strategies are related to the learner's intention to direct his own learning, in which the learner can take a charge of the development of his own program when he is helped by a teacher whose role is that as an advisor and resource person. In this case Stern points out that the learner must do the following things:

- a. Decide what commitment to make to language learning

- b. Set himself reasonable goals
- c. Decide on an appropriate methodology, select appropriate resources, and monitor progress
- d. Evaluate his achievement in the light of previously determined goals and expectations.

Cognitive strategies

These strategies are considered as steps or operations used in learning or problem-solving that requires direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. The following are some of the cognitive strategies:

- a. Clarification/verification
- b. Guessing/inducing/infering
- c. Practice
- d. Memorization
- e. Monitoring

Communicative-experiential strategies

These strategies are used in order to keep the conversation going on, and avoid the breakdown in the communication between the speakers. Communication strategies such as circumlocution, gesturing, paraphrasing, or asking for repetition and explanation are techniques used by the language learners to avoid interrupting the flow of communication.

Interpersonal strategies

These strategies urge the learners to monitor their own development and evaluate their own performance. The learners in this case must be in contact with the native speakers and cooperate with them and they must also be acquainted with the target culture.

Affective strategies

Stern explained that a good language learner employs distinct affective strategies. However, language learning can be frustrating in some cases which involved the learners' feeling of strangeness toward the foreign language. In other cases, the L2 learners may have negative feelings toward native speakers of the second language.

The classifications of language learning strategy taxonomies might enable those interested in the field to have a clearer view of how the strategies are interlinked. However, it has been acknowledged by many researchers that Oxford's (1990) classification is more detailed and gives clearer picture about LLSs. The classification by Oxford was adopted in this study due to its importance in LLS field and because it is comprehensive and combines the most useful strategy that the learners follow to improve their target language.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are several important theoretical assumptions which underlie contemporary ideas on LLSs. From the perspective which views students as being able to consciously influence

their own learning, the learning of language becomes a cognitive process similar in many ways to any other kind of learning (McLaughlin, Tamimi & Beverly, 1983). The learning paradigm that initiated the present investigation was based on cognitive and constructivism theories of learning. Cognitive theory of learning focuses on the conceptualization of students learning process. Moreover, this theory concentrate on the exploration of the way information is received, organized, retained and used by the brain (Thompson, Simonsen & Hargrave, 1996). Current cognitive theories of learning highlight the importance of learners' thoughts during learning process. Hence, the cognitivists consider the learners as thinking beings and put them at the center of the learning process by stressing that the learning will only take place when the learners understand what they learn (O'malley; O'Malley; Chamot & O'Malley, 1990).

On the other hand, constructivism theory of learning allows the learners to develop and construct their own understanding of the material based upon their knowledge and beliefs and experiences in concert with the new knowledge presented in the classroom. Identifying LLSs would provide learning setting that makes them understand their strengths and weaknesses and try to stretch their less preferred language learning strategy. Constructivism is a theory of learning not of teaching. Therefore, the constructivist learning environment is learner cantered rather than teacher cantered (Miller & Pilcher, 2002).

Heine, Proulx and Vohs (2006), explained that in a constructivist learning environment, educators should be open to learning from their students as the students engage in creative construction of new concepts. As students verbalize their newly constructed knowledge, they provide learning opportunities for others who are in the same learning environment and they also engage in revising, analyzing, and improving their own construction as they verbalize it to others.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nowadays English has clearly become the lingua franca of the world due to its importance as a bridge linking cultures and nations together. Using various LLSs make the learning process more effective and plays significant role in the process of second and foreign language learning. Thus, employing the right LLSs will speed up the learning process. This attempt will explore the preferred learning strategies employed by English students from Shaqra University. Figuring out the LLSs utilized by those students hope to enable us understand some of the reasons of their academic weaknesses and consequently raise the awareness of the weak students about the advantages of using these LLSs. Based on the academic achievement and the teachers experience in this university, English major students are found to be weak in English and their academic accomplishment is very poor. Some researchers have explained that the level of Saudi EFL learners is weak and the outcomes are unsatisfactory (Al-Seghayer, 2005; Khan, 2011; Rabab'ah & Bulut, 2007). Thus, this study is an attempt to find out those students' LLSs in order to understand their insight cognitive learning process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A good number of studies highlighted the overall strategy use in different environments and by different researchers. Sheorey (1999) investigated the overall LLSs among Indian college students (N=1261), studying English by means of English LLSs Inventory (ELLSI), a questionnaire specially designed for this study. Results indicated that the Indian college students used learning strategies included in ELLSI with high to moderate frequency (on a scale of 1-5). It was also found that their cultural and educational background influenced some of the strategies they used. In general, the results were consistent with those previously reported in studies on the learning strategies of students studying in other environments; female students reported significantly more frequent use of strategies than the male students, as did students whose proficiency in English was high. Results of factor analysis suggested that the Indian students seem to favor functional practice strategies that would help them boost their communicative performance in English. Also, they rely on examination-oriented memory strategies that would help them succeed in the examination-driven educational system.

Vidal (2002) reported a large-scale three-stage research carried out at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) which set out to investigate LLSs use with successful and unsuccessful language learners. Data were collected over three years by means of individual written reports about students' experience as language learners and Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a version translated into Portuguese by the researcher herself. The study revealed that the more successful learners used more strategies than the less successful ones. On the whole, metacognitive strategies were used most frequently, especially of the type "I pay attention when someone is speaking English", and memory and affective strategies were said to have been used with less frequency. In terms of correlations between strategy used by them in the SILL with achievement, as measured by scoring their written performance, it was found that the successful learners (grades 90-100) reached higher average in compensation strategies and less in memory strategies. Less successful learners (grades 0 to 59) had used metacognitive strategies more and affective strategies less than any others. More successful learners also used cognitive, compensation and social strategies more than less successful ones. Vidal also explained that the fact that successful learners use social strategies more than less successful ones may explain their success partly. Her final comments favoured learners' independence and strategy teaching. She stressed that it is the teacher's duty, in the light of a humanistic approach, to stimulate his students to be responsible for their learning, helping them to become conscious about their cognitive processes and training them in the use of more effective strategies. More recently Kunnu and Wangsomchok (2018) studied the LLSs by 82 second-year Chinese major students using oxford SILL. Findings showed that memory-related strategies were most frequently used while the least of strategies used by the study samples were social strategies.

Further, due to the significance of these learning steps or techniques, LLSs have been also a topic of different domains. For example, Virkkula and Nissilä (2017) explored

the LLSs among the vocational music students and found that the students mostly used cognitive and metacognitive strategies, followed by memory, compensation and the least used one was affective strategies.

In Saudi context, there are some attempts done to investigate LLSs in different contexts. Alkahtani (2016) explored the LLSs among Yanbu Centre of English Language learners and found that metacognitive strategies were the most employed by the institute students followed by, social, compensation, cognitive, memory and affective strategies. Likewise, Alharbi (2017) investigated the LLSs by group of Saudi EFL learners in Australia and found that most preferred strategies are metacognitive, social, compensation, cognitive, affective and memory strategies respectively.

Previous literature confirms the paramount significance of using the suitable LLSs in improving the EFL learners' academic achievement. Thus, the current study is an attempt to explore the Saudi senior English major students who are in the final year of their study. Findings could give us some useful insights about the nature of Saudi society and what are the steps or techniques they employ during their EFL learning journey.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Respondents

The respondents of this study were 60 Saudi senior English major students enrolled in Shaqra University, Dawadmi campus, Saudi Arabia. All of the respondents are males since it was beyond the scope of the researcher to study the female respondents. The respondents were purposively chosen since they are all fourth year students studied most of the required courses.

Tool

Quantitative approach was adopted in this study, namely strategy inventory of language learning (SILL) by Oxford's (1990). The rationale of choosing this questionnaire is due to its comprehensiveness for eliciting most of the steps and techniques used by the learners. Further, this tool has been extensively checked for validity and validity and found to be valid to achieve the objectives of this study. The adapted Oxford's (1990) SILL was divided into six sections; A to F, based on Oxford's categorization of strategies description was based on the five point Likert-scale. The version of the SILL used in this study was a 50-item instrument that was grouped into two main categories, direct strategies and indirect strategies, which were further subdivided into 6 groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1- The LLSs used by Saudi EFL learners during the process of learning English as a foreign language.

Table 1 below showed that the mean of overall strategy use was 3.3340 which was average strategy use according to Oxford's (1990) scale which ranges from 1 to 5:

Mean Criteria

3.5-5= High

2.5-3.4= Average

1.0-2.4= Low

The findings showed that social strategy was used most frequently by this group of students followed by metacognitive strategy. Both strategy categories used with high range according to Oxford scale. While the rest of the strategies fell in the average range, compensation, cognitive, affective, except for the memory strategy which was used with low range as illustrated in the following table.

Table 1 shows that the learners used all five LLSs but with different percentages ranging from high, medium and low. As it is noticed the LLSs used as follows: social strategy (M=4.1024), metacognitive strategy (M=3.7004), compensation strategy (M=3.4600), cognitive strategy (M=3.4014), affective strategy (M=2.7515). Using social strategy heavily indicates that the students have the required positive attitude to improve their L2, by contrast memory strategy used with low range by the students (M=2.4003). The students focused primarily on social strategy which showed that the students planned to communicate and be sociable with others to practice their English skills. Apparently, the students considered this strategy as the most important strategy which enabled them to practice their English everywhere and anytime.

Using metacognitive strategy with high range may show the readiness of the students to improve their English skills, and indicates that they tried to find many ways to learn, practice and be better learners in English. The other strategy used by the students with average range, this might be attributed to their lack of awareness of the importance of using all LLSs in developing their English proficiency. Memory strategy used by the students in low range, this might be because the students were not familiar with some of the items in this category, such as acting new English words physically or using flashcards to remember the new English words. This clearly indicates that those EFL learners lack the required awareness about using important LLSs.

Table 2 below presents the items that constitute each strategy with the mean of every single item. The table also showed that most of the items with the highest mean were social strategy items. For example: items number 45 (if I don't understand something in English, I ask the other per-

Table 1. Language Learning Strategy Use by the Saudi EFL learners (N=60)

Strategy Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank Order of Usage
A Memory	2.4003	0.25510	6
B Cognitive	3.4014	0.16426	4
C Compensation	3.4600	0.25346	3
D Meta-cognitive	3.7004	0.25220	2
E Affective	2.7515	0.23407	5
F Social	4.1024	0.62314	1
Overall	3.3340	0.53161	

Table 2. Means and frequency of all LLSs preferences

Memory		Cognitive		Compensation		Metacognitive		Affective		Social	
No.	M	No.	M	No.	M	No.	M	No.	M	No.	M
1	1.8122	10	3.1775	24	1.2007	30	3.5500	39	4.0221	45	4.3123
2	1.9865	11	3.2100	25	4.1230	31	3.6240	40	3.6520	46	2.3500
3	2.0150	12	2.7275	26	3.8700	32	3.6230	41	1.4010	47	4.4355
4	3.0120	13	2.1000	27	3.0010	33	3.2620	42	3.3370	48	3.7730
5	1.8500	14	3.1355	28	3.6450	34	2.0615	43	1.7151	49	3.9115
6	1.9240	15	3.1525	29	4.1500	35	2.7775	44	1.3000	50	3.0124
7	1.2003	16	1.5240			36	3.2370				
8	1.0100	17	2.1740			37	3.2270				
9	1.3900	18	2.7525			38	3.2620				
		19	2.6275								
		20	1.8120								
		21	2.5775								
		22	3.3550								
		23	2.3375								

son to slow down or say it again) M=4.3123, item number 47 (I practice English with other students), M=4.4355, and item number 49 (I ask questions in English). M=3.9115.

While most of the items with low mean were memory strategy items. For example: item number 7 (I physically act out new English words) M=1.2003 and item number 1 (I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English) M=1.8122.

Table 2 shows that the most used item by Saudi EFL learners in the memory strategies category was, (I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used) M=3.0120 while the least used strategy was (I physically act out new English words) M= 1.2003. Perhaps this low use for this strategy was because the students were not familiar with this kind of strategy, since it is concluded that they focused much on using social strategy as the best way to improve their English proficiency.

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), memorization strategies which relate to the process of storage and retrieval of the information can be considered as one of the most important strategies in language learning. Moreover, they perceived LLSs as a techniques and devices used by the learners of second language for remembering and organizing samples of the language used. The students used this strategy in low average because they were not familiar and not aware enough to use such strategies.

As for the cognitive strategies, the most used strategy by the students was (I try not to translate word for word) M=3.3550 while the least used strategy was (I read for pleasure in English) M=1.5240. Cognitive strategies were used to help the learners to grasp the second language by employing many thinking processes such as reasoning, analysis, and drawing conclusions. Using the dictionary to find the difficult words, and the use of the drill to practice English language were also among the cognitive strategies employed by the respondents.

The most frequently utilized strategy in the compensation strategies was (if I cannot think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing) M= 4.1500 and the least used strategy was (to understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses) M=1.2007. Compensation strategies help the learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production and help them to avoid the limitations of their knowledge in the target language.

Memorization, cognitive and compensation strategies are considered by Oxford as direct strategies for learning English language. These strategies involve learning directly like using linguistic clues to guess meaning or translating directly from L1 to L2. Further, they influence language learning directly through the process of clarification, monitoring, memorization, guessing, reasoning and practice (Bialystok, 1981; O'Malley & Chamot 1990).

In the present study, metacognitive strategies were found to be as important strategies for learning foreign or second language among the students. They indicated that the most common meacognitive strategy was that they noticed their English mistakes and use that information to help them do better M=3.6240. And the least metacognitive strategy used was that they planned their schedule so they will have enough time to study English M=2.0615. Metacognitive strategies help the learners to manage, organize, and monitor their learning process, and give them the opportunity to notice their mistakes in the process of learning English and try to avoid these mistakes in the future. In addition, these strategies guided the students to regulate their own cognition by assessing how they learn and by planning for future language tasks. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990) students without metacognitive approaches are considered like students without directions and opportunities to monitor their progress, and plan their learning or review their accomplishments.

Affective strategies also played crucial role to enhance and improve the students' abilities to learn English as a sec-

ond language easily. Strategies in this category involved the learners controlling their feelings toward the whole learning process, in which they tried to relax whenever they felt that they were nervous when using the second language. The analysis indicated that the most frequently used strategy by the students was that they tried to relax whenever they felt afraid of using English $M= 4.0221$. Meanwhile, the least used strategy was that they talked to someone else about how they felt when learning English $M=1.3000$.

Social strategies are those activities which the learners engaged in which in turn offered them the opportunities to be exposed to new knowledge (Stern, 1980). These strategies provide exposure to the target language indirectly so that they help in storing, retrieving and using the target language indirectly. They can be considered as a social form of learning language since they involve contacts with others such as questioning or asking for clarification.

For the category of social strategy, the most frequent used by the students was that they practiced English with other students, $M=4.4355$ because they believed that this was the best strategy which can enable them enhance their English skills. The students did not ask English speakers to correct them when they talked in which this strategy was used the least $M= 2.3500$. Metacognitive, affective, social strategies are all indirect strategies based on Oxford's (1990) classification. These involve learning the foreign language indirectly such as creating and seeking opportunities to learn the target language as much as possible. To conclude, all LLSs in the SILL were utilized by Saudi EFL learners in this study at average scale.

IMPLICATIONS

Saudi EFL learners somewhat were not using LLSs in appropriate way that might support them to maximize the opportunities for developing their English language skills. The mean for overall usage of LLSs was at average use. The outcomes of the presents study provided a clearer picture about how those learners tried to develop their skills in the English language. The students' lack of awareness about the importance of other strategies was clear since they used these strategies at average scale except for the memory strategy which was used in low scale. Therefore, strategy training programs are suggested in this case to explain to the students the importance of using all LLSs as much as possible without focusing on one particular strategies and neglecting the others. This is because all these strategies are of a great importance for the learners to master the target language. Language teachers and instructors can play a major role by helping their students to recognize the power of using LLSs for making the learning processes quicker, easier, and more effective. Sharing research such as the ones in the present study is a good way to persuade students to use such strategies as much as possible when they study since the appropriate use of LLSs can enhance language proficiency and greater self-confidence (Oxford 1993). Furthermore, teachers should equally recognize that certain strategies might be more suited to some learners than others. Thus, they must have good relationship with their students in order to have better understanding of the

students' strengths and weaknesses. Teaching is not a one-way activity but an interactive process. Consequently, it is important for language teachers to have good rapport with their learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study could be considered as a preliminary effort in identifying the LLSs used especially by Saudi EFL learners in general. Further research is suggested by the present researcher in order to have a clearer picture about the nature of Saudi students in using such LLSs. It is proposed that future research must take into account all other variables that may affect language learning strategy choice such as the immediate environment, the educational and cultural background. Further, involving greater numbers of Saudi EFL learners to participate in future research would be very useful as this will give clearer outcomes about the nature of using LLSs. It would be interesting to carry out a longitudinal study and use multiple data collecting instruments to examine the nature of LLSs by Saudi EFL learners and understand exactly how they think about their learning process.

Both learners and teachers need to become aware of the learning strategies through strategy instruction. Attempts to teach students to use learning strategies (called strategy training or learner training) have produced good results according to Rubin (1987). These attempts aimed to make students become more aware of their preferred learning strategies and to help them become more responsible for meeting their own objectives. Such objectives can be only achieved when students are trained in strategy use so that they become more independent and effective. Moreover, Oxford (1995) suggests that strategy training can be achieved after familiarizing the students with the LLSs and providing them with opportunities for practicing these strategies through integrating them into the classroom instructional plan and embedding them into regular class activities.

Thus, there is a need for more comprehensive research covering a wide range of variables affecting LLSs employed by Saudi EFL learners such as, beliefs, learning style, motivation, attitude, and others. Moreover, research on the frequency of use of the social, affective, memory strategies and choice of given strategies is recommended since it is helpful for both learners and teachers. Strategy instruction research is important in assessing learners' strategies. Therefore, there is a need for conducting research that will pave the way for building the theory that seems necessary for more LLSs work to be relevant to current foreign language teaching practice. It is time for the researchers to stand up and investigate what is going on inside the EFL classes of Arab learners, instead of merely depending on other studies that have been done on international students who differ from Arab students either in cultural or educational background.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed at examining the LLSs of a group of Saudi EFL learners at Shaqra University, Saudi Arabia. Findings the

preferred LLSs for those students enable the decision makers to understand the students' cognitive process and understand their language learning weaknesses and trying to overcome these weaknesses. The results showed that these students were average strategy users. Further, social and metacognitive strategies marked the highest usage while memory strategies marked the lowest usage which indicated that such strategies could be related to cultural and educational background differences. LLSs facilitate the learning of the target language by the language learners, who generally use LLSs in the learning process. Since factors like age, gender, personality, motivation, self-concept, life-experience, learning style, and others affect the way in which language learners learn the target language, it is not reasonable to assume that all language learners use the same LLSs or should be trained in using and developing the same strategies to become successful learners.

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