

English Language Learning Strategies Employed by Malay Part Time Learners of UiTM in the Northern Region Of Malaysia

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Abstract - The present research is an investigation into the repertoire of English language learning strategies employed Malay part-time learners learning English as a second language of UiTM in the northern region of Malaysia. The goal of the study is to help the learners improve their English proficiency. The objectives are to find out the level of the learners' learning strategies employed in learning English; and also to find out which strategies are mostly employed in their learning of English. The participants of the study are 120 Malay part-time learners learning English as a second language in four branches of UiTM in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia; viz, UiTM Perlis, UiTM Kedah, UiTM Penang, and UiTM Perak. The simple random approach is used in determining the respondents. The instruments used are two structured questionnaires, – adapted Oxford's (1990) SILL, version 7.0 and respondents' background information – and semi-structured interview based on Wenden's (1987) guidelines. The questionnaire data were analyzed using SPSS and the interview data were transcribed and analyzed based on Wenden's guidelines (1987). Results of the study showed that the Malay part-time learners are at the average level in using strategies learning English. The type of strategies they used seem to be the metacognitive strategies. This seems consistent with some studies done in foreign countries as well as in Malaysia. The researcher concluded that there is a need to train the learners in other types of learning strategies besides the metacognitive strategies, so that the learners could extend their repertoire of learning strategies which in turn would help them in learning English and thus improve their proficiency of the English language.

Keywords - Learning Strategies, Part time learners,

INTRODUCTION

The world today is changing. It is changing through a process of globalization and also the because of the impact of the development of science and technology. Due to these, our nation is also affected in many facets. As a result of the impact, we have no other choice other than to keep pace with this ever changing world by upgrading our skills and knowledge. The knowledge of the workers who had their education in the past decades has become obsolete to some extent and they have to learn new knowledge in order to keep pace with the present world development. This is in line with what Kamaruddin (1989) said, that 'there is a great and constant need for men and women in the midst of their working life to continue learning in order to keep abreast with the new frontiers of knowledge' (p.87); and according to him too, the higher education should play its role to train the people 'with the relevant knowledge, excellent professional qualities and up-to-date skills' (Kamaruddin, 1989, p. 90).

Hence, presently, many universities in Malaysia are offering various educational programs - full time and part time - for the adults and working people. For those who are interested in part time learning there are programs like off-campus and also Electronic Long

Distance Learning (e-PJJ). Among the Malaysian universities which offer part time higher education are UiTM, OUM, UUM, UM,USM.

In the context of higher education in Malaysia, English is an important and compulsory subject. It has been made compulsory the Ministry of Education. As Asmah (1994) stated that in Malaysia 'English is compulsory in all government schools and institutions of higher learning,' (p. 244). Secondly, English language is also said to be an asset (Asmah, 1994). Why? This is true because logically English is needed by learners to read the reference books, especially in the higher learning institutions. Most of the books at higher learning institutions are in English. So, it is relevant to say that English language is relevant and even important for students. In fact, now, English has become one of the world's major languages and a language of a wider communication. (Graddol, 2000).

English language: its importance in today's world

English is said to be the most widely used language throughout the world. It is used overwhelmingly as a medium of communication, at almost all levels of human communication, especially at international level. Today,

English has established itself as the most prevalent language used in all parts of the world; either as the first language, second language or a foreign language (Graddol, 2000).

English is undeniably pervasive in many domains of the world society today. In fact, it is said that 'in many countries a knowledge of English is helpful- and in some cases essential - for obtaining a certain job or pursuing a certain career' (Katzner, 2002).

English language in Malaysia : its importance

English was first introduced into Malaysia (Malaya then) with the arrival of the British colonization during the 19th century. Today, English has been made the second most important language after Bahasa Malaysia which was first announced in 1956 through the Razak Report and later reaffirmed it by the New Education Policy in 1970 (Asmah Hj. Omar, 1996). By this confirmation, it also means that English has been made 'compulsory in all government schools and institutions of higher learning' (Asmah Hj. Omar, 1996). In line with this it also implies that English language learning has been accessible to all students in Malaysia regardless of race or geographical context.

At this point, one might wonder why the government has made English the second most important language of the country? There is sure to be some reasons. According to Asmah Hj. Omar (1993) Malaysia realized that even though English is a colonial language it is 'an asset to keep'. It can be the 'language of international communication and a source and means to the development in science and technology' (Asmah Hj. Omar, 1993). 'The teaching of English in Malaysia has its general objectives for the purpose of knowledge and science' (Asmah, 1996). Besides that, some of its specific objectives are, as a medium of 'commercial dealings and in the world of diplomacy' (Asmah, 1993).

In line with the above, Ain and Rosli (1999) stated that 'knowing both Bahasa Malaysia and English in Malaysia encourages the ability to communicate and interact with a wide range of people and allows one to gain access to knowledge sources thus bringing social, cognitive, and economic advantages to a person' (p. 214). In addition, Ain and Rosli had also carried out a study on 15 senior human resource personnel from various national and multinational organizations in Malaysia to find out, among other objectives, the use of English in the organizations. The respondents stated that 'English is used in their organization' in the following situations: 'at meetings, for both internal and external correspondences, communication among employees, and with clients' (Ain and Rosli, 1999).

Evidently, all of the above scenarios indicate that English is actively used in Malaysia which suggests that it is important. Its importance is more felt in this era of information and communication technology with the advent of the internet because English is the 'lingua franca of internet' (Pandian, 1996). Last but not least, in the context of the present global world it is undeniably indispensable for Malaysia to have a medium of communication with the outside world, and the medium is no other than the English language because English language has become a language of wider communication; language of the world (Asmah, 1993).

Scenario of English proficiency among learners in Malaysia

Although many realize that English is important in today's world, as far as English is concerned among Malaysian learners, the standard is still below the expected level, and this includes not only school students but also university undergraduates; in fact, even those who have graduated. This has been highlighted in research findings such as by the National Higher Education Research Institute (NAHER) in 2005 which reported employers were grumbling that 'local universities graduates in general have low English language proficiency'. (NAHER, 2005, p. 91). This could also be related to a statement made by the UPM vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Nik Mustapha R. Abdullah who revealed findings of a recent survey by University Putra Malaysia alumni centre that 'prospective bosses always looked for employees with good command of the language as they were an asset to any organization' (The Star, 2008). In another context low proficiency in English has also affected one of the government agencies; viz. tourism department. It was highlighted that one of the shortcomings among the workers in tourism industry is the inability to converse in English (The Star. 2008). So, evidently, it is an obligation for all Malaysians, learners or workers, to strive to master English as we are not alone living in today's globalized world in which English is the dominant language used not only in all parts of the world but also in our own country.

The rationale of language learning strategies

For most of the time, part time learners are left on their own to do their learning activities. If such is the situation that the learners have to be in, they must be more independent; they have to be self-driven and take care of their own learning process. Barrass (2002) said, 'part time students must be well motivated, self reliant, and able to work alone' (p. 7). He also believed that 'learning-how-to-learn skills' are the keys to one's success in life (Barrass (2002, p.7). How can they

achieve this? They may learn as many learning strategies as possible and practice the ones which suit them in their learning. Why? There are many reasons and rationales highlighted by experts in this area. According to many language experts language learning strategies help and enhance learners' language proficiency (Oxford, 1990; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Rubin, 1981; Naiman, 1978). Oxford (1990) stated that 'language learning strategies encourage greater overall self-direction for learners' This is very relevant since the part time learners have to learn more on their own. As Oxford (1990) said that 'self-direction is particularly important for language learners, because they will not always have the teacher around to guide them as they use the language outside the classroom' (p. 10).

Background of study

In UiTM there are many part time learners in various courses. This includes part time learners in all the branch campuses. In UiTM Penang, the only faculty that offers part time program is the faculty of Business Studies. The program that it offers are two; viz. diploma level and the degree level. Other than Penang, UiTM Perlis, UiTM Kedah and UiTM Perak also offer part time courses like the e-PJJ. The present study is related to the Malay part time learners of the diploma level who come from these four campuses.

These learners are taking a program called Diploma in Business Studies. Among the subjects that they have to pass is the English subject. They have to take the English subject in semester one, two, three, four, and five. The English codes are: for semester one, Bel 120 or Consolidating English skills, for semester two, Preparation for MUET with the code Bel 260; for semester three, the code is Bel 311 which is called English for Academic Purposes; and for semester four and five, the English course is called Business Communication Skills. In all these codes the four language skills are stressed which they are tested in the on-going and final exam. So, it is important for the learners to master these components. However, some learners claimed that they face problems in learning the subject, especially learning on their own outside classroom. So, the researcher who is also teaches this subject to the part time students of one of the campuses, viz., UiTM Penang, takes the initiative to help the learners by trying to explore their learning strategies used by the part time learners in four campuses in UiTM in the northern region. Consequently, based on the findings of the study, adjustments on teaching styles and materials could be designed to fit the part time Malay learners of UiTM in the northern region.

Statement Of Problem

The Malay part time ESL learners face problems learning English. This surfaced in the findings of a preliminary study done by the author among the ESL learners of UiTM Penang in 2008. The learners expressed the matter in the evaluation form which all students of UiTM filled in before the end of each semester. Based on this discovery the researcher who was also the class lecturer for the students carried out an exploratory study to find out further information. The learners expressed in writing that they faced problems in learning English outside classroom and that they wanted to upgrade their English proficiency but lack the ideas on how to learn English more effectively.

This situation could be related to findings of one study done by Jamali Ismail and Hasliza Aris (1996) on the three main ethnics of Malaysia, viz Malay, Chinese, and Indians on their perception of their ability in the English language. Results revealed that they are generally weak in English but 'generally have favorable attitude towards the English language and strong motivation to learn the language' (Jamali and Hasliza, 1996). Evidently, in relation to the present study the Malay part time learners are not alone in their experience of facing problems in learning English language.

Objectives of study

The objective of the present study is :

- 1) To identify the level of language learning strategies which the Malay part time ESL learners employed in learning English;
- 2) To identify the language learning strategies mostly employed by the Malay part time ESL learners in learning English.

Research Question

The research question for the present study is:

- 1) What is the level of language learning strategies employed by the Malay part time learners in learning English?
- 2) What are the language learning strategies mostly employed by the Malay part time ESL learners in learning English?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Learning Strategies

Definition

According to Oxford the word 'strategy' comes from the ancient Greek term "strategia" which means 'generalship or the art of war' (p. 7). She added that 'tactics' is another word used to refer as 'tools to achieve the

success of strategies' (p. 7). which according to her 'many people use these two terms interchangeably' (p. 7). According to her too, 'in a nonmilitary settings, the strategy concept has been applied to clearly non-adversarial situations, where it has come to mean a plan, step, or conscious action toward achievement of an objective' (p. 8). This idea 'has become influential in education' and 'has been transformed into learning strategies'

Several definitions for the concept of learning strategies have been proposed by many experts in this area; Tarone (1981), Stern et al. (1983), Rubin (1987), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Winstein and Mayer (1986), Brown (2000), Oxford (1990), and last but not least, Oxford (1990).

From all the above definitions given it appears that different linguists offer different definitions and this leads us to a somewhat condition of mixed perspectives of the concept of 'learning strategies'. However, one of

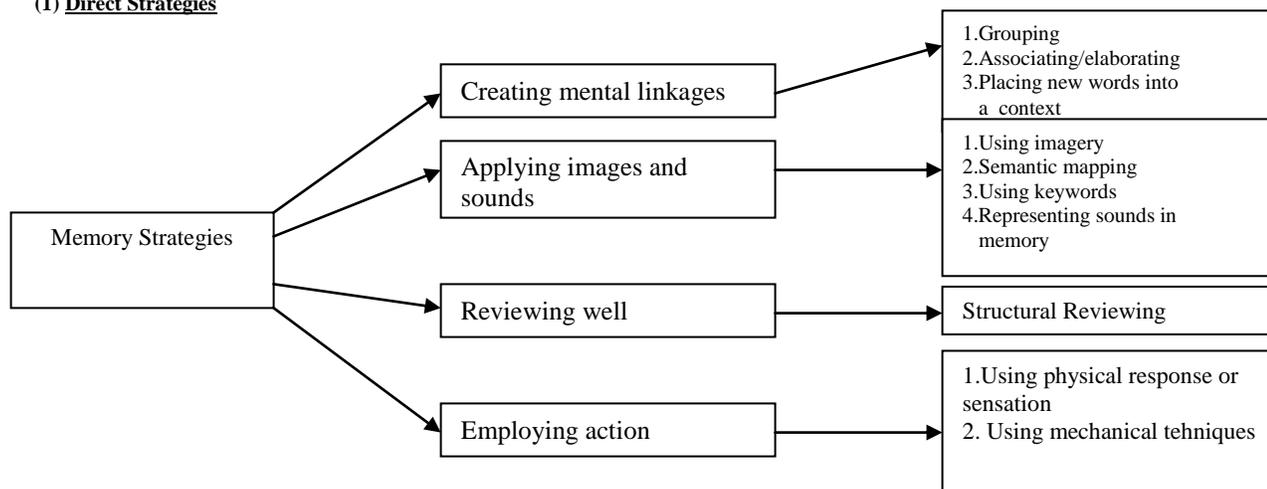
the best definitions recommended by Ellis (2002) is the one given by Oxford (1990) who stated that 'learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations' (p. 8).

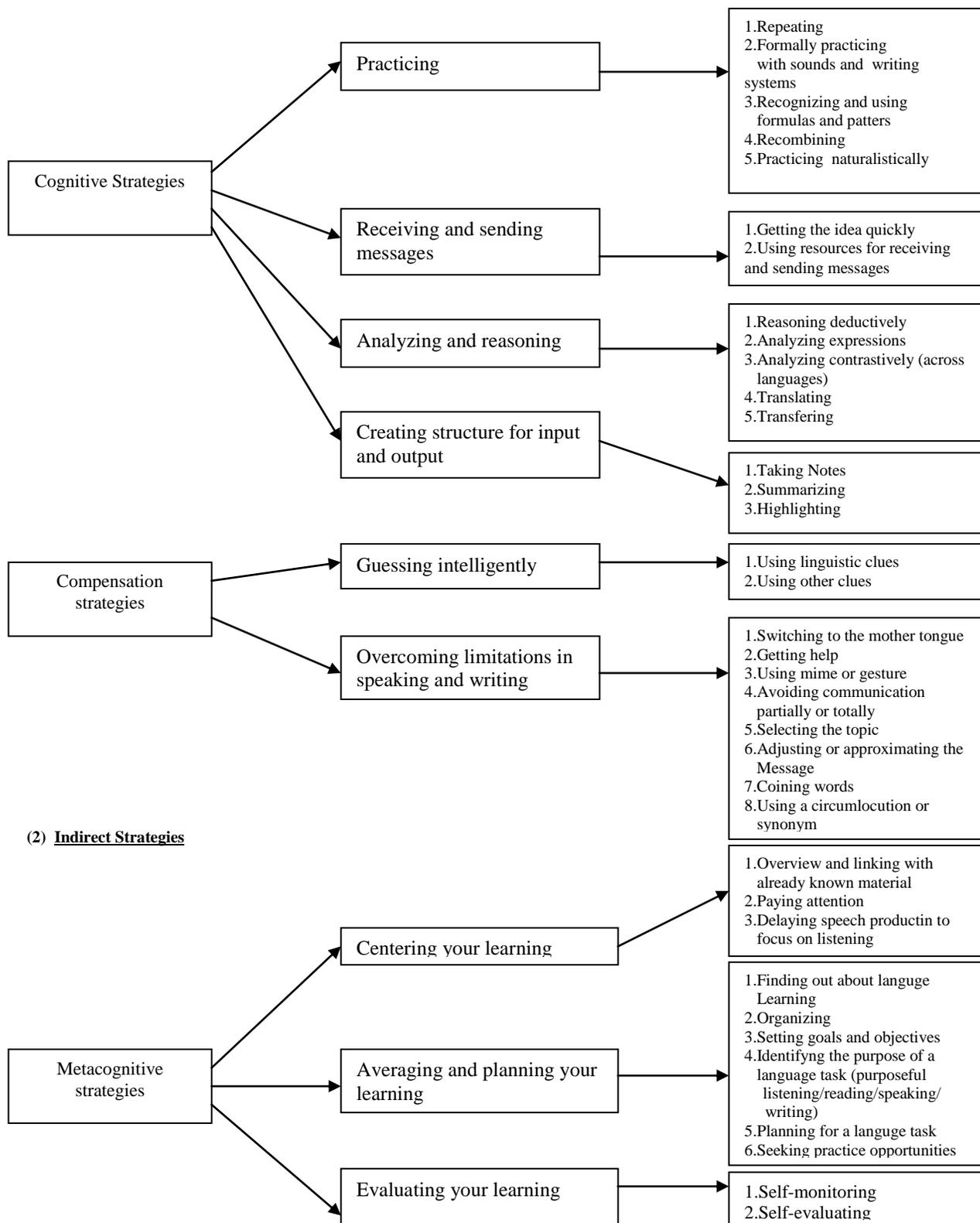
Classification Of Learning Strategies

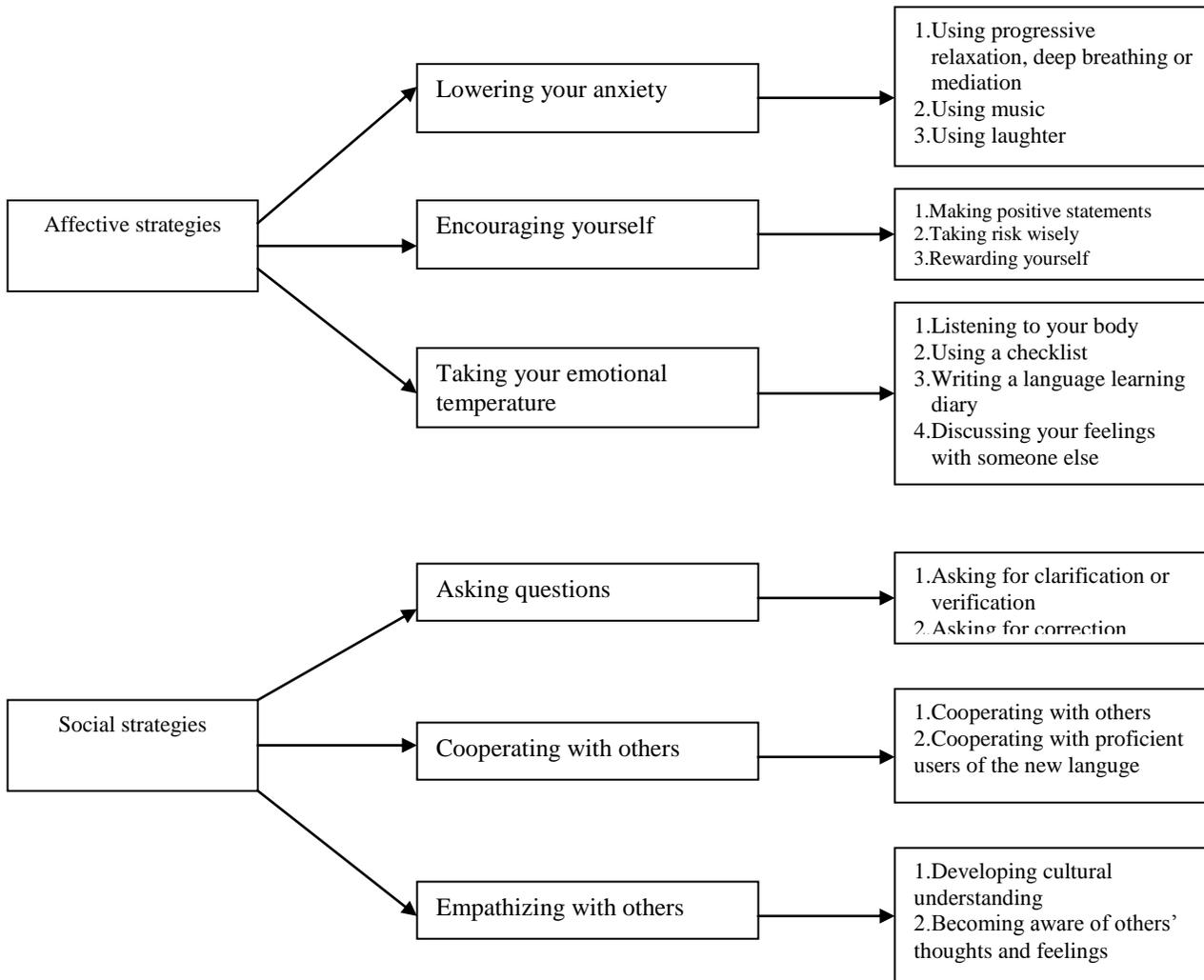
As far as classification of strategies is concerned, there are several classifications by several linguists, as reviewed in the literature. Starting with its just listings of strategies, it developed to a more 'comprehensive, multi-leveled, and theoretically-motivated taxonomies' (Ellis, 2002, 539). The taxonomies considered for the present study are Rubin (1981), Naiman et al. (1978), O' Malley and Chamot's (1990) typology of learning strategies and Oxford's (1990) classifications of strategies. The selected classification for the present study is Oxford's (1990), as illustrated in figure 1 below.

Figure 1 : Oxford (1990) classification of learning strategies

(1) Direct Strategies







Oxford's (1990) language learning strategies classification

This classification is said to be the most comprehensive taxonomies of all the ones mentioned earlier (Ellis, 2002). This is because it has a broader classes of learning strategies. Oxford's (1990) taxonomy is said to be the comprehensive in the sense that she has built on the other classifications 'with the aim of subsuming within her taxonomy virtually every strategy. This means that she has included all the earlier strategies into her model, making it more complete. Precisely, as mentioned in the literature, based on all the four classifications, she came up with the first model in 1985 of which based on this she had also produced the first 'students' inventory on language learning (SILL) in 1986. Since then the classifications and the SILL has undergone revisions. In 1990, Oxford (1990) formulate a new language learning strategies classifications, which is the one used in this study.

Although problems exist in this classification, many researchers in the world have used it as a basis for their studies until today. Some of the researches carried out using this classifications and the SILL are such as studies done by Shmais (2003), McLeod (2002), Su (2008), Khalil (2008), Riazi (2007), Xiao (2007) and Lee and Oxford (2008). In the Malaysian context too many researchers have used Oxford's (1990) classifications and the Oxford (1989) SILL (version 7.0 for language learners of other languages). They are researchers such as Nair (2002), Kaur and Salasiah (1998), Kwong (2007), Leong (2008), Norhayati (2008), and Sayadian (2008) Budiman (2008). In view of this, the present study has adopted it as a base to carry out the study.

Related Research

There are many studies done all over the world as far as language learning strategies is concerned. This section

presents a review of some of the studies done in foreign countries as well as in Malaysia.

Brief History of Language Learning Strategies Research

The earliest research in learning strategies could be traced to the decade of the 60s when Aaron Carton published his study 'The Method Of Inference in Foreign Language Study' in 1966 (Wenden & Rubin, 1987). What was discovered from this study was 'learners vary in their propensity to make inferences and in their ability to make valid, rational, and reasonable inferences' (p. 19). Following this study, most studies focused on researching the strategies of successful language learners such as done by Rubin (1971) who published her report in 1975.

Consequently, later studies include Naiman et al. (1978) who studied on the 'personality traits, cognitive styles and strategies that were critical to successful language learning' (Wenden & Rubin 1987, p. 20); Wesche (1975) who studied 'the learning behaviours of successful adult language students in Canadian Civil Service (Wenden & Rubin 1987, p.21); Stern (1975); Wong-Fillmore (1976) who 'identified social strategies used by successful language learners' (Wenden & Rubin, 1987, p. 21); Bialystok (1979) whose study reported on the 'effects of the use of two functional strategies – inferencing and functional practicing – and two formal strategies – monitoring and formal practicing' (Wenden & Rubin, 1987, p. 21); Tarone (1977) whose study identified 'several communication strategies which learners use to remain in a conversation' (Wenden & Rubin, 1987, p. 21); Hosenfeld (1977) who reported on the reading strategies of successful and unsuccessful second language learners (Wenden & Rubin, 1987, p. 20); Hosenfeld (1978) who studied the meta-cognition process; Cohen and Aphek (1981) whose study focused on the 'strategies students used in the learning of vocabulary' (Wenden & Rubin, 1987, p. 21); In addition to all these, a new dimension, besides studies on strategies of successful language learners, is the one done by Wenden (1982) which focused on the importance of metacognitive strategies. Chamot and O'Malley (1987) 'provide the first clear contrast between cognitive and metacognitive strategies (in Wenden & Rubin 1987, p.22).

Recent Research:

Research in language learning strategies continues since several decades ago until the present era of the 2000s. There have been numerous studies in language learning strategies in recent years.

Studies Outside Malaysia

In the context of foreign countries, there is a study done by Wafa Abu Shmais (2003) on the language learning

strategies used according to gender and proficiency variables among the Arabic-speaking English-majors at An-Najah National University in Palestine. The instrument used was the Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0 for learners of other languages containing 50 items. The results revealed that the subjects' use of the strategies ranged from high to medium frequency; highest being 79.6% for meta-cognitive strategies and the lowest 63% for compensation strategies. Consequently, the researcher recommended that the subjects be given additional training in the aspect of cognitive, memory and compensation strategies which, he said, could be embedded into their regular classroom activities.

Another study is done by Nigel Parson (2003) in New Zealand on the idiosyncrasies of out-of-class language learning of a group of 106 mainland Chinese learners studying English at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. A self devised questionnaire was used by the researcher together with a follow up interview. The questions in the questionnaire sought to find out about the range of material the respondents used outside of class and when and where they use English as well as the learning activities that they do in learning English. The results indicated more than half of the respondents (N=59: 55.7%) used mainly Chinese in the place where they lived. Those who used English is 42 (39.6%). The rest of the 5 (4.7%) respondents used English and Chinese equally. In terms of activities they did the highest is listening and watching news on radio or television with a percentage of 87% (n=92). Meanwhile the lowest is using English at home which is 40% (n=42). The researcher concluded that the out-of-class language learning (VUW) strongly contributed to the language proficiency of the Chinese students at The Victoria University of Wellington.

In another study carried out in Taiwan by Min-hsun Maggie Su (2005), one of the three questions attempted was to find out the types and frequency of the language learning strategies employed by the vocational college foreign language students. The respondents were 419 randomly selected Taiwanese vocational college students, males (24.1%) and females (79.5%) majoring in applied foreign languages. The instruments used were SILL version 7.0, and the adapted Oxford's (1990) SILL background questionnaire. The result showed that the overall mean score of the respondents in language learning strategy use is 2.86, with the social strategy being the highest and the memory strategy the lowest. However, according to the researcher, the level of the strategy for all categories are at the medium level

In another study, Aziz Khalil (2005) carried out an investigation into the language learning strategies of 378

students; 194 high school students in Bethelhem, Palestine and 184 university EFL learners in Bethelhem University, Palestine using Oxford's (1990) SILL version 7.0 questionnaire, translated into Arabic. The objective of the study was to find out the strategies used according to level of proficiency and gender. The results showed that the overall mean score for the school students is lower than the mean score of the university students; viz. 3.21 for university students; and 2.99 for the school students. Both are at the medium level of strategy use.

In another foreign study, Abdolmehdi Riazi (2007) carried out an investigation on the patterns of language learning strategy use among 120 female Arabic-speaking student majoring in English at a university in Qatar using Oxford (1990) SILL version 7.0 together with the background questionnaire. Both are in English version. The result showed that the overall mean score is 3.46 which is at the medium level of strategy use. Relating to each category of the strategies, metacognitive strategy seems to be the highest which is 3.87. Apparently, from this study it can be observed that metacognitive strategy seems to be the preferred strategy among the female learners.

Another foreign study is the one that was carried out by Junhong Xiao (2007). This study investigated the language learning strategies of a group of 218 Chinese students in year 1,2 and 3, and graduates who had just graduated from their studies learning English at a distance at Shantou Radio and Television University, China. The study adopted the Oxford (1989) SILL questionnaire and adapted it to suit the study, but still contain the six categories of strategies but with 60 items. The overall result showed that the mean score is 3.22 which is 'towards medium high' (Xiao, 2007). In this study the respondents seemed to employ affective strategies the most which is 3.54.

The last study to be presented in this section is the one done by Lee and Oxford (2008). The researchers carried out an investigation on 1,100 male and female Korean EFL students from middle school, high school and university on their strategy awareness and use. The instrument used was Oxford's (1990) SILL version 7.0 which was adapted by translating it into Korean language and adding two open-ended questions so as to answer the other research question; viz. on awareness. Besides that, the Oxford's (1990) background questionnaire was also adapted before administering to the respondents. The results on strategy use among the Korean students revealed that the mean score for compensation strategies was the highest which is 3.10. The results in this study revealed that the Korean EFL students were at the medium range of strategy use.

From the presentation of all the above foreign studies findings, we have observed that there were various kinds of results as far as language learning strategies is concerned among the respondents. Some learners employed compensation strategies the most; some employed affective strategies most, some employed metacognitive strategies the most, some showed low employment of strategies in learning English, some used social strategies the most. Overall, the mean scores of the strategy use by all the respondents as observed in all the studies lies in the medium level; either high medium or lower medium. This may be due to various reasons and factors such as learner variables, task types and other related factors. In the next section, review of the studies done in Malaysia is presented.

Research In Malaysia

In the context of the present study, it is important to review some of the studies done in the Malaysian context as far as language learning strategies is concerned apart from the studies carried out by various foreign countries. This would enable the researcher to see the patterns of the language learning strategies used among the learners in the Malaysian context which could be compared with the findings of the present study.

Firstly, there is the study done by Kaur and Salasiah (1998) on 46 Malay second year students of USM on the language learning strategies employed in learning English. The instrument used was the Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL – version for speakers of other languages learning English) and background questionnaire. The aim was to make the learners aware of the existence of language learning strategies and to help them become better language learners. Besides the SILL, a structured interview session was also carried out with 10 selected students among the 46 subjects. The results showed that majority of the subjects (73.9%) use language learning strategies in learning English. (Kaur & Salasiah 1998 & 1999). The main point that the researchers raised out of this study is that, 'there is a need for English language teachers to familiarize themselves with language learning strategies and then to conduct strategy awareness training among their students to aid in the learning process' (Kaur & Salasiah, 1998 & 1999).

In another study related to language learning strategy use in higher learning institution in Malaysia was done by by Suchitra Nair (2002) on a group of 50 Malay Engineering full time diploma students in the third semester of UiTM, Penang campus, taking language proficiency course focusing on the four skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. The major goal of the study was to identify the learning strategies used by the students. The instrument used was the 'Strategy

Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) for learners of other languages, by Oxford (1990). In this study, the researcher has concluded that ‘students to a large extent, lack the tools necessary for “learning how to learn” and thus strongly recommended for a ‘conscious effort on providing strategy training’ (Nair, 2002).

In another study done by Lau Chun Kwong (2007), 60 lower six science students in a secondary school in Kulim, Kedah were investigated on their employment of language learning strategies in learning English. The respondents comprise of male and female Indian and Chinese students. The instruments used were Oxford’s (1990) SILL version 7.0, translated into Malay; background questionnaire, and semi-structured interview. One of the research questions of this study was ‘what are the language learning strategies commonly used by lower six science students when learning English?’ (Kwong, 2007). The result revealed that the majority of the respondents in this study fell under the medium category of strategy use (65%) with the metacognitive being the most used strategy which is 3.38.

Another study which is carried out in a secondary school was the study done by Lim Seng Leong (2008). The researcher investigated the language learning strategies of Malay and Chinese students in form four in the Bukit Jambul secondary school in Penang. The instrument used was the SILL. The results revealed that the Chinese students ‘employ a variety of strategies in learning English but with different frequencies in terms of the use of some categories in the SILL’ (Leong, 2008). The Chinese students was said to be at the medium level of strategy use with metacognitive the most employed, followed by cognitive, social, compensation, memory and last but not least affective strategies. Meanwhile, for the Malay respondents, they are at the upper medium level of strategy use with metacognitive strategies the highest. So, apparently, it seems that overall, the most employed strategies is metacognitive strategies among the form four Malay and Chinese students.

The next study to be presented in the context of Malaysian language learning strategy is an investigation carried out by Sima Sayadian (2008). The researcher carried out the study on 82 TESL students of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). The sample is a combination of 55 undergraduate students and 27 PhD students. The instruments used was the Oxford’s (1990) SILL version 7.0. One of the objectives of the study was to find out the range and type of language learning strategies employed by UPM undergraduate and PhD TESL students. The results revealed that the level of strategy use among the undergraduate students was at the medium level with the mean score of 2.46. For the PhD students their strategy

use was also at the medium level with the mean score of 2.51. From these two sets of results we could observe that both level of students were low level users of metacognitive strategies as far as language strategies in the Oxford (1990) classification is concerned.

Up to this point it has been observed that the language learning strategies researches in English learning, done by various researchers in the foreign countries as well as in Malaysia mostly used Oxford’s SILL inventory version 7.0 (version for speakers of other languages); meanwhile some researchers used self created questionnaires. After reviewing all the studies, it is relevant that an analysis is made to what is salient in the trend or pattern of language learning strategies research. This is discussed in the next section.

Interpreting the studies

An analysis of all the above studies above shows a certain pattern as far as language learning strategies research is concerned. Firstly, as far as we could observe, the subjects involved in the studies were all full time learners. Secondly, all the subjects were ESL learners. Thirdly, the findings are mixed and inconsistent; in the local as well as foreign contexts. For example, the one done in UiTM said that the students were lacking as far as strategies use is concerned; the one done in USM said that majority of the students did employ language learning strategies in learning English. This suggests for more researches to be carried out in order to get a clearer picture of strategies used by learners. Fourthly, most of the studies reviewed above seemed to carry out investigations on the overall language learning strategy. Apart from this, only one researched on the out-of-class language learning strategy, viz. the study done by Nigel Parson (2003) in New Zealand. In Malaysia, none of the studies reviewed above focus on the out-of-class language learning strategies. Additionally, one of the most salient findings from the analysis of the studies presented above is that, all studies done were on full time learners; none of the studies were carried out among the part time learners. especially the Malay part time learners learning English as a second language at the diploma level. Consequently, based on this backdrop, the present study is carried out to find out the repertoire of the language learning strategies among the Malay part time learners learning English in four branches in the northern region of a public Malaysian university; viz, UiTM Perlis, Kedah, Penang, and Perak. It is hoped that the findings from this study would provide some insights to English teachers teaching the Malay part time learners so that they have better and clearer ideas of this group of learners’ ways of learning; thus, helping the teachers in preparing materials and teaching approaches which are relevant for them.

METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a quantitative as well as qualitative methodology. The method of data collection is by retrospective approach using the structured Oxford's (1990) SILL questionnaire version 7.0 for English speakers of other languages, the Oxford's (1990) background information questionnaire, as well as the semi-structured interview protocol based on guidelines by Wenden (1987). These three instruments were adopted in carrying out the data collection process so as to triangulate the results of the data collection. This is because, Ellis (2002) said that 'many of the most successful studies have employed multiple data collection procedures' (p. 535). In line with this, Ellis (2002) also stated that 'a method that has been found to be more successful involves the use of structured interviews and questionnaire, (p. 534). Ellis (2002) also said that many researchers have used this method to study language learning strategies among learners, of which among them are Naiman et al. 1978, Rubin 1981, Politzer and McGroarty 1985, Oxford 1985, Wenden 1986a, Chamot 1987).

Sampling

Basically, the sampling method for the present study is based on the simple random sampling approach. The samples for the present study involves 120 Malay part-time learners of UiTM Perlis, Kedah, Penang, and Perak taking Diploma in Business Studies (code BM111); either through PLK or e-PJJ program.

Subjects

The subjects for the present study comprise of 120 Malay part-time learners of UiTM Perlis, Kedah, Penang and Perak taking up a course in Diploma in Business Studies (code BM 111); PLK and e-PJJ programs. The contact hours for the English code that they take is lesser than the full time learners. The subjects in this study is a mixture of students from part one, two, three and three. Thus, the English codes that they take differ from one semester to the other. For semester one students, they take Consolidating Language skills, for semester two, they take Preparation for MUET, for semester three, they take English for Academic Purposes. Specifically, the respondents involved in the main study comprise of 40 from semester one, 40 from semester two, 40 from semester three. Out of this composition, 60 were male and 40 were female subjects, and all of them have the same mother tongue; viz. Bahasa Melayu.

Instruments

Background questionnaire

The background questionnaire is adapted from Oxford's (1990) model to suit the respondents of the present study.

Questions included in this adapted model are name of respondents, age, gender, semester, mother tongue, length of the respondents' English learning, belief of respondents' English proficiency, importance of English learning, enjoyment in learning English, level of problem encountered in learning English outside classroom, and last but not least reasons for learning English. The questionnaire is in English because the questions do not involve difficult words, in which it has been confirmed of its flexibility by the samples in the pilot study.

Oxford's (1989) SILL Questionnaire (Version 7.0)

The questionnaire adopted for the present study to identify the strategies used among the respondents is the Oxford's (1989) SILL inventory, version 7.0 for English speakers of other languages which consists of 50 items which is responded on a five-likert scale continuum, viz. (1) Always or mostly not true of me; (2) Usually not true of me; (3) somewhat true of me; (4) usually true of me; (5) Always or mostly true of me. The questionnaire is accompanied with Bahasa Malaysia translation as implicated by the pilot study beneath the English version. In addition, it is also responded in the instrument itself on the right side of the page by circling the selected scale (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) which is also as a result of the pilot study; not in a separate answer worksheet following the original SILL.

The Interview protocol

The second instrument of the study is an interview protocol. The aim is to get an additional data from the respondents. It is felt relevant because as O'Malley and Chamot (1990) said that 'the primary advantage with interview data collection is the richness of the description obtained of the respondent's use of learning strategies' (p.94). The interview protocol structure is a retrospective interview based on the guidelines provided by Wenden (1987). This model of interview is chosen because it is suitable with the present study in the sense that it corresponds to the research questions of the present study in which it is an exploratory study to find out the general strategies employed by the respondents in learning English outside classroom.

Data Analysis and Presentation

There are three types of data analyzed and presented in this study. Firstly, the demographic data; secondly, the questionnaire (Oxford, 1990, SILL) data; and thirdly, the interview data. The questionnaire data is analyzed using SPSS program; and the interview data is analyzed based on Wenden's (1987) guidelines. All questionnaire data are presented in table form. viz. the presentation of the mean scores for each category of Oxford's (1990) six strategies. Interview data is presented in excerpts as support to the questionnaire data.

FINDINGS

In this section, data from the Oxford’s (1990) SILL questionnaire is presented.

Oxford’s (1990) SILL data

Reference of mean score based on Oxford’s (1990) SILL Profile of results

Table 1.0: Reference to mean score based on Oxford’s (1990) descriptive system

Level	Range of Score	Description
High	4.5 – 5.0	Always or almost always used
Medium	3.5 – 4.4	Usually used
	2.5 – 3.4	Sometimes used
Low	1.5 – 2.4	Generally not used
	1.0 – 1.4	Never or almost never used

The table above shows the reference for the interpretations of learners’ performance based on Oxford’s (1989) system which accompanies the SILL (1989). The performance of learners are considered high if the mean score is 4.5 to 5.0 and 3.5 to 4.4; medium level if the mean score is 2.5 to 3.4, and low if the mean score is 1.5 and below. The description of the respondents’ performance is based on this description in

discussing their performance of strategy use reflected in the data.

Overall mean score of respondents’ strategy use

The overall mean score of the respondents’ strategy use in this study is 3.1, which means the respondents are medium strategy users or only sometimes used, according to Oxford’s (1990) SILL profile of the results. This can be referred in table 2.0 below.

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Table 2.0 Overall mean score of respondents’ strategy use

N	Mean	Level	Interpretation
120	3.1	Medium	sometimes used

Respondents’ mean score for each category of strategy use

Table 3.0: respondents’ overall mean score for each of the language learning strategy categories based on Oxford’s (1990) strategy classification

Strategies	N	Mean	Level	Rank
Memory	120	2.50	Medium	6
Cognitive	120	3.30	Medium	2
compensation	120	3.10	Medium	4
Metacognitive	120	3.60	High	1
Affective	120	3.00	Medium	5
Social	120	3.20	Medium	3

The table above shows the overall mean score for each category of the language learning strategies of the respondents as revealed from the questionnaire data. As can be referred in the table, it seems that the majority of the level of strategy use among the respondents of this study is at the medium level. However, only one type of

strategy seems to be highly employed by the learners which is the metacognitive strategies with a score of 3.60. This is consistent with some studies done in the foreign studies like studies done by Shmais (2003) and Riazi (2007). In Malaysia the result of this study is consistent with the study done by Kwong (2007 and

Leong (2008). On the contrary, for memory strategy, the mean score is 2.50 which means medium level; cognitive strategy is 3.30 is also at the medium level; for compensation strategy, the mean score is 3.10; affective strategy has a mean score of 3.00 which is at the medium level as well; and last but not least for the social strategy the respondents also seem to employ this strategy at the medium level with the mean score of 3.20.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Discussions

The question asked in this study are:

- (i) What is the level of language learning strategies employed by the Malay part time learners in learning English?
- (ii) What are the language learning strategies mostly employed by the Malay part time ESL learners in learning English?

From the findings, the data showed that the respondents utilized all the strategies in the Oxford's (1990) learning strategies classifications. However, the usage is only at the medium level. The overall mean score is 3.10. The result of this study is similar with other studies in foreign countries like studies done by Shmais (2003) and Hong (2007). In addition the result of the present study is also consistent with the studies done in Malaysia like studies done by Kwong (2007) and Leong (2008). This reflects that the respondents in this study are moderate users of language learning strategies as far as English language leaning outside classroom is concerned. This indication is a good sign in the sense that these group of learners showed that they already possess the foundation in relation to language learning strategies. It also indicates that there is potential for these group of learners to be further trained in the use of language learning strategies so as to empower them to enhance their English language learning.

In addition, the data also showed that five of the strategies mean scores center around 3.0 and only one strategy, viz. metacognitive strategy showed a high

mean score of 3.60. The lowest mean score goes to the memory strategy which is 2.50. These results indicate that the respondents do use the learning strategies but in majority is not that high or active; just moderate or at the less active level. There may be various reasons for this phenomenon. Firstly, they may not be aware of the repertoire of language learning strategies available; secondly, they may also not have sufficient context or opportunities for utilizing the learning strategies, even if they are aware of them; or thirdly, there may perhaps be other reasons as to why this phenomenon occurred.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the present study, it may be concluded that to some extent, the respondents are aware on the range of strategies in their learning of English. However, it is still not enough just to be aware of the strategies, it is also important to ensure that the strategies are really mobilized by the learners. In fact, additional language learning strategy training should be carried out on the learners so that they could extend their existing repertoire of language learning strategies as presently their level of strategy use is only at the medium level with only one at the high level which is the metacognitive strategy. Even though the metacognitive strategy is at the high level it is a bonus to further enhance it among the learners so that they would be exposed more to the various types of strategies in this category. In a nutshell, the findings of the study has given some insights to the researcher and those who are concerned with the part time learners' learning of English language patterns. Thus, this will guide the lecturers in designing their lesson plan or language learning strategy session. Apart from that, the curriculum designers, the material producers, and the universities which provide part time courses, may also benefit from the findings of this study. Nevertheless, for a more conclusive findings, further studies such as these should be carried out involving a larger number of respondents of part time learners. This may include respondents from other universities as well apart from UiTM alone.

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