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Language Learning Strategies of ESL Students in Online Distance Learning Environment Nur Alyani Khairol Anuar¹, Muhammad Irfan Mokhtar²

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Abstract

This study reports on the use of Language Learning Strategies by L2 learners in online distance learning environment. When learning, learners will either consciously or unconsciously use language learning strategy (LLS) in order to process new information in their language lesson. In 1990, Oxford comes out with Strategies Inventory of Language Learning (SILL). This inventory has six broad categories: Cognitive, Memory, Affective, Meta-cognitive, Compensatory, and Social strategies. Various researches then have been conducted with their focus on LLS in L2 learning. LLS has been found to help learners to achieve better language achievement. While technology keeps on moving forward, it also lays its effects on teaching and learning process. The advent of technology gives L2 learners the opportunity to learn the language in technology-mediated environment. Thus, this study examined the preference of L2 learners in LLS when learning English in online distance environment. 78 respondents were involved in this study and questionnaires were given as the research instrument. Result shows that in term of LLS preference, learners used more Compensation strategy when learning English online. There is also a significant difference between male and female learners in term of LLS use. Female used more LLS as compared to male. Female learners preferred to use Metacognitive strategy, while male used Compensation strategy the most. The findings of this study have pedagogical impacts on English teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Language learning strategies, ESL, Online Distance Learning, L2 learners

Introduction

Learning a language differs from one person to another. According to Rubin (1975), good language learners learn differently as compared to bad language learners. From there on, researchers have tried to explore more on specific ways of learning employed by other language learners. When learning, learners will either consciously or unconsciously use the language learning strategy (LLS) in order to process the new information in their language lesson. In 1990, Oxford comes out with Strategies Inventory of Language Learning (SILL). This inventory has six broad categories; Cognitive, Memory, Affective, Meta-cognitive, Compensatory, and Social strategies. According to Oxford (1990), language learning strategies are “the specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations”. In a previous finding by Holec (1981), it is found that applying the right learning strategies will escalate autonomous learning in ESL. There are many previous researches that support the notion of positive and meaningful relationship between language learning strategies and language proficiency (Muhammad Irfan & Nur Alyani, 2015; Al-Maktary, 2018; Ahmad, Jelas & Ali, 2010). Rapid development of technology is changing the landscape of language teaching and learning. Teaching and learning can now be done online without the need of seeing each other. The convenience of online learning has also been one of great catalysts for distance learning. Distance learning, online learning, web-based learning, e-learning, cyberlearning, and computer-based learning are terms that have little unanimity in term of definitions (Moore et al., 2011). Online learning environment is then used as an umbrella term for related concepts of learning that take place on the Internet or involved the use of Internet (Moore et al., 2011). LLS is still considered as relevant yet needed for effective language learning even in this digital era and strategies pertinent to numerous digital learning challenges do exist (Oxford & Schramm, 2007).

Research Objectives

1. To identify language learning strategies of L2 learners in online distance learning environment.
2. To identify the preference of language learning strategies of L2 learners according to gender.

Methodology

Respondents for this study are university students who are currently taking English subject in their course of study. There are 78 respondents for this study. A convenience sampling was adopted in selecting the respondents. All respondents took their English subject through online distance learning environment. Teaching and learning process took place in a 100% online environment. This study employed quantitative method where questionnaires are used to gather information from the respondents. Questionnaires were adapted from Oxford (1990). SPSS was used to analyse the gathered data from the respondents.

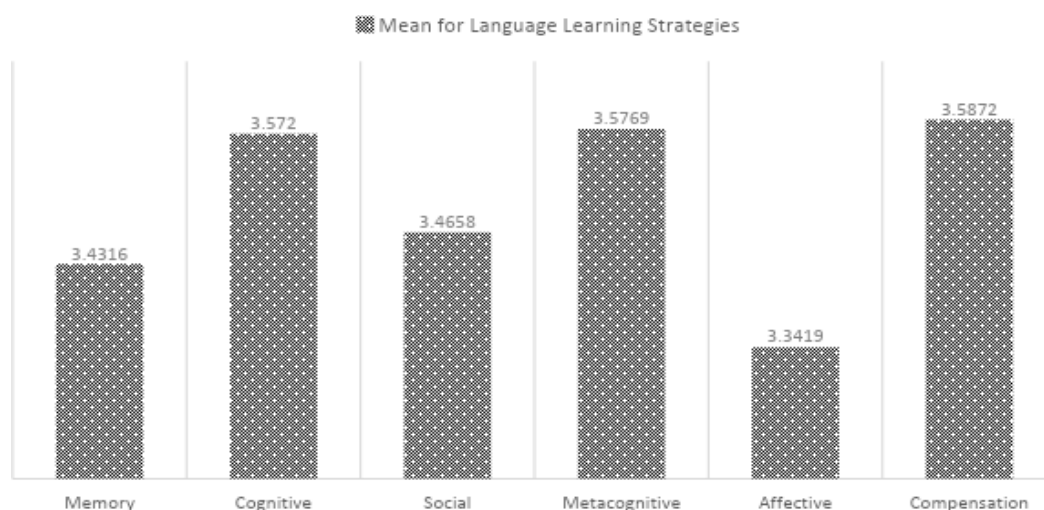
Findings

This study focused on language learning strategies used by L2 learners in online distance learning environment.

Table 1: Mean for Language Learning Strategies

LLS	Mean
Memory	3.4316
Cognitive	3.5720
Social	3.4658
Metacognitive	3.5769
Affective	3.3419
Compensation	3.5872

Chart 1: Mean for Language Learning Strategies



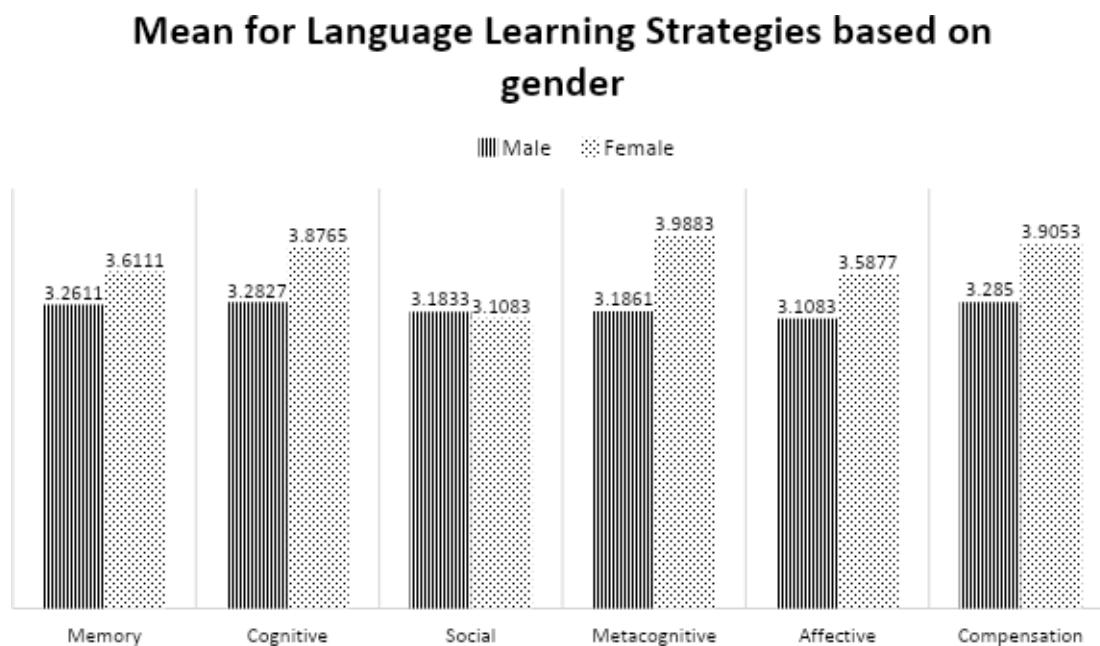
Data gathered from the respondents were analysed to figure out the most preferred LLS by using mean and standard deviation. Learners' most frequently used LLS is Compensation strategy with its mean value is the highest (3.5872). Least used LLS is Affective strategy with mean value of 3.341. However,

Copyright © 2020 Virtual Symposium on Teaching and Learning (VSTL2020) e-proceeding. from Table 1, the difference between mean value of each strategy is not very distinct from each other. This indicates that learners also employ other LLS in their L2 learning and they were equally used.

Table 2: Mean for Language Learning Strategies based on gender

LLS	Male	Female
Memory	3.2611	3.6111
Cognitive	3.2827	3.8765
Social	3.1833	3.1083
Metacognitive	3.1861	3.9883
Affective	3.1083	3.5877
Compensation	3.2850	3.9053

Chart 2: Mean for Language Learning Strategies based on gender

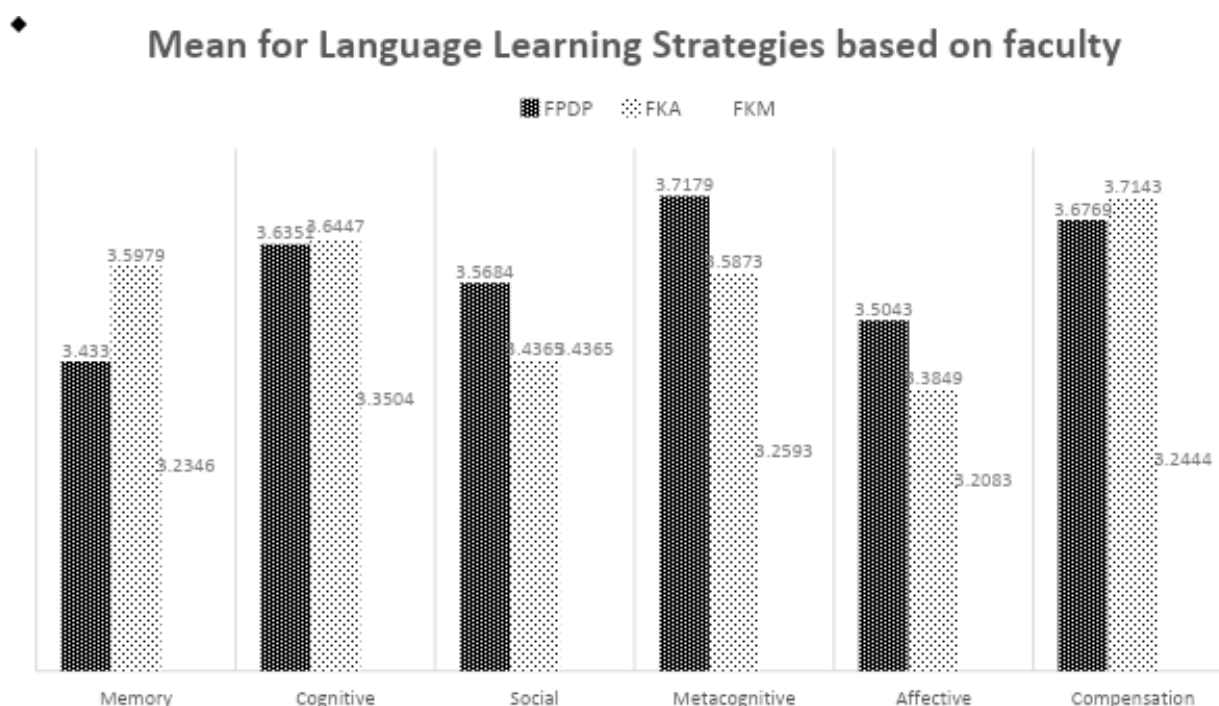


To further explore the preference of language learning strategies used by the respondent, data was analysed according to gender. Compensation is the most preferred learning strategy for male students with a mean value of 3.2850, while metacognitive is the most preferred learning strategy by female students with the mean value of 3.9883. However, the least preferred LLS for male is affective strategy with mean value of 3.1083. Female learners seemed to have least preference in social strategy with mean value of 3.1083.

Table 3: Mean for Language Learning Strategies based on faculty

LLS	FPDP	FKA	FKM
Memory	3.4330	3.5979	3.2346
Cognitive	3.6351	3.6447	3.3504
Social	3.5684	3.4365	3.4365
Metacognitive	3.7179	3.5873	3.2593
Affective	3.5043	3.3849	3.2083
Compensation	3.6769	3.7143	3.2444

Chart 3: Mean for Language Learning Strategies based on faculty



Data for this research was collected from 3 faculties; Fakulti Pengurusan dan Perniagaan (FPDP), Fakulti Kejuruteraan Mekanikal (FKM), and Fakulti Kejuruteraan Awam (FKA). Data was analysed based on their respective faculty and it shows that FPDP students had the highest tendency to use metacognitive strategy with the mean value of 3.7179, while FKA students chose compensation strategy as the most preferred strategy with the mean value of 3.7143. FKM students showed more inclination towards cognitive strategy with mean value of 3.3504. The least preferred strategy for FPDP is memory with a mean value of 3.4330. Affective strategy appeared to be the least favourite for FKA and FKM students with a mean value of 3.3849 and 3.2083 respectively.

Conclusion

This study has managed to highlight the learners preferential in their LLS when learning English in online distance learning environment. From the analysed data, finding shows that respondents of this study had predilection of compensation strategy when learning English in online setting. Compensation strategy is a strategy adopted by L2 learners by compensating their limited knowledge of the language with something else. Compensation strategy is mainly a skill of guessing meanings from the context in reading and listening and using synonyms and gestures to convey meaning when the precise expression is not known (Oxford, 1990). According to this study, L2 learners preferred to make guesses when they were in a bind regarding the language. This research may benefit educators and learners in

Copyright © 2020 Virtual Symposium on Teaching and Learning (VSTL2020) e-proceeding. designing lessons that will match the learners learning strategies. This research may be replicable and further elaborated in other different contexts.

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