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Learning Strategies used by Pakistani ESL Students in University of Sargodha

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Abstract -The language which is learned after the learning of native language is called second language and the process of learning the second language is called second language acquisition (Gass & Selinker, 2008). The study of learning strategies has gained much importance in the field of second language acquisition during the past few decades (Koch, 2005). "Language learning strategies are operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information; specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990).

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Learning Strategies used by Pakistani ESL Students in University of Sargodha

Hafiza Saima Akbar [α], Nabila Gul [σ], Mamoona Manzoor Sial [ρ], Iqra Nadeem [ω] & Ijaz Ranjha [¥]

I. Introduction

The language which is learned after the learning of native language is called second language and the process of learning the second language is called second language acquisition (Gass & Selinker, 2008). The study of learning strategies has gained much importance in the field of second language acquisition during the past few decades (Koch, 2005). "Language learning strategies are operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information; specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990).

Oxford(1990) provides six categories of learning strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, memory related, compensatory, affective and social strategies. Researches have shown that different factors like age, gender, motivation, learning styles, cultural differences, learning stage, learning experience, proficiency and aptitude directly influence the choice and use of learning strategies (Rubin, 1975, et al., cited by Lee, 2010). Good language learners use these strategies consciously or unconsciously to create successful learning experiences.

In second language acquisition, the types of learning strategies and learning styles differ in different cultures (Oxford, 1996a). The purpose of this study is to explore the learning strategies used by the students of University of Sargodha by using quantitative method and to find out the relationship between the strategy use and the various factors. The researcher has chosen four independent variables to find their influence on strategy use: learning stage, self-choice of studying English, intrinsic motivation (liking of English language) and self-examined proficiency.

The results obtained from the data will fill the major research gap by providing information about the strategies used by the students of University of Sargodha. This study will explore the relationship among four independent variables and students' strategy use and will find the variable which best predicts the students' strategy use. This information will help the teachers in identifying students' needs according to their requirements and guiding them in using the strategies they are lacking in use.

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a) *Aims of the Study*

The main aim of this study is to investigate the strategy use by the students of University of Sargodha. It will also explore the impact of four independent variables on students' strategy use. Following will be the research questions of this study.

b) *Research Questions*

- What is the mean of total strategy use for all the students?
- What is the mean of each of the strategy category for all the students?

II. Literature Review

Currently emphasis is put on the active role of learners in learning process and the effective use of learning strategies shows learners' control over the learning process (Gewehr, 1998). Language learning strategies are conscious efforts of the learners to make their learning better and faster (Oxford, 1996a; Koch, 2005). Learning strategies impact the development of communicative competence (Oxford, 1996b). Students use strategies of advance planning, note taking, self-management, self - encouragement, cooperation, inferring, and deduction etc. (Gewehr, 1998). But unfortunately all learners don't adopt the learning strategies (Gewehr, 1998). According to Graham (1997) successful and unsuccessful learners are differentiated on the basis of their strategy use. Learners can't achieve their goal without the use of learning strategies (Koch, 2005).

Malley and Chamot (1990) give three strategy categories: metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective but Oxford (1990) gives six categories of learning strategies. Metacognitive strategies are used to plan, monitor and evaluate students' own learning process and are considered to be most effective in their learning (Gewher, 1998; Graham, 1997; Oxford, 1996b). Cognitive strategies manipulate incoming information in the form of summarizing, deduction, inference, note taking, induction and translation to make learning effective (Gewher, 1998; Graham, 1997; Oxford, 1996b). Compensatory strategies, like guessing and inferring are also used by good learners (Oxford, 1996b). When learners don't remember any appropriate word in the given situation, they use the words of same meaning to solve their problem (Littlewood, 1984). Most researchers called memory strategies, like combining and organized

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reviewing as cognitive (Oxford, 1996b). Affective strategies, like self-encouragement and high motivation are used to control one's emotional state and anxiety level (Gewher, 1998; Graham, 1997; Oxford, 1996b). Social strategies, like asking for help, questioning and sharing worries show cooperative attitude of learners (Gewher, 1998; Graham, 1997; Oxford, 1996b). But many learners don't use social and affective strategies (Oxford, 1996b).

Gujjar, Noareen and Aslam (2010) compared the learning strategies used by the Pakistani students of formal and non-formal education system and found that formal students use strategies of memorization and socialization while non-formal students use summarizing and compensatory strategies.

Researches have shown that factors like age, motivation, goals, aptitude, language learning level, proficiency, learning style and learning field influence learning strategies choice (Oxford and Nyikos 1989). According to Gwehr (1998) factors like learning stage, age, learning style, context, experience, culture and teaching impact the strategy use.

Research of Oxford and Nyikos (1989) finds motivation as the strongest predictor of strategy use and highly motivated learners use more cognitive and metacognitive strategies. According to Gardner's hypothesis highly motivated learners are active and successful learners (Oxford, 1996a). There is a strong relationship between strategy use and proficiency level of the students (Oxford, 1996b). More proficient learners consciously use more and organized strategies (Oxford, 1996a). The research on learning strategies helps students and teachers in improving the learning process (Gewehr, 1998).

III. Learning Strategies

Language learning Strategies (LLS) are seen as a shift from focusing on teacher and teaching to learners and learning.

Cohen (1998) defined such as swift when he states that "one potentially beneficial shift in teachers roles in from that of being exclusive the manger, controller and instructor to that of being a change agent- a facilitator of learning, whose role is to help their students to become more independent and more responsible for their own learning. In this role the teacher become partner in the learning process"

Language Learning Strategies are different from teaching Strategies (the technique used by teachers to help learners learn) in that, the learners and not the teachers, is the one who exercises control or the operations of the designed activity (O' Malley etal.1985).

Weinstein and Mayer (1986) "behaviors and thoughts that a learners engages in during learning. Which are intended to influence the learners encoding process"? Mayer (1988) "behavior of a learner that are intended to influence how the learners process information"

a) Characteristics of Language learning Strategies (LLS)

- Learning strategies are set of process and a routine for organizing those processes (Garner, 1988)
- LLS allow learners to become more self directed (oxfor,1906)
- Only conscious strategies are LLS, these are must be a choice involved on the part of learners (Cohen, 1990)
- They may be visible as they are (specific actions for techniques) (Green and oxford,1995) or invisible as they can involve mental processing (Williams and Burden,1997)
- Learning Strategies use is determined at a metacognitive level (Garner,1988)
- LLS can be thought to students (oxford,1906)
- Learning Strategies are under the active, strategic control of the student while in use (garner,1988)

b) Can Strategies be Taught to Students

- Teachers who experimented and investigated learning strategies in their teaching are convinced that strategies can be taught through direct instruction and overtime students will maintain and transfer them into new task when necessary.
- Strategies teaching should start at the beginning levels by providing them in the student's first language.
- Strategies should be integrated with in the curriculum rather than taught as separate entity.
- Teacher should identify strategies by name, describe them and model them.
- Students needs to have experience with variety of strategies by name to be able to use the one that works with them well.
- In this case of failure in language learning, students need to be assured that work with them well.

c) The Good Language Learner Strategies

The good Language learning strategies that we observed are to find a learning style that suits you and involve yourself in the language learning process. To develop an awareness of language both as system and as communication, also pay constant attention to expanding your language. Teacher should develop the L2 as a separate system.

IV. Research Methodology

The students of University of Sargodha will be taken as population. The sample will constitute the students from different departments. Oxford's (1989) Strategy Inventory for language learning version 7.0 (ESL/EFL) is modified to collect the data from the students.

"The SILL is self-scoring" and students get feedback immediately (Oxford, 1996a, p 109). Its validity and reliability has been checked various times. The

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average Cronbach alpha reliability of SILL version 5.1 is 0.91 and its validity ranges from 0.40 to 0.80. Yang's (1992) study shows that the SILL doesn't give fake results (Oxford, 1996a, p 110). The validity of SILL is proved when the research is conducted in relation to learning style, performance and settings (Oxford, 1996b). The SILL is divided into six language learning categories: cognitive, metacognitive, memory related, compensatory, affective and social strategies. Five Likert scale responses are included in the questionnaire (Oxford, 1990)

V. Data Analysis

Oxford's (1990) key will be used to calculate the mean strategy score which has a scale range of 1-5.

i. High use: 4.5 to 5.0 (almost always or always) and 3.5 to 4.4 (usually)
ii. Medium use: 2.5 to 3.4 (sometimes)
iii. Low use: 1.5 to 2.4 (usually not) and 1.0-1.4 (never or almost never)

The frequency and percentage of students showing high, medium and low strategy use will be calculated. Then the means and standard deviations of all and each of strategy categories will be calculated which will indicate the strategy use of the whole sample.

I refresh my previous memory related to the present learning tasks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	usually not	3	10.0	10.0	20.0
	sometimes	14	46.7	46.7	66.7
	usually	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the Data from 30 students and out of these students 46.7% of students sometimes refresh their previous memory related to present learning tasks.

I remember new English words by using them in sentences

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	usually not	5	16.7	16.7	23.3
	sometimes	8	26.7	26.7	50.0
	Usually	14	46.7	46.7	96.7
	always or almost always	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the data from 30 students and out of these students 46.7% usually remember new English words by using them in sentence.

I learn rhyming words together (e.g. ride and hide)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	usually not	8	26.7	26.7	36.7
	sometimes	13	43.3	43.3	80.0
	Usually	5	16.7	16.7	96.7
	always or almost always	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the data from 30 students and out of these students 43.3% sometimes learn rhyming word together.

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I memorize new English words and their meanings

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	usually not	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	sometimes	4	13.3	13.3	23.3
	Usually	17	56.7	56.7	80.0
	always or almost always	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the data from 30 students and out of these students 56.7 usually memorize new English words and their meaning.

I silently revise, what the teacher and other students say, in my mind

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	sometimes	14	46.7	46.7	56.7
	usually	8	26.7	26.7	83.3
	always or almost always	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected data from 30 students out of these students 46.7 sometimes silently revise, what the teacher and other students say, in my mind.

I practice new English sounds

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	usually not	5	16.7	16.7	20.0
	sometimes	12	40.0	40.0	60.0
	usually	9	30.0	30.0	90.0
	always or almost always	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the Data from 30 students out of these students 40.0% sometimes practice new English sounds.

I take notes in English in the class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	usually not	1	3.3	3.3	10.0
	Sometimes	10	33.3	33.3	43.3
	Usually	6	20.0	20.0	63.3
	always or almost always	11	36.7	36.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the Data from 30 students out of these students 36.7 always or almost always take notes in English in the class.

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I watch English movies and TV programmes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	usually not	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Sometimes	12	40.0	40.0	56.7
	Usually	8	26.7	26.7	83.3
	always or almost always	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the Data from 30 students out of these students 40.0% sometimes watch English movies and TV programmes.

I listen to English songs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	usually not	5	16.7	16.7	23.3
	Sometimes	12	40.0	40.0	63.3
	Usually	10	33.3	33.3	96.7
	always or almost always	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the Data from 30 students out of these students 40.0% sometimes listen English songs.

I read English books and newspapers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	usually not	3	10.0	10.0	13.3
	Sometimes	10	33.3	33.3	46.7
	Usually	14	46.7	46.7	93.3
	always or almost always	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the Data from 30 students out of these students 46.7 usually read English books and newspapers.

I write text messages in English, not in Roman

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	usually not	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	sometimes	10	33.3	33.3	53.3
	usually	10	33.3	33.3	86.7
	always or almost always	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the Data from 30 students out of these students 33.3 usually and sometimes write text messages in English, not in Roman.

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I try myself to interpret any English text

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	usually not	4	13.3	13.3	16.7
	sometimes	6	20.0	20.0	36.7
	usually	11	36.7	36.7	73.3
	always or almost always	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the Data from 30 students out of these students 36.7% usually try themselves to interpret any English text.

I use gestures and pauses to express myself, when I don't remember any English word during conversation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	usually not	4	13.3	13.3	30.0
	sometimes	9	30.0	30.0	60.0
	usually	9	30.0	30.0	90.0
	always or almost always	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the Data from 30 students out of these students 30.0 % usually or sometimes use gesture and pauses to express themselves, when they don't remember any English word during conversation.

If I don't remember any English word, I use any other word or phrase having the same meaning

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	usually not	3	10.0	10.0	16.7
	sometimes	6	20.0	20.0	36.7
	usually	7	23.3	23.3	60.0
	always or almost always	12	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the Data from 30 students out of these students 40.0% always or almost always don't remember any English word, I use any word or phrase having the same meaning.

I review what to be discussed in the class before going into the class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	usually not	8	26.7	26.7	40.0
	sometimes	7	23.3	23.3	63.3
	usually	5	16.7	16.7	80.0
	always or almost always	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the Data from 30 students out of these students 26.7 usually not review what to be discussed in the class before going into the class.

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I try to find opportunities to participate in the class in English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	usually not	2	6.7	6.7	20.0
	sometimes	4	13.3	13.3	33.3
	Usually	14	46.7	46.7	80.0
	always or almost always	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the data from 30 students out of these students 46.7 usually try to find opportunities to participate in the class in English.

I prepare myself for presentations and discussions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	usually not	4	13.3	13.3	23.3
	Sometimes	5	16.7	16.7	40.0
	Usually	10	33.3	33.3	73.3
	always or almost always	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the data from 30 students out of these students 33.3% usually prepare themselves for presentations and discussions.

I ask questions in English in my class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	usually not	1	3.3	3.3	6.7
	sometimes	13	43.3	43.3	50.0
	Usually	13	43.3	43.3	93.3
	always or almost always	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the data from 30 students out of these students 43.3% usually or sometimes ask questions in English in my class.

I do study discussions with my group mates in English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	usually not	5	16.7	16.7	23.3
	Sometimes	12	40.0	40.0	63.3
	Usually	8	26.7	26.7	90.0
	always or almost always	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the Data from 30 students out of these students 40.0% sometimes do study discussions with their group mates in English.

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I talk in English with my teachers, friends and family members

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	usually not	4	13.3	13.3	23.3
	sometimes	17	56.7	56.7	80.0
	Usually	4	13.3	13.3	93.3
	always or almost always	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

We have collected the data from 30 students out of these students 56.7% sometimes talk in English with their teachers, friends and family members.

VI. Conclusion

Learning Strategies are very important for Language Acquisition. There are different Learning Strategies used to learn the second language. For this purpose we selected 20 main Strategies for knowing which Strategies are more popular in the students of University of Sargodha. By the results we concluded that the following two Strategies are more popular.

- Talk in English with my friends and teachers. (56.7%)
- I memorize new English words. (56.7%)

VII. Proposed Implications of the Study

This study will also help the teachers to instruct students about strategy use and to allow them to practice their strategies in the classrooms. The results of this study will make students aware of their learning strategies use and will help Lectures integrated with strategy instruction can be conducted by the teachers.

VIII. Appendices

Dear All,

We are the students of BS English, 6th semester conducting a questionnaire to know the learning strategies used by the University students.

From
Saima, Mamoona, Nabila,iqra,ijaz

Name (Optional) _____
Semester/Year: _____
Male/Female: _____

Strategy No.	Strategy	1.Never or almost never	2.Usually not	3.Sometimes	4.Usually	5.Always or almost always
1	I refresh my previous memory related to the present learning tasks.					
2	I remember new English words by using them in sentences.					
3	I learn rhyming words together (e.g. ride and hide)					
4	I memorize new English words and their meanings.					
5	I silently revise, what the teacher and other students say, in my mind.					
6	I practice new English sounds.					
7	I take notes in English in the class.					
8	I watch English movies and TV programmes.					
9	I listen to English songs.					
10	I read English books and newspapers.					
11	I write text messages in English, not in Roman.					

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12	I try myself to interpret any English text.					
13	I use gestures and pauses to express myself, when I don't remember any English word during conversation.					
14	If I don't remember any English word, I use any other word or phrase having the same meaning.					
15	I review what to be discussed in the class before going into the class.					
16	I try to find opportunities to participate in the class in English.					
17	I prepare myself for presentations and discussions.					
18	I ask questions in English in my class.					
19	I do study discussions with my group mates in English.					
20	I talk in English with my teachers, friends and family members.					

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