

# LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES USED, LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND TEACHING APPROACH

Feda Mohammad Fedayee

Faculty of Humanities and Literature,

Department of Pashto Language and Literature, Baghlan University

Email: Fedam0484@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This conceptual paper is formed from the basis of literature reviews related to the concepts and keywords used in the research area. There are several researches on language learning strategies (LLSs) used that have shown a significant relationship on students' language proficiency (LP) level. The method used to look into the LLSs used is by using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). However, most of the previous research did not include another concept that can be studied upon which is teaching approach. This paper aims to discuss the relationship of LLSs used and LP to teaching approach.

**Key Words:** Language Learning Strategies Used, Language Proficiency and Teaching Approach.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The second language learning strategies can be traced back to the year 1975 (Grenfell & Macaro, 2007). Over the past three decades, researchers have done many researches in learning a second language which encouraged researchers to conduct a number of studies on the strategies of language learning. Important information have been provided by these strategies about students' performance in learning a language and could be taught where learners who are less proficient in language learning could be equipped to a satisfactory level (Griffiths, 2004). Grenfell & Macaro, 2007 claims that there have definitions for the language learning strategies since it than, for instance, Brown (2001) mentioned that strategies could be special technique for approaching a hard task where one can achieve a specific ending as well as decided designs to control and manipulate information. At the same time, Oxford (2011) defines language learning strategies in which conscious steps or behaviours are put into practice for enhancing memory, retention, recall, and to use new information. It shows that multiple functions are served in learning strategies. Learners take specific actions for making the process of learning easier, faster and make it more fun. They try to make it transferable to new situations i.e. more effective and self-directed. In addition, six strategies have been prescribed through Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Namely: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

Various researchers define language proficiency by many ways: Oxford & Nyikos (1989), Phillips (1991), Mullins (1992), stated that language proficiency is a self-rating, a test of language achievement, an entrance and placement examinations and is also known as language course grades. Besides, Watanabe (1990) stated learning proficiency as years of language study.

LLSs are beneficial to language teachers as well as language learners. Thus, teachers can help raise students' awareness on the use of LLSs in order to help them learn the language more efficiently and therefore, enhance their language proficiency. There is a need to include teaching approach concept that can help teachers to identify and use the most suitable language learning strategies in their classrooms. In this study, the relationship of the students' LLSs use and their language proficiency are investigated. Teaching approach is also explained in order to support this research.

## 2. CONCEPTS:

### 2.1. Language Learning Strategies:

There are many researches that have been carried out to study the Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) used by second language (L2) learners in learning English. All of the following related studies being discussed have one similar aspect which the researchers used Strategy Inventory Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire by Rebecca Oxford (1990) in order to identify the LLSs use. For instance, Kevin Chi-Him Tam (2013) has conducted a study on LLSs use of 50 first year university students from Hong Kong University. To summarize the results, the researcher found that Compensation strategies are the most frequent LLSs used by the students. The next most used strategies are Cognitive, Social, Metacognitive, Memory and Affective strategies. The researcher concluded that the data provided useful information for educators to provide LLSs training to students to enhance their English language learning skills.

A study by Bathuma and Kalaimakal (2014) examined the students' use of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) in private secondary schools in Malaysia. The participants of the study are 60 students of different forms, gender, age and level. The result has pointed that the respondents have highest usage of Compensation Strategies. The

students used the strategies when reading and listening by guessing intelligently. Furthermore, the students make guesses by bringing in their own life experience or previous knowledge to make sense. The Compensation strategies help students in overcoming their lack in vocabulary. The second highest is Cognitive Strategies. The strategies that the students used are skimming and scanning to find the main idea. As conclusion, the researcher claimed that the students are able to become efficient language learners because of the frequent use of Compensation and Cognitive Strategies. Moreover, a study conducted by Atifniagar, Zaheer and Alokozay (2020) stated that the highly used VLSs were the social strategies in which learners strive to ask native speakers, teachers, and classmates for the meanings of new words in English language conversation. Furthermore, determination strategies were used at the second level among students, in which they use dictionaries to find out the meanings of collocation patterns, followed by cognitive, and memory strategies. Whereas the metacognitive strategy was the least frequently used strategy among EFL learners in Baghlan University, this is due to their focus on the materials related to examination; explore anything about the new words for learning, and rarely think of their improvement in vocabulary learning. This study also provides a piece of extensive information and awareness to curriculum designers, policymakers, and particularly to the instructors to take positive steps in revising their methodologies of teaching in enhancing students' vocabulary learning strategies.

Melor, NurAinil and Mohammed Amin (2013) have conducted a study on 'Malaysian Gifted students' use of English Language Learning Strategies (LLSs)'. This study examined the LLSs use among 104 gifted students registered in a special programme called PERMATA Pintar Education Programme. The findings of this study showed that the gifted students use more indirect strategies which are Metacognitive, Affective, Social strategies than direct strategies which includes Memory, Cognitive, Compensation strategies. The highest strategies used among the gifted students are Metacognitive strategies. This depicts that the strategies allow the students to coordinate, plan, organize and evaluate their own language learning process. This also means that gifted students are aware and able to control their own language learning. Moreover, the Affective strategies are the least frequent LLSs use by the gifted students.

Nurhuda, Melor and Nur Dalila (2015) have conducted a study entitled 'Through the Lens of Good Language Learners: What Are Their Strategies?'. The results of this study showed that Metacognitive strategies are among the most preferred strategies used, followed respectively by Compensation, Cognitive, Social, Memory and the least used strategies among successful language learners are Affective Strategies.

A study was conducted by MamunaGhani, Fazal Malik and Aziz Ahmad (2016) to investigate the Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) use by M.A. in English Literature/Linguistics students in Pakistan. The findings of this study found that Metacognitive strategies is the most preferred LLSs used which concludes that the students put high importance in managing and organizing their language learning. This finding is similar to a study by Anita Habók and Andrea Magyar (2018) in the context of Hungarian lower secondary students in Years 5 and Year 8 which showed that both years indicated Metacognitive strategies as the most frequently used LLSs.

NarjesGhafournia (2014) has investigated Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) use and reading achievement among Teacher-Training students in Iran. The participants favoured using Cognitive, Metacognitive, Memory, and Compensation strategies than other strategies regardless of their reading ability.

MahaAlhaysony (2017) in the study of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) use by Saudi EFL students found out that the most frequently used LLSs were Cognitive, Metacognitive and Compensation strategies while the least frequently used LLSs were Memory and Affective strategies.

These mentioned studies have generally looked into the Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) use among language learners. The Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) use should be emphasized in order to improve their second language learning through appropriate integration of LLSs with the students' capabilities and interests.

## 2.2. Language Proficiency:

Language can be acquired in so many ways whether consciously or subconsciously. When it comes to second language acquisition, the learning process happened explicitly where there is teaching process to support the second language development though this does not mean that someone who is bilingual can acquire the language with ease. Practice, time, motivation and real social interaction experiences are needed to support the process of acquiring the language.

Level of language proficiency can be improved with Language Learning Strategies. Based on the study of Language Learning Strategy Use and English Proficiency of University Freshmen in Taiwan by Ying-Chun Lai, the higher proficient students used more Language Learning Strategies. Successful learners effectively use a greater number, and a higher frequency, of learning strategies (Bruen, 2001; Chamot et al., 1988; Green & Oxford, 1995; Griffiths, 2003; Kim, 2001; Park, 1997; Wharton, 2000). The positive relationship between Language Proficiency and Language Learning Strategies cannot be denied anymore. Most of the studies depicted the difference between successful and less successful learners where the successful learners used more LLSs and more often than the less successful learners in language learning (e.g., Bruen, 2001; Chamot et al., 1988; Chen 2002; Green & Oxford, 1995; Griffiths, 2003; Wharton 2000). Cohen (1998) noted that higher proficiency learners were able to complete the

language tasks given by using fewer selected strategies consciously that suits while for lower proficiency students, they kept on trying different strategies and end up using more strategies. By using wrong language learning strategies, learners will have difficulties in grasping and acquire the language since the strategies does not suits the learners' ability and needs.

Language Proficiency always related with the four language skills; reading, listening, writing and speaking. In a way to become a higher proficient learner, the second language learners were expected to acquire these skills and by using the correct language learning strategies, they can improve their proficiency level. In other research made by Anita Habók and Andrea Magyar with a title of "The Effect of Language Learning Strategies on Proficiency, Attitudes and School Achievement" proved that LLSs is frequently and widely used by proficient students to compare with less proficient students (Khaldieh, 2000; Wu, 2008; Rao, 2016). Some researchers also highlighted that some strategies chosen was influenced by the proficiency. Al-Qahtani (2013) and Charoento (2016) revealed that successful students mainly used Cognitive strategies, while Wu (2008) emphasised significant utilisation of Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social strategies among more proficient university students. Furthermore, Chen (2009) highlighted that proficient learners used lesser communication strategies. However, they are able to implement the strategies better than the less proficient learners. Moreover, Wu (2008) noted that Cognitive strategies have the most dominant influence on proficiency.

The correct Language Learning Strategies chosen by the learner really helps in improving their proficiency. But they must know which strategies suits the best to which goal according to which language skills. A study in Magogwe and Oliver (2007) showed that proficient learners are able to complete tasks more efficiently as they are aware of the most suitable LLSs. Moreover, foreign language attitude and language proficiency have an important role when investigating LLSs used as LLSs cannot be examine in isolation (Griffiths and Inceca, 2016). Besides that, Rao (2016) showed that the students' language proficiency level has an influence on their LLSs used and the high level students benefited from their high usage of LLSs.

### **2.3. Teaching Approach**

Good teachers are able to identify the best possible teaching approaches required by their students to improve in language proficiency. According to Umed Kumari (2013), he believes that "the most effective teachers can determine the appropriateness of language learning objectives for students by some form of differentiation". At a lower level of understanding, the teachers could differentiate the needs from students of varying proficiency and ability. At a more complex level, teachers could come up with combinations of different teaching approaches so that the teaching is able to meets with the needs of both higher and lower proficiency students.

Audio-lingual Approach gives priority on the oral form than the written form and it fully utilized the modern teaching aids such as laptop, internet, speaker, etc. According to Dipak Wayal, "this approach can save time, energy and provide better understanding in language learning". He also mentioned that it can create harmonious and positive environment psychologically in both the students and teachers' minds. Technology is proved to have a significant effect on enhancing and developing students' language proficiency. In a study by Abdul Bari Khan (2016), Grammar-Translation Approach (GTM) is a crucial method for the students at college level in Pakistan to learn English because the vast majority of them are using English as a third language. The lack of English speaking community throughout the country has strongly influenced the use of GTM in their language learning compared to the other modern methods such as direct method or audio-lingual method. Moreover, it has a positive impact on developing the students' English proficiency because GTM make the language acquisition much simpler by providing ample understanding of the ideas and concept from the textbooks. Danyan Huang (2016), stated that "Task-Based Teaching Approach has positively triggered the students' motivation and enhanced interest and enjoyment of learning the target language". There is also an indication of growth in their language skills especially in their speaking and writing skills. According to Danin Christianto (2019), all of the teachers involved in the study had positive feedbacks toward the use of Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT) in English lesson. The respondents agreed that the approach were critical and beneficial in the current century which requires a high English proficiency especially in speaking skill.

### **3. CONCLUSION:**

Language learning strategies (LLSs) are somewhat important not only for the students but also for the teachers. LLSs as we can see can be divided into 6 components where it is said to be used differently by students with different level of proficiency (LP). In previous studies, the researchers have found that students with higher proficiency level tend to use Metacognitive which the low proficiency students did not use and vice versa. This conceptual paper tries to look at LLSs, LP and teaching approach that the teachers use in classroom when conducting lesson and try to correlates these three concepts to see if there is any differences in students' performance if the teachers are aware of the students LLSs. Lack of studies relating LLSs and LP with teaching approach makes the teacher unaware that there are students preferring certain types of activities in the classroom and not the other kind of

activities. Further studies should be done regarding these three concepts which are LLSs, LP and teaching approach to give clear explanation on these concepts. Furthermore, the implications of this study could help teachers and students with their teaching and learning process to increase the students' achievement and the teachers' confidence to do activities in the classroom.

## REFERENCES:

1. Abdul, B.K. (2016). The Effectiveness of Grammar Translation Method in Teaching and Learning of English Language at Intermediate Level, Chenab College of Advance Studies, Mianwali, Pakistan.
2. Ali, A., Ghani, M., Malik, F., Ahmad, A., (2016). The Use of Language Learning Strategies by Pakistani M.A. English Students in Literature/Linguistics. Retrieved from [http://www.qurtuba.edu.pk/thedialogue/The%20Dialogue/11\\_3/Dialogue\\_July\\_September2016\\_324-333.pdf](http://www.qurtuba.edu.pk/thedialogue/The%20Dialogue/11_3/Dialogue_July_September2016_324-333.pdf)
3. Alhaysony, M (2017). Language Learning Strategies Use by Saudi EFL Students: The Effect of Duration of English Language Study and Gender. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 18-28, January 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.academypublication.com/ojs/index.php/tpls/article/viewFile/tpls07011828/1026>
4. Atifnigar, H., Zaheer, Z. U. R., & Alokozay, W. (2020). Examining the Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies among EFL Learners in Baghlan University of Afghanistan. *American International Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 2(2), 1-10.
5. Bagozzi, R.P. & Yi, Y. & Phillips, L. W. (1991). Assessing Construct Validity in Organization Research. *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 36. 421-458. 10.2307/2393203.
6. Bathuma, S & Kalaimakal, P. (August, 2014). The Usage of Language Learning Strategies in Malaysian Private Secondary Schools. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*. ISSN: 2203-4714. Vol. 5 No. 4. Australian International Academic Centre, Australia. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1128722.pdf>
7. Bruen, J. (2001). Strategies for Success: Profiling the effective learner of German. *Foreign Language Annals*, 34, 216–225.
8. Chamot, A. U., & El-Dinary, P. B. (1999). Children's learning strategies in immersion classrooms. *Modern Language Journal*, 83, 319–338.
9. Chamot, A. U., & Küpper, L. (1989). Learning strategies in foreign language instruction. *Foreign Language Annals*, 22, 13–24.
10. Chamot, A. U., Küpper, L., & Impink-Hernandez, M. (1988). A study of learning strategies in foreign language instruction: Findings of the longitudinal study. McLean, VA: Interstate Research Associates.
11. Charoento, M. (2016). Individual learner differences and language learning strategies. *Contemp. Educ. Res. J.* 7, 57–72
12. Green, J. M., & Oxford, R. L. (1995). A closer look at learning strategies, L2 proficiency, and gender. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29, 261–297.
13. Chen, M. L. (2009). Influence of grade level on perceptual learning style preferences and language learning strategies of Taiwanese English as a foreign language learners. *Learn. Individ. Dif.* 19, 304–308. doi: 10.1016/j.lindif.2009.02.004
14. Cohen, A. D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. London: Longman
15. Christianto, D. (2019). Teachers' Perception on the Use of Communicative Language Teaching Approach in the English Classrooms, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
16. Fariya, I. (2016). Effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching at Primary Level in Bangladesh, BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Ganyaupfu, E.M. (2013), University of South Africa, South Africa.
17. Ghafournia, N. (2014). Language Learning Strategy Use and Reading Achievement. *English Language Teaching*. Vol. 7, No. 4; 2014. ISSN 1916-4742 E-ISSN 1916-4750. Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1075716.pdf>
18. Ghavamnia, M., Kassaian, Z. & Dabaghi, A. (2011). The Relationship between Language Learning Strategies, Language Learning Beliefs, Motivation, and Proficiency: A Study of EFL Learners in Iran. Article in *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, DOI: 10.4304/jltr.2.5.1156-1161
19. Griffiths, C. (2003). Patterns of language learning strategy use. *System*, 31, 367–383.
20. Habók A and Magyar A (2018) The Effect of Language Learning Strategies on Proficiency, Attitudes and School Achievement. *Front. Psychol.* 8:2358. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02358. Retrieved from <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02358/full>
21. Huang, D. (2016). A Study on the Application of Task-based Language Teaching Method in a Comprehensive English Class in China, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China.
22. Kamarul, S.M.T, Mohamed, A.E., Nik M.R.N.Y & Zamri, M. (2009). Language Learning Strategies and Motivation among Religious Secondary School Students. Retrieved from

- [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254644986\\_Language\\_Learning\\_Strategies\\_and\\_Motivation\\_among\\_Religious\\_Secondary\\_School\\_Students](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254644986_Language_Learning_Strategies_and_Motivation_among_Religious_Secondary_School_Students)
22. Khaldieh, S. A. (2000). Learning strategies and writing processes of proficient vs. less- proficient learners of Arabic. *Foreign Lang. Ann.* 33, 522–533. doi: 10.1111/j.1944-9720.2000.tb01996.x
  23. Kim, K. H. (2001). Language learning strategies, learning styles, and beliefs about language learning of Korean university students. *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 5, 31–46.
  24. Kumari, U. (2013). Effectiveness of approaches to Teaching
  25. Magogwe, J. M., and Oliver, R. (2007). The relationship between language learning strategies, proficiency, age, and self-efficacy beliefs: a study of language learners in Botswana. *System* 35, 338–352. doi: 10.1016/j.system.2007.01.003
  26. Mart, C.T. (2013). *The Direct-Method: A Good Start to Teach Oral Language*, Ishik University, Erbil, Iraq.
  27. Melor, M. Y., Nur, A. S. & Mohammed, A. E. (2013). Malaysian Gifted Students' Use of English Language Learning Strategies. *English Language Teaching*; Vol. 6, No. 4; 2013. ISSN 1916-4742 E-ISSN 1916-4750. Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1077010.pdf>
  28. Nurhuda, M. N, Melor, M. Y. & Nur, D. M. N. (2015). Through the Lens of Good Language Learners: What Are Their Strategies?. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*. ISSN: 2203-4714. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1127579.pdf>
  29. Paramasivam, S. (2016). Language Learning Strategies Across Proficiency Levels Among EFL Pre-University Students. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 135-148.
  30. Park, G. (1997). Language learning strategies and English proficiency in Korean University students. *Foreign Language Annuals*, 30, 211–221.
  31. Rao, Z. (2016). Language learning strategies and English proficiency: interpretations from information-processing theory. *Lang. Learn. J.* 44,90–106. doi: 10.1080/09571736.2012.733886
  32. Tam, K. C. (2013). A Study On Language Learning Strategies (LLSS) of University Students in Hong Kong. *Taiwan Journal of Linguistics*. Vol. 11.2, 1-42, 2013. The University of Hong Kong. Retrieved from [http://tjl.nccu.edu.tw/main/uploads/11.2\\_.1\\_2\\_.pdf](http://tjl.nccu.edu.tw/main/uploads/11.2_.1_2_.pdf)
  33. Wu, Y. L. (2008). Language learning strategies used by students at different proficiency levels. *Asian EFL J.* 10, 75–95.