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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	▶▶▶	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	▶▶▶	English as a Second Language
L2	▶▶▶	Second Language
LLSs	▶▶▶	Language Learning Strategies
SILL	▶▶▶	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
SLA	▶▶▶	Second Language Acquisition

## ABSTRACT

Learning strategies, which are "behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable" (Oxford, 1989, p. 235), play a crucial role in second/foreign language learning. Recent studies have attempted to investigate how choice of language learning strategies is affected by some individual variables such as age, gender, language proficiency, culture, motivation, attitude, personality characteristics, language anxiety, learning styles, and beliefs about language learning. Among the variables that influence L2 strategy choice and use, learners' motivation was found by many researchers (e.g., Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Oxford, Park-Oh, Ito & Sumrall, 1993; Rahimi, Riazi, & Saif, 2008) as the most powerful influence on the choice and frequency of strategies they use. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between motivation and language learning strategy (LLS) use among 152 university EFL learners at Shahrekord University. Besides, this study attempts to examine the effect of learners' gender, motivational orientation, and years of study on LLS use. Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and a motivational questionnaire were used to collect data. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the correlation between LLSs and language learning motivation. Results of this analysis revealed that motivation correlated positively with all six categories of LLSs. That is, highly-motivated learners tended to use LLSs more frequently than those who are less motivated. The results of three-way independent ANOVA, however, showed that type of motivation, gender, and years of study make no significant difference in LLS use.

**Key Words:** Language learning strategies, SILL, Motivation



# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Preliminary

Within the field of second language (L2) education there has been a prominent shift in focus from teaching techniques toward more learner-centered and communicatively-oriented language teaching, with a more emphasis on students and learning instead of on teachers and teaching over the past few decades (Lessard-Clouston, 1997; Nunan, 1988). Researchers recognized that it was insufficient to deal with language education without taking the learner into consideration (Tamada, 1996). Therefore, many researchers attempt to discover how learners go about learning an L2 and what makes some individuals more successful at learning language than others. As Williams and Burden (1997) point out, that can only be answered by investigating learning strategies. Learning strategies, which are "behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable" (Oxford, 1989, p. 235), play a crucial role in language learning and this field has become one of the most fertile areas of research in second language acquisition (SLA) (MacIntyre, 1994). As Ellis (1994, p. 529) mentions, there has been an 'explosion of activity' in this area in recent years, with strategy appearing as a key term in the cognitive approach to SLA. Researchers have suggested that learning strategies are important for language

learning and help learners in promoting their own achievement in language proficiency (Green & Oxford, 1995; Griffiths, 2003; O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, & Küpper, 1985; Oxford, 1990).

Oxford and Nyikos (1989) and Oxford (1990) argue that learning strategies are important to language learning for several reasons. First, appropriate learning strategies are highly related to successful language achievement. If learners know how to use learning strategies appropriately, they can benefit greatly. Second, learners who use appropriate learning strategies take responsibility for their own learning by "enhancing learner autonomy, independence, and self-direction" (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989 p. 291). Third, unlike most other learning characteristics, such as aptitude, attitude, motivation, and personality, learning strategies are teachable.

Early research on LLSs (e.g., Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975) was mostly concerned with exploring the strategies used by good language learners. In fact, the researchers were interested in determining what distinguish "good" from "poor" language learners and investigate what makes some learners more successful than others when it comes to mastering L2. Stern (1975) provided a list of ten strategies which he believed to be characteristics of good language learners. Since then, different definitions and classifications of strategies have been proposed by researchers in the ESL/EFL field. Oxford, who pioneered much of the work in the field of strategies, defines LLSs as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (1990, p. 8). Her strategy taxonomy includes six categories: memory strategies (refer to strategies which assist the learner to store and

retrieve information), cognitive strategies (which relate to how students think about their learning), compensation strategies (which enable students to make up for limited knowledge), metacognitive strategies (which help learners to manage or regulate their learning), affective strategies (relating to learners' feelings) and social strategies (which involve learning by interaction with others).

Oxford (1990, p. 9) summarized the basic characteristics of LLSs as follows:

- expand the role of language teachers
- allow learners to become more self-directed
- are problem-oriented
- involve many aspects, not just the cognitive
- can be taught
- are flexible
- are influenced by a variety of factors

More recent studies have attempted to investigate how choice of LLSs is affected by some individual variables such as age (Purdie & Oliver, 1999), gender (Al- Otaib, 2004; Chang, 2005; Green & Oxford, 1995; Griffiths, 2003; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Rahimi, Riazi, & Saif, 2008; Salem, 2006; Sheorey, 1999; Shmais, 2003; Tercanlioglu, 2004; Wharton, 2000), language proficiency (Chamot & Küpper, 1989; Park, 1997; Peacock & Ho, 2003; Shmais, 2003; Tuncer, 2009; Yilmaz, 2010), culture (El-Dib, 2004; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995), motivation (MacIntyre & Noels, 1996; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Rahimi, Riazi, & Saif, 2008; Sadighi & Zarafshan, 2006; Wharton, 2000), attitude (Yin, 2008), personality characteristics (Tamada, 1996), language anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994), learning styles

(Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Rahimi, Riazi, & Saif, 2008), and beliefs about language learning (Yang, 1999; Yin, 2008).

In other words, a lot of variables affect the type and the frequency of strategies in the process of language learning. Among numerous individual language learner variables considered affecting strategy use, motivation was found as the major predictor of the learners' use of LLSs (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Oxford, Park-Oh, Ito, & Sumrall, 1993; Rahimi, Riazi, & Saif, 2008).

In L2 learning, motivation provides "the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process" (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 117). Motivation plays a seminal role accounting for success or failure in any complex task particularly, language acquisition. . It also determines "the extent of active, personal involvement in L2 learning" (Oxford & Shearin, 1994, p. 12). Gardner (1985, p. 50) specified four elements of motivations: (a) a goal, (b) effortful behavior to reach the goal, (c) desire to attain the goal, and (d) positive attitudes toward the goal. Gardner and Lambert (1972) classified learning motivation into two major groups: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation refers to the learners' positive attitudes toward the people and culture of L2 group and the desire to interact with the L2 community. The integrative motivation can be contrasted with the latter one, instrumental motivation, which refers to acquiring a language for utilitarian or external reasons such as getting a better job or higher salary. Considerable research indicates that motivation has a major influence on how learners approach the language learning process. Gardner and Lambert (1959) maintained that motivation and attitudes play key roles for learners to study and acquire L2. Cohen and Dörnyei (2002)

argue that "Motivation is often seen as the key learner variable because without it nothing much happens. Indeed, most other learner variables presuppose the existence of at least some degree of motivation" (cited in Griffiths, 2003, p. 156). The early studies on learning motivation suggested that integrative motivation played a more important role than instrumental motivation in language learning process. Gardner's hypothesis was that instrumental motivation is less influential than integrative motivation. However, in most of the recent studies, researchers pointed out that both motivation types are essential components for success in learning an L2.

When referring to the relationship between motivation and strategy use, some researchers (e.g., Tamada, 1996; Wharton, 2000) discovered that motivation has a strong relationship with the learners' use of different types of strategies. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) explored the relationship between the use of LLSs and variables such as sex, course status, motivation level, years of study, career orientation and so on. They found that among the factors they studied, motivation was the most significant factor influencing the use of learning strategies. They reported that "learners who are highly motivated to learn a language are likely to use a variety of strategies." They also concluded that "the degree of expressed motivation is the single most powerful influence on the choice of language learning strategies" (p. 294). Tamada (1996) indicated that both orientations of motivation (instrumental & integrative) had a significant effect on the use of language learning strategies.

Gender is another important factor that influences language learners' use of learning strategies. In most of the studies investigating differences in LLS use, females show more use of learning strategies and they employ strategies more frequently than

males (e.g., Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Salem, 2006; Sheorey, 1999). As Oxford (1989) comments, "the sex difference findings to date show that in typical language learning situations females use significantly more learning strategies than males and use them more often" (p. 239). However, some researchers found that males employed more strategies than females (Tercanlioglu, 2004; Wharton, 2000), and some claimed that there is no significant differences between males and females on their use of LLSs (Aliakbari & Hayatzadeh, 2008; Al- Otaib, 2004; Chang, 2005; Griffiths, 2003; Rahimi, Riazi, & Saif, 2008; Shmais, 2003).

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Over the past few decades, researchers started to consider the importance of LLSs in L2 learning context, due to the fact that LLSs can facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval, or use of information and increase self confidence (Chang, 2003). Researchers have found that there is a significant relationship between strategy use and academic success. One reason for unsuccessful students not to learn actively is their lack of strategy knowledge or use (Cetingoz & Ozkal, 2009). Likewise, it has been found in numerous studies that more proficient language learners use a "wider range of LLSs than do less proficient learners" (Ehrman & Oxford, 1990, p. 312). However, despite the significant role that LLSs play in foreign language learning, most teachers demonstrate little understanding of learner's LLSs and little knowledge about LLSs (Park, 1997). Therefore, it is of great importance for both students and teachers to pay more attention to the patterns of LLSs and variables that affect the use of language learning strategies. Due to the scarcity of research in this domain in Iran, the present study attempts to

conduct a research to investigate the use of LLSs by Iranian students and the effect of factors such as gender, university level, and different types of motivation (instrumental/integrative) on language learning strategies.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

1. To what extent are the EFL participants integratively and/or instrumentally motivated? Are the EFL participants more integratively or instrumentally motivated?
2. What LLSs (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, social, and affective) do students use more frequently in the process of learning English? And, is there any significant difference between the EFL participants use of strategies?
3. Is there any significant relationship between participants' motivation and LLS use?
4. Does the type of motivation (i.e., instrumental, integrative or both) make a significant difference in LLS use?
5. Does the participants' level at the university (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) make a significant difference in LLS use?
6. Does the gender (i.e., female or male) make a significant difference in LLS use?



## **1.4. Research Hypotheses**

The null hypotheses for the aforementioned research questions are as follows:

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference between the EFL participants' type of motivation (i.e., instrumental/integrative).
- H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference among EFL participants in terms of LLSs (i.e., memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, social, and affective).
- H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant correlation between the EFL participants' motivation and LLS use.
- H<sub>04</sub>: The type of motivation (i.e., instrumental, integrative or both) makes no significant difference in LLS use.
- H<sub>05</sub>: The participants' level at the university (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) makes no significant difference in LLS use.
- H<sub>06</sub>: The gender (i.e., female or male) makes no significant difference in LLS use.

## **1.5. Significance of the Study**

Extensive research has indicated the importance of LLSs in making language learning more efficient and producing positive effects on facilitating language learning proficiency (Cohen, 1998; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Use of LLSs help the learners retrieve and store learning material, and facilitate their learning. Chamot (1993, p. 308) states that "successful language learners differ from less successful ones in a number of ways, of which perhaps the most important is the degree to which they are strategic in their approach to the various tasks which comprise language learning." In this way, the importance of LLSs is undeniable.

Another influential factor which determines the success of students in language learning achievement is motivation. Gardner (1985) proposed that motivation is the primary factor in successful language learning and determines the extent to which learners actively engage in language learning.

In addition, motivation is regarded as the most major predictor of LLS use (Gardner, 1985; Oxford, 1990; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Different studies have found a strong correlation between motivation and LLS use with highly motivated students using more strategies than students who are less motivated (e.g., MacIntyre & Noels, 1994; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). In their study, Oxford and Nyikos (1989, p. 294) reported that "learners who are highly motivated to learn a language are likely to use a variety of strategies." Then, they suggested that "not only does high motivation lead to significant use of language learning strategies . . . but high strategy use probably leads to high motivation as well" (p. 295). In other word, "language learning strategies and language learning motivation orientation are inseparable and interconnected elements in the development of second language learning" (Chen, 2009, p. 6). Because of the important relationship between motivation and learning strategies in language learning and scarcity of research in this domain in Iran, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between learning motivation and LLS use among a population of university EFL learners. Besides, this study attempts to examine the link between learners' gender and university level on LLS use.

The results of this study will be useful for teachers of English as a second or foreign language. It is imperative that English teachers identify student`s motivation orientation and the types of learning strategies employed by EFL learners, because the

more teachers understand the learning motivation and preferred learning strategies, the better teachers will be able to prepare effective instruction. Also, if in this study, it is proved that any of the variables mentioned above (motivation, gender, & university level) has a significant effect on strategies used by EFL students, the teacher can come up with the main strategies used by different groups of students. Language teachers can incorporate effective strategies into their curriculum in order to help their students better acquisition.

## **1.6. Definition of Key Terms**

### **1.6.1. LLSs**

Basically, LLSs are "the techniques or devices, which a learner may use to acquire knowledge" (Rubin, 1975, p. 43). Oxford (1990) provides a more detailed definition of LLSs as "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). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) viewed learning strategies as "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p. 1).

According to Oxford, language-learning strategies are divided into two major groups: direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies (strategies that directly involve the target language) comprise memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Each of these six strategies is defined below and illustrated with some examples.

Memory strategies: help learners to store and retrieve new information, like creating mental linkage, associating, or using imagery.

Cognitive strategies: are the mental processes associated with manipulating and transforming learning materials. Examples include note taking, functional practice in natural setting, reasoning, translating, and formal practice with structures and sounds (Oxford, 1990).

Compensation strategies: help learners to overcome the gaps in knowledge of the language while listening, reading, speaking, or writing. Examples include using gesture or body language, using synonyms or circumlocution while speaking or writing, and coining words to communicate.

Metacognitive strategies: help learners to manage or regulate their learning, such as planning and arranging for learning tasks and monitoring the learning process.

Affective strategies: are techniques that learners employ to control their emotions, attitudes, and motivations related to language learning. Examples of such strategies are discussing feelings with someone else, risk taking, and trying to relax when feeling anxious about learning.

Social strategies: refer to actions that lead to increased interaction with other people in the language learning process. For instance, asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others.