

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will first look at the literature on gender and language learning, followed by the discussion of the differences between the male and female. The literature on the Perceptual Language Style Preference and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) will also be explained.

2.1 Gender and Language Learning

Since the day we are born, we are given a set of roles and expectations to abide by based on our sex. We are all classified into two categories: male or female. However, there is a difference between the words ‘sex’ and ‘gender’. Sex is defined as “either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and that are distinguished respectively as female or male especially on the basis of their reproductive organs and structures” according to Merriam-Webster Medical Dictionary. We cannot change our sex; we are either male or female when we are born. However, Merriam-Webster defines gender as “the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex.” Although we cannot change our sex, we can change our gender and a woman can express masculine qualities, and vice versa. Our gender roles are based on our sex; if we are female we are expected to have feminine characteristics, and if we are male we are expected to have masculine characteristics. This is seen when baby girls are dressed head to toe in pink

clothing, and baby boys are dressed in blue.

Lorber (1994) says that gender is a “social institution” and uses the term “gender statuses.” She says gender statuses are the “socially recognized genders in a society and the norms and expectations for their enactment behaviorally, gesturally, linguistically, emotionally, and physically” and states that they are based on “development in any particular society.”

Gender, in common usage, refers to the differences between men and women. Gender (masculine or feminine) refers to social category which is often associated with certain behaviours. Encyclopedia Britannica notes that gender identity is "an individual's self-conception as being male or female, as distinguished from actual biological sex."

Although "gender" is no longer used interchangeably with "sex," the term "gender" refers to social rather than biological differences. Some view gender as a social construction rather than a biological phenomenon. A person's sex (male or female) is not necessarily a person's gender as sex refers to biological category which is usually fixed before birth. Sex is the biological categorization of people whereas gender is the social construction as the interpreted identity males and females choose to take on. If we accept that these genders are of people of different worlds, then it is also inevitable that there are certain differences in the usage of language among these two separate genders (Vanfossen, 1998).

The studies that have been going on in this area of language and gender have focused on many aspects from different syntactical, phonological or lexical uses of language to aspects of conversation analysis, such as topic nomination and control, interruptions and other communicative features. While some researchers have focused only on the description of differences, other work has sought to show how linguistic differences both reflect and reproduce social difference.

This study takes gender, particularly male and female secondary students, in the focus of their differences in their learning styles and strategies in acquiring English language in the Malaysian school context. The Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) of the Malaysian Education Ministry has outlined the objectives of teaching and learning of the English language which apply to both genders.

However, when teaching the language is taking place in classroom, teachers and parents often make comparisons between the boys and girls in their lives. When faced with a high boy-to-girl ratio, teachers often believe that their classes will be loud, active, and competitive but when faced with more girls than boys, teachers describe their classrooms as active but quiet. Teachers too have also observed differences between these two genders in the classroom. Often heard that they tried to provide the same experiences for the students but that the responses they received by their students can be different based on their gender. Rosnani Kassim (2003) found that the communication styles of males and females are indeed different. Male students tend to be domineering when they are in all-male group discussion. The findings show that the environment in the all-male group interaction was highly competitive with each group member trying to interrupt one another while in all-female group discussion it was shown that female students show cooperative behaviour.

The female students allowed each speaker to hold the floor for a long time without interrupting. This strengthens the claim that female students are supportive in all-female conversations and discussion. However, in mixed-gender groups, she found that female students displayed the tendency to be just as assertive as male students. The female students were said to interrupt as much as the male students. Amazingly, according to Rohani Kassim (2003), male students tend to show cooperative speech style when they were in mixed-group discussions.

It is true that male and female are quite different in their ways of using the language. With all the differences said, these differences somehow influence the process of language learning. These differences have led parents and teachers to believe that there is a tendency that biological differences may influence communication styles between male and female students even when the environmental conditions are similar.

2.2 Gender as a Factor in Language Learning

Past research reported that different achievement between boys and girls may be probably due to their biological differences. In 1927, Lincoln posited a theory that boys' lower skeletal growth caused difficulties in adapting to the auditory and visual demands of reading (Lincoln, 1927, quoted in Shapiro, 1990: 241). On the other hand, arguments that boys' brains seem to be more specialized in visuo-spatial ability have been used to argue for boys' 'natural' advantages in science, mathematics and technological subjects.

The idea of the differences in the biology of boys and girls is supported by Gurian (2001) whose explanation has its roots in brain-based research. He explained that males and females are biologically different because of the differences found in the brain. Table 2.1 below briefly describes the differences between males and females as outlined by Gurian (2001).

Table 2.1: Overview of Brain-Gender Differences

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Development and Structural Differences▪ Chemical Differences▪ Hormonal Differences▪ Functional Differences▪ Differences in Processing Emotion |
|---|

Source: Gurian's *Boys and Girls Learn Differently* (2001:19)

According to Gurian (2001), the differences refer to developmental, structural differences, chemical, hormonal and functional differences as well as differences in emotional processing. These differences are believed to have the tendency to influence students' language learning which would include the learning styles and strategies.

The first difference between these two genders would be because of the developmental and structural differences of the brain. In general, female brains mature earlier than male brains (Gurian, 2001:27). Brain development in infants is often most pronounced in the right hemisphere and gradually moves to the left. In females, the movement to the left starts earlier than in males. The most familiar structural difference in the brain is corpus callosum that refers to the bundle of nerves that connects the right and left hemispheres. In females, it is up to 20 % larger than males, thus giving girls a better cross-talk between the

hemispheres of the brain. In females, there is more development in the pre-frontal lobes which affect decision making, and the occipital lobes in which sensory processing often occurs. Males tend to have more development in certain areas of the right hemisphere, which provides them with better spatial abilities such as measuring, mechanical design, and geography and map reading (Gurian, 2001:27).

Male and female have a differing amount of most of the brain chemicals. This chemical difference in the brain is another reason on why Gurian (2001) says boys' and girls' minds are different. In addition, these differences are due to hormonal differences. Although males and females both possess all the human hormones, the degree of dominance differs. Male hormones are dominated by the testosterone, while female hormones are dominated by estrogen and progesterone. There are other particular hormonal differences which cause different actions and thinking of the males and females. Table 2.2 below shows some of the differences in the brain which cause male and female think and act differently.

Table 2.2: Brain Gender Differences

PART OF BRAIN	SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES	IMPACT
Broca's area	More highly active in females	Improved verbal communication skills in females
Cerebellum	Stronger connecting pathways in female brain between brain parts	Females have superior language and fine-motor skills; males less intuitive, as fewer parts of brain involved in tasking
Cerebral cortex	Thicker in males on the right side of brain; thicker in females on the left side	Males tend to be right-brain dominant; females tend to be left-brain dominant
Cerebrum	Females use more volume and particular areas to do same tasks	Greater capacity to multitask in females; female cerebrum always active
Frontal lobe	Likely more highly active in females	Improved verbal communication skills in females
Left hemisphere	Usually better developed in the female brain; creates superiority at language tasks	Females superior at listening, communicating, all language-based learning
Right hemisphere	Boys use right side of brain to work on abstract problems; girls use both sides	Male superior at spatial relationship
Wernicke's area	Likely more highly active in females	Improved verbal communication skills in females

Source: Gurian's *Boys and Girls Learn Differently* (2001: 20)

Gurian (2001) also discusses the evolution of these differences in terms of male and female brain development. Some of the differences he describes are already familiar to us. For instance, girls are more able to engage in multi-task behaviour, use both sides of the brain when processing information, hear better and are more physically active. He also includes information we are less familiar with, such as boys may take more time in processing emotive information, thus making it more difficult for boys to quickly adjust after engaging

in stressful or emotionally charged situations. This ‘lag time’ can interfere with the learning process for boys.

Gurian (2001) also explains how these differences influence learning styles, school performance and behaviour. He suggests that these differences make boys and girls advantaged in some areas and disadvantaged in others. Boys are more likely to exhibit more learning disabilities, behaviour problems, and poorer academic performance; whereas girls are more likely to receive less attention from teachers, participate less in athletics, and experience gender bias in the classroom.

According to Gurian (2001), there ten areas of learning style for boys and girls which are influenced by the brain-based differences as shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Areas of Learning Style

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Deductive and Inductive Reasoning▪ Abstract and Concrete Reasoning▪ The Use of Language▪ Logic and Evidence▪ The Likelihood of Boredom▪ The Use of Space▪ Movement, Sensitivity and Group Dynamics▪ The Use of Symbolism▪ The Use of Learning Teams |
|---|

Source: Gurian’s *Boys and Girls Learn Differently* (2001 : 41)

In the first area, boys tend to be deductive in their conceptualizations, starting their reasoning process frequently from a general principle and applying it, or ancillary principles, to individual cases. This is the reason that boys, on average, do better on fast multiple-choice tests. Girls, on the other hand, tend to favour inductive thinking, adding more and more to their base of conceptualization. In the abstract and concrete reasoning, Gurian (2001) said that boys tend to be better than girls at not seeing or touching the thing and yet still being able to calculate it, in Mathematics, for example.

In the use of language, on average, females produce more words than males. This statement could be true when it is also supported by many researches carried out on the language use between the male and female. In the logic and evidence area, girls are generally better listener than boys and hear more of what's said. Boys, however, tend to hear less and more often ask for clear evidence to support a teacher's or others' claim. In the likelihood of boredom, boys get bored more easily than girls. This often requires more and varying stimulants to keep them attentive. Once a child becomes bored, he is likely not only to give up learning but also to act out in such a way that class is disrupted and he is labeled a behavioural problem.

On the other hand, in the use of space, boys tend to use up more space when they learn, compared to girls. In the area of movement, girls do not generally need to move around as much while learning but movement seems to help boys not only stimulate their brains but also manage and relieve impulsive behaviour.

In the area of sensitivity and group dynamics, girls learn while attending to a code of social interaction better than boys do. Boys, on the other hand, tend to focus on performing the task well, without as much sensitivity to the emotions of others around them. In the use of symbolism area, boys are said to have better tendency towards symbolic texts, diagrams and graphs when the girls tend to prefer written texts. Finally, in the use of learning teams, both girls and boys are said to benefit from learning team and group work, with boys tending to create structured teams and girls forming less structured organizations.

The brain-based research has somehow showed that the differences of the male and female students would eventually affect any aspect of their lives. These differences may also affect their learning style and strategies especially in the process of acquiring a language.

2.3 Gender and Learning Styles

Boys and girls are different in many ways including their preference for perceptual learning styles. The demarcation is due to socialisation (Oxford, 1995). Both parties have to fulfil certain social roles to live to the expectations of parents, teachers and members of the community. As a result, boys tend to be assertive and bold whereas girls are tender and passive (Nyikos, 1990). When these characteristics are demonstrated in their learning situation, the boys become hyperactive. Restak (1979) as cited in Dunn and Dunn (1992) stated that 95 percent hyper actives are males. In addition to that, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder occurs commonly among boys than girls with the ratio ranging from 2:1 to 5:1 (Accordo et. al., 1990; Bhatia et. al., 1991; Kanbasyahi et. al., 1994) as cited in Entwistle (2002). Hence, the boys need mobility, as they cannot sit still for a long time. They can be categorized as Kinaesthetic and Tactual learners.

Based on the researcher's personal experience, females do well in groups. They can work together towards the same goal. In contrast, the boys might fight either to be the leader or to a 'rider' that is not taking any responsibility at all in group work.

Learning styles have been defined differently by different researchers. Keefe (1987) defines learning styles "as characteristic cognitive, affective and physiological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment" (Keefe, 1987:4). According to Kolb (1984), learning styles are an individual's preferred method of receiving and processing information which is shaped by heredity, age, past and present environmental factors as well as cultural background. Learning style, according to Dunn and Dunn (1993) is the way in which each learner begins to concentrate on, process, and retain new and difficult information. That interaction occurs differently for everyone. To identify a person's learning style pattern, it is necessary to examine each individual's multi-dimensional characteristics to determine what is most likely to trigger each student's concentration, maintain it, respond to his or her natural processing style, and cause long-term memory.

Reid (1985) defines learning style as "an individual's natural, habitual and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills and says that these learning styles persist, regardless of teaching methods and content areas." This learning style is divided into three major categories, namely cognitive learning styles, sensory learning styles and personality learning styles. Later, Reid (1987) also divides the sensory learning styles into perceptual learning styles, environmental styles and sociological styles. Among these the perceptual modalities have been regarded as the most important in ESL learning.

Oxford's (1995) analysis of sensory learning styles showed that there are differences between genders. It was found that male learners were more inclined towards Tactile and Kinaesthetic as she argued that these styles might be related to the spatial ability prominent in the male gender. Oxford (1995) argued that in visual style, findings were still inconclusive to determine whether there is any difference between genders. However, the female learners were thought to be more auditory than male learners. Male learners were found to be more field dependent than female learners, who were thought to acquire the ability to separate details easily through the use of analysis (Oxford, 1995). In contrast, as Oxford explained, female learners were more dependent with a more interpersonal and global orientation.

According to Oxford (1995) many studies have found gender differences in the reflection and impulsivity style where male learners are found to be more impulsive and the females are more reflective (Shipman & Shipman, 1985; Belinky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; cited in Reid, 1995). She further added that female learners would consider various angles and social contexts before responding whereas the male learners inadvertently would jump in with quick response, regardless of the correctness of the answers.

Belinky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) found that males and females might have distinctly different ways of knowing and that males were more objective and thoughtful while females were more subjective and emotional (cited in Oxford, 1995). The finding suggested that both genders took a different route to learning and employed various styles and strategies towards language learning. According to Oxford (1995) males might take a more thinking approach, focusing on rules, facts and logic. The female learners, on the other hand, employ a great deal of social interaction, high degree of empathy and

cooperative learning.

Gender differences in learning styles can be summarized in the Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.4: Overview of Gender Differences in Learning Styles

Male		Female	
i)	Field Independent	i)	Field Dependent
ii)	Analytic	ii)	Global
iii)	Tactile	iii)	Auditory
iv)	Kinaesthetic	iv)	Reflective
v)	Impulsive		

Source: Oxford's *Gender Differences in Learning Style* in Reid (1995:40)

In order to find out the learning style preference of the male and female students, this study uses Reid's (1987) definition of perceptual learning style. Therefore, when we talk of perceptual learning style, we are referring to the learning style that comprises the sensory channels of visual, auditory, tactile and Kinaesthetic modes of learning and the sociological style of individual and group learning. The rationale for choosing the perceptual learning style from among the different models is because it is most easily applied to regular classroom situations where the teaching learning situations require the learners to use their sensory channels to process information. It also seems to be the most appropriate model for research on language learning because language is received and transmitted primarily through the sensory channels that is, the eyes, ears and hands. When learning a language, the ears, eyes and hands are all actively involved. Language learning involves receiving and sending cues for communication. In addition to the sensory channels, the inclusion of individual or group learning style is again reflective of formal classroom situations where the students have to either work individually or in groups.

Reid's (1987) study focused on Malay students in the U.S. Reid's (1987) instrument is used again by many researches in finding perceptual learning style preference among students. Hyeok (1999) used Reid's instrument on Korean learners. Shareena (1995) studies on Malay ESP learners, while Badli Esham (2005) studies on Malay ESL learners. Both studies have similar tertiary level setting. Yeoh (2004) also used similar instrument on engineering students at a polytechnic. Noor Saazai (2004) however, used similar instrument, but on the upper secondary students of a rural school.

2.3.1 Perceptual Learning Style Preferences

Perceptual Learning Style is defined by Reid (1987) who classifies learning styles into *auditory* (hearing), *visual* (seeing), *tactile* (hands-on), *kinaesthetic* (whole-body movement), *group* (like to work in-group), and *individual* (like to work individually). The researcher investigated Perceptual Learning Style of ESL students in the United States, one of a pioneering research into the Perceptual Learning Style.

Reid (1987) developed the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire particularly for learners of foreign language. The questionnaire assesses preferred learning styles of the students based on how students learn best using their perceptions: *visual*, *auditory*, *kinaesthetic*, and *tactile* preferences, and two social aspects of learning: *group* and *individual* preferences.

These channels are measured using the Perceptual Learning Style Preference questionnaire (see Appendix B for the questionnaire). The questionnaire determines the learning style preferences into the following three categories:

Major learning style preferences

This is the perceptual style preference who obtains a score of 38 - 50 for a particular style in the Perceptual Learning Style Preference questionnaire.

Minor learning style preferences

This is the perceptual style preference who obtains a score of 25 - 37 for a particular style in the Perceptual Learning Style Preference questionnaire.

Negligible learning style preference

This is the perceptual style preference who obtains a score of 24 and less for a particular style in the Perceptual Learning Style Preference questionnaire.

The description of the different learning style preferences are in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Reid’s (1987) Description of Learning Style Preferences

Level	Learning Style	Description
Major	Visual	Learn well from seeing words in books, on the chalkboard and in workbooks. They remember and understand information and instructions better if they read them. They do not need as much oral explanation as an auditory learner, and can often learn alone with a book. They take lecture notes and oral instruction if they want to remember information. Example of question for this type of learner would be “I learn better by reading than by listening to someone,” or “I learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the chalkboard.”
	Auditory	Learn from hearing words spoken and from oral explanations. They remember information by reading aloud or by moving their lips as they read, especially when they are learning new materials. Example question for this type of learner would be “I learn better in the class when I listen to someone,” or “When the teacher tells me the instructions I understand better.” They benefit from hearing videotapes, lectures and class discussion. They also benefit from listening to tapes, and by conversing with their teacher.
	Kinaesthetic	Learn best through experience, by being involved physically in classroom experiences. They remember information well when they actively participate in activities, field trips, and role plays in the classroom. A combination of stimuli, for example, an audiotape combined with an activity, help them understand new material. Example question for this learner would be “I prefer to learn by doing something in the class,” or “When I do things in the class, I learn better.”
	Tactile	Learn best when they have the opportunity to do “hands-on” experiences with materials, that is, working on experiments in a laboratory, handling and building models, and touching and working with material which provide them with the most successful learning situations. Writing notes or instructions can help them remember information, and physical involvement in classroom activities may help them understand new information. Example question for this type of learner would be “I learn more when I make something for a class project,” or “I learn more as I make drawings while I study.”

Table 2.5, continued

Level	Learning Style	Description
Major	Group	Learn more easily when they study with at least one student, and are more successful competing and work well with other students, and remember information better when they work with two or three classmates. The stimulation they receive from group work helps them learn and understand new information. Example question for this type of learners would be "In class, I learn best when I study with others," or "I get more work done when I work with others."
	Individual	Learn best when they work alone. They think better when they study alone, and when they remember information they learn by themselves. They understand material best when they learn it alone and make better progress in learning when they work by themselves. Example question for this type of learner would be "In class, I work better when I work alone," or "I prefer working on projects by myself."
Minor		Indicate areas where students can function well as a learner. Usually, a very successful learner can learn in several different ways, and he / she might want to experiment with ways to practice and strengthen his / her minor learning style.
Negligible		Negligible or negative learning style indicates that the learner may have difficulty in learning that way.

Source: Reid's *Perceptual Learning Style Preference (PLSP) Questionnaire* (1987)

2.4 Gender and Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are steps taken by language learners to enhance any aspects of their learning. Tarone (1983) defined a learning strategy as "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language - to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence" (1983:67). Wenden and Rubin (1987:19) define learning strategies as "... any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information." Rubin (1987) later wrote that

learning strategies "are strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affect learning directly" (1987: 22). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) defined learning strategies as "the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (1990:1). Oxford (1992) defines learning strategies as specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability (Oxford, 1992:18).

Language learning strategies have been classified by many scholars. However, most of these attempts to classify language learning strategies reflect more or less the same categorizations of language learning strategies without any radical changes. O'Malley's (1985) classified language learning strategies into three main subcategories namely, metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and schizoaffective strategies. Rubin (1987) grouped language learning strategies used by learners that contribute directly or indirectly to language learning into three categories namely, cognitive learning strategies, metacognitive strategies, communication strategies and social strategies.

Choice of language strategy is also influenced by a number of factors. Gender has been found to influence strategy choice. According to several studies, the gender of the students makes a significant difference in learning a second or foreign language, according to several studies (Politzer, 1983; Oxford et al., 1988; Ehrman and Oxford, 1989; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Oxford et al., 1993; Oxford and Ehrman, 1995; Lee, 1994). All studies, which examined gender as a variable in the use of language learning strategies reported that

significant gender differences almost always occurred in a single direction, showing greater use of language learning strategies by females. Politzer (1983) reported that females used social learning strategies significantly more than males. His only comment about gender differences was, "Variance due to sex of learners seems relatively minor, but does exist with regard to such variables as social interaction" (p.62). Ehrman and Oxford (1989), using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) with both students and instructors at the U.S. Foreign Service Institute came to the conclusion that compared with males, females reported significantly greater use of language learning strategies in four areas: general study strategies, functional practice strategies, strategies for searching for and communication meaning, and self-management strategies.

Oxford and Nyikos (1989) found similar results in a study of 1,200 university students; female learners used formal rule-related practice strategies, general study strategies and conversational input elicitation strategies more frequently than did male learners. But unfortunately, as they indicated, too many other potentially interesting gender differences either have not been explored or have not been reported. These three studies (Politzer, 1983; Ehrman and Oxford, 1989; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989) found a wide range of gender differences in strategy use, especially frequency and variety of strategy use was significantly greater for women. Oxford et al. (1993) also found girls showed a number of differences from boys in terms of motivation, achievement, and frequency of strategy use on their study of factors affecting Japanese language achievement for high school students who were enrolled in the Japanese Satellite Program (JSP) in the USA.

Lee (1994) investigated the factors that affect the use of language learning strategies of Korean middle and high school, and college students, and reported that girls showed more frequent use of strategies than boys in middle school, but not in high school and college. Singh (2000), and Hashim and Syed Sahil (1994) used the Strategy Inventory for Language Learners (SILL) to study the learning strategies of ESL Learners, both at the tertiary level. The present study was conducted to add to the research into language learning strategies at the secondary school level. To date, little research has been conducted into the language learning strategies of Malaysian secondary school students as they relate to gender. Gender differences in strategy use may be more important and more prevalent than previously found. If differences do exist, an understanding of them may help English language teachers guide learners to take better control of their comprehension and learning processes.

In short, most of the prior research showed significant differences between males and females in the use of strategies, with women's overall dominance in frequency and range of the strategies. Oxford (1993) mentioned the factors undoubtedly influencing the choice of learning strategies: motivation, gender, cultural background, type of task, age and L2 stage, and learning style. But she proposed that another factor - L2 strategy training - can also have a powerful effect on the choice of strategies. She concluded that after strategy training, males and females showed roughly equivalent, though, different strategy strengths (Oxford et. al., 1988).

2.4.1 Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL)

Strategies are the mental and communicative procedures learners use in order to learn and use language. They are specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information.

Oxford (1990) has developed a system of language learning strategies which is more comprehensive and detailed than earlier classification models. To date, the most structured and comprehensive instrument to be developed for determining learning strategies in ESL is the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) by Oxford (1990). The SILL is based on the system of language learning strategies developed by Oxford (1986). This strategy system links individual strategies as well as strategy groups with each of the four language skills i.e. listening, reading, speaking and writing. This strategy system is appropriate for studying both perceptual learning style and learning strategies because in the process of using the four language skills, learners would be displaying auditory, visual, Kinaesthetic, tactile, group or individual learning style. If the learner has a tendency for listening, he or she could have either auditory or group learning style as the preferred learning style depending on the situation. If a learner has a greater tendency for writing, he or she could have Kinaesthetic or tactile learning style as the preferred learning style. A preference for reading would indicate visual mode as the preferred learning style. A learner who likes speaking would display preference for Kinaesthetic or group learning style. A learner who likes to do these activities alone would be displaying a preference for individual learning style.

In this system, strategies are divided into two major classes: direct and indirect. Direct strategies, which "involve direct learning and use of the subject matter, in this case a new language" are subdivided into three groups: memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies; Indirect strategies, which "contribute indirectly but powerfully to learning" (Oxford, 1990: 11-12) are also subdivided into three groups: metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. The strategies are shown in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6: Oxford's (1990) Learning Strategies

Direct Strategies	Memory
	Cognitive
	Compensation
Indirect Strategies	Metacognitive
	Affective
	Social

According to Oxford (1990), memory strategies, such as creating mental linkages and employing actions, aid in entering information into long-term memory and retrieving information when needed for communication. Cognitive strategies, such as analysing and reasoning, are used for forming and revising internal mental modes and receiving and producing messages in the target language. Compensation strategies, such as guessing unknown words while listening and reading or using circumlocution in speaking and writing, are needed to overcome any gaps in knowledge of the language. Metacognitive strategies help learners exercise executive control through planning, arranging, focusing, and evaluation their own learning process. Affective strategies enable learners to control feelings, motivations, and attitudes related to language learning. Social strategies, such as asking questions and cooperation with others, facilitate interaction with others, often in a

discourse situation.

Logically, individuals will apply different strategies depending on their personality, cognitive style, and the task at hand. But although cultural and ethnic background, personality, sex, language learning purpose, and other factors influence the degree to which and the way in which learners use specific strategies, all these types of strategies are important to good language learning (Oxford & Crookall, 1989). Thus, it is suggested that an understanding and awareness of learner strategies on the part of both teacher and students may provide valuable insights into the process of language learning. This, in turn, may enable individual learners to adopt or further develop a range of effective personal language learning strategies, and encourage teachers to incorporate their active use in class. Finally as Oxford (1990:1) put it, "strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence."

In this study, the strategy system for language learning proposed by Oxford (1986) is used as the basis for determining the learning strategies used by the form two male and female students. The learning strategies used by each student are measured using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (see Appendix B for the questionnaire). Depending on the score obtained by the subjects, they are categorized into three groups, that is, high level user of the strategy, medium level user of the strategy and low level user of the strategy.

2.5 Conclusion

All learners have individual attributes relating to their learning processes that is, their own learning styles. Learning style has been defined differently by different researchers, depending on how they view the construct and operationalize it. A definition that encompasses all the different versions is that suggested by Robotham (1999) that is, learning style is the general tendency towards a particular learning approach displayed by an individual. According to Dunn and Dunn (1993), no learning style pattern is better or worse than another. A proficient learner is not someone who can learn within a narrow range of activities as defined by a particular learning style, but rather someone who demonstrates the ability to select an appropriate learning style, from a range, according to the demands of the situation and their own learning capabilities.

Successful language learners use a variety of language strategies to become more self-directed and improve their performance. Learning strategies are steps taken by language learners to enhance any aspects of their learning. In this study, the strategy system for language learning strategies used by Oxford (1990) is used as the basis for determining the learning strategies used by the male and female students who learn the English language in the classroom.

The choice of strategies is influenced by a number of factors and gender is one of them. Many researchers reported that females appear to use significantly more strategies than males. They tend to use more social and communicative strategies.

While there have been studies to show the relationship between the learning styles and the learning strategies, this study only attempts to determine the results of preferred learning style and the learning strategies of different gender, that is the male and female students in school as it is also conducted in a survey method. The subjects, the study approach and the whole process of how the survey is conducted are explained in the next chapter.