

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Implication

5.1 Introduction

The final chapter discusses the general strategy use among the subjects, strategy use and cognitive style, class implication, conclusion and suggestions for further research. It is hoped that language teachers and language learners would approach teaching and learning a second language with awareness of the importance of learners factors and effective language learning strategies as well as the possible links between them.

The current study was designed to identify the language learning strategies employed by the second year university students majoring in English in Iran. The researcher tried to concentrate on cognitive style classification (field dependent/field intermediate/field independent) and whether FI language learners' choice of language learning strategies differed from those of FD and FIM language learners. They did seven years of formal English in their respective schools; (as it is mentioned earlier, English is considered as a foreign language in Iran) and later went for English courses with the intention of finding a better job or to achieve a better chance to succeed in university entrance exam. In other words, for most of the subjects in this study, their exposure to the English learning was limited to classroom learning only.

5.2 General strategy use among the subjects

The learners that participated in this study used learning strategies at a “moderate toward high level”, metacognitive, cognitive, social, compensation, memory and effective strategy (Refer to Oxford’s suggested analysis of the SILL average, See Table 4.4, page: 80).

In general, the metacognitive strategy is utilized in order to manage their learning process and handling their learning task, while they employed cognitive strategy to utilize the new language directly, by practicing, analyzing, concentrating and summarizing. In addition the subjects used social strategies like asking questions and becoming aware of other cultures when they work with others to learn the language.

They also used the compensatory strategy to overcome knowledge limitations such as using own intelligence to guess the meaning and using synonym or other tricks to find the meaning of unknown word. Learners made use of memory strategies such as imagery, grouping and structured review to remember information and to retrieve it when needed. Finally they controlled their emotions and attitudes through effective strategies like anxiety reduction and self encouragement. The results are also consistent with the finding of a study done by Tahmasebi (1998) among second year university students using the SILL.

However the subject in this study were observed to use cognitive and social strategy more frequently compared to the subject in the Tahmasebi (1998) study. This difference shows that the communicative approach has powerful influence in the selection of language learning strategies choice.

The classroom teaching methods emphasizes skills, which empower language learning ability through communication and practice. The result of this study appears to support the claim by Oxford (1989); language teaching methods affected the language learning strategies.

The finding of a study done by Cecilia Joseph (1998) showed that the Form Four students generally choose the same strategy as undergraduate students in UUM (University Utara Malaysia). The undergraduate students in UUM made use of metacognitive and compensation strategies more frequently compared to the students in Cecilia Joseph's (1998) study in which the participants were from the high school level. University students are more dependent compared to Form Four students, they show less interest in using language learning strategies to manage their own learning compared to undergraduate learners.

This is due to the independent learning aspects which are not highlighted in classrooms setting compared to university setting where a variety of language learning exists and they rarely encourage the development by the students. (Nunan, 1996).

The result of the study by Bialystock (1979), Nyikos (1990), believed that the classroom environment might not help the use of a wide range of strategies.

5.3 Strategy use and cognitive style

Based on the results the researcher found that learners from the different groups of cognitive style (FI/ FIM /FD) have their own preferences in choosing the language learning strategies. Research results implied that there were no relationship between field dependent /field independent and choices in language learning strategies among learners in this study. The students chose the learning strategies, which facilitate the learning task that help them to be a better language learner.

In the first and second choices we found similar patterns for all the groups, however the pattern changes starts from the third choice (different pattern in learning strategies emerged).Surprisingly, there is a consistent pattern in that at least two groups shows similar sets of language learning strategies, except for social strategies where we cannot see similar patterns in the selection of learning strategies among the subjects concerned.

Here is the table to show the preferences of the three groups in language learning strategies.

Table 5.1: Summary of the preferred strategies by different cognitive groups

Name of he factors	Field independent	Field intermediate	Field dependent
Metacognitive	1	1	1
Cognitive	2	2	2
Social	6	4	3
Compensatory	4	3	4
Memory	3	5	5
Affective	5	6	6

When the language learning strategies were ranked according to the learners’ preference, it was found that the different groups of language learners (FI /FIM /FD) displayed similarities and differences in their choice of language learning strategies. All groups made ‘metacognitive’ strategies their first choice, followed by ‘cognitive’ strategies.

However, the third, fourth and fifth selection of the subjects’ language learning strategies differed. For the third choice the FI learners chose the memory strategies, whereas FIM learners picked the compensatory strategies and FD made use of social strategies as their third choice.

Next the FI and FD learners chose the compensatory strategies, and the FIM language learners made social strategy as their fourth choice. In contrast to the FI learners who made affective strategy their fifth choice, the FIM and FD learners' fifth choice were the memory strategies. Similar to the fifth choice, FD and FIM learners chose the affective strategies and FI learners chose the social strategies as the sixth choice.

The mean was utilized to show the differences in choosing language learning strategies. The result revealed that metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies were statistically significant. The subjects preferred the metacognitive and cognitive strategies as their first and second choice among the six strategy categories mentioned in Oxford's Taxonomy (1990). The subjects preferred these strategies to help them learn English more effectively.

Although, the results pointed out that all groups had chosen metacognitive and cognitive strategies in their first and second language learning strategies, FD learners' preferred memory and compensation strategies followed by affective and social strategies, while FIM learners picked up compensatory, social, memory and finally the effective strategies for the respective categories. Meanwhile the FI learner utilized social, compensatory and memory followed by affective strategies.

In other words, regardless of learner's cognitive style, the high use of metacognitive strategies reflects the learner's personal traits such as being well organized and motivated in their learning.

This is followed by cognitive strategy that is believed to enable the learners to apply the appropriate paralinguistic features such as gestures, intonation, and facial expression, which make learners more proficient in language use.

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Among the learners in this study, FD groups chose the social strategy as their third choice. This explained that FD learners had more opportunities to use English in their immediate social environment, that is, family members and friends and teachers.

Besides academic intelligence that enabled the students to utilize the above mentioned strategies, the needs to obtain good results in tests and examinations influenced their choice of language learning strategies. Therefore, language teachers have to be cautious if they plan to teach learners from each category of cognitive styles categories. It is not necessary that the strategies used by FI learners are good and suited to FIM or FD learner's style of learning.

Besides academic intelligence, other factors such as learner's background, learning needs, learner's personality and examination format affect learner's choice of language learning strategies. Faerch and Kasper (1984) believe that language learners need to know the declarative knowledge (what is already known, for example, about structure, grammar and words) and procedural knowledge (how to use what is known in an appropriate context) in order to master the language.

The findings of this study implied that different groups of the language learners utilized different language learning strategies to manage their learning of English. The result of this study gave teachers, and test designers, the opportunity to have a better understanding on how learners learn English and what kind of learning strategies they used. As a matter of fact this information also helps test developer in designing test that cater to the needs of the learners.

5.4 Classroom implication

The findings of this study have some implications for teaching and learning of English for the purpose of communication. Firstly, the findings suggest that language learning strategies should be taught to language learners (regardless of their cognitive style group), in classroom environment. Secondly, the teaching methods should be compatible with language learners' choices of language learning strategies, so as to enable them to use the appropriate strategies to acquire proficiency in the English language. Thirdly, the examinations format should also be designed according to language learners' needs. Finally, English teachers should recognize the student's use of the language learning strategies.

It is very important to incorporate language learning strategies into language classes. This could give the learners better chances to learn and to develop their skills in the use of language learning strategies; they will be able to practice their language skills. After practicing continuously, learners will be able to identify the learning strategies related to their learning task and will be able to direct their learning to overcome the problems found in their language learning environment.

English teachers should use a variety of language teaching strategies. In addition, using different teaching methodologies assist the teaching and learning of English. This could somehow allow the learners to identify, adopt, and adapt language learning strategies that are suitable for a more effective learning of the English language. The results of some of the studies showed that classroom environment could be considered as an effective factor in the use of the language learning strategies. (Bialystok, 1979: Oxford and Nyikos 1989).

The examination design and scoring system should show the use of the serious forms of language strategies. It should be compatible with the learning process rather than testing the students' knowledge of the language learnt. In other words, tests and examinations should be used as a scale to discover the language learner's area of learning. The results should help the teachers to assist the learners to improve language proficiency. Teachers' perception of the learners' choice of language learning strategies are useful in identifying the learners' problematic areas in language learning.

However, the language learning strategies reflects the problem language learners face while learning the language. The language teachers can help their learners to find ways to get through their learning problems. Although the relationship between FD/ FI and choices in the language learning strategies cannot be found in this research, teachers should still consider the need of each group of learners and choose the suitable teaching methodologies relevant to each group.

5.5. Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate that the language learners used learning strategies to handle the learning task and to achieve the language learning process. It also showed that there is a negative link between the choice of language learning strategies and factors such as being field dependent/field intermediate /field independent among Iranian university student majoring in English.

The different groups of language learners (FD/FIM/FI) showed their choice of language learning strategies when learning English. The results suggested that the learners' choice for language learning strategies seemed to be influenced by some underlying factors such as learners' immediate social background.

Social immediate background refers to the situation that the learners are from, the social environment in which English is seldom used. In such an environment, they neither have a chance to hear English nor to use it in their daily life. In Iran, English is considered a foreign language and the learner's immediate social environment influences his learning and his choice of learning strategies.

5.6. Suggestions for future research on language learning strategies

In the light of the findings of this study, the suggestions for further research to be carried out are as follows:

1. The subjects of this study were limited to the second year university students majoring in English in two universities in Iran. The results and conclusions obtained can not be generalized to all the second year students in Iranian universities. It is recommended that studies be extended to involve students with other majors in Iranian universities and also different levels of English.
2. In this research all the subjects were from the same nationality and the same culture. It is recommended having subjects from different nationalities, social and cultural backgrounds as it will give opportunity to the researcher to do the comparative studies which will yield interesting results.
3. In this research, all the subjects were female. It is recommended to have a combination of the female and male subjects to see and take a look at the gender prospect.