FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE THE LEARNING STRATEGIES OF EFL LEARNERS

PERSIS DINEEN RODRIGUES

RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA KUALA LUMPUR

MARCH 2010
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for the strength, patience and perseverance given to me while completing my research project. Without His countless blessings, this research would be incomplete.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Ng Lee Luan, for her invaluable comments, suggestions and great guidance throughout my research. The comprehensive guidelines and constructive feedback have enabled me to finally complete the task. Furthermore, her meticulous work drove me to strive harder in completing this research. For this reason, I would never forget her as she has always been there for me whenever I needed her. She has been for me an unfailing beacon of hope and source of encouragement.

The guiding spirit of this study has been my beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Phlip Charles Rodrigues. Without them, I would have given up. My parents have constantly given me love and strength in what I have achieved so far in my life. Their motivation and support have steered me to complete my postgraduate course.
This project would not have been possible without the love and encouragement of my precious husband, Mr. Mah Jee Onn, who has always been there for me during good times and bad. He has given me a lot of comfort and love which made me a stronger person during this journey. I would like to thank my dearly loved husband for all that he has done for me.

A very special thank-you goes to my colleagues and students in APIIT who have helped me in completing this research. Their support and understanding have inspired me to work harder. Without them, I would not have come this far.

Last but not least, I would like to offer a special word of thanks to all my other family members, friends, and lecturers who have given me great support throughout this fruitful endeavour.
ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan tentang strategi pembelajaran bahasa telah dijalankan oleh para penyelidik dalam usaha mencari faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kemahiran berbahasa di kalangan pelajar dalam bidang bahasa. Strategi pembelajaran bahasa merupakan salah satu faktor utama yang mempengaruhi kejayaan pembelajaran bahasa. Laporan ini membentangkan dapatan kajian tentang faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pelajar yang mahir menuntut bahasa asing dan pelajar yang kurang mahir menuntut bahasa asing dalam pemilihan strategi pembelajaran semasa mempelajari program intensif Bahasa Inggeris selama 4 minggu. Seramai 30 orang pelajar terlibat dalam penyelidikan ini dan cara metodologi kajian yang telah digunakan adalah borang soalselidik SILL dan temuduga. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua kategori pelajar menggunakan strategi sosial secara kerap. Walau bagaimanapun, strategi memori tidak kerap digunakan oleh pelajar yang mahir menuntut bahasa asing sementara strategi emosi pula tidak selalu digunakan oleh pelajar yang kurang mahir menuntut bahasa tersebut. Pemilihan strategi pembelajaran biasanya dipengaruhi oleh pengetahuan awal, kepercayaan, pengetahuan mengenai budaya bahasa kedua atau asing, personaliti, motivasi, emosi, suasana pembelajaran, pengaruh bahasa pertama, umur dan rakan sebaya. Implikasi laporan ini disertai oleh beberapa cadangan untuk kajian masa hadapan.
ABSTRACT

Research studies on language learning strategies have been carried out by researchers in their quest to locate factors that influence the proficiency of language learners. Language learning strategies are found to be one of the key factors that contribute to successful language learning. This paper presents the findings of factors that influence the choice of learning strategies of proficient and less proficient EFL learners in a four-week English Intensive Programme. A total of 30 participants took part in this study, and collection of data was carried out via the use of the SILL questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The results indicate that both proficiency groups employ social strategies as their most frequently used ones. However, memory strategies are not frequently used by proficient learners, whereas affective strategies are seldom adopted by less proficient ones. The study also reveals that learners’ choice of learning strategies are mainly influenced by prior learning experiences, beliefs, knowledge of the target cultures, personalities, motivations, emotional states, learning environments, influence of their first language, age and peer influences. The implications of this study are discussed along with the suggestions for further research.
UNIVERSITI MALAYA

ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

Name of Candidate: PERSIS DINEEN RODRIGUES    (I.C/Passport No: 800603-14-5862)

Registration/Matric No: TGB 060031

Name of Degree: MASTER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE


FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE THE LEARNING STRATEGIES OF EFL LEARNERS

Field of Study: SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

I do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

(1) I am the sole author/writer of this Work;
(2) This Work is original;
(3) Any use of any work in which copyright exists was done by way of fair dealing and for permitted purposes and any excerpt or extract from, or reference to or reproduction of any copyright work has been disclosed expressly and sufficiently and the title of the Work and its authorship have been acknowledged in this Work;
(4) I do not have any actual knowledge nor do I ought reasonably to know that the making of this work constitutes an infringement of any copyright work;
(5) I hereby assign all and every rights in the copyright to this Work to the University of Malaya (“UM”), who henceforth shall be owner of the copyright in this Work and that any reproduction or use in any form or by any means whatsoever is prohibited without the written consent of UM having been first had and obtained;
(6) I am fully aware that if in the course of making this Work I have infringed any copyright whether intentionally or otherwise, I may be subject to legal action or any other action as may be determined by UM.

Candidate’s Signature          Date: 16 MARCH, 2010

Subscribed and solemnly declared before,

Witness’s Signature          Date: 16 MARCH, 2010

Name: DR. NG LEE LUAN
Designation: SUPERVISOR
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstrak</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter One: Introduction

1.0: Overview                  | 1 – 2 |
1.1: Background of the Study   | 2 – 6 |
1.2: Statement of the Research Problems | 6 – 7 |
1.3: Objectives of the Study   | 7    |
1.4: Research Questions        | 8    |
1.5: Limitation of the Study   | 8 – 9 |
1.6: Significance of the Study | 9 – 10|
1.7: Conclusion                | 10   |
## Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0: Overview  

2.1: Individual Differences  
2.1.1: Age  
2.1.2: First Language  
2.1.3: Nationality  
2.1.4: Learners’ Belief and Knowledge of Target Culture  
2.1.5: Prior Learning Experience  
2.1.6: Motivational Level and Learning Attitude  
2.1.7: Learning Styles and Personalities  

2.2: Language Learning Strategies (LLSs)  
2.2.1: Various Definitions of LLSs  
2.2.2: Classifications of LLSs  
2.2.3: The Good Language Learners  

2.3: Past Studies on Language Learning Strategies  
2.4: Factors that Influence the Choice of Language Learning Strategies  

2.5: The Research Gap  
2.6: Conclusion
Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.0: Overview 37

3.1: Participants 37 – 40

3.2: Background of the Intensive English Programme (IEP) 40 – 43

3.3: Research Design 44

3.3.1: Quantitative Method 44 – 45

3.3.2: Qualitative Method 45

3.4: Research Instruments 46

3.4.1: SILL Questionnaires 46 – 50

3.4.2: Semi-structured Interview 50 – 51

3.5: Ongoing Assessments 52 – 55

3.6: Data Collection 55 – 59

3.7: Triangulation 59 – 60

3.8: Conclusion 60
Chapter Four: Findings and Discussions

4.0: Overview

4.1: Overall Responses to SILL Questionnaire

4.1.1: Average Scores of SILL Student Profiles

4.1.2: Total Average Scores of Frequency of Use

4.2: Frequency of Use of Language Learning Strategy by Proficient Learners

4.2.1: The Most Frequently Used Language Learning Strategy by Proficient Learners

4.2.2: The Least Frequently Used Language Learning Strategy by Proficient Learners

4.3: Frequency of Use of Language Learning Strategy by Less Proficient Learners

4.3.1: The Most Frequently Used Language Learning Strategy by Less Proficient Learners

4.3.2: The Least Frequently Used Language Learning Strategy by Less Proficient Learners

4.4: Factors that Influence the Choice of Language Learning Strategies

4.4.1: Prior Learning Experience

4.4.2: Learners’ Belief & Knowledge of Target Culture
4.4.3: Personality and Attitude 83 – 90
4.4.4: Self-motivation 90 – 93
4.4.5: The Influence of Emotions 93 – 99
4.4.6: Learning Environment 100 – 102
4.4.7: Influence of First Language 102 – 106
4.4.8: Age Factor 106 – 109
4.4.9: Peer Influence 109 – 110
4.5: Conclusion 110 – 111
Chapter Five: Summary, Implications and Recommendations

5.0: Overview 112
5.1: Summary of the Study 112 – 119
5.2: Implications of the Study 120
  5.2.1: Theoretical Implications 120
  5.2.2: Methodological Implications 121
  5.2.3: Pedagogical Implications 122
5.3: Recommendations for Future Research 123
  5.3.1: Implementing Different Types of Instruction 123
  5.3.2: Strategy Training for EFL students 123 – 124
  5.3.3: Peer Tutoring Sessions 124
  5.3.4: Videotaped Learning Testimonials 124
  5.3.5: Strategies-Based Instruction (SBI) 125
5.4: Conclusion 125

Bibliography 126 – 136

Appendices 137