

## **Chapter Four: Findings and Discussions**

### **4.0: Overview**

This chapter reports the data analysis and findings of the study. Data on the participants' feedback and their responses to the questionnaire on the language learning strategies were analysed. In addition, factors that contributed to choosing language learning strategies for both proficient and less proficient learners were discussed in detail, and followed by a conclusion.

### **4.1. Overall Responses to SILL Questionnaire**

Based on the SILL results, descriptive statistics were used to describe the overall responses to SILL questionnaire. In the following section, average scores of students' profiles and scores of frequency of use are discussed respectively.

#### **4.1.1. Average Scores of SILL Student Profiles**

Table 4.1.1(a) shows the average scores of each language learning strategy for each participant.

Table 4.1.1(a): SILL Students' Profiles

Students	Memory	Cognitive	Compensatory	Meta cognitive	Affective	Social
1	1.78	2.57	4.17	3.11	2.17	4.67
2	2.44	3.93	4.5	3.89	2.83	4
3	2	3.5	3.17	3.11	3.33	4
4	2.67	3.07	2.83	2.56	3.83	4
5	4.22	3.93	4.5	4.67	4	4.33
6	3.22	3.36	2.67	3.44	2.17	4.33
7	3.78	4.36	4.17	4.67	3.33	4.17
8	3.44	3.43	3.17	4	3.67	4.5
9	3.44	4.57	3.83	4.33	4	2.67
10	2.78	3.21	3.5	3.33	2	3.5
11	2.89	3.21	2.83	3.44	1.83	4.17
12	2.67	3.71	4	3.33	4.33	3
13	2.44	3.14	3.5	3.11	3.17	4.5
14	2.89	3.93	3.83	4	4.17	3.83
15	3.11	3.71	3.83	3.67	1.5	4.33
16	3.11	3.64	3.5	3.78	3.17	4.5
17	3.56	3.29	3.5	4.33	3.5	4
18	2.56	3.86	4	3	3.17	4.33
19	3.33	4.14	3.5	4.22	3.17	2.17
20	4.22	2.71	2	2.67	2.33	4
21	3.56	4.14	3.33	3.78	3.33	4.67
22	3.22	4.07	4	4.22	3.83	4
23	3.67	4	4	4.33	3.83	4.67
24	2.89	3.29	3.83	3.44	3.83	3.67
25	3.11	3.57	3.67	3.78	3.5	4
26	2.56	3.57	3.83	4	4.33	4
27	3.44	3.5	4	3.33	3.17	3.5
28	2.56	3.5	3.17	3.22	3.67	3.83
29	3.56	3.71	3.83	4.89	4	4.17
30	2.78	3.29	3.5	3.56	3.83	4.67

Based on a five-point Likert scale, 4.5 to 5.0 represents “always or almost always used”, 3.5 to 4.4 shows “usually used”, 2.5 to 3.4 indicates “sometimes used”, 1.5 to 2.4 represents “generally not used, and finally 1.0 to 1.4 indicates “never or almost never used” (Oxford, 1990) . In general, out of 30 participants, 16 participants chose social strategies as their most frequent language learning

strategies. On the other hand, 17 did not make frequent use of memory strategies. The average scores for social strategies were between 3.5 and 4.67, which indicated high frequency of use of social strategies in their language learning activities or tasks. The participants utilised social strategies to practise their English more frequently. The communicative activities contributed indirectly to learning the language daily. For example, the participants initiated conversations with other students and teachers. They asked questions and obtained answers, listened to music, watched television or browsed the Internet, and participated in classroom activities such as conducting discussion in pairs or groups.

This current finding was in contrast with the previous studies (Kaur, 2003; Chang, Liu & Lee, 2007). Kaur (2003) found that ESL learners frequently used metacognitive strategies to pay attention and link with already known materials through listening. Furthermore, in these studies, they were able to organise, set their goals and objectives, and to carry out self-monitoring and self-evaluation. Hence, metacognitive strategies allowed the learners to take control of their learning situation. Chang, Liu & Lee (2007), on the other hand, discovered that compensatory strategies were the most frequently used by 1758 Taiwanese college EFL learners, because the students guessed the unknown phrases in English, and switched to their first language in order to overcome limitations in speaking and writing. The researchers also revealed that compensatory strategies were employed by the Taiwanese students majoring in Humanities & Social Science, and Business & Management, as these two fields involved the use of the

English language.

In this study, memory strategies did not seem to be the students' favourite choice except for participant 5 and 20 who regarded these as important. This finding correlated with previous research (Bremner, 1999) found that memory strategies were less frequently used. Here, the participants did not group words, topics, linguistic functions, or try to relate new language information to concepts or picture a word in mind, or figure out newly-learnt words. Kaur's (2003) research also confirmed that memory strategies were the lowest choice for ESL students, because the vocabulary that was used in the English language class was not y significant to the learners. In addition, the vocabulary that they learnt was not related to their field of study. However, Chang, Liu & Lee (2007) proved otherwise. The three researchers argued that memory strategies were frequently used by the Taiwanese students after compensatory strategies, because they majored in Humanities and Social Science, Business Management, and Science and Engineering. Thus, memorising English terminologies was vital for the learners to understand their subjects or topics.

In this study, affective strategies were the least frequently employed by the EFL learners because they were not able to control their anxiety level and emotion. In brief, memory strategies were not as popular as social strategies among the EFL learners. They believed the environment could provide the ideal platform to practise or use the language. Thus, social strategies were frequently

used to seek opportunities to practise English as much as they could. In order to obtain the overall picture of the average scores of frequency of use by these participants, the following section reveals the total average scores of each strategy.

#### 4.1.2. Total Average Scores of Frequency of Use

The total average scores of frequency of each strategy are shown in Table 4.1.2.

Table 4.1.2: The Total Average Scores of Frequency of Use

<b>Average Level</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Points</b>
High (Usually used, 3.5 to 4.4)	Social Strategies	3.95
	Meta Cognitive Strategies	3.71
	Compensatory Strategies	3.61
	Cognitive Strategies	3.60
Medium (Sometimes used, 2.5 to 3.4)	Affective Strategies	3.30
	Memory Strategies	3.06

In Table 4.1.2., social strategies were most frequently used by the Intermediate students with an average score of 3.95. Metacognitive strategies were the next popular choice with an average score of 3.71. This showed the learners paid attention during lessons, they set their learning goals, and they sought opportunities to practise their language skills and evaluate their learning progress. In the same average score category, compensatory and cognitive strategies were adopted quite often with respective scores of 3.61 and 3.60. The learners used gestures when they could not think of a word during conversations,

they asked someone for help, and they used other linguistics clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. Cognitive strategies allowed the learners to repeat words, to analyse grammatical patterns, and to summarise the main ideas. However, affective and memory strategies were not frequently used by the learners. They sometimes used affective strategies to control their emotions, attitudes, and motivations to learn English. Positive statements were sometimes used to encourage and motivate them to learn. Memory strategies were the least frequently used with an average score of 3.06, which indicated that the learners did not usually use rote learning for remembering words or phrases in English.

In summary, the participants generally employed all the six learning strategies of SILL. However, proficient learners and less proficient ones differ in choosing learning strategies as their most frequently and least frequently used methods. These findings are discussed in the following sections.

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

This section discusses the findings of the most and least frequently used pattern of learning strategies by the proficient EFL learners.

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

Table 4.2.1 shows the average scores of each learning strategy employed by eight proficient learners of EFL.

Table 4.2.1: The Average Scores of Language Learning Strategies  
Employed by Proficient Learners of EFL

<b>Partici- pant</b>	<b>Memory</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>Compensa -tory</b>	<b>Meta cognitive</b>	<b>Affec- tive</b>	<b>Social</b>
001	2.44	3.93	4.5	3.89	2.83	4.67
002	4.22	3.93	4.5	4.67	4	4
003	3.78	4.36	4.17	4.67	3.33	4.33
004	2.89	3.93	3.83	4	4.17	4.5
005	3.11	3.64	3.5	3.78	3.17	4.33
006	3.33	4.14	3.5	4.22	3.17	4.33
007	2.89	3.29	3.83	3.44	3.83	4.67
008	3.56	3.71	3.83	4.89	4	3.83
<b>Total Average Scores</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>3.96</b>	<b>4.20</b>	<b>3.56</b>	<b>4.33</b>

The focus of the research question is on the most frequently used pattern of language learning strategy adopted by the proficient EFL learners. Based on Table 4.2.1, social strategies topped the list. Majority of the eight participants (87 percent) selected social strategies, with average scores of 4.33 and 4.67. They always used social strategies to learn English, because they believed this method of learning would be a faster way to acquire the language skills, and would also enable them to have more opportunities to practise the language.

These participants had strong determination to learn and practise English with their classmates, teachers, friends, and native English speakers. The learners believed that by practising English with others, they would be able to hone their language and academic skills. This finding is line with Olah's (2006) study on Japanese ESL students employing social strategies. According to Olah, the strategies proved to have the highest correlation to academic achievement, because the university students focused more on practising English language than passing the examinations. This current study also revealed that all the proficient learners used social strategies frequently, with an average score of 4 and above, except for one participant whose average score was only 3.83. Besides social strategies being the most frequently used by the proficient learners, the least frequently used method was also discussed. This finding is discussed in Section 4.2.2.

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

According to Table 4.2.2, memory strategies were chosen as the least frequently used pattern by five participants: The lowest average score was participant 001 with only 2.44. This showed that the participant did not generally use memory strategies that much, as the average score fell below the low frequency category. Slightly above the low frequency category, both participants 004 and 007 obtained 2.89. This indicated that the two participants sometimes employed memory strategies in attempting the language tasks. The results in Table 4.2.2 revealed that participants 005 and 008 adopted slightly more memory strategies than participant four and seven, with 3.11 and 3.56 respectively.

Generally, these proficient learners did not use memory strategies that much, because memorisation could lead to boredom in their quest to acquire English language skills. This rote learning generally allowed language learners to repeat words or phrases several times for them to remember. As a result, the proficient learners would prefer social strategies to memory strategies, because they would rather practise the language in the natural way. Memory strategies were reported the least used by these less proficient learners and it was consistent with Chuo and Yen's (2005) study. Generally, the researchers found that proficient Taiwanese EFL learners in a college did not favour memory strategies in learning English, because the students employed more metacognitive strategies. Furthermore, they usually planned and organised their learning progress in

English. Nevertheless, Chuo and Yen (2005) also discovered that memory strategies were most frequently used by proficient learners for certain language tasks such as vocabulary development, pronunciation, grammar, reading, and listening tasks.

### **4.3: Frequency of Use of Language Learning Strategy by Less**

#### **Proficient Learners**

Besides proficient learners of EFL, this section discusses the findings of the commonly used learning strategies of other eight less proficient learners. The discussion and findings will address research question two.

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

Table 4.3.1 shows the average scores of each language learning strategy adopted by the eight less proficient learners of EFL.

Table 4.3.1: The Average Scores of Language Learning Strategies  
Employed by Less Proficient Learners of EFL

<b>Partici- pant</b>	<b>Memory</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>Compensa- tory</b>	<b>Meta Cognitive</b>	<b>Affect- ive</b>	<b>Social</b>
001	3.22	3.36	2.67	3.44	2.17	4.33
002	3.44	3.43	3.17	4	3.67	4.17
003	2.89	3.21	2.83	3.44	1.83	3.5
004	3.11	3.71	3.83	3.67	1.5	3.83
005	3.56	4.14	3.33	3.78	3.33	4
006	3.22	4.07	4	4.22	3.83	4.67
007	3.11	3.57	3.67	3.78	3.5	3.67
008	2.78	3.29	3.5	3.56	3.83	4.17
<b>Total Average Scores</b>	<b>3.17</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>3.74</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>4.04</b>

To answer the second research question, less proficient learners also chose social strategies as their most frequently used learning strategies. The results showed that six out of eight less proficient learners chose social strategies as their path to acquiring language skill. For example, participant 001, 002, 006 and 008 usually used social strategies, with average scores of 4.33, 4.17, 4.67 and 4.17 respectively. This finding was similar to that of the proficient learners who also frequently employed social strategies in learning English. Nevertheless, the proficient learners consistently used more social strategies than the less proficient ones, because of their proficiency level that enabled them to use social strategies more confidently. Unlike the less proficient learners, their proficiency level was lower, which sometimes made them unsure of using the social strategies.

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

Affective strategies were the least frequently used pattern of language learning employed by the less proficient learners. Participant 004 seldom employed affective strategies, garnering the lowest average score of 1.5, followed by participant 003 who also rarely used the strategies in learning English. The results indicated that both participants were not motivated to learn English. Moreover, they did not show strong interest in acquiring or learning English as a foreign language. The learners did not use positive statements to encourage themselves to improve their English language skills. For instance, participant 003 stated that, *“It’s not really important for me to encourage myself to learn English”*. Participant 004 did not share his learning experience or feelings with others as he was unable to control his anger.

Nevertheless, this finding contrasted with the finding of proficient learners who used memory strategies less frequently. Affective strategies were the least frequently used method, while memory strategies were not the choice of the less proficient learners either. Out of eight participants, only three chose memory strategies. The following section discusses factors that influence both proficient and less proficient learners in their choice of learning strategies.

#### **4.4: Factors that Influence the Choice of Language Learning Strategies**

In answering research question three and four that focus on investigating factor that influence proficient and less proficient learners' choice of language learning strategies, the next sections will outline the factors that influence the choice of learning strategies.

##### **4.4.1: Prior Learning Experience**

Previous learning experience has influenced both the proficient and less proficient learners in choosing certain strategies. The learners would apply similar strategies that they had learnt from their previous language learning institutions in their home country.

Participant 007 (proficient learner) had learnt English grammar in China before coming to Malaysia. According to her, the students in China were given many grammar exercises to do, and had acquired the ability to analyse grammatical items proficiently. As she said, *“The teacher will teach the tenses, and they will give many practices, many different types of questions, and we have to do many exercises. When we read the sentence structure, we will know which is right or wrong.”* This showed the learner was able to self-evaluate her language performance. Despite having memory strategies as the least frequently used strategies (2.89), the participant 007 sometimes memorises grammatical rules for examination preparation without trying to understand the meaning. The present

finding was consistent with the results of Hou's research (2008) that showed that reading and listening materials (including grammar components) in China were designed for examinations. The students were forced to read and listen in order to pass the examinations. As a result, they felt it was boring to read and listen to such non-authentic materials. In addition, the learners had a tendency to focus on individual words instead of the main ideas or the gist of them.

From the researcher's observations in classrooms, this previous learning experience had influenced the proficient participants in using certain cognitive strategies: repeating technique, taking notes, analysing, and reasoning. These common strategies have been learnt in their schools, colleges, universities or language centres. The repeating technique is usually employed by students to remember words or phrases in English.

With this repeating technique, proficient learners listened to the words several times, repeat them and imitated a native English speaker. For example, participant 001 (proficient learner) usually repeated compound words three to four times. Participant 005 who is deemed to be a proficient learner said or wrote difficult words five to six times, and also wrote the words in one page in order to remember the accurate spellings. Participant 002 (proficient learner), on the other hand, usually listened or watched YouTube to improve his listening and pronunciation. According to Webopedia, the number one online information technology encyclopedia, YouTube.com is a video-sharing website which online

users can upload and share their videos and share their videos. (Source: <http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/Y/YouTube.html>). While listening or watching YouTube, participant 002 usually repeated the words or phrases that he had learnt. Such personal experience had given the learner the opportunity to expand his choice of learning strategies, and also to acquire competency in the language.

Previous experience also contributed to enhancing the learning curve of the learner. Such finding is in line with Chuo and Yen's study (2005) on Taiwanese students' prior learning experiences. One of the participants shared that his father had drilled him to memorise many English words or phrases in order to participate in English speech contests. The learner soon realised his personal experience had taught him well to consolidate his competence in the language.

In this study, proficient learners like participant 004 usually remembered the spelling when he wrote letters. For example, he wrote the word "responsibility" several times, because there were so many letters "i" which he had to remember. Another interesting finding was that another proficient learner (participant 006) preferred to repeat the new words verbally from the electronic dictionary several times. Like the proficient learners, the less skilled participants would use the repetition technique to bolster their language ability. The less proficient learners usually repeated the English words or phrases several times in

written or verbal form. For example, participant 008 would repeat the newly-learnt English words three times; because this was one effective way she could remember the new words. She would repeat the words several times early in the morning as this was be the best time for her to recall the new words.

These findings showed that both proficient and less proficient learners were well acquainted with the repetition technique when they were back in their homeland. The similar findings are also consistent with Chuo and Yen's study (2005). The researchers discovered that the Taiwanese students had started learning English in a private language institute at an early age. They had been exposed to grammar exercises, drills, and test-taking skills, which prepared them for the entrance examinations.

However, there are learners who feel otherwise about drilling. For instance, participant 003 (proficient learner) thought that repetition technique was boring, ineffective and a waste of time. Too much repetition would affect the learner's enthusiasm and interest in learning the language. Participant 003 would rather learn the language in a natural way, by saying, "... *English is like [we are] being forced to learn; but I want to learn English in a natural way*". Ya (2003) commented that memorisation, recitation, and translation would discourage language learners from practising the language naturally. For example, in China, students were drilled for examinations and were not encouraged to practise the language in a natural way. In addition, He (2001) also stated that question-and-

answer drilling reinforced the roles of the students as passive learners. This method did not encourage students to pick up language skills, broaden their comprehension, manipulate and produce appropriate English phrases or words according to the various contexts.

In short, prior learning experience had determined the choice of learning strategies, and this experience was influenced to some extent by the learners' belief and knowledge of target culture. The learners' belief and knowledge of target culture are discussed in the next section.

#### **4.4.2: Learners' Belief & Knowledge of Target Culture**

The proficient learners knew the importance of developing an understanding of the cultures of other people. They believed that possessing a background knowledge of a new culture often helped them to understand better than hearing or reading it in English. In addition, a background knowledge of the custom of the people, such as their manner of speaking, the type of food they prefer, and the way they dress, was regarded as aids that would enable the proficient learners to choose the appropriate words or phrases to express loudly their views on cultures, without creating any misunderstanding. For example, participant 001 learnt the English culture from watching English movies or sometimes communicated with the native speakers. Thus, participant 001 became more aware of the mindset of the other speakers.

Participant 004 felt that learning the culture of English speakers would be crucial in understanding how they think. For instance, when the learner used Skype for communicating with his friends, his friends seemed to understand what he was trying to convey. Unfortunately, when the teacher read the sentences in Skype, she was not able to decipher what the learner was trying to express. Thus, participant 004 felt that he needed to use English so that he could think and speak like English speakers.

Participant 005 also agreed that learning about English culture was one way of mastering the language. Participant 006 found that the English language is rich and employing social strategies could help her to understand more new words or phrases in engineering. Furthermore, the learner commented that putting oneself in an English-speaking environment would speed up the learning process. As participant 006 said, *“English culture has rich culture. If you study the language, you will widen your knowledge.”* Hou (2008) also confirmed that the Chinese participants in his study had improved their English skills, because they had more opportunities to listen and speak in English daily as well as to assess authentic materials. Additionally, various idiomatic expressions learnt from the authentic materials helped them to communicate effectively. Participant 008, on the other hand, was slightly different from the rest, because he seldom communicated with others to find out about the English culture. The participant would just read English newspapers and books, listen to English news, and surf the Internet to get an overall view of the English culture.

The present research found that the less proficient learners also believed in learning the culture of English speakers. For example, participant 006 felt that it would be necessary for him to practise English in many ways. To him, learning the culture of English speakers would help him understand the different cultural traditions of the English and Arabs. The less proficient learner found social strategies useful in his class, because it would afford him the chance to explain his culture using English as the medium of expression.

Learning the culture of the English-speaking people would pave the way for the less effective participants to explore the differences in expressions, idioms, traditions, and norms. For instance, participant 001 felt that by understanding the English speakers' culture, he would be able to understand basic greetings like "good night" and "good morning". Furthermore, the less proficient learner found there were differences between the English and Iranian cultures. The native speakers used formal expressions when greeting someone, but in Iranian culture, the greetings were more informal and friendlier.

Besides empathising with others, the proficient learners believed that asking questions would prompt them to look for corrections in their production skills. This strategy was mostly used in speaking and writing, because the learners were more inclined towards making errors while producing the target language. In spoken conversations, the learners would ask English speakers to correct them when they spoke the language, because English speakers knew the language and

they would know how to correct the mistakes made by the learners. For instance, participant 005 asked a British man to teach him how to pronounce the word, STOP, in the learner's home country. Asking the teachers to correct their grammatical mistakes in class was another strategy to achieve their communicative competence.

Belief and knowledge have influenced the proficient learners to adopt metacognitive strategies, which also involved seeking opportunities to use the language. The participants usually looked for people they could talk to in English, because they believed that they could practise their pronunciation, grammar, sentence structure, and accent better. In this way, they could build up their confidence when speaking to people. For example, participant 002 always looked for people to talk in English either through the Internet or classroom discussion.

The finding also revealed that less proficient learners believed in employing social strategies. For instance, participant 006 believed social strategies would be able to help him improve his English. He would always ask the English speakers to correct his errors, and would practise English with the other students. Practising English with other students would not only improve his speaking skills, but also strengthen the bonds of friendship. For example, participant 005 (less proficient learner) would make new friends while practising his English conversations with them.

The present research revealed results that are similar to Riley's (2009) study on students' faith in their method of acquiring skills in the second language learning. He argued that first-year Japanese university students showed positive belief in communicating with English-speaking people. This way, the students believed that they could improve their English by practising with their classmates or friends. The learners' positive belief led them to build up their confidence level and increase their ability to practise more with their peers or classmates.

Nevertheless, the current finding contrasted with the finding of Wu (2009). The researcher found that Taiwanese technical students did not regard their daily communication as a tool for practising English. They did not believe that they could learn from practising English within a group of classmates or peers. Additionally, the learners thought that their spoken English must be perfect for communicating with other classmates. If the students believed so, they might refuse to talk with their peers in classrooms.

Starting a conversation in English would be another cognitive strategy that the less proficient learners would employ. However, not all of them concurred with this approach. Learner 007, for example, believed that striking up a conversation in English would not be interesting, because every student in the institution would only use English for basic greetings like "How are you? I'm good, goodbye". This observation was contrasted with the study on the proficient learners who would normally begin a conversation with English greetings.

In this current study, the finding revealed that both proficient and less proficient learners often watched English movies or English programmes to improve their comprehension and creative skills. The learners believed that non-printed resources helped them to further improve their listening and speaking skills. For example, proficient learners like participants 001 and 004 acquired more new words or expressions and understood how the native speakers pronounced and used these expressions in different situations. Participant 006 (proficient learner) preferred watching English programmes more than surfing the Internet.

Nonetheless, Taiwanese technical students in Wu's research (2009) differed from the participants of this study. Besides getting less support from the teachers, the Taiwanese students showed lack of initiative in using multimedia resources to improve their English. Furthermore, the traditional drilling method was one of the obstacles that stood in the path of language teachers who were searching for appropriate English movies that would show the true values of their cultures, rather than focusing on violence, social ills, and glorifying the Western culture.

In summary, belief and knowledge of target culture differ from one individual to another. If the learners' belief is consistent with accepted good language practices, the belief is likely to be effective, and the learning outcome is positive. Belief and knowledge of target culture are somehow related to

personality and attitude. This next factor is described in the following section.

#### **4.4.3: Personality and Attitude**

Apart from the other two factors, the eight proficient learners never missed the opportunity to practise English with other students or their peers, because they were keen to improve their speaking skills. Practising English with other students in classes would allow the learners to practise their informal conversations. For instance, participant 007 always practised English with her Chinese friends as they would like to learn grammar together. The learner also looked for other opportunities to learn and understand the pronunciation of foreign students.

The participants of this study attributed their success in acquiring English language skills to their constant efforts. Their positive outlook had spurred them to adopt the correct learning attitude towards English language learning. The truth of this present finding is amply borne out by Lei and Qin (2009) on the reasons for the success or failure of EFL learners in universities in China. The researchers proved that successful EFL learners were more hardworking and persevering in EFL learning than the unsuccessful ones. However, the second part of Lei and Qin's finding (2009) failed to support this present study, because the less proficient learners also put a lot of efforts in making their learning more successful. For example, participant 006 (less proficient learner) would seek help from his roommate to speak to him in English, because his roommate's command

of the language was better than his. Participant 001 (less proficient learner) would find another person who speaks good English to practise his conversational English.

Participant 004 (less proficient learner), on the other hand, would not even share his thoughts with others, because he could not control his anger. This result showed that the learner had difficulty in managing his affective strategies due to his negative attitude. Furthermore, the learner would have limited learning strategies or methods to practise spoken English.

Adopting a positive attitude had enabled proficient learners to set their own goals, seek opportunities to try out their English language skills, and to self-evaluate. In other words, the proficient learners possessed strong positive attitude in employing metacognitive strategies. They arranged and planned their mode of learning to explore the English “terrain”. The proficient learners used many ways to acquire knowledge of the language in their bid to hone their skills. For example, participant 006 read journals for her research in science.

Good learning attitude also contributed to the careful and effective planning and organising of their language learning. A majority of the learners planned their schedule wisely so that they would have enough time to study English. However, two proficient learners did not plan their time-table because they wanted more freedom and would not want to be bogged down with planning.

This study also revealed that some less proficient learners did not review their English lessons often. For example, participant 008 did not review his English lessons, because she preferred to relax at home. Participant 007 also did not revise his English lessons, because he could already understand the lessons in the class. Nevertheless, the less proficient learners would like to have more freedom in using English in a natural manner. The time factor also played a part in learning English. Participant 001 (less proficient learner) never reviewed his English lessons, because he had to do his household chores such as cooking and cleaning.

However, reviewing English lessons was favoured by participants 004, 005 and 006 (less proficient learners). Participant 004 would review the English lessons for about one hour or more if there was more work. Participant 005 was of the opinion that English lessons would considerably help him to remember English words. Participant 006 would review his lessons for his writing modules, because there were so many vocabulary items to be used. He usually used the Internet to assist him in elaborating his ideas.

Proficient learners possessed a strong learning attitude, with clear goals and objectives. Organising one's study is equally important as setting one's goals and objectives. Without setting goals, the proficient learners would not be able to pursue a higher level of English. All the proficient learners stated that they fixed goals in improving their English language skills except for participant 007 who

seldom set targets.

Besides having goals, the proficient learners also monitored their learning progress. For example, participant 001 always kept track of his learning progress, and he always asked his friends to provide feedback or comments on his progress. Participant 004 monitored his English language progress by revising his last tests or reading the handouts in Level Four so that he would not make the same mistakes in the future. Nevertheless, participant 007 was rather different from the rest. Since participant 007 did not really care much about her learning goals, her learning progress was not being focused either. This was because participant 007 thought that she could do her best without the need to monitor her progress in the mastery of the language.

This research discovered that the less proficient learners were not exactly aware of how they could become better English learners. In the case of participant 008, she was unaware that there were many paths to acquiring a good command of language. She said, *“I think I can’t. I don’t know why. I think ...this is my thinking.”* In other words, she could not discover the other ways of learning English. Participant 007 never found out how to be a better learner because he was only interested in travelling around the world.

A positive language learner often seeks opportunities to practise English. Reading in English is another way for language learners to learn and improve their reading skills. Five proficient participants found that reading was beneficial. For instance, participant 002 would read whenever he had the free time or during a self-study session. Participant 003 would read English newspapers, novels and browsed websites written in English. Participant 004 strongly believed that reading was essential as English was a new second language to him. Participant 006 read a lot about new inventions and strange happenings from the Internet. Participant 007 concurred that reading would increase her vocabulary. Besides the proficient learners, participant 005 (less proficient learner) would also practise his English with people via the Internet.

The study also found that proficient learners do evaluate their learning progress in English. Some learners were able to detect their errors in all the four language skills. They usually corrected their own mistakes such as pronunciation, choice of words, sentence structures, and spelling mistakes. For instance, participant 001 corrected his grammatical mistakes in conversation. The learner remembered he used the wrong plural form for the pronoun “we”. Instead of “were”, he used “was”. He then realised the mistake and corrected it immediately.

Besides monitoring his own mistakes, participant 002 (proficient learner) sometimes received feedback from his teacher or his friends to do the corrections. Participant 005 (proficient learner) realised he made mistakes in his writing

because the meaning in the sentences or paragraphs did not sound logical. Proficient learner like participant 006 was also aware of her grammatical errors, especially in the use of the present and past tenses in speaking, and spelling mistakes. Other than the proficient learners, less proficient learner like participant 006 would also seek help from teachers and friends to provide comments or feedback on how to acquire proficiency in English.

Self-monitoring is not enough to evaluate one's performance in learning the language. Self-evaluation is also equally important because it involves both general and specific evaluations on language skills. In this study, the proficient learners were determined to find out how to be better learners of English. For example, in speaking, participant 001 would find a girlfriend who could speak English. This way, he would be able to improve his conversation. Participant 004 would also evaluate his speaking style, especially when using American accent in his speech. The proficient learner believed that using American accent would give him the confidence to speak better. Unlike participant 003, participants 007 and 008 evaluated their performance by asking teachers, friends, or classmates for advice. Participant 008 used the Internet as a medium of learning and evaluation. He believed that he had the opportunity to share his learning experience with others via the Internet.

The current study also discovered that only participant 001 seldom looked for opportunities to read in English, because he did not like reading. This showed that the learner did not have a strong interest in reading English materials, and this had to do with his personality.

Some less proficient participants had developed a positive attitude towards learning: they paid close attention to the words of the speaker. Paying attention to someone would give them some clues as to what the speaker would say next. For example, participant 007 would use the first and the next sentences to get an idea of the speaker's intention. He would observe the gestures, emotion and intonation to aid him in arriving at the correct conclusions.

In short, successful learners seemed to have cultivated better personal traits than unsuccessful ones, because good language learners usually possess good personal qualities like “positive”, “resourceful”, “confident”, “risk-taker” and “persistent”. This overall finding is similar with Chou and Yen's research (2005) on good Taiwanese language learners. The researchers commented that most of the participants were associated with “successful personalities” with qualities such as “persistent”, “positive”, “confident”, and “willing to face challenges”. This was because the learners described their personalities as being more “active” and “extroverted” than “introverted”. Nonetheless, the researchers found that no specific personality trait was mentioned more frequently than others by the participants, because the learners' personality traits were quite diverse.

These good personal traits may, to a certain extent, influenced the level of motivation among the learners. A student with a dynamic personality may increase the level of motivation of his classmate. To understand better, self-motivation is another factor that will be discussed in the following section.

#### **4.4.4: Self-motivation**

Before the findings are discussed, it is good to understand that motivation can be divided into two different types: instrumental and integrative (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). The current study found that the proficient learners had more instrumental motivation than integrative one. For instance, participant 002 wished to master the English language so that he could read English journals, references, books, and many more when he goes to a university. This showed that participant 002 had strong instrumental motivation. Besides participant 002, participant 003 felt that by spelling out her goals, she would be able to plan things ahead so that she could achieve her targets. Participant 005 agreed that without goals, one tends to become lazy.

The proficient learners' goals were mostly to acquire language skills because they realised that mastering English would benefit them in their pursuit of individual dreams. For instance, proficient participant 001 said, "*I think English language is very important as it is a global language*" and for this reason, he hoped that by mastering English he would one day be able to run an international

business company. Therefore, the learner's discourse about English language is often linked to future employment. This finding showed the social context that the learner was applying (Gao, 2005). The researcher further explored the developmental process of two Chinese's learning approaches in the learning of English. Gao (2005) found that the learners knew that they had to master the language in order to secure a job or take advantage of educational opportunities. Similarly, this study is also confirmed by the findings of Bradford (2007). The researcher found that Indonesian students learnt English because they want to obtain well-paid jobs in the future.

However, this result differs from Chuo and Yen's research (2005) on the motivation and attitude of Taiwanese EFL learners. The participants had positive attitude toward learning English, because they had shown great interest in learning the culture (integrative motivation). The participants had positive reinforcements such as having committed English teachers and encouragement during their learning process.

Learners are often motivated to do better when they keep track of their progress in the English language. For instance, participant 006 (proficient learner) always thought about her progress in learning English, because she always believed in improving herself. The finding is consistent with Chung's Individual Developing Model (2005) research. Chung (2005) suggested that students should be given more freedom in making contracts. Self-motivated

contract was used to prod students to set goals. Setting goals or objectives would promote independent learning. However, in this study, participant 007 (proficient learner) only set goals when she aimed for better results. When participant 007 did not have lessons or examinations, she did not care much about her learning goals.

Unlike the proficient learners, the less proficient ones did not have strong instrumental motivation to master English. For instance, participant 003 scored low for affective strategies, with an average score of 1.83 (see Table 4.3.1). The result showed that the less proficient learner had very low motivational level to improve his English language skills. Participant 003 did not like to encourage himself to do better, because of his characteristic trait: he was not bothered to nurture his skills in English. In addition, he said, "*I prefer to solve Mathematics*". Passing the English proficiency exam is the only aim of participant 003 who was keen to continue his degree programme at the main stream. However, this instrumental motivation of participant 003 would not lead to long-term success in honing his English skills, because he placed too much focus on examinations. This present study supports the findings of Lei and Qin (2009). Both researchers found that placing too much emphasis on examinations would restrict the mental scope of the students. Thus, the learners would not be able to use the English language integratively.

This current finding also shared some similar results with Olah's study (2006) on Japanese ESL high school and university students. Olah (2006) found that high school students had higher instrumental motivation than university students in their attempt to pass the English proficiency tests. However, the finding in Olah's study revealed that the motivation to study for proficiency exams had not improved their language skills.

In short, this current study revealed that proficient learners had higher level of motivation than less proficient ones. In other words, the proficient learners could perform better than the less proficient ones in acquiring the English mastery. Surprisingly, the study found that these less proficient learners would prefer social strategies as their method of learning despite their low self-motivation. Self-motivation is somewhat influenced by the participants' emotions. A positive emotion increases the level of motivation, and vice-versa. This factor is discussed in the following section.

#### **4.4.5: The Influence of Emotions**

The role of emotions influenced the choice of learning strategies by both the proficient and less proficient EFL learners. The levels of emotions differ from one individual to another. Such emotions can be seen when language learners attempt a language task.

The proficient learners except for participant 001 encouraged themselves to feel more relax. For example, participant 002 always tried to take it easy, while participant 003 told herself not to be nervous. Participant 004, on the other hand, tried to relax by keeping silent. For instance, when participant 004 listened to somebody speaking, he stored his answer in his mind. When he found the right time to speak, he would start sharing his answers or thoughts. Participant 005 felt that relaxation was important for him to concentrate; otherwise, he would forget what he intended to say.

The less proficient learners, on the other hand, were unable to encourage themselves to improve their language skills. For example, participant 001 did not encourage himself to improve his English language skills although he tried at times. The learner was an introverted person who would hardly talk to anyone, because he was too nervous. This finding is consistent with the research of Chan and Wu (2004) on language anxiety among the EFL elementary school students. The researchers found that the students were unable to respond appropriately or accurately to their classmates, because of communication fears. This fear surfaced when the students were anticipating a conversation with others. Generally, the students were too anxious to speak, because they lacked self-confidence. Furthermore, the researchers found that the students were easily nervous because they felt that everyone was looking at them and judging them too.

In this study, the proficient learners knew how to employ self-encouragement strategies. One of these strategies was making positive statements (Oxford's theory, 1990). The proficient learners tried to encourage themselves to speak English even when they were afraid of making a mistake. Positive words were used by the learners to calm them down in order to focus better and excel in language learning tasks. Some examples of positive statements made by the proficient learners are shown in the following points:

*Participant 001 : It's not a problem to make mistakes, I will learn from them, because nobody is perfect.*

*Participant 002 : I'm not afraid of making a mistake, I will learn from my mistake. I try to speak, try to ask and learn from others.*

*Participant 003 : I can really think about something. I told myself I am number one.*

*Participant 004 : If I don't encourage myself, I can never speak English.*

*Participant 005 : Don't listen to others. I can make it better next time.*

*Participant 006 : If I am always afraid when I speak, I can't learn anything. I learn from my mistakes, so I try not to repeat them again.*

*Participant 007 : If I don't have a mistake, I don't need to learn English. So, I don't need to be afraid of mistakes. If I speak English very much, I can find my mistakes and correct them. After that, I can use English very well.*

*Participant 008 : I always think of my goals, and I see myself. Actually, I make a mental picture of me and success. I always try to go to this picture, and how to look at this picture.*

The positive statements clearly showed that the proficient learners motivated themselves to acquire English language within a short period. They always believed in learning from mistakes, because learning from mistakes could reinforce their learning process or language acquisition. In addition, the optimistic statements reflected their desire to independently progress to a higher level of English language proficiency besides having teachers and peers to encourage them.

Encouraging oneself also involves rewarding. Language learners often anticipate external sources to reward them. Receiving praises from the teacher, or getting good results or certificate of accomplishment may motivate the learners to perform better. For instance, getting compliments from parents motivated participant 002 (proficient learner) to work harder in his English language journey. Proficient learner like participant 003 would cook some delicious food for her friends after performing well in the English tests. Giving oneself a reward would help soothe one's emotions. For example, participant 004 (proficient learner) would reward himself with a gift when he did well in English. He felt very happy and motivated to excel more in his studies. Participant 006 (proficient learner) celebrated with her friends after obtaining good results in English

language. In addition, participant 008 (proficient learner) treated himself to a swim with his friends or an outing to a park or sometimes to a treat at a restaurant.

However, some proficient learners need more reward than they usually get externally. The reward usually comes from within the learners themselves. For instance, when participant 007 obtained a good mark, she would tell herself, “*You are good at this part.*” After having said that, participant 007 felt she should work harder and that boosted her confidence to proceed to the next stage. Out of eight proficient learners, participant 001 did not really give himself a reward as he always believed reward was not important to him.

Listening to your body is important to assess one’s emotions. In other words, paying attention to what the body says. Negative emotions like nervousness, tension, anxiety, fear and anger tighten the muscles and affect the nervous system. The proficient learners usually noticed their English mistakes when they were nervous while studying or using English. Paying attention to their own mistakes had brought them closer to acknowledging their nervousness while using the language.

When the proficient learners were nervous, they employed wrong words and played with their pencils. At times, when they panicked, they had the tendency to forget words or messages that they would like to convey. About 17 percent of the proficient learners did not usually talk to others about how they felt

when they were learning English. For instance, participant 001 never talked to anyone, because he was afraid that his friends would not encourage him in his studies. Participant 006 also never talked to anyone about how she felt when learning English, because sharing with others would make her feel depressed, especially when her friends commented that everything was difficult and assignments could not be finished on time. The present finding was consistent with Chan and Wu (2004), and they found that most of the students were fearful of answering questions. They would feel embarrassed if their friends laughed at them or made fun of their English language.

Chan and Wu (2004) also found a similar finding with this current study. In their study, the participants felt a high level of anxiety in any situation. In other words, the students were unable to control their anxiety level. A simple small incident could upset their emotional balance. Unlike the rest of the participants in this study, participant 003 (proficient learner) stated that she could adapt easily to the new environment, saying, *“In fact, I am not really nervous, because I can adapt to a new environment”*.

The less proficient participants also felt anxious while communicating with others. For instance, participant 003 would take deep breath when he was talking to his own countrymen, because he was afraid that his people would laugh at his mistakes. Participant 004 who scored the lowest average score of 1.5 did not encourage himself to speak better English as he was afraid of using the language.

When he felt nervous, the learner would just keep quiet.

These current findings are confirmed by Chan and Wu's study (2004) who discovered that elementary students would fear or feel embarrassed when their classmates watched or evaluated their English performance in class. As a result, this fear would hinder the learners from using the language. In other words, the participants of this study developed fear of negative evaluation. The less proficient learners would fear that negative evaluation might come either from their teachers or classmates.

In summary, the role of emotions plays a great influence on the learners' choice of employing learning strategies. A positive emotion allows the learners to stay focused on their language learning, whereas, learners who are unable to control or manage their emotions, most likely do not show positive interest in learning English. Emotion is somewhat influenced by another factor, which is the learning environment. A positive learning environment increases not only the level of motivation, but also the level of emotion of the learners. The following section discusses learning environment.

#### **4.4.6: Learning Environment**

Learning environment was also one of the factors that influenced both proficient and less proficient learners in choosing social strategies, affective strategies and metacognitive strategies. A conducive and positive learning environment allows language learners to employ appropriate learning strategies. For instance, in a classroom setting, a majority of the proficient learners would seek for clarification or verification if they did not understand something in English (social strategy). They would either ask the person to slow down or repeat the word or phrase. In addition, the learners would choose appropriate conversational questions like “*pardon me*”, and “*please say it again*” to understand what the speakers were trying to convey. In order to catch the message, participant 007 (proficient learner) would even ask the speaker to slow down for her.

A positive learning environment allows language learners to be comfortable while studying or practising the language. The current finding is consistent in its conclusions with Li’s study (2004) on culture and classroom communication among the Asian learners in New Zealand language schools. The learners felt they had more opportunities to communicate with the teachers and classmates than in China, because the teachers in China emphasised a lot on grammar and writing practice.

Participant 004 (proficient) felt that he would use this method (asking for clarification) in most situations, but he also believed that it depended on whether the method was properly used. Participant 005 (proficient), who is shy by nature, would normally ask his classmate whenever he could not understand the teacher. If his classmate failed to understand the lesson, he had no choice but to ask the teacher for clarification.

Asking questions in English also allowed the proficient learners to learn more about interesting or new subjects. Therefore, asking questions in English would increase their knowledge on various subjects. Apart from using English in the classroom, participant 007 would ask questions in English outside the classroom. According to her, she asked many questions in English whenever she communicated with Malaysians, especially when she purchased things in the supermarkets. The cashiers at the supermarket were not able to converse in Mandarin with this proficient participant. As a result, English was used as a medium of communication between the cashier and the participant.

The proficient learners focused on their English language by paying attention when someone was speaking in English. Paying attention involves two modes: directed attention and selective attention. Directed attention means the learners decide generally or globally to pay attention to the task and avoid irrelevant points. Selective attention, on the other hand, involves learners deciding in advance to notice particular details (Oxford's theory, 1990). For example,

participant 001 (proficient) used directed attention so that he could learn new words from the speakers. Participant 002 (proficient) also adopted directed attention as he wished to learn how the speaker made the sentences and also pronounced the words. Proficient learner like participant 007 used selective attention to understand the pronunciation of words in movies, and would take down some notes while listening to the speakers or the actors.

Besides the learning environment, the learners were also influenced by their first language. The following section describes first language as another factor that determined their choice of learning strategy.

#### **4.4.7: Influence of First Language**

Participant 001 (proficient learner) was questioned on how he connected the relationship between things he already knew with new things he learnt in English. In reply, he just knew how to use or make the connection. At times, the learner made the connection between English phrases with the ones in his first language, Arabic. This finding is quite consistent with Altan's (2004) study on Turkish participants who usually connected the relationship between things they already knew in their first language with new things they learnt in English. Although participant 001 is a Yemeni, the two different nationalities shared the same strategy.

Analysing with contrasting angles is a strategy that most learners adopt naturally (Oxford, 1990). The strategy includes analysing elements (sounds, words, syntax) of the new language in order to find out the likenesses and differences in comparison with one's own native language. For example, participant 004 (proficient learner) believed that there were some famous words in his first language which could be used in English. He chose the word "supposed". In his first language, "supposed" meant something you think. In an English sentence, the word could be used as "It's supposed to be interesting", but in a Persian sentence, "I think I believe that's interesting". Despite the difference in both sentence structures, the meaning of "supposed" remained the same. Participant 005 (proficient learner) always looked for words in his first language that were similar to new words in English, because he worried about producing inaccurate words in English.

Nonetheless, analysing contrastively was not commonly employed by other proficient learners like participants 002, 006 and 007. Participant 002 never looked for words in his first language which were similar in new English words, because there were so many big differences between Arabic and English. Hence, there were no similar words in Arabic to be used in English. In addition, participant 002 said that in Arabic, the native speakers did not care much about grammar, because they had different dialect and accent. Participant 006 did not employ this method, because not all the words had the same meaning in her first language. For instance, the word "certificate" means "the skin of a goat" in her

first language. The two different meanings had caused so much confusion for the learner. Another example was given by participant 006. The sound of the word “tail” was quite similar in both English and Arabic, but in English, the word “tail” might have more than one meaning. Unlike in Arabic, the word “tail” had only one meaning, “animals’ tails”. Participant 007 stated that she would never apply this method, because she would want to use English naturally. If she remembered the words in Chinese, she would not be able to think more in English.

Translating could be a useful strategy for proficient learners to use their first language as the basis for understanding what they heard or read in English. However, word-for-word translation might result in wrong interpretation of the new language. Furthermore, translating could slow down the learning speed of the learners, and force them to go back and forth frequently between the first language and English. For instance, proficient learners like participants 001 and 003 did not usually translate word for word, and usually guessed from the context or other situations. However, both participants only translated some key words if they could not understand the topic when answering the questions. Participant 004 (proficient learner) felt translating was a waste of time and only used it if certain words were not clear at all. It seems that translating too much would lead participant 004 to lose his concentration while reading the texts.

Participant 007 (proficient learner), however, sometimes translated certain words in English for her foreign friends to understand what she meant. Participant 008 (proficient learner) only guessed the meaning from the context in the examinations, but not in normal reading classes where he employed translation method. Besides these proficient participants, participants 002 and 006 did not believe in translating word for word, because translating could not provide accurate meanings in both their first language and English.

First language could have a small role to play in preparing the less proficient learners to be familiar with language tasks or materials given by the teachers in class. For instance, the less proficient learners watched English movies or scrolled the websites to sharpen their skills. They also at times read the English subtitles to better comprehend the conversations of the actors. However, translation was needed because some phrases could not be found in English. Hence, the less proficient learners had to read the subtitles of their first language to gain more accurate understanding of the English language. Nation's (2003) theory supported that the use of first language helped learners gain the knowledge to achieve the performance of the target language.

Like the proficient learners, the less proficient ones frequently watched English movies to acquire a wider knowledge of English. For example, participant 006 watched more English news such as CNN and BBC than movies. He was encouraged by his father to improve his formal English. Nevertheless, participant

006 faced some problems in conveying his Arabic culture in English, because there were not many Arabic words that conveyed the same meanings in English.

In brief, first language is employed when a language learner needs to compensate his missing knowledge in the target language. The following section describes their choice of strategy which is also influenced by age factor.

#### **4.4.8: Age Factor**

Age played an important factor in influencing the use of mechanical techniques such as flashcards among the proficient and less proficient learners. Majority of the proficient learners did not use flashcards that often because they did not have exposure or opportunity to use them. For example, participant 006 said, *“Nobody taught us how to use flashcards.”* Participant 008 also commented, *“I don’t know, because I haven’t used flashcards before.”*

The finding was also consistent with the less proficient learners. Majority of them did not use flashcards so often, because they had not heard of them. For instance, participant 004 was exposed to flashcards when he was a five-year-old child. He said, *“When I was a child, my mother trained me to use flashcards about two to three times.”* Furthermore, his mother also trained his other siblings to use flashcards. As he grew older, the less proficient learner did not use flashcards because he said, *“Flashcards are just good for children.”* Besides

flashcards, participant 004 felt that giving oneself a reward or a treat was only meant for children. Hence, he did not think giving such incentives useful for him.

The use of flashcards is usually used by younger children to memorise English words or phrases. Children at the point of time tend to focus on things that are easy to understand, and they would appreciate a reward or a treat given to them. In other words, children are generally more field-dependent (Zhao and Morgan, 2004). They usually depend on teachers to provide visual aids for acquiring the language. The two researchers also argued that when a child became an adolescent or an adult, he would feel self-consciousness about his image. Therefore, participant 004 (less proficient learner) felt that flashcards were too easy for him and more appropriate for younger children.

Flashcards were also ineffective for participant 008 (less proficient learner) who was an adult learner. She did not favour flashcards, because she believed there were so many other ways of improving English. According to Zhao and Morgan (2004), adult learners have better learning strategies, greater cognitive ability and the ability to associate things around them. This is because the mature learners have established their beliefs and learning habits from their long learning experience.

Participant 005 (less proficient learner) had also been exposed to flashcards when he was a child, but he now focused more on using the Internet as a source of learning. Via the Internet, the less effective learner could visualise the words as the online resources supplied endless pictorial words for the learner to enhance his memory and also language skills. Thus, using technology in English language has brought a great attention not only to teachers, but also to students.

Jarvis (2005) debated that Internet was widely used around the world which the learners picked up new vocabulary to practise and improve their language skills. In his journal article, Jarvis (2005) further argued that appropriate choice of words would be employed by the learners according to the situations. In this scenario, adult learners would be most likely the right learners to fully utilise the Net, because of their maturity. In other words, their years of experience and rich information had influenced the learners to change their way of learning or acquiring English language (Zhao and Morgan, 2004). Using flashcards, nevertheless, were quite effective for less effective learner like participant 006 who usually employed them to remember new English words. He usually used flashcards once in a week, and his roommate helped him to flash the cards.

Besides flashcards, age did make a difference in choosing report writing. For instance, since participant 006 (proficient learner) was a mature student who studied science, report writing was essential for her to do her research in English. Adult learners like participant 006 have greater memory storage and greater

capability of grasping concepts in learning target language (Zhao and Morgan, 2004). In Zhao and Morgan's journal article (2004), the researchers argued that adult learners are superior to children, because they are able to make decision wisely, to employ learning strategies and to set learning goals.

In brief, age factor plays a role in influencing the choice of learning strategies among the proficient and less proficient learners. The following section discusses peer influence as another variable that contributed to the choice of employing learning strategies.

#### **4.4.9: Peer Influence**

Finally, peer influence played a major role in influencing proficient learners to seek practice opportunities. For example, participant 008 would read when his friends encouraged him. Participant 001 was influenced by the learning environment and peers. He said, *"If I see the topic is exciting and everybody is sharing his idea, I like to join."* At times, peers influence motivated participant 001 to join in the classroom activities. Participant 003 was also motivated by her friends, and said, *"My friend told me that they were my friends, and I should not be afraid of them"*. Participant 008 always believed that nothing was impossible. He felt that, *"I always think about the children whom speak English very well. What's the difference between me and these children? It's just these children listen a lot, listen to his father, mother a lot of time, and he can speak English. So,*

*I can speak English like them.”*

Body language or gestures were another avenue for the less proficient learners to pick up language skills. For instance, participant 004 paid attention to gestures because his vocabulary was weak. Due to his low proficiency level, the less proficient learner had to employ compensatory strategies to communicate with his peers.

The current findings contradicted with Lengkanawati's research (2004) on learners from different cultural background learning a foreign language. Indonesian learners in Australia rarely talked to their peers or even with the proficient users. The reason was that most Indonesian students were shy by nature.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

Both proficient and less proficient learners of EFL displayed different ways of using language learning strategies. The current study revealed that proficient learners employed more learning strategies than the less proficient ones. It is in line with the previous studies that less proficient or less effective learners only employed a few learning strategies.

Nevertheless, the participants in this study, on the whole, adopted mostly all the six different types of language learning strategies according to Oxford's (1990) classification. Thus, the findings showed that the learners employed both direct and indirect strategies, which indicated a good sign of language learning.

In summary, some learners did not know that there are other learning strategies that can be used in acquiring English language skills. Hence, creating awareness of these strategies would be one of the recommendations that the current study would propose in chapter five.