

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The world has been facing rapid growth especially in culture, politics, socio-economy, education, media and technology. Therefore each and every individual is expected to be competent in order to cater the needs formed through the changes. Language learning is essential in business communication and global workforce. People from all over the world are trying to learn as many languages as they can in order to communicate and explore the other cultures. English language becomes an aid to succeed in our commercial businesses throughout the globe.

The role of learning styles and learning strategies in English language proficiency achievement adapted by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners have been explored by researchers in different contexts. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005), proficiency is explained as "a noun that refers to the ability of an individual to speak or perform in an acquired language." (Sparks and Ganschow, 1993 *as cited in* Janet Renou, 2010, p.1) claim that learners may have deficits in either the phonological, semantic or syntactic systems in their native language, and that this can affect how well they can master a foreign language.

1.1 Background of the study

1.1.1 Learning Style

According to Reid (1995, *as cited in* Janet Renou, 2010), “Learning style” refers to “an individual’s natural, habitual and *preferred* way of absorbing, processing and retaining new information and skills.”

According to MacKeracher (1996 *as quoted in* Herod, 2004), learning styles may be thought of as the way in which people:

- *take in information*
- *select certain information for further processing*
- *use meanings, values, skills, strategies to solve problems, make decisions, and create new meanings*
- *change any or all of the processes or structures described in this list*

Learning style is also explained as “the biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some learners and terrible for others.” (Dunn and Griggs, 1988, p. 3 *as cited in* Rebecca L. 2003)

1.1.2 Learning Strategies

Like learning styles, there are learning strategies as well. It is explained as “a set of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information” (Wenden and Rubin, 1987, p. 19 *as cited in* E.Griva and Helen Tsakiridou, 2006).

Learning strategies are also illustrated as “special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information.” (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990, p.1 *as cited in* Michael Lessard, 1997)

Furthermore, Cohen (1990, p.4 *as quoted in* Eid Alhaisoni, 2012) explains that “learning strategies are processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in actions taken to enhance the learning or use of a second or foreign language through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about that language.”

“There are three other aspects such as cognitive, emotional and social involve in language learning strategies that enhance learners’ language learning proficiency and self-confidence.” (Oxford, 1990; Ehrman and Oxford, 1990 *as cited in* Lee C.K. 2010)

Learning strategies are defined as “specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques --such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task -- used by students to enhance their own learning.” (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992, p. 63 *as quoted in* Rebecca L. 2003).

Thus learning styles and strategies help the learners to improve and develop their language competence.

O’Malley et al. (1985, *as cited in* Pezhman Zare, 2012) state that “metacognitive is an expression to indicate an executive function, strategies which involve planning for learning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, observing of one’s production or comprehension, correcting your own mistakes, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed.”

Brown, 2007, p. 134 *as cited in* Pezhman Zare, 2012, states that “Cognitive strategies are more limited to specific learning tasks and they involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself.”

“Acquisition of a second language will be successful when the learners use an appropriate language learning strategy.” (Richard, 1994 *as cited in* Carol Griffiths, 2004).

1.1.3 EFL Learners

“EFL learners are those acquiring English as a Foreign Language. There are various reasons for the learners to learn English especially to improve their communication skills and excel in further education as well as to work in a foreign country.” So “**EFL** instructional approaches differ in significant ways. EFL is usually learned in environments where the language of the community and the school is not English. There is a rapid growth in the number of EFL learners in higher education institutions like colleges and universities in Asia where the classroom have become more like EFL than ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom.”

(Lee Gunderson, Routledge, 2009).

"ESL countries are nations where the medium of instruction in education and government is in English, although English may not be the native language. On the other hand, EFL countries do not use English as a medium of instruction but English is taught in schools. Malaysia was once considered an ESL country but now leans more towards EFL. The methods and approaches of teaching English as a second language and foreign language do differ greatly."

(Christopher Fernandez, 2012)

1.2 Statement of problem

Alderman (2004, *as cited in* Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin and Leong Lai Mei, 2013), states that “the students’ poor performance of language learning are affected from a lack of effort, lack of effective learning strategies, whereas a good language learner is a highly interested student and a successful user of a large number of different strategies.” This finding indicates that not all language learners are aware of their own learning styles and strategies in order to be competent.

Downey, Snyder and Hill (2000, *as cited in* Janet Renou, 2010) found a correlation between phonological processing difficulties and learning problems that foreign language learners face. However, Castro and Peck (2005, *as cited in* Janet Renou, 2010) state that “even students who do not appear to have any language-learning deficits, such as those who score highly on the Modern Language Aptitude Test, encounter difficulties in the foreign language classroom.” It shows that there is no proper guidance provided in mastering a foreign language as the learners are required to use different approaches.

English is used as an official language in many countries and found to have a great impact towards different cultures around the world. (Susanna, 2007 *as quoted in* Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin and Leong Lai Mei, 2013, p. 181)

Ton and Pham, (2010, p.181 *as quoted in* Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin and Leong Lai Mei, 2013) found that English as an International language is being used as a tool of communication in countries all over the world.

“It is very valuable to formulate and adapt learning strategies to complement learner’s English language level and then encourage successful participation” (Margaret, 2005 *as cited in* Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin and Leong Lai Mei, 2013).

“In the era of globalisation, English language well known as ‘Lingua Franca’ being used widely across the world to communicate with native-speakers and non-native-speakers, especially in the education sector, all university students need it for their studies in order to search information and obtain knowledge; therefore, a lot of the universities throughout the world need to include English language as one of their educational tool requirements.” (Khader and Mohammad, 2010, p.182).

“English is often used as the medium of instruction in higher education” (Murray and Christison, 2010, p.79). The process of daily teaching and learning of the English language found to have a strong relation with socio-politics practices. (Ronald and David, 2001).

Thus, the need of English in many nations around the world has made it to be recognized as an international language with a rapid growth. (Carlo, 2012; Hessein, Demirok, and Uzunboylu, 2009; Richards, 2001; Wozniak, 2010)

The findings above indicate that mastering English language becomes a great deal among the learners to compete in education field as well as in getting a good job especially in the corporate world.

1.3 Objectives of the study

This study examines the role of learning styles and strategies in English language proficiency achievement by EFL learners at the Intermediate level.

Specifically, this study aims to:

- i. Find out the most preferred language learning styles and learning strategies,
- ii. Identify the impact of the learning styles and learning strategies in Listening and Reading proficiency achievement,
- iii. Explore the other factors that influence students' proficiency achievement (Listening and Reading)

1.4 Research Questions

In order to meet the objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- i. What are the most preferred language learning styles and learning strategies?
- ii. Is there any impact of learning styles and learning strategies on students' Listening and Reading proficiency achievement?
- iii. What are the other factors that influence students' proficiency achievement in Listening and Reading?

1.5 Hypotheses

The three hypotheses for the current study are as follows:

- i. Learning styles and strategies play a vital role in the proficiency achievement,
- ii. Other factors that influence students' proficiency achievement are motivation, age and gender,
- iii. Selection of suitable teaching methods and activities in classroom.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

The role of learning styles and learning strategies in English language proficiency achievement is a wide field to be explored. Thus, this study focuses on the importance of the learning styles and strategies with particular reference to the English language proficiency achievement.

The limitation of the present study is with reference to the respondents. From the overall 3 levels of English classes, only Intermediate level will be selected to choose respondents for the study. This study focuses only on Intermediate level students as they are the students who will be taking IELTS (International English Language Testing System) examinations by the end of the semester. Upon the completion of their 3rd Level (Intermediate Level), they will be furthering their higher studies in universities, and start searching for jobs. Thus, the respondents in this study are being tested on two skills only viz; Listening and Reading. Hence, the learners need to be proficient in the target language while exploring the outside of the world.

Due to the time constraint, the researcher will not choose the entire class as respondents. So, only a group of 18 selected respondents' feedback will be analysed to validate the result for the current study.

As the researcher will be carrying out a mixed-mode study, the respondents will be chosen from only one private College in Kuala Lumpur to conduct this study. An overgeneralization will be made on the population based on the results obtained.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study adds more information in the area of second or foreign language acquisition with respect to the approaches made. The current study hopes to contribute a comprehensible input towards the use of appropriate styles and strategies in proficiency achievement among EFL learners at the Intermediate level. "Many research findings display the value and necessity of the strategies for language learning (Chamot and O'Malley, 1996; Oxford, 1990; Oxford and Leaver, 1996, p. 11), but little work has been done on intermediate level EFL students' language learning strategies." As noted under the Problem Statement, this study is intended to fill in a major research gap by producing appropriate curriculum designs, teaching methodologies and materials which suit the learners.

Besides that, the current study will also enhance more perceptions in teaching methodology and materials selections for Intermediate level teachers and students. Hence, it helps the teachers to identify the needs of their students and problems encountered in mastering the target language. The implications will be useful to the teachers to be aware in making the learners more independent and more effective in foreign language acquisition.

In addition, the Intermediate level learners would be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses in acquiring a foreign language which might help them to make some changes in the learning styles and strategies used at present. Reid (p. xiv; 1995 *as cited in* Mohammed Ashour Jhaish, 2010, p.14) states that “developing an understanding of learning environments and styles will enable students to take control of their learning and to maximize their potential for learning.”

Apart from that, this study will be beneficial for syllabus or curriculum developers and material producers for EFL learners in private higher education Institutions. The selection of an appropriate teaching methodology according to the types of learners is very important in language classrooms. It requires a great effort in lesson plan preparation according to the type of learners.

Furthermore, “learners should also be encouraged to develop a greater range of strategies and to activate their language outside of the classroom. They should, in short, be encouraged to think about the processes underlying their own learning, and to see that, ultimately, they are responsible for their own learning.” Nunan (1995 *as quoted in* Mania Nosratinia, Zahra Mojri and Elnaz Sarabchian, 2004).

According to Mohammed Ashour Jhaish, (2010) “teachers may have enough time not only to identify their students’ styles and strategies, they might become capable of integrating appropriate materials and activities that match the learners’ learning styles and they can have better opportunities to assess and guide the learners with respect to learning strategies manipulated in various situations.”

1.8 Definitions of key concepts

1.8.1 English as Second Language

According to Richards et al. (1992; p.124 *as quoted in* Rebecca L. 2005), ESL refers to “the role of English for immigrant and other minority groups in English-speaking countries who use English at school and at work. In a general educational context, it is a term used to describe learners who speak English as a second language as opposed to the native language they speak at home.”

1.8.2 English as Foreign Language

Richards et al. (1992; pp.123-124 *as quoted in* Rebecca L. 2003), claim EFL as “The role of English in countries where it is taught as a subject in schools but not used as medium of instruction in education nor as a language of communication (e.g. government, business, industry) within the country.” For example, English is taught in Iran as a foreign language.

1.8.3 L1 / L2 / SL

L1 stands for a person’s mother tongue or first language. L2 stands for the person’s target language or second language someone has learned or wishes to learn. SL refers to a person’s second language.

1.8.4 Language Learning Styles

Basically language learning styles refer to “an individual's natural or habitual pattern of acquiring and processing information in learning situations.” Dunn and Dunn (1979; p.89 *as cited in* Reid 1987) define learning styles as “a term that describes the variations among learners in using one or more senses to understand, organize, and retain experience.”

1.8.5 Language Learning Strategies

“Language Learning Strategies are techniques used by students to improve their own language learning. A more detailed explanation of language learning strategies, shown earlier in this chapter, indicated that these strategies are specific methods or techniques consciously used by individual learners to facilitate the comprehension, retention, retrieval and application of information for language learning and acquisition (Oxford, 1990 *as quoted in* Zohreh Eslami Rasekh and Reza Ranjbary,2003).

1.8.6 Proficiency

“Language proficiency or linguistic proficiency is the ability of an individual to speak or perform in an acquired language. Thus, proficient speakers demonstrate both accuracy and fluency, and use a variety of discourse strategies” (Karen E.Breiner Sanders, Pardee Lowe, Jr John Miles and Elvira Swander, 2000).

1.8.7 Achievement

“Final rating of students determined by teacher through point system, expressed by a letter grade” (Brown et. al. 1989 *as cited in* Mohammed Ashour Jhaish 2010).

1.8.8 ESOL

English for Speakers of Other Languages.

1.8.9 IELTS

International English Language Testing System.

1.8.9.1 Listening skill

“In the process of learning a foreign language, one’s grammar improves if one learns to listen to the language prior to speaking it” (Benson and Heilt. 1978 *as cited in* Swanson, CH 2012).

In order to receive messages delivered by the speaker listening skill assist people to be more attentive. There are several types of listening skill such as listening for specific information, note taking, transforming and summarizing. It is extremely used in English language classes.

1.8.9.2 Reading skill

According to Kintsch and Kintsch. (2005, *as quoted in* Mohammad Jafre Zainol Abidin, Low, J.S.P. and Raman. P. 2012), reading skill is defined as “a process of comprehending a text which integrates decoding ability, vocabulary cognition, prior knowledge of the topic and appropriate strategies.”

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter gives a brief overview of the background, related literature and moves on to the statement of problem. This is followed by the objectives and the research questions. The hypotheses and scope of study are discussed and the chapter ends by defining the significance and key concepts. Thus the current research explores the role of learning styles and strategies in English language proficiency achievement by EFL learners at the Intermediate level in a Private College in Kuala Lumpur.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the literature related to the research on the role of learning styles and learning strategies in English language proficiency achievement among EFL learners at the intermediate level. It addresses the individual use of learning styles and strategies, the impact of those learning strategies and styles in language proficiency achievement specifically in listening (comprehension) and academic reading, and the involvement of other variables towards successful language learning.

2.1 Language Learning Styles and Strategies

2.1.1 Language Learning Style (LLS)

Language Learning Style is defined as referring to a learner's "consistent way of responding and using stimuli in the context of learning." Claxton and Ralston (1978; p.7 *as cited in* Mohammed Ashour Jhaish, 2010).

"The composite of characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological factors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment. It is demonstrated in that pattern of behaviour and performance by which an individual approaches educational experiences. Its basis lies in the structure of neural organization and personality which both moulds and is moulded by human development and the learning experiences of home, school, and society".

(National Association of Secondary School Principals in Keefe and Ferrell, 1990; p. 59 *as quoted in* Philip A. Reed, 2000).

According to Keefe (1979 *as cited in* Mohammed Ashour Jhaish, 2010; p.4) has given a similar view on learning styles which are “cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment.”

Reid (1987 *as cited in* Mohammed Ashour Jhaish, 2010) conducted a research with respect to the learning style preferences of ESL learners. “The overall results of the research indicated that ESL learners strongly preferred kinaesthetic and tactile learning styles when compared to audio and visual ones. In addition, most groups showed a negative preference for group learning. The results obtained point out that as ESL learners adapt to their learning style preferences to the learning environment they are involved.” (Mohammed Ashour Jhaish, 2010, p. 23)

Willing, K. (1988, p. 27) in the study entitled “learning styles in adult immigrant education” involved 517 learners from various ethnic groups has discovered the cultural differences with respect to the learning style preferences of the learners.

2.1.2 Classification of Language Learning Style

The four types of learners suggested by Nunan (1991 *as quoted in* Attapol Khmakhien, 2011) are as follows:

- 1) Concrete - refers to learners who employ very direct means of processing information. Concrete learners will record information received using their senses of sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing. They view things in a tangible, factual and literal way.
- 2) Analytical - means learners whose cognitive strengths lead them not only to analyse carefully and demonstrate great interest in structures but to put a great deal of value in revealing their independence by performing these things

themselves, autonomously. Learners in this group would like to study individually, find their own mistakes and work on assigned task problems.

- 3) Authority-oriented denotes learners who would like their teacher to explain everything to them. This group of learners tend to write everything in their notebook, prefer to study grammar rules and learn by reading.
- 4) Communicative - refers to learners who have a desire for the communicative and social learning approach. These learners prefer learning a language by watching, listening to native speakers, talking to friends in English and watching television in English, using English outside class, learning new words by hearing and learning by conversation.

2.1.3 Learning Style Dimensions

The table below provide a summary of the various dimensions which is divided into six categories with definitions. It shows that the dimensions overlap with one another. The similarities can be seen among (auditory, tactile, kinaesthetic, group and individual) with analytic and global learning styles where the learners learn more effectively in groups, individually, body experience or interacting with others. However, visual style differs with reflective and impulsive learning styles as it requires immediate response and sufficient time.

According to Selime Tabanlıoğlu. (2003, p.13) “The scope and depth of learning styles vary because it seems impossible to limit a person’s learning style only with a certain dimension, that is, it cannot be said that a person is only visual, audio or kinaesthetic.”

Table 1: Overview of Some Learning Styles Reid (1998 as quoted in Attapol, 2011)

	<p>The Seven Multiple Intelligence</p> <p>Verbal/Linguistic Ability with and sensitivity to oral and written words</p> <p>Musical Sensitivity to rhythm, pitch, and melody.</p> <p>Logical/Mathematical Ability to use numbers effectively and to reason well.</p> <p>Spatial/Visual Sensitivity to form, space, colour, line, and shape.</p> <p>Bodily/Kinaesthetic Ability to use the body to express ideas and feelings.</p> <p>Interpersonal Ability to understand another person's moods and</p> <p>Intrapersonal Intentions.</p> <p>Ability to understand oneself: one's own strengths and weaknesses.</p>
	<p>Perceptual Learning Styles</p> <p>Visual Learns more effectively through the eyes (seeing).</p>
	<p>Learns more effectively through the ear (hearing).</p> <p>Auditory Learns more effectively through touch (hands-on).</p> <p>Tactile Learns more effectively through complete body experience.</p> <p>Kinaesthetic</p> <p>Group Learns more effectively through working with others.</p> <p>Individual Learns more effectively through working alone.</p>
	<p>Field Independent and Field Dependent (Sensitive) Learning Styles</p> <p>Field Independent Learns more effectively sequentially, analysing facts.</p> <p>Field Dependent Learns more effectively in context (holistically) and is sensitive to human relationships.</p>

Table 1, continued

<p>Analytic Global</p>	<p>Analytic and Global Learning Styles</p> <p>Learns more effectively individually, sequentially, linearly.</p> <p>Learns more effectively through concrete experience and through interaction with other people.</p>
<p>Reflective Impulsive</p>	<p>Reflective and Impulsive Learning Styles</p> <p>Learns more effectively when given time to consider Options.</p> <p>Learns more effectively when able to respond immediately.</p>

Hall (2005) suggests that teachers should create awareness among the students about their information processing by explaining the use of learning strategies which relates to their learning styles.

Therefore, Willing (1988 *as quoted in* Mohammed Ashour Jhaish, 2010, p.17) provides a diagram of the basic structure of the hypotheses that inspire the representation of learning styles (*see Figure 1*). “The diagram consists of the three stages of the learning perspective: perceiving, processing and using. The first stage is the “receiving” part, when the language input is received through all the senses, that is, through kinaesthetic, visual, auditory or tactile sensory preferences. The diagram below highlights on the process of comprehension made through the sensory modality in revealing a person’s general learning behaviour.”

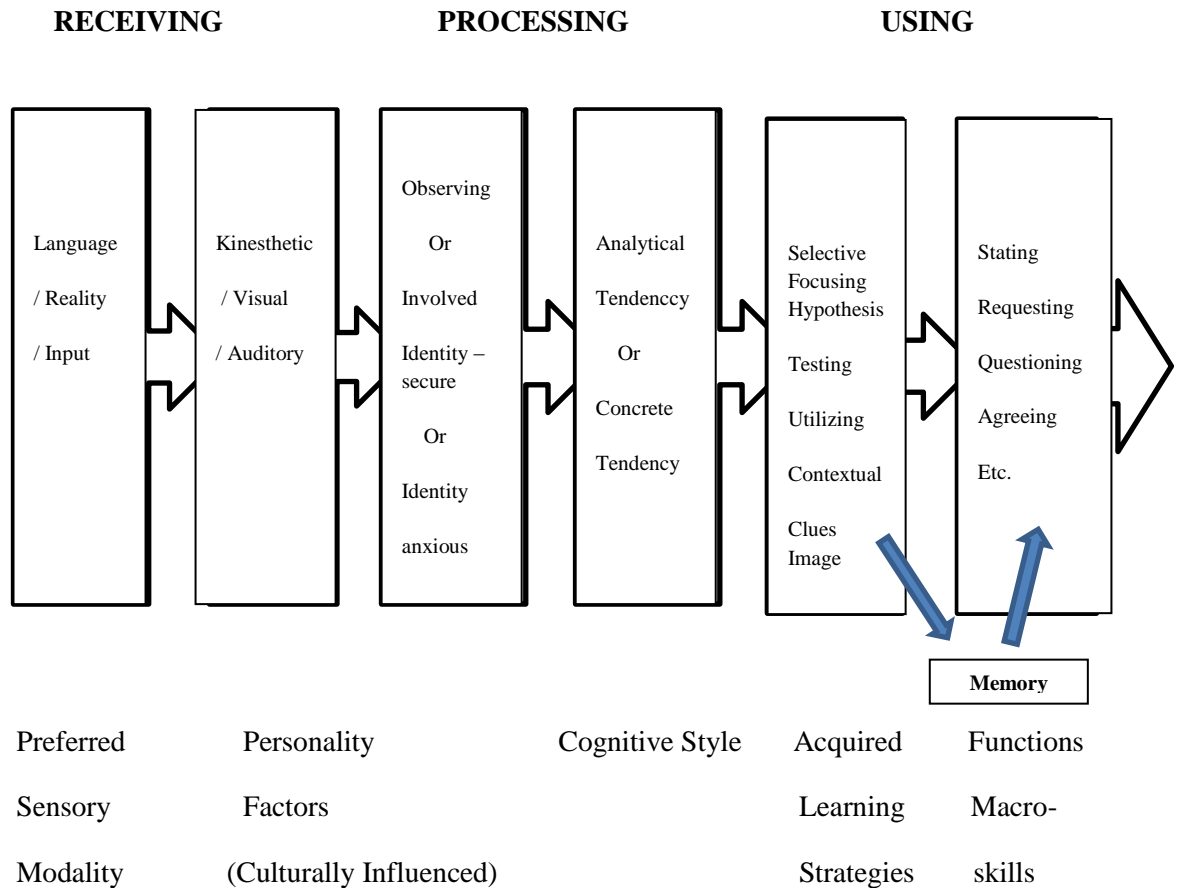


Figure 1: Psychological Model of Language Learning Style Differences (Willing, 1988; p.59)

At the first stage, personality variables such as involved-observing, identity secure, self-directing and authority-oriented, falls under receiving and processing at the second stage. It shows that personality does not only control the way information is processed but also it controls how information is explored and collected in the first place. The personality factors are assumed to be “formed by the individual’s cultural background” (Willing, 1988, p. 61 as quoted in Mohammed Ashour Jhaish, 2010).

The second stage is the “processing part”, which is “the area of what happens inside the head” (Willing, 1988; p. 61 as quoted in Mohammed Ashour Jhaish, 2010). This level includes the cognitive styles and ‘analytical’ and ‘concrete’ tendencies are discriminated. The arrow that follows determines the ‘acquired learning strategies’,

which are described as “the means by which a person integrates or digests information and experience in general” (Willing, 1988,p. 62).

The final stage involves language functions such as stating, requesting, questioning, and agreeing where the information being stored in the memory is retrieved. The functions are being used in both the second and third stage.

Mohammed Ashour Jhaish (2010) conducted an exploratory study to investigate the relationship among Learning Styles, Language Learning Strategies, and the Academic Achievement among the English Majors. The study aims to find out the significant differences in the perceptual learning style and strategy preferred by the male and female students. The results obtained from the study indicates that students had major, minor and negligible learning style and the most preferred strategy by the participants was metacognitive.

A study on the ‘Perceptual Learning Styles and Achievement in a University-level Foreign Language Course’ was carried out in 2010 by Janet Renou to investigate the connection between perceptual learning style and French language proficiency achievement. 82 English speaking students age ranged from eighteen to twenty-three were selected as respondents for the study. The respondents were drawn from different faculties. A questionnaire consisting of 24 items about learning styles and a self-assessment tool were distributed to the respondents for data collection. Hence, the result did not show any major benefit in selecting a particular learning style over another.

In this section, previous studies conducted on language learning styles with the outcomes were discussed. In the current study the researcher attempts to explore the EFL learners’ preferred learning styles as proposed by Reid (1998).

2.1.4 Language Learning Strategies (LLSs)

According to Mania Nosratinia (2011), strategies are those specific “attacks” that we make on a given problem, and that vary considerably within each individual. They are the moment-by-moment techniques that we employ to solve “problems” posed by second language input and output. Therefore, Chamot (2005, p. 112) defines strategies quite broadly as “procedures that facilitate a learning task. Strategies are most often conscious and goal driven.”

Thus, Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies is more comprehensive and detailed. It has been divided into two main classes, direct and indirect. “Certain learners are more successful than others at learning a second or foreign language despite exposure to the same teaching methods and learning environment.” (Naiman et al. (1978), Rubin; Stern (1975) *as cited in* Lee C.K, 2010, p.135)

“Language Learning Strategies that directly involve the target language are called direct strategies. All direct strategies require mental processing of the language, but the three groups of direct strategies (memory, cognitive, and compensation) do this processing differently and for different purposes. Memory strategies are used for storage of information; cognitive strategies are the mental strategies that learners use to make sense of their learning; and compensation strategies help learners to overcome knowledge gaps to continue the communication.” (Mania Nosratinia, 2011, p.3)

Cohen (1998 *as cited in* Safaa Mohmmed, 2012, p.513) stated that “Learning Strategies are processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in actions taken to enhance the learning or use of a second or foreign language through the storage, retention, recall and application of information about that language.”

Indirect strategies control the language learning process without the involvement of the target language in direct. Metacognitive strategies help the learners to take charge of their own perception. Meanwhile, affective strategies help to regulate emotions, motivations, and attitudes; and Social strategies help students learn through interaction with others. (Mania Nosratinia, 2011)

The definition by Oxford (1990) shows cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of language learning strategies that enhance learners' language learning proficiency and self-confidence. Language learners will be successful in the tasks due to use of an appropriate language learning strategy (Richard, 1994).

“Language learning strategies are divided into three main categories, metacognitive, cognitive, and social affective which refer to learners' planning their learning, thinking about the learning process, monitoring their own comprehension or production, and evaluating the outcomes of their own learning.”(Chamot and O'Malley, 1987; O'Malley et al., 1985 *as cited in* Lee C.K. 2010, p.136).

According to Murat Hismanoglu (2000), language learning strategies displays the learners' approaches towards a task or problem in the process of language learning. Meanwhile it provides the insights of selecting the appropriate skills to learn, comprehend or remember new information presented by teachers in the language classroom. Thus, it helps the language teachers to trace their students' ability in adapting the assigned task.

Table 2: Overview of Learning Strategies (O'Malley, 1985)

<p>Metacognitive Strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ planning for learning ➤ thinking about the learning process as it is taking place ➤ monitoring of one's production or comprehension ➤ evaluating learning after an activity is completed. ➤ include advance organizers, ➤ directed attention ➤ selective attention ➤ self-management ➤ functional planning ➤ self-monitoring ➤ delayed production ➤ self-evaluation
<p>Cognitive Strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Involve direct manipulation of the learning material itself ➤ repetition ➤ resourcing ➤ translation ➤ grouping ➤ note taking ➤ deduction ➤ recombination

Table 2, continued

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ imagery ➤ auditory representation ➤ key word ➤ contextualization ➤ elaboration ➤ transfer ➤ inference
Socio-affective Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It can be stated that they are related with social-mediating activity and transacting with others

Fedderholdt (1997:1 *as cited in* Murat Hismanoglu, 2000), explained that the language learner who is capable of using a wide variety of language learning strategies appropriately can improve his language skills in a better way. Hence, “language learning strategies contribute to the development of the communicative competence of the students. Being a broad concept, language learning strategies are used to refer to all strategies foreign language learners use in learning the target language and communication strategies are one type of language learning strategies.” (Lessard-Clouston (1997:3) *as cited in* Murat Hismanoglu, 2000, p.15)

Language learning strategies “... are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed movement, which are essential for developing communicative competence.” (Oxford, 1990:1 *as quoted in* Murat Hismanoglu, 2000, p.16)

Pezhman Zare, (2012, p.168) conducted a research on Language Learning Strategies among EFL/ESL Learners “explored the importance of these strategies in second/foreign language learning and teaching. The study results in the use of language learning strategies do help and improve language learning and assist language learner in different ways.” It is also revealed that there is a relationship between language proficiency and language learning achievement.

In 2003, Carol carried out a study on Language Learning Strategy use and proficiency. The result proved that there is significance between described rate of language learning strategy practice and proficiency.

Rebecca, L. (2003) conducted a study entitled Language Learning Styles and Strategies. In this study, she found that Styles and strategies assist in defining the learners’ talent and describe the learner’s ability and readiness to work within the framework of different instructional methodologies.

A case study on the Use of Language Learning Strategies after Strategy Training among Form four ESL students was conducted in 2008 by Shirley. The purpose of the study was to identify the types of language learning strategies used by ESL students in classroom upon the completion of the strategy training. Meanwhile the study was intended to explore the students’ perceptions on their language learning after strategy training.

In the current study, the researcher use the O’Molloy (1985 *as cited in* Pezhman Zare, (2012) Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies to identify the preferred language learning strategies in English Language proficiency achievement among EFL learners at the Intermediate Level.

2.2 Proficiency Achievement

“Although increased proficiency might reasonably be assumed to be the major aim of all study, defining and determining proficiency in language learning for speakers of other languages is no easy endeavour” Carol Griffiths, (2004, p.34). The interpretation made by Harley, Allen, Cummins and Swain (1990, p.7 *as cited in* Carol Griffiths, (2004, p.34) shows that, “it has entailed viewing proficiency as little more than grammar and lexis”.

Richards, Platt and Platt, 1985 *as cited in* Carol, 2004 defines that the concept of proficiency has been linked to the degree of skill with which a language can be used.

According to (Farhady et.al. 1994 *as cited in* Rahman Sahragard; Afsaneh Baharloo and Seyyed Mohammad Ali Soozandehfar, 2011) a proficient language learner has the sufficient capability to recognize, comprehend, or produce language elements.

A study was undertaken by Abdirahman M. Addow; Abdullahi Hussein Abubakar, and Mohamed Said Abukar (2013) on English language Proficiency Achievement for undergraduate students in Somalia. The objective of the study was to discover the relationship between English Language proficiency as measured by the students’ score in secondary school compared with the score obtained in their first semester in the University. About 100 final year students from Business and Accounting Faculty were selected as respondents. The study showed that English language proficiency has no connection with their academic achievement.

Mohammad Aliakbari (2012) conducted a study to examine the connection between learning style preference (LSP) of non-academic Iranian students with reference to gender, English language proficiency level and final achievement scores. In this study, it was found that there was a low association between participants’ learning style preference (LSP) with the other three variables as mentioned earlier.

According to Oller (1979 *as cited in* Carol Griffiths (2003, p.35), “all of these elements of language derived from a single underlying skill which could not be divided into discrete components. This view suggests that performance in, for instance, reading and listening relies on the same underlying language skills, and that other aspects of linguistic competence such as pronunciation and vocabulary are all part of the same general proficiency.” (Nunan, 1988 *as cited in* Carol Griffiths 2003).

“A highly influential and enduring model of language proficiency which he called *communicative competence* (the ability to use language to convey and interpret meaning) was introduced by Hymes (1972 *as cited in* Carol Griffiths 2003, p.36). Furthermore, communicative competence is divided into three main categories which later falls into four separate components: *grammatical competence* (which relates to the learner’s knowledge of the vocabulary, phonology and rules of the language), *discourse competence* (which relates to the learner’s ability to connect utterances into a meaningful whole), *sociolinguistic competence* (which relates to a learner’s ability to use language appropriately) and *strategic competence* (which relates to a learner’s ability to employ strategies to compensate for imperfect knowledge).” Canale; Swain, 1980, and Canale (1983 *as quoted in* Carol Griffiths 2003, p.36)

“Over the years a variety of tests has been developed to assess language proficiency, including the extensively used Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Neither of these tests, however, is universally accepted as a reliable or valid measure of proficiency. The construct validity of TOEFL, for instance, is regarded as suspect because of its multi-choice nature “real” language is not multi-choice, and, therefore, it is difficult to be sure that multi-choice questions are really measuring what they are supposed to be measuring.”(Carol Griffiths, 2003, p.37)

“A high level of proficiency has been associated with an increased use of both direct and indirect strategies” (Chang, 1990; Green and Oxford, 1995; Park, 1997; Chen, 2002; among others *as cited in* Rahimi; Riazi and Saif, (2008).

According to Williams, Powers, Kong and Starr, (2012 *as quoted in* Abdirahman M. Addow; Abdullahi Hussein Abubakar, and Mohamed Said Abukar, 2013) low language proficiency has been an obstacle in achieving success at higher education level as universities require students who are seeking for admission to have a good grade in English language proficiency tests.

To sum up, the researcher of the present study aims to identify the impact on English Language Proficiency achievement by EFL learners at the Intermediate Level through Language learning styles and strategies used.

2.3 EFL Learners

“EFL learners with low anxiety levels tended to use general reading strategies such as guessing, while EFL learners with high anxiety levels employed basic support mechanisms, such as translation, to help themselves understand texts. Some reading strategies were more used by high-anxiety level readers than low-anxiety level readers. Additionally, females tend to be slightly more anxious than males in reading.” Hsin-Yi Lien (2011, p.199)

According to Tseng (2010), there is no significant difference in the use of LLSs, and they've all become advanced EFL learners with good English proficiency, its implication can indeed be very inspiring. It sheds light on the possibility that one can still become a proficient English learner in Taiwan by adopting effective language learning strategies.

A study entitled “Iranian EFL Learners’ Achievement Goals in Relation with Their Metacognitive Reading Strategy Use” was conducted by Mahtab Mohammadi Ghavam, Mina Rastegar, Mohammad Hasan Razmi (2011) to find out the relationship between the achievement goals and the frequency of metacognitive reading strategies used by the Iranian EFL learners with reference to the significant differences in gender. In this study, Achievement Goal Questionnaire and Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategy Inventory were used as the instruments for data collection. The findings of the study showed a connection between the frequency of metacognitive reading strategies used with the achievement goals. In addition, a major difference was found between achievement goals and gender. However, no significant difference was found between males and females with reference to Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategy Inventory use.

There are a few proposed descriptions on EFL Learners presented in this section.

2.4 Listening Test

A case study was conducted by Naser Atasheneh and Ahmad Izadi (2012) on The Role of Teachers in Reducing or Increasing Listening Comprehension Test Anxiety: A Case of Iranian EFL Learners. The outcome of the study revealed that “the high anxious informants had a significant improvement in the second language listening comprehension test.”

According to Richards (2008 *as cited in* Leny Mahdalena. (2010) states listening can provide much of the input and data that the learners receive in language learning.

2.5 Reading Test

Reading assessment is used to measure a learner's progress in lessons. Frederick Cline, Christopher Johnstone and Teresa King (2006) explain reading as “decoding and understanding text for particular reader purposes. Readers decode written text by translating text to speech, and translating directly to meaning. To understand written text, readers engage in constructive processes to make text meaningful, which is the end goal or product.”

2.6 Other variables that influence students' proficiency achievement

According to Oxford (1990, *as cited in* Pezhman Zare, (2012, p.167) “many factors affect the choice of language learning strategies among which can be named: degree of awareness, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex, nationality, general learning styles, personality traits, motivation level, and purpose for learning the language.”

Learners' level of language proficiency, motivation, learning style and gender has been shown to have a strong effect on learners' use of different types of strategies. (Rahimi; Riazi and Saif, (2008)

2.6.1 Nationality

There are very few research studies conducted on Language Learning Strategy Use and proficiency achievement according to nationality.

“Rote memorization and other forms of memorization were more prevalent among some Asian students than among students from other cultural backgrounds. Certain other cultures also appeared to encourage this strategy among learners.” (Sabunguoglu, 2011)

Studies on nationality-related differences in language learning strategies were conducted by Politzer; McGroarty (1985) and O'Malley (1987 *as cited in* Carol Griffiths, 2003, p.46) and discovered that "Asian students exhibited fewer of the strategies expected of "good" language learners than did Hispanic students" while O'Malley ascribed "the lack of success of Asian students to the persistence of familiar strategies."

2.6.2 Age

Students of different ages and stages of L2 learning used different strategies, with certain strategies often being employed by older or more advanced students. (Sabunguoglu, 2011)

"Although the evidence regarding the effects of age on language learning is "far from clear or conclusive" (Spolsky, 1989, p.92), it is a common belief that children are superior to adults as language learners (Bellingham, 2000). Several well-known case studies (for instance Burling, 1981; Schmidt, 1983; Schumann, 1978) also seem to support the idea that adults find it difficult to develop new language." (Carol Griffiths, 2003, p.48)

2.6.3 Gender

"There is significant gender differences between male and female language learners in which females have demonstrated to use more and wider range of strategies than males." (Zare, 2010; Lee, 2003; Green, and Oxford, 1995; Ehrman and Oxford, 1989 *as quoted in* Pezhman Zare, 2012, p.167).

There are studies which have reported on the role of gender in successful language learning and achievement. (Bailey; Onwuegbuzie; Daly, 2000; Chamber 1995 *as cited in* Attapol Khmakhien, 2011)

2.6.4 Motivation

Oxford and Nyikos (1989 *as cited in* Rahimi; Riazi and Saif, (2008) explained motivation is found to be the only latter factor influencing strategy use compare with the other factors.

Motivation is found to be as one of the most important factors affecting students' performance of second language (L2) learning. (Lei, 2012; Thang et.al. 2011 *as cited in* Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin and Leong Lai Mei. (2013).

Findings have demonstrated that learners with high motivation use a significantly greater range of learning strategies than the less motivated students. (Oxford, 1990; McIntyre and Noels, 1996; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989 *as cited in* Pezhman Zare, 2012).

The definitions and related studies to other variables were proposed in this section. In the current study, the researcher aims to discover the variables which involves in English language learning by EFL learners to achieve proficiency.

2.7 Summary

In short, this research will explore the commonly used language learning styles and strategies by EFL learners at the Intermediate Level, the impact on the English Language proficiency achievement (listening and reading) and other factors that affect the language learning styles and strategies in English language proficiency achievement.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The current research attempts to investigate the role of learning styles and learning strategies in English Language Proficiency Achievement by the EFL learners at Intermediate Level at a private Higher Learning Institution in Kuala Lumpur.

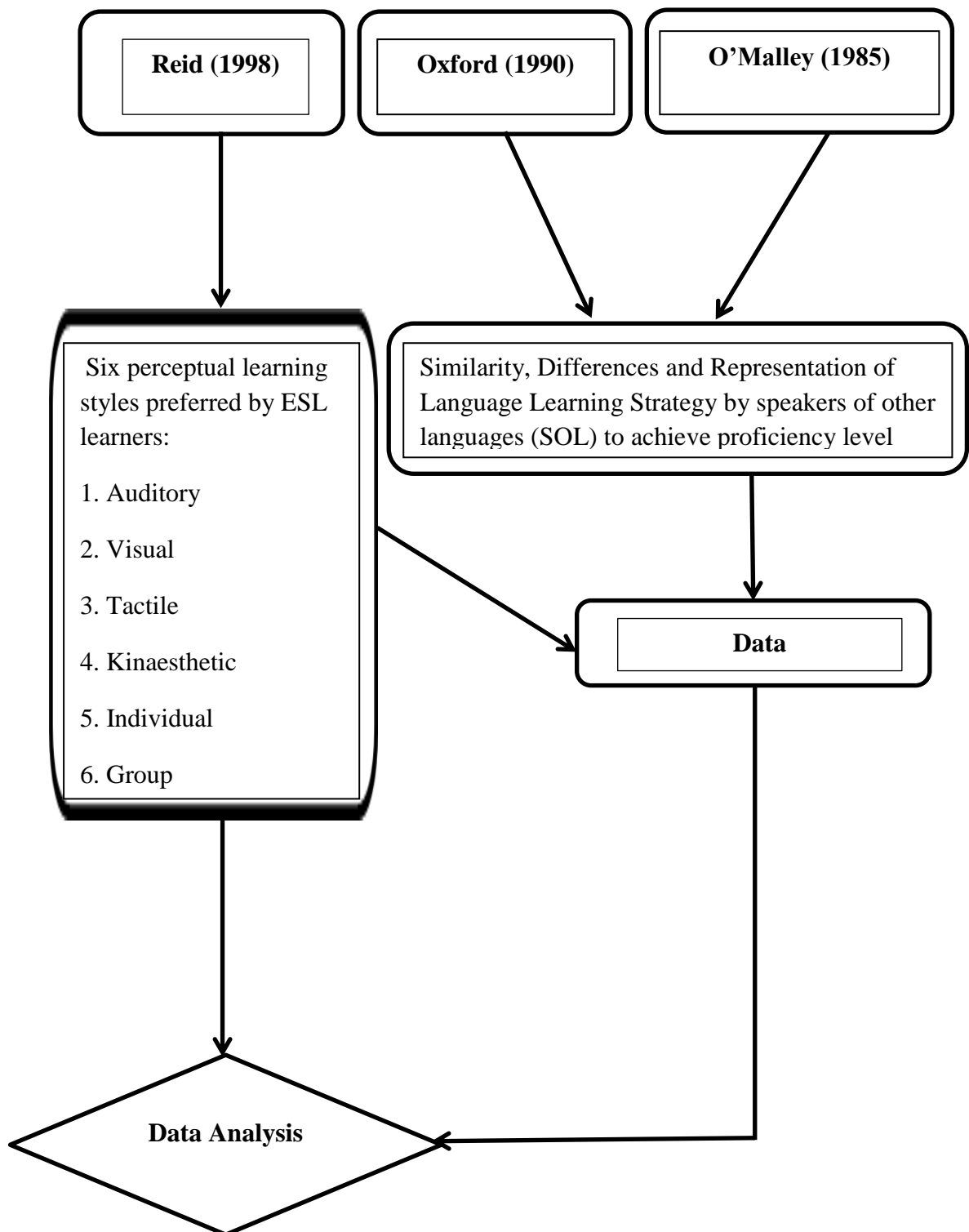
This chapter includes the following sections:

- i. Methodology used for the study
- ii. Data for the study
- iii. Data processing and analysis
- iv. Pilot study
- v. Sample analysis
- vi. Conclusion

3.1 Methodology used for the study

The present research will be conducted based on the conceptual framework illustrated in figure 3.1. The framework is derived from Reid's (1998) six perceptual learning styles preferred by ESL learners as well as the similarity and differences of Language Learning Strategy use adapted from Oxford (1990) and learning strategies and proficiency achievement by speakers of other languages adapted from O'Malley (1985). The data collection will be done using two Questionnaires on Learning Style Inventory (LSI) and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Thus, the Band scores obtained from a listening and reading (IELTS) tests adapted from IELTS Practise Tests Plus 1 (Intermediate level, 2009) will be used to measure the respondents' language proficiency level. Therefore, the biographical information provided by the respondents will be focussed.

Figure 3.1 Research Framework



3.2 Data for the study

Needed data for the study was collected by making use of a set of instruments viz; biographical information questionnaire, Learning -Style Inventory Questionnaire (LSIQ), Strategy Inventory for Language Learning Questionnaire (SILLQ), IELTS Listening test and IELTS Academic Reading test.

3.2.1 Instruments

The researcher used a questionnaire to collect the background information of the respondents such as age, gender, nationality and reason for learning English. The questionnaire was used to identify the factors that influence students' proficiency achievement by relating the information with the IELTS Reading and Listening test scores. Meanwhile, 24- Item Learning-Style Inventory Questionnaire (LSIQ) proposed by Barsh was used to analyse the type of learners according to the selection of their preferred style of learning. The Learning- Style inventory was used as it has been designed to help learners identify the way(s) learners learns best or prefers to learn by employing the learning styles. Furthermore, the statements found in the inventory reflect the teaching methods and activities conducted in the language classroom. The 50 - Item Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990) was adapted to classify the learners according to their preferred learning strategies. The SILL includes six categories of strategies for language learning: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. The SILL found to reliable for data collection as it comprises all the major language learning strategies which is well organized. Moreover, a pilot study was conducted using the questionnaire, learning style and strategy inventories to measure its' reliability and validity.

An IELTS practice based Listening and Reading Tests was conducted to measure the proficiency level of the participants. The assessment mainly focuses on two

specific skills only. The IELTS listening test is designed to evaluate an extensive range of listening skills, including the ability of respondents' comprehending the main ideas and specific factual information. In addition, it helps the researcher to measure the respondents' competency in identifying the opinion and purpose of the speaker. Therefore, the reading test assists the researcher to check the respondents' comprehensive skills on searching for main ideas and recognizing of the writer's purpose. The factors affecting Language Learning Proficiency will be extracted from the information provided on the ethnographic part.

3.2.2 Data Collection

Data were collected with the permission of the Principal and Lecturers in *English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) –Intermediate Level* class. The researcher distributed a pre-planned questionnaire and provided necessary instructions to the respondents with reference to the information to be obtained.

The respondents were informed that the purpose of the task is only to provide information for the study and the data would not be used for any other purpose.

The researcher will analyse the data collected from respondents with reference to their IELTS Band Scores which they obtained from the Listening and Reading Tests given throughout this study. It is to help the researcher to evaluate the learners' proficiency achievement in the said course.

3.2.3 Sampling

The respondents for current research were selected randomly.

(for details see section 3.2.4)

3.2.4 Participants

A total number of 18 students in the age group 18 to 24 were selected for the current study. Among the 18 students, 9 males and 9 females are equally representing each gender. All the respondents are from different ethnic groups (Malay, Thai, Iranian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and Russian). The following charts show the number of respondents according to their ethnicity and gender.

All the 18 respondents are the researcher's English class students. The respondents are from a private higher learning Institution in Kuala Lumpur.

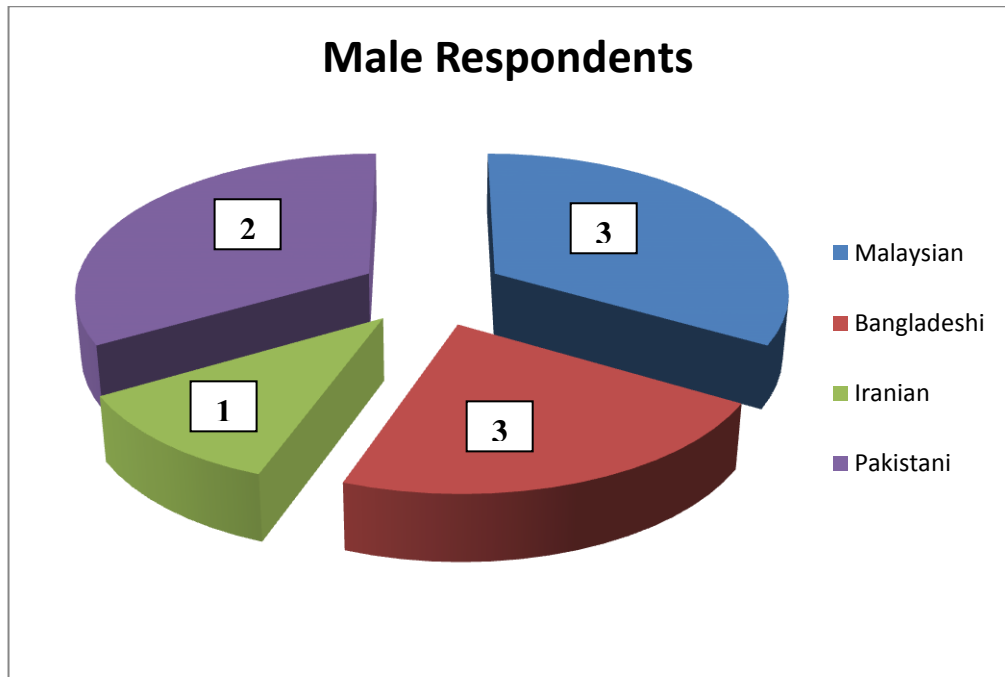


Figure 3.2: Number of male respondents according to ethnicity

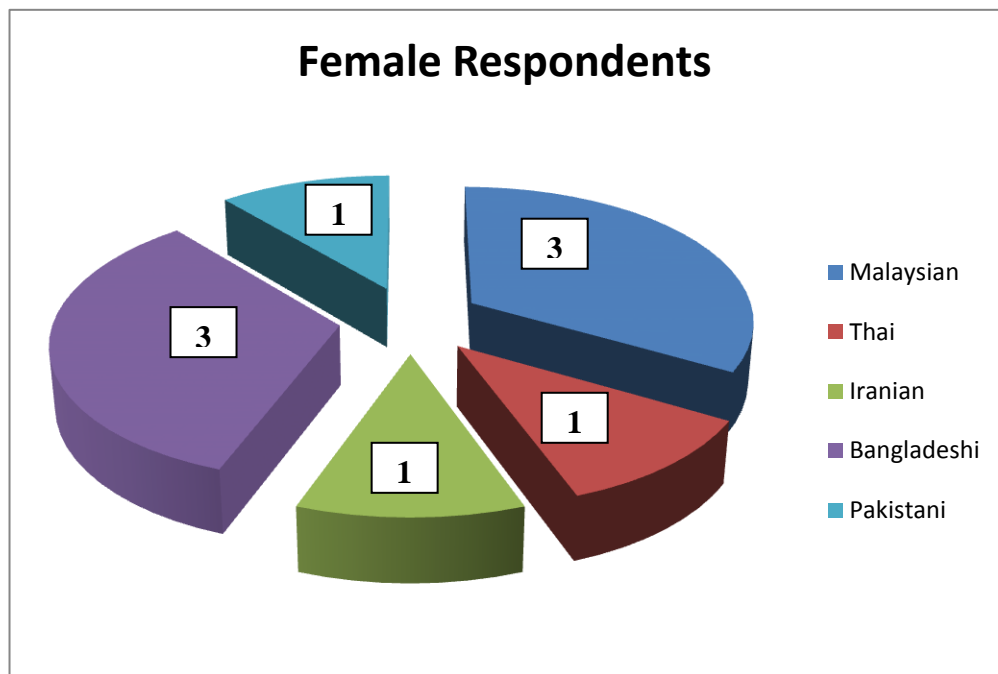


Figure 3.3: Number of female respondents according to ethnicity

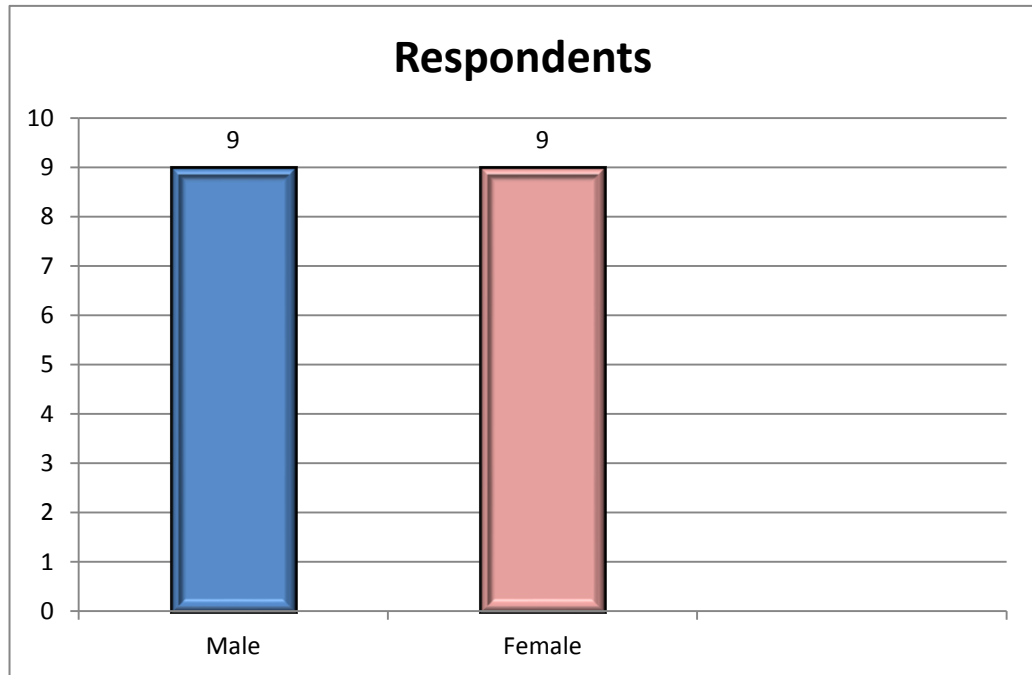


Figure 3.4: Total number of respondents according to the gender

3.3 Data collection, processing and analysis

In order to complete the study, the researcher elicited data by distributing the instruments (questionnaire) to all the 18 respondents. Although, the instruments consist of 3 sections, classification of data is based on the number of choices made on the SILL and LSI questionnaires.

The data will be categorized into four sets of information for the current study in order to complete the writing of the report. The information thus gained is very helpful for the researcher to do the analysis.

The first set of information consists of the students' selection of their Language Learning Styles, which will help the researcher to classify the commonly used learning style in the acquisition of English as a foreign language. The classification of choices will be made according to Reid' Overview of Language Learning Strategy (1998 *as cited in* Attapol Khmakhien, 2011).

The second set of information concerns with the number of choices made on the Strategy Inventory in Language Learning. All the items have five-point Likert-scale responses: 1 = never or almost never, 2 = usually not, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always or almost always. It shows the language learning strategies the one most preferred by the students. The analysis of data will be carried out using (O'Malley, 1985) Taxonomy on Language Learning Strategies.

The third set consists of two modules of IELTS based Listening and Reading Tests. The Listening Test consists of 40 questions which are divided into four sections. It involves Multiple-choice options, fill in the blanks or table and completion of sentences with no more than three words or a number for each answer. The participants will be given 30 minutes and they listen to each part only once. Therefore, the Reading Test consists of 40 questions which have 3 passages. It involves paragraph headings, short answers, multiple choice, sentence completion, classification, identification of writer's views, Yes, No, Not Given and True, False, Not Given types of questions. The assessment criteria for each test will be based on the participants' Band Scores. The time allocation for the Reading Test is 60 minutes.

According to the source obtained regarding IELTS Assessment criteria from *International Development Programme (IDP) 2013*, Band 9 is allocated for an Expert user whose language command is appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding. Band 8 is for a Very good user where the command of language is utilised with only occasional, unsystematic inaccuracies and misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Band 7 is for a Good user who has operational command of the language with misunderstandings in some situations but able to handle complex language well. Band 6 is meant for a Competent user who has effective command of language despite some inaccuracies and misunderstandings. The user can use and understand fairly complex language particularly in familiar situations. Band 5 is for

Modest user who has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Band 4 is for a Limited user who has a basic competence which is limited to familiar situations. The user has frequent problems in understanding and expression as well as not able to use complex language. Band 3 is refers to an Extremely limited user as he or she conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations where frequent breakdowns in communication occur. Band 2 is for Intermittent user who only uses the most basic information with isolated words or short formulae and has difficulty in understanding spoken and written English. Band 1 is for non-user who is very weak and unable to use the language. Band 0 is for those who did not attempt the test.

The highest band score is 9 and the minimum requirement of International Institutes or Colleges is Band 6.5.

The final set of information catered the needs of the researcher to discover the other variables influencing in English Language Proficiency achievement based on the information provided on the learners' background.

Results of the analysis are presented in the form of tables, pie charts and bar charts.

3.4 Pilot study

Prior to the actual study, a pilot test was conducted on a small scale to ascertain the actual data collection and the analysis for the related study. 4 respondents were chosen randomly for this pilot study.

After the pilot study, actual data collection and data analysis were carried out following the procedures used in the pilot study with suitable reinforcements wherever necessary. The researcher would ensure that the data collected is valid and reliable.

3.5 Sample Analysis

There were 4 respondents (2 males and 2 females) chosen for the pilot study to discover the validity of the current study. One of the male and female respondents was selected from the age group 18 – 20 and the other two respondents (1 male and 1 female) were selected from the age group 21-24.

The table below indicates that the most preferred language learning styles by the 4 selected respondents.

Table 3.1: Respondents' preferred learning styles

Language Learning Styles Inventory (LLSI)	VISUAL	AUDITORY	TACTILE
<i>m3</i>	20	14	8
<i>m5</i>	24	30	18
<i>f5</i>	36	40	32
<i>f7</i>	36	36	26
TOTAL	116	120	84

m3= male 3, f5= female 5

The results achieved show that the most preferred language learning style is the Auditory one followed by the Visual. However there is one male respondent who preferred the visual style more than auditory style and tactile style. Meanwhile a female respondent have chosen both the visual and auditory styles as her first preference.

Therefore *table 3.2* indicates a greater number for cognitive, metacognitive and memory strategies are the most preferred language learning strategies by the respondents. The least preferred learning strategies are social, affective and compensation.

(It has answered research question 1)

Table 3.2: Respondents' preferred learning strategies

Language Learning Strategies Inventory (LLSI)	Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
<i>m3</i>	18	28	12	21	18	18
<i>m5</i>	30	44	18	28	22	20
<i>f5</i>	32	51	22	33	22	22
<i>f7</i>	32	56	23	38	20	30
TOTAL	112	179	75	120	82	90

m3= male 3, *f5*= female 5

It was found that the respondents' preferred learning styles and strategies have a great impact towards their proficiency achievement in listening and reading. The band scores obtained by the 4 respondents for IELTS Listening and IELTS Reading tests have a strong relationship between the learning style and strategy used as the highest grade is obtained for the listening test. Therefore, the female respondent who admitted that she prefers both the visual and auditory learning styles has scored the highest band score for both the tests; listening (band 9) and reading (band 8). Therefore gender factor

does involve in the proficiency achievement. It proves that female respondents score better grade when compared with male respondents. The male respondent who scored the highest grade for listening and reading tests is 18 years old whereas the female respondent who obtained the highest score for both the tests is 24 years old. It shows that age does not really matter in language proficiency achievement. Therefore, three out of four respondents have stated that they are interested in learning English to achieve oral proficiency in communication. However, one respondent (*f7*) has mentioned that she is learning English to obtain good grades in order to pursue her studies in the United States of America. The analysis is described in the *table 3.3* below. The validity of instruments and consistent outcomes of the pilot study encouraged the researcher to carry on with the current research in its present shape.

(Answered research questions 2 & 3)

Table 3.3: The relationship between learning styles and strategies on proficiency achievement

Respondents	Age	Listening Scores (out of 40)	IELTS Band	Reading Scores (out of 40)	IELTS Band
<i>m3</i>	24	25	6	20	5.5
<i>m5</i>	18	33	7.5	28	6.5
<i>f5</i>	18	37	8.5	31	7
<i>f7</i>	24	39	9	35	8

m3= male 3, f5= female 5

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter presents the needed research framework used for the analysis. In addition, this chapter describes the data collection made for the study, which includes research instruments, methods and techniques for data collection and sampling of participants. Also, this chapter explains the process of data collection, organising and processing of the data for analysis. Besides that, it includes the relevance of the pilot study conducted.

The data obtained helps the researcher to examine the EFL learners' proficiency achievement through language learning styles and strategies used.

Chapter 4 presents the research findings and results in detail.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The classified and processed data was analysed using the selected research methods. The results and outcomes achieved through the data analysis will be discussed as they are shown. The researcher used two questionnaires to describe the language learning styles and strategies used by the respondents which are then measured with a listening and reading tests.

The researcher has provided codes for all the respondents, as shown in the table below:

Table 4.1: Codes for the respondents

Codes	Respondents
<i>m1</i>	First male respondent
<i>m2</i>	Second male respondent
<i>m3</i>	Third male respondent
<i>m4</i>	Fourth male respondent
<i>m5</i>	Fifth male respondent
<i>m6</i>	Sixth male respondent
<i>m7</i>	Seventh male respondent
<i>m8</i>	Eighth male respondent
<i>m9</i>	Ninth male respondent

Table 4.1, continued

<i>f1</i>	First female respondent
<i>f2</i>	Second female respondent
<i>f3</i>	Third female respondent
<i>f4</i>	Fourth female respondent
<i>f5</i>	Fifth female respondent
<i>f6</i>	Sixth female respondent
<i>f7</i>	Seventh female respondent
<i>f8</i>	Eighth female respondent
<i>f9</i>	Ninth female respondent

4.1 Background of the respondents

All the respondents were selected from *English for Speakers for Other Languages* (ESOL) Intermediate Level class for the data collection. There were 18 respondents involved in this study with equal number representing each gender. They represent different nationality viz, Malaysian, Thai, Iranian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and Russian. The classification of respondents participated in this study are shown in the bar chart below.

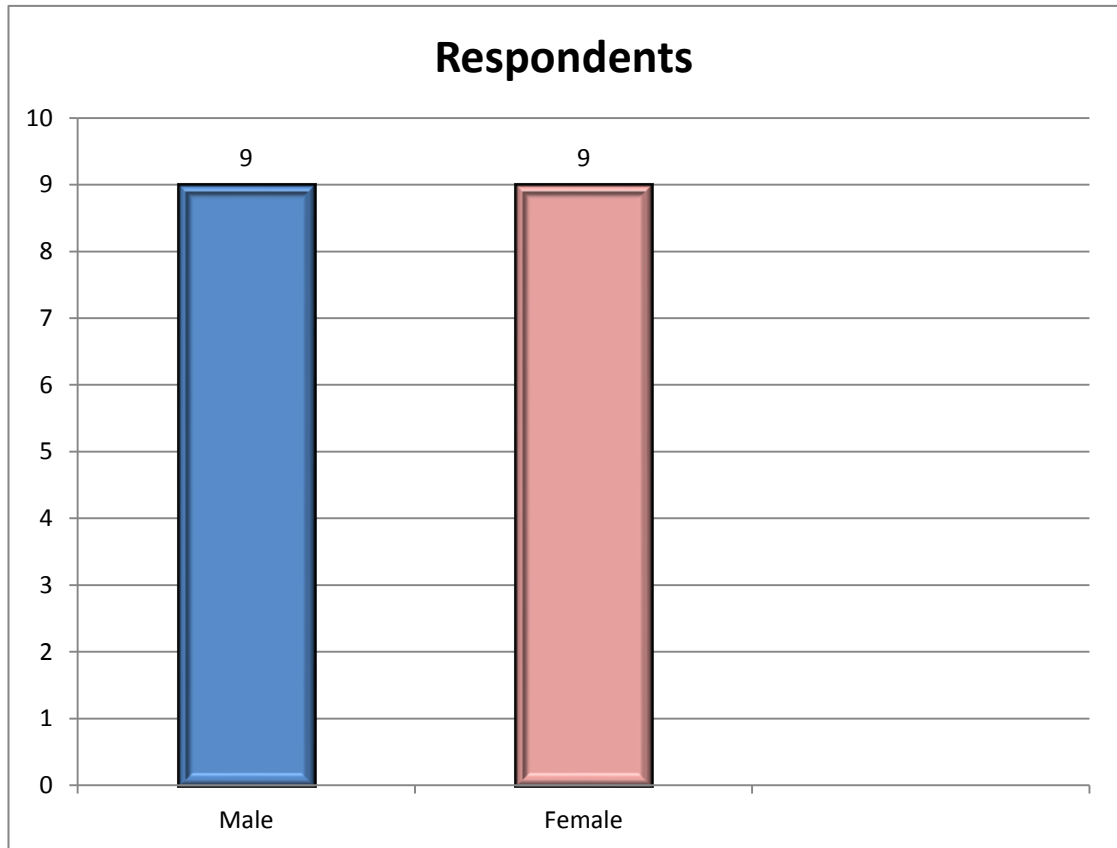


Figure 4.1: The number of respondents for each gender

Based on figure 4.1, the number of overall respondents involved in this study is 18. A similar number of respondents were selected to represent each gender (male and female). The researcher selected nine respondents from each group with different cultural background to obtain an equivalent valid data. All the respondents participated in this study are taking this course to be competent in English language.

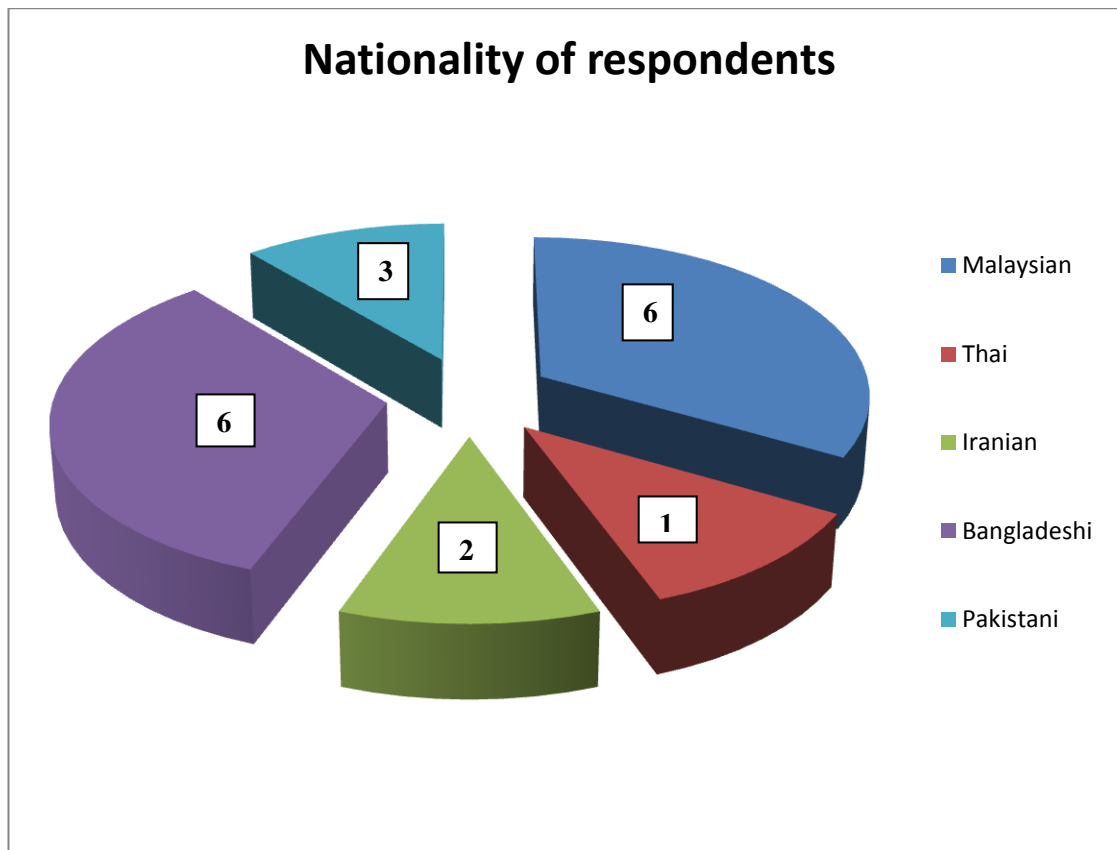


Figure 4.2: The number of respondents from each ethnicity

The figure above shows the comparable number of respondents from various nationalities involved in this study. There are six respondents (3 males and 3 females) from Malaysia, one respondent from Thailand, two (1 male and 1 female) respondents from Iran, six respondents (3 males and 3 females) from Bangladesh and the other three (2 males and 1 female) are from Pakistan. They are required to take a placement test before entering the English course to evaluate their proficiency level. Some of the respondents started the course from the basic level whereas others with high scores were directly placed in the intermediate level.

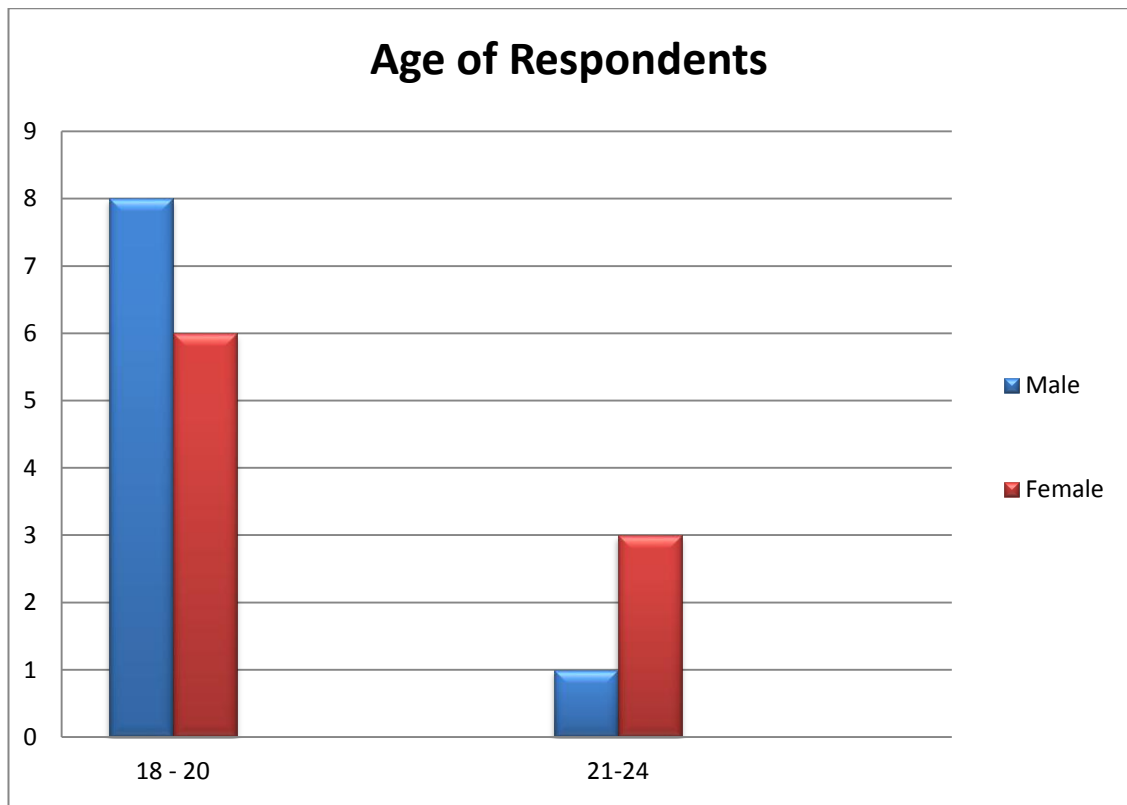


Figure 4.3: The age of respondents

The figure above shows the number of respondents drawn from two different age groups. There are 14 respondents in the first category of age between 18 to 20. Therefore the other 4 respondents are from the second category of age between 21 to 24. Seven male respondents aged 18 years old, one respondent is 20 and one respondent is 24 years old. Thus, six female respondents are 18 years old, one respondents is 21 years old and the other two are 24 years old. They are from different age groups as there is no age limitation for students to enrol in the English course. However, the minimum age for taking the IELTS exam is 16. So, the respondents will be taking the IELTS exams at the end of their course at intermediate or advanced level.

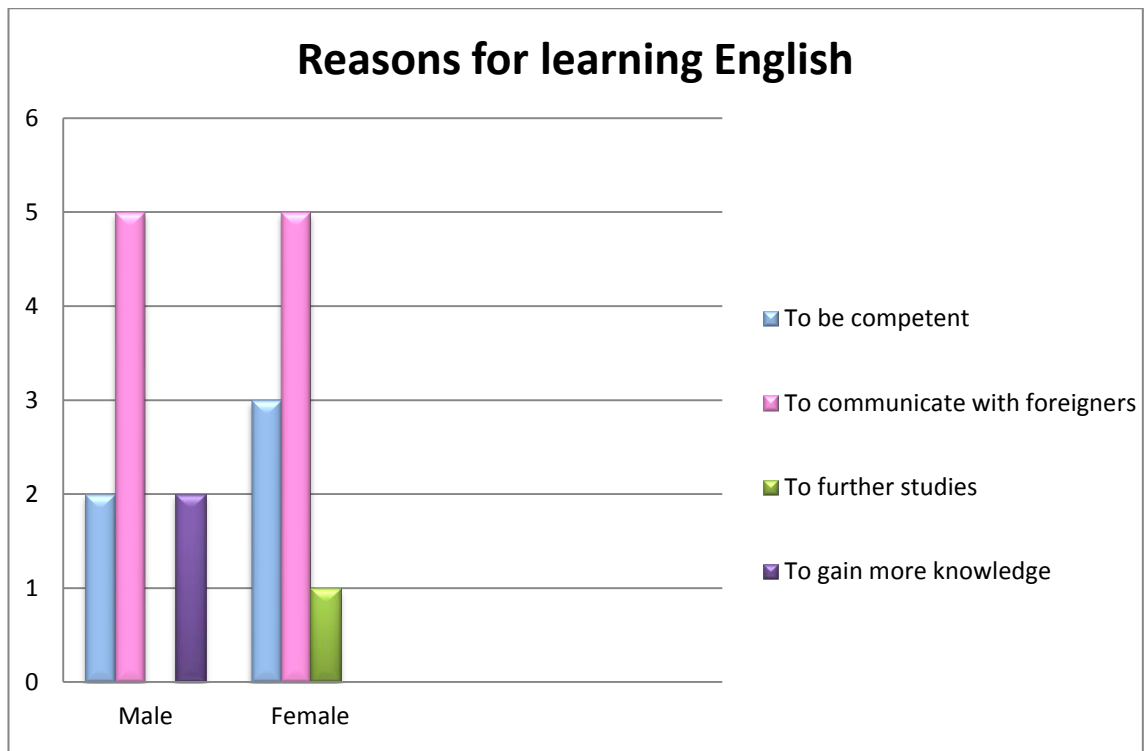


Figure 4.4: The reasons provided by the respondents to acquire English

The bar chart above shows the reason provided by the respondents for taking English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course in a private institute. This data facilitates the researcher to gain more information on the variables involved in English language proficiency achievement.

From the bar chart above, it is found that five respondents have stated that they are acquiring English to gain confidence and excel in the language. They have stated that it would help them to have a bright future with a secured job. Hence, majority of the participants from both genders had mentioned that they would like to communicate fluently with people from all over the world. However, least number of respondents has indicated that she is enrolling in English course to obtain a good grade in the IELTS examination to further her studies in the United States of America. Meanwhile, two out of the eighteen respondents are studying English to increase their knowledge.

4.2 Language Learning Styles Inventory

This survey has 24 items statement that describes the language learning styles of the respondents involved in this study. It has been divided into three main categories which include eight statements referring to visual, auditory and tactile. It helps the respondents to have a better understanding on their preferences of learning and processing information. Other than that, the respondents tend to identify their primary and secondary strength in the language learning process in order to achieve success.

The table below defines the choice of statements made to describe the respondents' learning styles in the three categories which are visual, auditory and tactile. The respondents were required to read the statements and place a check in the appropriate space provided next to each statement to indicate whether it Often, Sometimes or Seldom describes their personality.

Table 4.2: Choices made by number of respondents for Visual Style

GENDER	Male			Female		
	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Often	Sometimes	Seldom
2. I prefer to see information written on a chalkboard and supplemented by visual aids and assigned readings	2	7	0	7	2	0
3. I like to write things down or to take notes for visual review	1	8	0	4	5	0
7. I am skilful with and enjoy developing and making graphs and charts	1	7	1	4	2	3

Table 4.2, continued

10. I can easily understand and follow directions on a map	1	7	1	4	5	0
14. I can understand a news article better by reading about it in a newspaper than by listening to a report about it on the radio	1	7	1	4	5	0
16. I think the best way to remember something is to picture it in your head	3	6	0	4	5	0
19. I am good at working and solving jigsaw puzzles and mazes	1	7	1	4	3	2
22. I prefer obtaining information about an interesting subject by reading about it	3	4	2	4	4	1
TOTAL	13	53	6	35	31	6

The above table illustrates that majority of the respondents sometimes use the visual style. The male respondents sometimes prefer to see information written on the whiteboard with some visual which females often prefer. More male and female respondents sometimes prefer to take notes for reference. As for male respondents, they enjoy developing graphs and charts at times where a female does that often. Majority of the respondents from both genders has stated that they are not always good at understanding and following directions given on a map. The respondents only sometimes prefer to read news articles rather than listening and they remember best by picturing the information in mind. In addition, the females have revealed that they are

always good in solving jigsaw puzzle and maze as well as enjoy reading to gain new information. As for males, they are only sometimes able to solve puzzles, mazes and don't really enjoy reading activities.

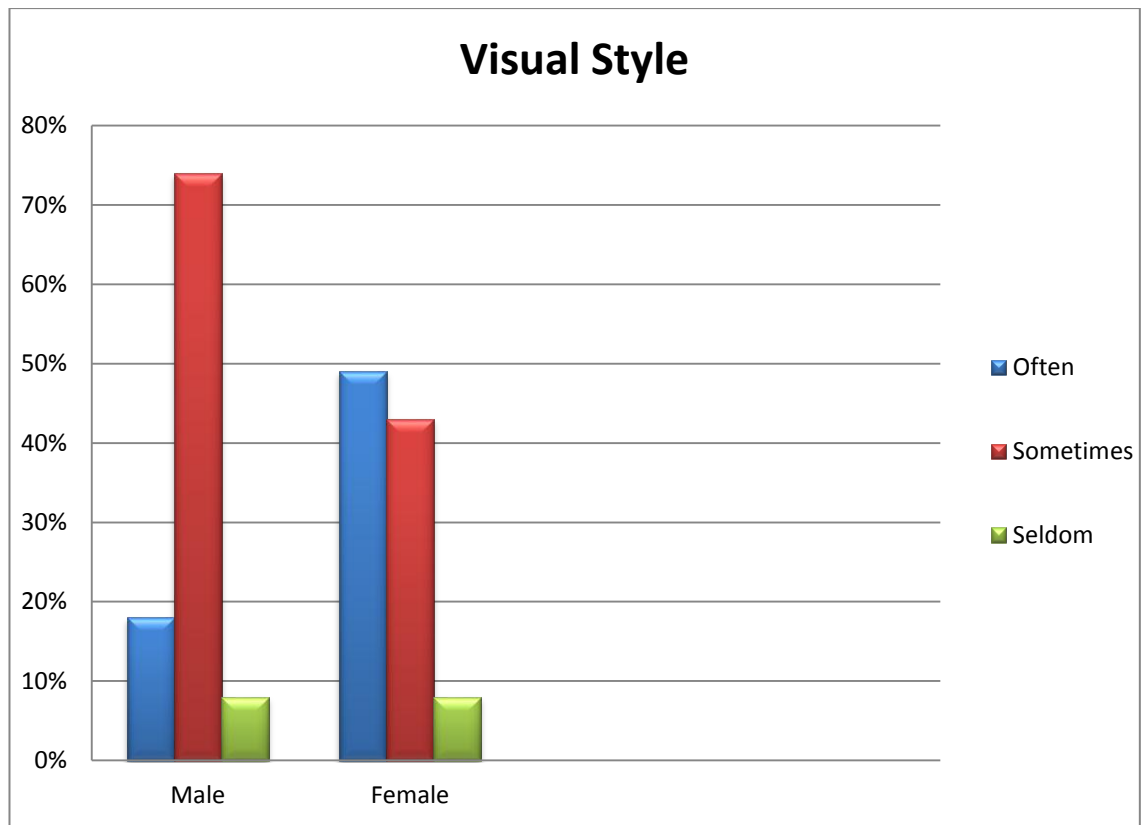


Figure 4.5: The percentage of choices made by respondents for visual style

The differences of choices made for Visual style by both the genders is shown in the bar chart above. The higher number of females (49%) often prefers visual compared to male respondents (18%). However, 74% of male respondents only sometimes prefer visual style when compared to 43% of female respondents. Both gender made similar choice of 8% for the option seldom.

Table 4.3: Choices made by number of respondents for Auditory Style

GENDER	Male			Female		
	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Often	Sometimes	Seldom
1. I can remember best about a subject by listening to a lecture that includes information, explanations and discussions.	3	6	0	6	3	0
5. I require explanations of diagrams, graphs, or visual directions.	4	4	1	7	1	1
8. I can tell if sounds match when presented with pair of sounds.	3	3	3	4	3	2
11. I do best in academic subjects by listening to lectures and tapes.	3	5	1	5	4	0
13. I learn to spell better by repeating words out loud than by writing the words on paper.	3	6	0	3	6	0
18. I would rather listen to a good lecture or speech than read about the same material in a textbook.	4	4	1	5	4	0
21. I prefer listening to the news on the radio rather than reading the paper.	3	5	1	4	4	1
24. I follow oral directions better than written ones.	5	3	1	4	5	0
TOTAL	28	36	8	38	30	4

The table given above indicates the choices made for auditory style by males and females. The female respondents have agreed that they often listen to a lecture which comes with sufficient information and provides brief explanations as it would help them to remember best. As for males, only sometimes they prefer to listen to the lectures. Besides that, female respondents often request for clarification about diagrams, graphs or visual directions and they are good at recognizing sounds. However, male respondents often or only sometimes require explanations on visuals and able to match with sounds accordingly.

Male respondents sometimes and female respondents always succeed in academic subjects by listening to lectures and recordings. Both the genders have agreed with the statement that only sometimes they can spell better through repetitions than writing the words on paper. Thus, female respondents often and male respondents often or sometimes only prefer to listen to an effective lecture or talk than to reading a textbook.

Therefore, male respondents sometimes prefer to listen to news on the radio rather than reading newspaper whereas female respondents often or sometimes listen to the news on the radio. Males always prefer to listen to oral directions than written and females only sometimes prefer that.

The bar chart below reflects the options chosen by the male and female respondents for auditory style. It shows that 53% of female respondents always prefer auditory style compare to 39% of male respondents. Half of the entire male respondents (50%) only sometimes prefer auditory style unlike females 41%. The rest are 6% of females and 11% of males are very seldom use auditory style.

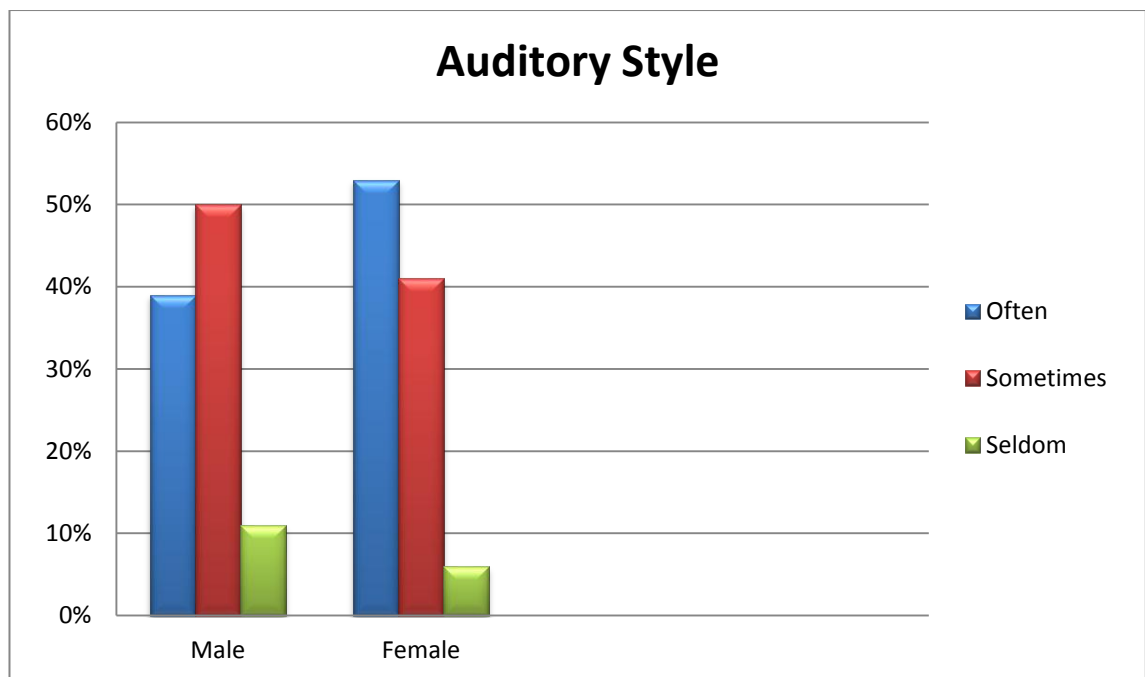


Figure 4.6: The percentage of choices made by respondents for auditory style

The table below points out the choices made for the tactile style by the total number of 18 respondents. A large number of the overall female respondents enjoy doing activities in the class at times compared to males seldom like activities. Both genders sometimes enjoy inventing things. Females always remember things best by writing when compared to males sometimes. Most of respondents have confessed that they seldom play with coins or keys neither chew gum nor smoke during lessons. Meanwhile, females prefer “finger spelling” while males don’t. It has been indicated that both genders sometimes prefer to hold things while studying. Females like to touch people often but males only sometimes prefer to do that.

Table 4.4: Choices made by number of respondents for Tactile Style

GENDER	Male			Female		
	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Often	Sometimes	Seldom
4. I prefer to use posters, models, or actual practice and other activities in class.	2	2	5	4	5	0
6. I enjoy working with my hands or making things.	2	4	3	3	5	1
9. I can remember best by writing things down.	1	6	2	6	2	1
12. I play with coins or keys in my pocket.	0	4	5	2	2	5
15. I chew gum, smoke or snack while studying.	1	3	5	1	2	6
17. I learn the spelling of words by “finger spelling” them.	2	2	5	5	2	2
20. I grip objects in my hands during learning periods.	1	7	1	1	6	2
23. I feel very comfortable touching others, hugging, handshaking, etc.	2	5	2	6	2	1
TOTAL	11	33	28	28	26	18

The bar chart below explains the choices made for tactile style. It shows a big comparison between male and female respondents. It indicates that 39% of female respondents often use this style followed by 36% for sometimes and 25% for seldom. Meanwhile only 15% of male respondents often prefer tactile. The other 46% of male respondents have chosen sometimes and 39% seldom.

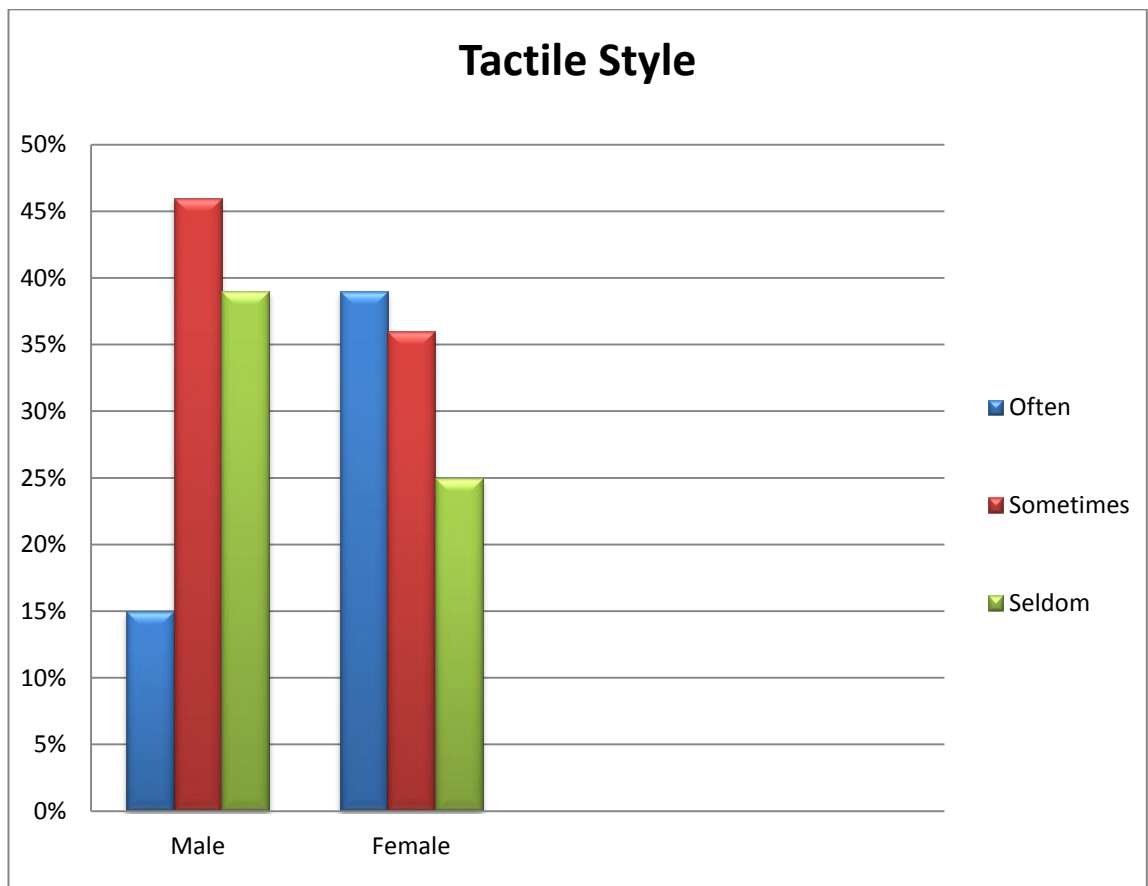


Figure 4.7: The percentage of choices made by respondents for tactile style

The pie chart below shows the most preferred language learning styles by the 18 respondents involved in this research. It indicates that auditory (43%) is the most preferred by the respondents followed by visual style (31%) and tactile style (26%). A greater number of respondents prefer conversations based activity and enjoy music. In addition, they revealed that they can get distracted easily and have difficulty with written directions. Thus, visual learners are good at remembering face; enjoy reading activities and bad at verbal instruction. Therefore, reading is not a priority for tactile learners.

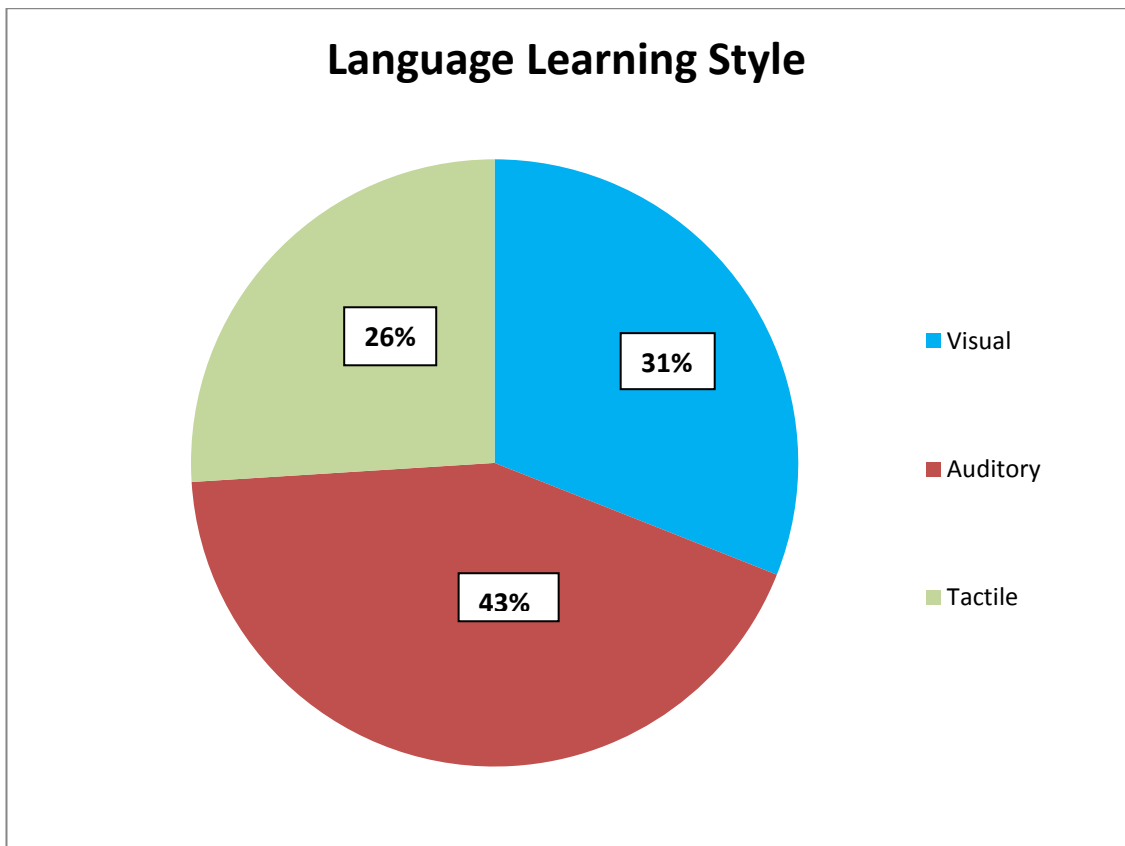


Figure 4.8: The most preferred learning style by the respondents

4.3 Language Learning Strategies Inventory

This instrument has 50 items statement divided into six sections to describe the use of language learning strategies among the respondents involved in this study. Part A consists of 9 statements of memory strategy, part B has 14 statements describing the cognitive strategies, part C covers 6 statements of compensation strategy, part D reflects 9 statements of metacognitive strategies, followed 6 statements in part E is regarding of affective strategy and 6 statements in part F on social strategy. It helps the respondents to identify their most preferred language learning strategies in order to excel in their studies.

The tables given below describe the statements selected by the respondents to describe their language learning strategies. The respondents were asked to read each statement and fill in the bubble of the response (1; never or almost never true of me, 2; usually not true of me, 3; somewhat true of me, 4; usually true of me, or 5; always or almost always true of me) that indicates the truth of it in second language (SL).

Table 4.5: Respondents' choice of memory strategy

PART A: Memory Strategy										
Gender / Options	Male					Female				
Statement	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in SL.	0	2	5	2	0	0	1	2	4	2
2. I use new SL words in a sentence so I can remember them.	2	4	2	1	0	0	1	2	4	2
3. I connect the sound of a new SL word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.	0	3	3	3	0	0	0	4	5	0
4. I remember a new SL word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	0	1	5	2	1	0	0	5	2	2
5. I use rhymes to remember new SL words.	0	1	4	4	0	1	2	2	2	2
6. I use flashcards to remember new SL words.	0	2	5	2	0	1	0	2	6	0
7. I physically act out new SL words.	0	1	3	4	1	0	1	3	5	0
8. I review SL lessons often.	0	1	6	2	0	0	0	5	4	0
9. I remember new SL words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	0	1	3	4	1	1	1	3	4	0
TOTAL	0	14	38	25	4	3	6	28	36	8

The table above clarifies that most female and few male respondents often relate previous knowledge with new information gained. Thus, only females practice new words that they learn in second language in order to remember their meaning. As for males, they don't use any new words in lessons. Female respondents are good at matching sounds of a new word with its pictures to remember the words easily.

Both the genders can remember better through making imagination in their minds. The respondents prefer to use flashcards when compared to rhymes. They practice the new word in lessons while doing revisions. Meanwhile, the respondents are able to recall the new words encountered in their lesson easily.

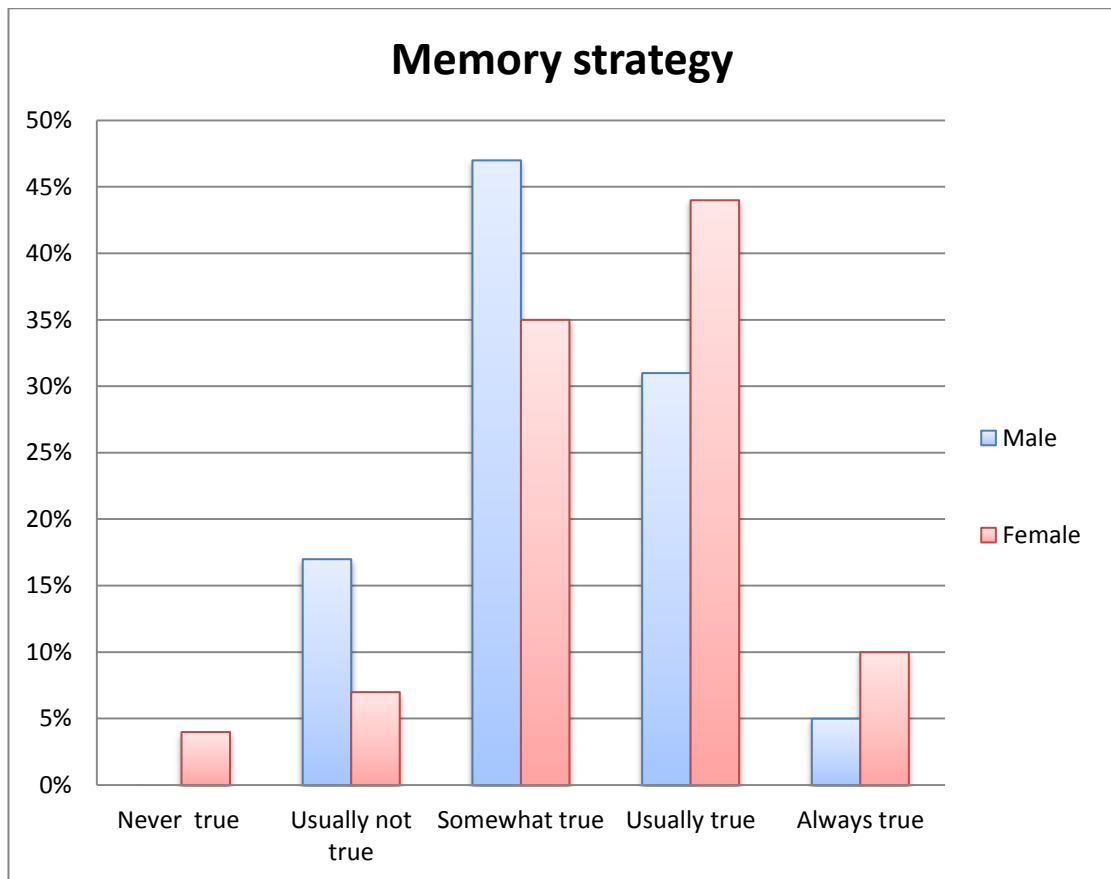


Figure 4.9: The selected choices of memory strategy by respondents

The bar chart above shows the different number of choices made for memory strategy by male and female respondents. The majority of female respondents (44%) declared that they prefer memory strategy compared to male (31%). However 47% of male respondents have chosen option 3 (somewhat true) compare to 35% female respondents. Least number of respondents chose option 5 (always true) where male (5%) and female (10%). The other 17% of males and 11% females have indicated that the statement never or usually don't match them.

Table 4.6: Respondents' choice of cognitive strategy

PART B: Cognitive Strategy										
Gender / Options	Male					Female				
Statement	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10. I say or write new SL words several times.	1	2	2	4	0	0	0	3	4	2
11. I try to talk like native SL speakers.	1	1	6	1	0	0	1	2	5	1
12. I practise the sounds of SL.	1	2	4	2	0	1	0	2	5	1
13. I use the SL words I know in different ways.	0	2	5	1	1	1	2	3	3	0
14. I start conversations in the SL.	0	1	4	4	0	0	1	2	5	1
15. I watch SL language TV shows spoken in SL or go to movies spoken in SL.	0	2	4	3	0	0	0	3	5	1
16. I read for pleasure in the SL.	0	1	4	4	0	0	1	4	3	1
17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in the SL.	0	4	2	2	1	0	0	4	4	1
18. I first skim an SL passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.	0	2	5	2	0	0	1	6	2	0
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in the SL.	0	1	5	3	0	0	0	4	4	1
20. I try to find patterns in the SL.	0	1	6	2	0	0	1	2	6	0
21. I find the meaning of an SL word by dividing it into parts that I understand.	0	1	4	4	0	0	0	2	6	1

Table 4.6, continued

22. I try not to translate word by word.	1	3	3	2	0	1	0	4	3	1
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in the SL.	0	2	5	2	0	0	2	3	4	0
TOTAL	4	25	59	36	2	3	9	44	59	11

The above table explains the attitude towards cognitive strategy by all the 18 respondents involved in this study. It is categorised by gender (male and female) to have a better vision. It shows that the respondents strongly practice using new words and speaking in a second or foreign language. Furthermore, the respondents do make efforts in speaking the second or foreign language like a native speaker. Thus, they often practise the pronunciation of second language words and use the words they know in several ways.

Overall respondents agreed that they have increased the use of English in their daily life situations through reading, writing, listening and speaking. The respondents have specified that they skim a reading passage before scanning for the answers and often match new words with their native language. The respondents sometimes prefer to look for similar words in their own language to match with the new words found in a second language. Only female respondents don't prefer to translate words but males do. Most of the female respondents summarise the information gained from the lessons unlike the males sometimes.

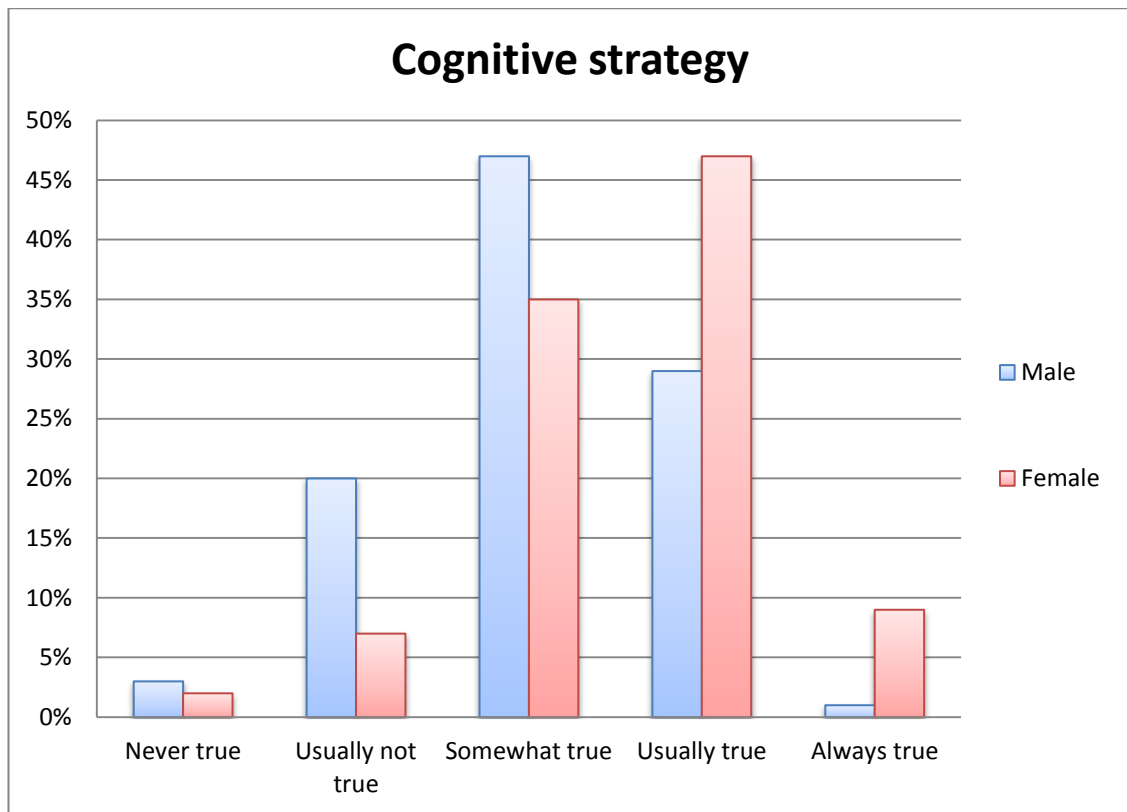


Figure 4.10: The selected choices of cognitive strategy by respondents

The bar chart above shows the differences found between the two genders upon the selection of the correct statements regarding their cognitive strategy. Most of the male respondents (47%) think that they somewhat prefer cognitive strategy compared to 35% of females. Thus, female respondents chose always true (9%) and 47% think it is usually true with the cognitive strategy statements in describing themselves. Around 23% of males have revealed that it is usually not true (20%) and (3%) of them never agree. Approximately 47% agreed that the statements are usually true of them.

Table 4.7: Respondents' choice of compensation strategy

PART C: Compensation Strategy										
Gender / Options	Male					Female				
Statement	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
24. To understand unfamiliar SL words, I make guesses.	0	1	5	3	0	0	0	4	4	1
25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in the SL, I use gestures.	0	2	4	3	0	0	1	3	4	1
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in the SL.	0	3	3	2	1	0	0	5	4	0
27. I read SL without looking up every new word.	1	1	5	2	0	1	0	4	3	1
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in the SL.	0	2	5	2	0	0	2	3	3	1
29. If I can't think of a SL word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	0	2	3	3	1	0	1	2	5	1
TOTAL	1	11	25	15	2	1	4	21	23	5

The (table 4.7) above outlines the total number of statements chosen for compensation strategy by all the respondents. There are six statements provided to indicate the respondents' learning strategy. It is shown that the respondents prefer to make guesses or gestures while facing difficulties in speaking. Thus, female respondents tend to invent new words instead of finding the right ones. As for males, they are good at guessing the following statements in a conversation and females tend to use similar words to replace certain words.

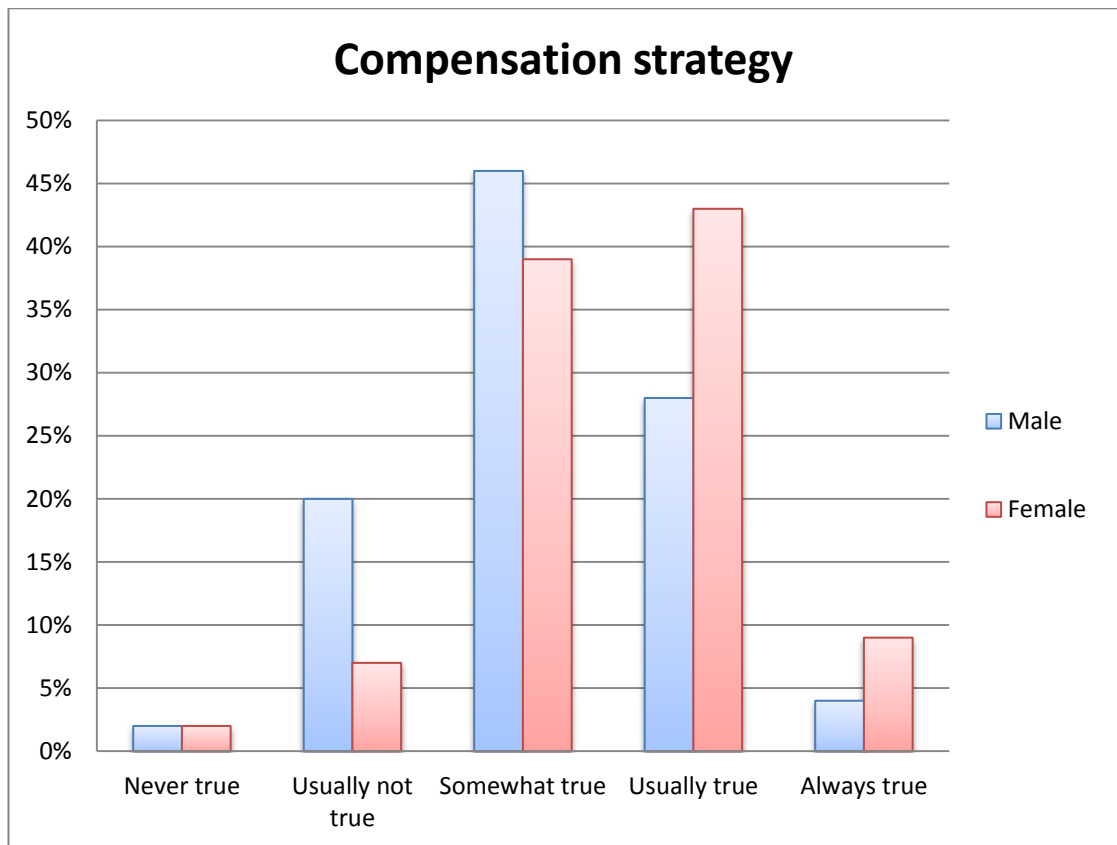


Figure 4.11: The selected number of compensation strategy statement

The above figure clarifies the truth of compensation strategy preferred by the overall respondents. It is shown according to their gender. Nearly 85% of respondents (46% males and 39% females) have indicated that the statement is somewhat true, followed by 28% males and 43% of them think usually true, 20% of males and 7% females have chosen usually not true, 4 % of males and 9% of females feel that the statement reveals the truth and only 2% of male and 2% of female respondents strongly feel that they don't prefer the compensation style.

Table 4.8: Respondents' choice of metacognitive strategy

PART D: Metacognitive Strategy										
Gender / Options	Male					Female				
Statement	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my SL.	0	2	4	2	1	0	0	3	6	0
31. I notice my SL mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	0	1	5	2	1	0	0	2	5	2
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking SL.	0	2	5	2	0	0	0	3	5	1
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of SL.	0	2	3	4	0	0	0	4	3	2
34. I plan my schedules so I will have enough time to study SL.	0	1	4	4	0	0	2	2	5	0
35. I look for people I can talk to in SL.	0	2	2	5	0	0	1	1	4	3
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in SL.	0	1	6	2	0	0	1	3	5	0
37. I have clear goals for improving my SL skills.	0	0	7	2	0	0	0	4	3	2
38. I think about my progress in learning SL.	0	0	6	1	2	0	1	3	5	0
TOTAL	0	11	42	24	4	0	5	25	41	10

The above table demonstrates choices made by the respondents for the metacognitive strategy which consists of nine statements. The male respondents agreed that only sometimes they try to find various methods to use the second or foreign

language as for females usually make a different approach to converse in the second language. Sometimes male respondents notice their errors in second or foreign language and they learn from their mistakes to improve themselves. However, female respondents agreed that they usually learn from their mistakes to progress in the language.

Majority of the female respondents have agreed it's true that they usually pay attention to the speaker of the second language whereas for males they only sometimes do that. The choices made for the statement number 33 shows that male respondents usually take initiatives in trying to find on how to be competent in second language unlike females only sometimes does that. Usually or only sometimes male respondents plan their schedules to revise their second language lesson compared to females who usually design their timetables to allocate enough time to study a second language or foreign language.

All the respondents have agreed that they usually look for people to communicate in the second or foreign language. It is true that male respondents enjoy reading as much as possible in a second language and they sometimes look for the chances to read unlike females who usually look for reading activities. Hence, a great number of respondents from both genders have agreed that only sometimes they have clear goals to improve their skills in second or foreign language. Therefore, female respondents usually reflect about their progress in acquiring second or foreign language but only sometimes males consider about their development.

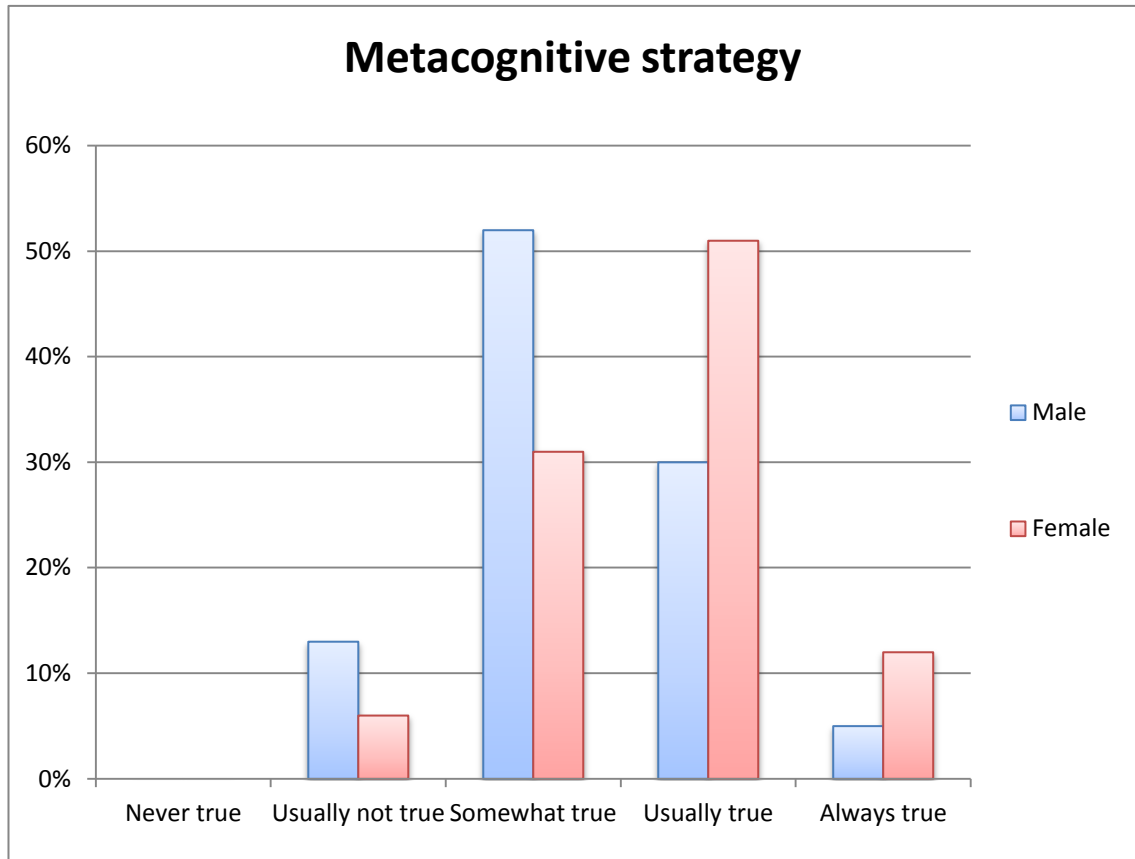


Figure 4.12: The selected number of metacognitive strategy statement

The figure above shows that 52% of male and 31% of female respondents feel that they sometimes use the metacognitive strategy. However, only 12 % of the females and 5% of males agreed that they always prefer metacognitive strategy. Thus, 30% of males and 51% of females have chosen option 4 which defines the statements provided are usually true of them. The other 19% of respondents (13% males and 6% females) don't agree with the statements of metacognitive strategy in the questionnaire as they usually don't use that strategy.

Table 4.9: Respondents' choice of affective strategy

PART E: Affective Strategy										
Gender / Options	Male					Female				
Statement	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using SL.	0	1	6	2	0	0	0	5	3	1
40. I encourage myself to speak SL even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	0	1	6	2	0	0	1	2	5	1
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in SL.	0	2	5	2	0	0	0	5	3	1
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using SL.	0	2	5	2	0	0	2	3	4	0
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.	0	1	5	3	0	0	0	5	3	1
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning SL.	0	2	3	4	0	0	1	4	4	0
TOTAL	0	9	30	15	0	0	4	24	22	4

The table above shows six statements of affective strategy. It can be seen that the respondents take charge of their own learning as they remain calm whenever they are afraid in second or foreign language setting. Therefore they dare to make mistakes and they do reward themselves whenever they feel satisfied with their performance. As for male respondents can sometimes notice that they are nervous, females agreed with the statement. They prefer to express their feelings and seek for consultation regarding second or foreign language to ensure a good result.

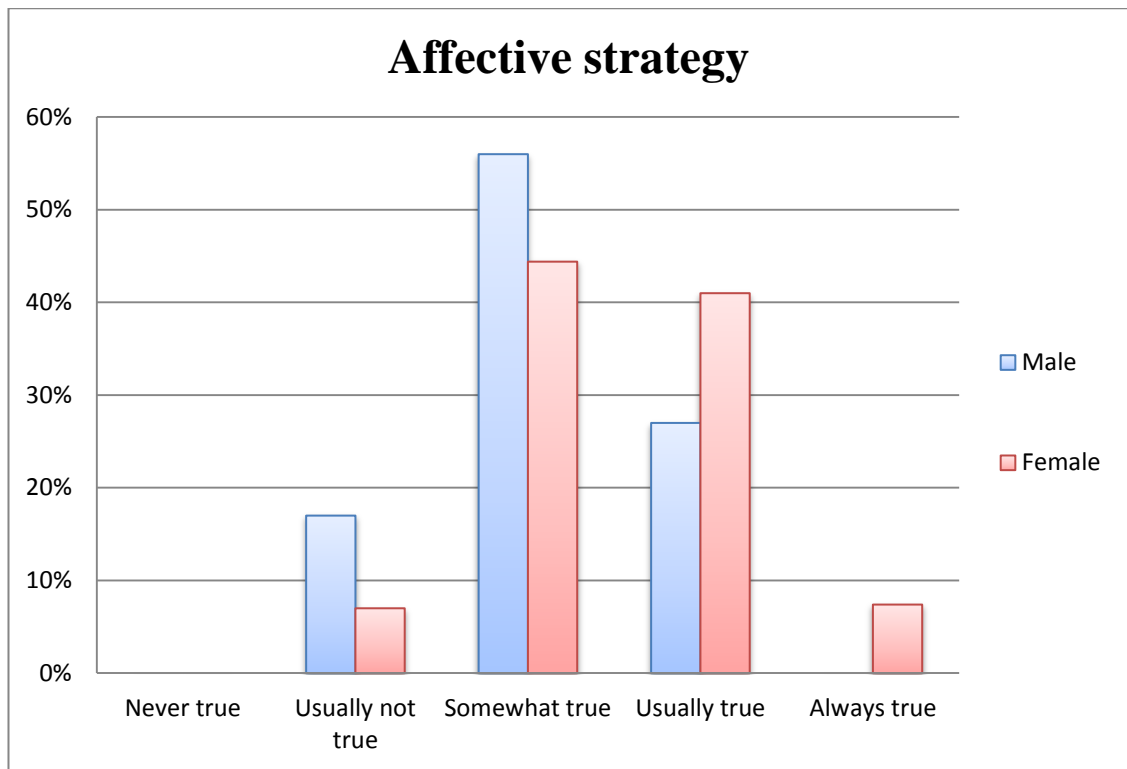


Figure 4.13: The selected number of affective strategy statement

The bar chart above describes the difference of choices made on affective strategy by the respondents. It is clearly shown that female respondents have agreed that their attitude is related to affective strategy compared to males. Around 56% of male and 44% female respondents have chosen option 3 which is somewhat true about them. Only 7% of female respondents have strongly agreed with the statement. The other 27% of male and 41% of female respondents agree that it is usually true of them unlike others 17% of male and 7% of female respondents who don't think in the same way.

Table 4.10: Respondents' choice of social strategy

PART F: Social Strategy										
Gender / Options	Male					Female				
Statement	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
45. If I do not understand something in SL, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	0	0	6	3	0	0	0	3	5	1
46. I ask SL speakers to correct me when I talk.	0	1	6	2	0	0	1	3	3	2
47. I practise SL with other students.	0	1	5	3	0	0	0	4	4	1
48. I ask for help from SL speakers.	0	0	6	2	1	0	1	3	3	2
49. I ask questions in SL.	0	1	2	5	1	0	1	3	4	1
50. I try to learn about the culture of SL speakers.	0	0	5	3	1	0	2	3	2	2
TOTAL	0	3	30	18	3	0	5	19	21	9

The above table defines respondents' feedback about their social strategy use. It shows that male respondents sometimes and female respondents usually ask the speaker of second or foreign language to say word by word or to repeat their statement if they did not get the message conveyed by the speaker. Male respondents sometimes and female respondents (usually or sometimes) request the second speaker to correct their mistakes while communicating. The male respondents agreed that they sometimes and females (usually or sometimes) converse with other students in the second language. At times or usually female respondents seek for assistance from the second language speaker while only sometimes males request for guidance. Thus, all the respondents from both the genders agreed with statement number 49 as they usually ask questions in second language. Besides that, they do agree that they sometimes make some effort to learn the culture of second language speakers.

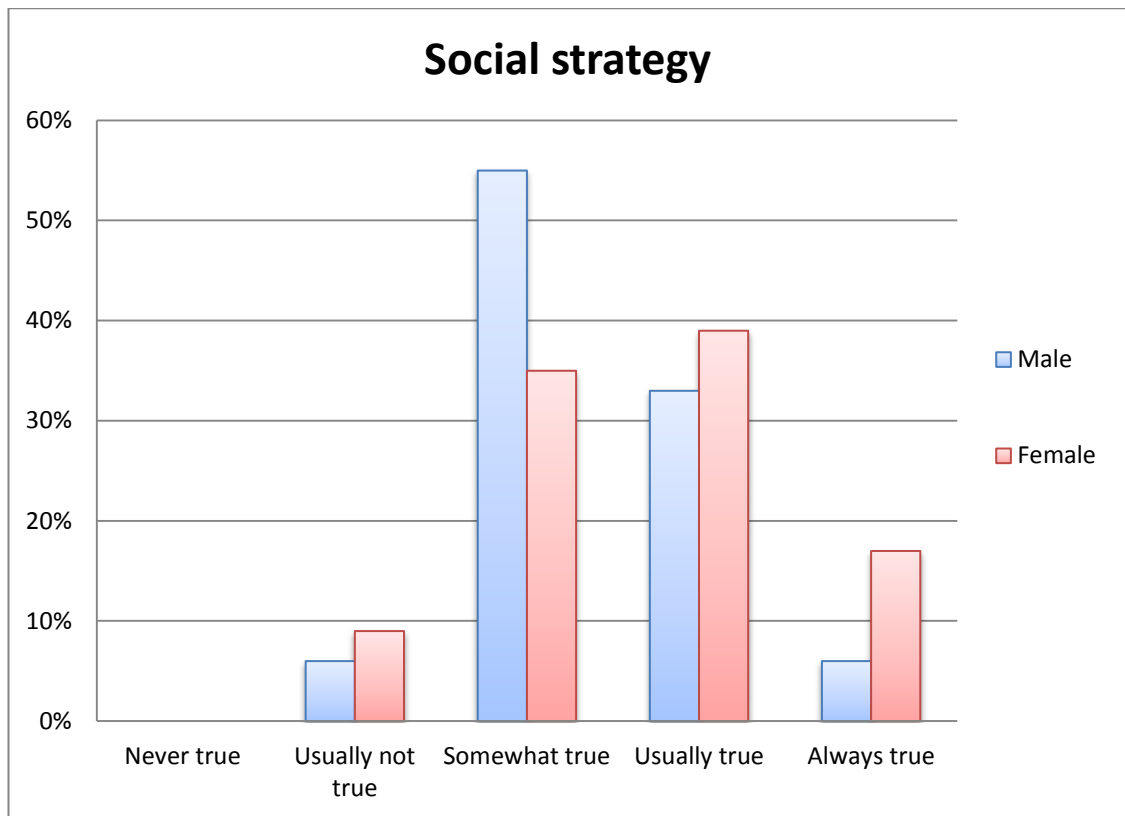


Figure 4.14: The selected number of social strategy statement

The bar chart above clarifies the choices of social strategies made by all the 18 respondents participated in this study. A comparable amount of selections is reflected on both genders. 6% of male and 9% of female respondents agreed with the statement of usually not true. Thus, 55% of males and 35% females have stated that it is somewhat true of them. The statement usually true was chosen by 33% males and 39% females. The other 6% of male respondents and 17 % of female respondents have strongly agreed with the statements to describe them.

The pie chart below describes the most preferred language learning strategies by the total number of respondents involved in this study. It shows that a greater number (27%) of the respondents prefer cognitive strategy followed by metacognitive strategy (20%) and memory strategy (19%). A very small number of the respondents prefer social strategy (13%), compensation strategy (11%) and affective strategy (10%).

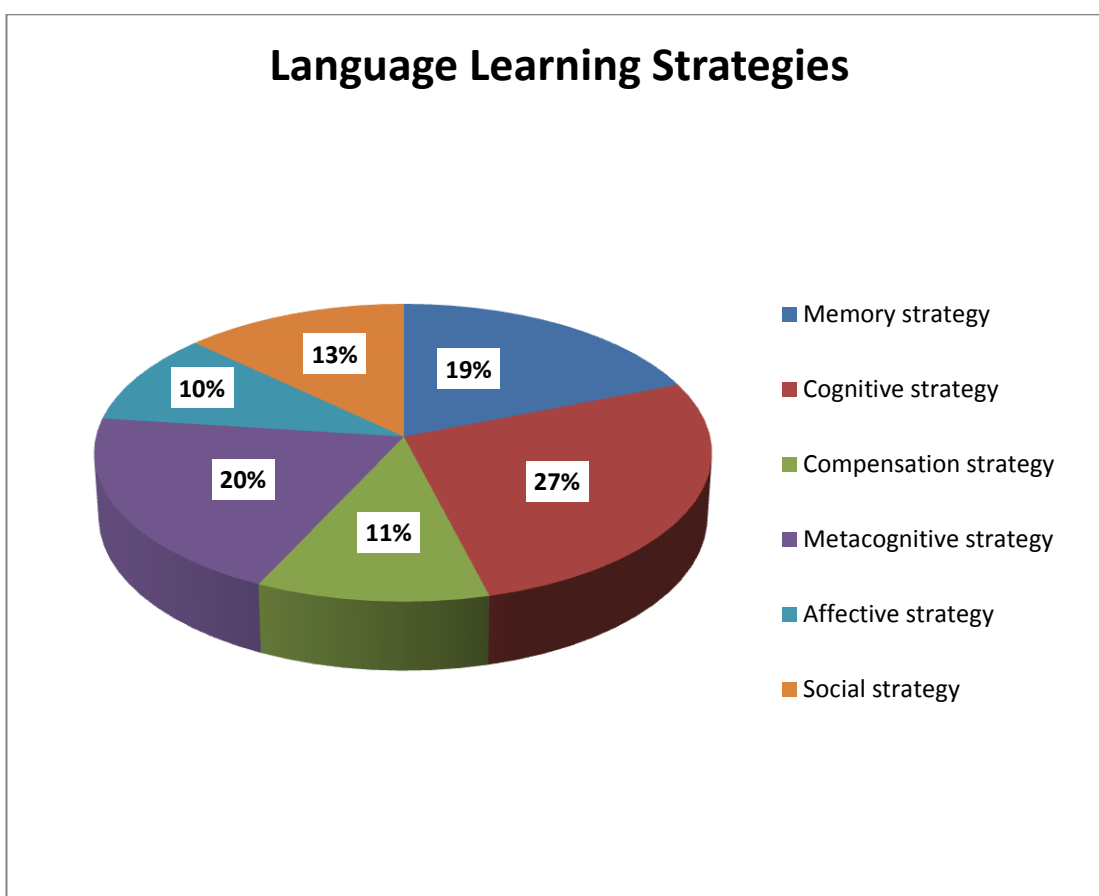


Figure 4.15: The most preferred learning strategies by respondents

4.4 IELTS band scores

The researcher used two instruments to measure the participants' proficiency level. IELTS Listening test and IELTS Reading test were carried out to classify the ability of respondents in English as Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency achievement.

Therefore, IELTS grading system is used as criteria in the assessment of each respondent. Each correct answer or raw score carries 1 mark which is then calculated by the band calculator. Band scores ranging from band 1 to Band 9 are awarded to respondents on the basis of their raw scores in each test. The interpretations of each band are shown in the table 4.10 below.

Table 4.11: Assessment criteria for IELTS band score, source from IDP (2013)

Band Score	Skill Level	Description
Band 9	Expert user	has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.
Band 8	Very good user	has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.
Band 7	Good user	has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.
Band 6	Competent user	has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.

Table 4.11, continued

Band 5	Modest user	has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.
Band 4	Limited user	basic competence in limited to familiar situations. Has a frequent problem in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.
Band 3	Extremely limited user	conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.
Band 2	Intermittent user	No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty in understanding spoken and written English.
Band 1	Non-user	Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.
Band 0	Did not attempt the test	No assessable information provided.

IDP – International Development Programme

4.5 Listening Test

According to Thompson and Rubin (1996, p. 331 *as cited in* Yiching, 2005), listening is defined as “an active process in which listeners select and interpret information that comes from auditory and visual clues in order to define what is going on and what the speakers are trying to express”.

This study used an IELTS Listening Test to evaluate the respondents’ listening ability. Thus, a listening test consists of 40 questions (each question carries 1 mark) were adopted from (IELTS Practice Test Plus 1, 2009). There were four sections involved in the test. In section one, respondents listen to a conversation between two individuals set in a daily life situation and answer questions on their understanding.

Next is section two where the respondents listen to a speech about everyday common situation. In section three, the recording of conversation played will be based between up to four people set in an education or training setting. The last section in the listening paper is a conversation about an academic subject.

The duration provided for the listening test is 40 minutes and the answers will be transferred onto the answer sheet provided. The table below shows the scores obtained by respondents for the listening test conducted.

Table 4.12: Scores for listening test

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Scores</i> <i>(out of 40)</i>	<i>IELTS</i> <i>Band</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Scores</i> <i>(out of 40)</i>	<i>IELTS</i> <i>Band</i>
<i>m1</i>	18	35	8	<i>f1</i>	18	28	6.5
<i>m2</i>	20	33	7.5	<i>f2</i>	24	34	7.5
<i>m3</i>	24	25	6	<i>f3</i>	18	30	7
<i>m4</i>	18	37	8.5	<i>f4</i>	18	33	7.5
<i>m5</i>	18	33	7.5	<i>f5</i>	18	37	8.5
<i>m6</i>	18	27	6.5	<i>f6</i>	18	35	8
<i>m7</i>	18	36	8	<i>f7</i>	24	39	9
<i>m8</i>	18	29	6.5	<i>f8</i>	21	32	7.5
<i>m9</i>	18	30	7	<i>f9</i>	18	38	8.5

The table above illustrates the band scores achieved by each respondent in the IELTS listening test. All the respondents participated in this study could understand the input of the listening test and then answer to the questions given to them. Overall 100% of the respondents have scored above the competent level (Band 6). It shows that 22% of the respondents scored the least band score 6 to 6.5 (competent users), whereas 39% are good users with band 7 to 7.5, 6 respondents (33%) are very good user (band 8 to 8.5) and 6% are an expert user of English language.

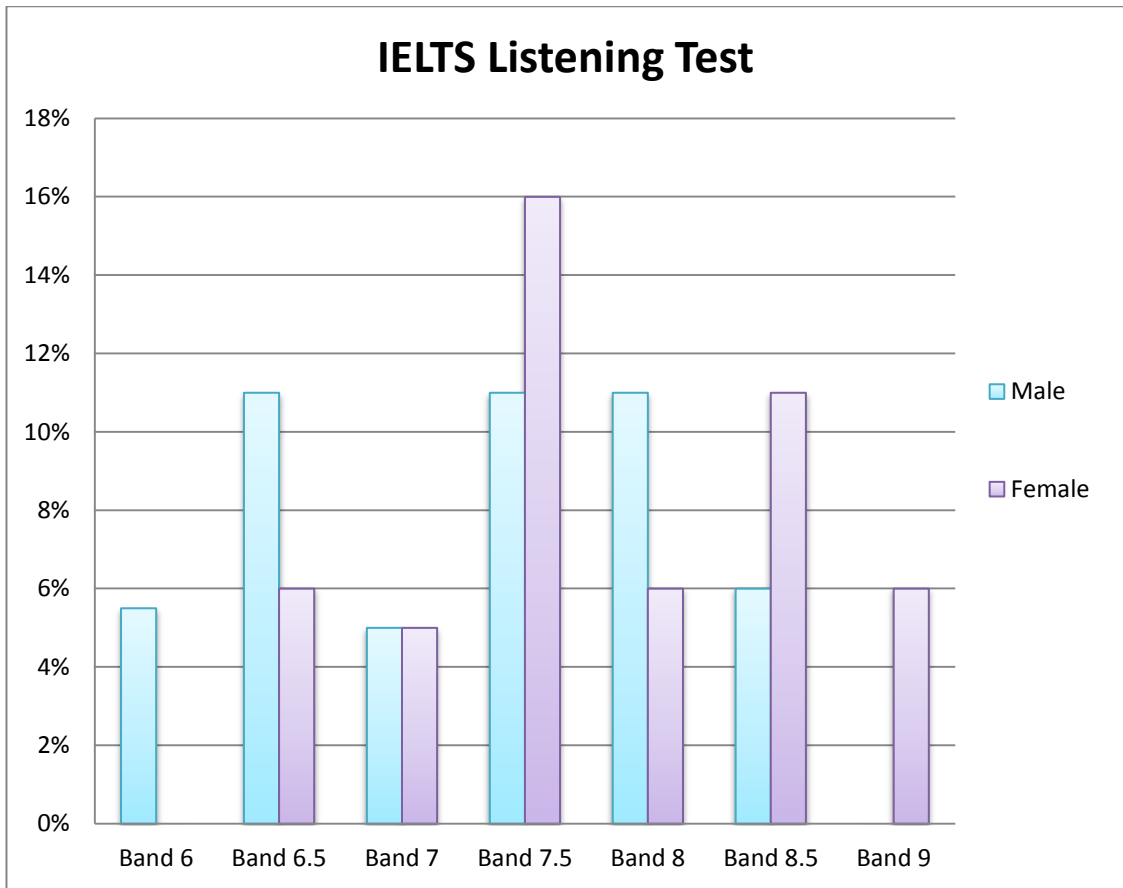


Figure 4.16: The IELTS Listening Band scores of respondents

Based on the IELTS grading system (2013) of the Institute of International Development Programme (IDP), a female respondent has reached the highest band score 9 compare to the highest band score obtained by the male respondent is 8.5. The results reveal that 33% of male respondents' performance in the listening test (good user and expert user) is lower than 44% of female respondents. It is shown in the bar chart given above.

4.6 Reading Test

This instrument consists of three sections with three different lengthy passages for the respondents to read and answer the following questions. The total amount of words involved in the texts is in the range of 2,150 to 2,170. The IELTS Academic Reading Test was taken from IELTS Practice Tests Plus 1 (2009). The range of the text involved is from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. Respondents were required to recite and understand the passages before responding the questions that follow. The allocation of time provided for the test was 60 minutes. Chao Chen (2010) explains “the reading comprehension test is very useful in foreign language usage setting. Therefore it holds an important way of testing learner’s language ability.”

The table below (Table 4.13) shows the scores gained by respondents for the reading task involved in this study.

Table 4.13: Scores for reading test

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Scores (out of 40)</i>	<i>IELTS Band</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Scores (out of 40)</i>	<i>IELTS Band</i>
<i>m1</i>	18	31	7	<i>f1</i>	18	22	5.5
<i>m2</i>	20	29	6.5	<i>f2</i>	24	29	6.5
<i>m3</i>	24	20	5.5	<i>f3</i>	18	31	7
<i>m4</i>	18	26	6	<i>f4</i>	18	28	6.5
<i>m5</i>	18	28	6.5	<i>f5</i>	18	31	7
<i>m6</i>	18	26	6	<i>f6</i>	18	26	6
<i>m7</i>	18	27	6.5	<i>f7</i>	24	35	8
<i>m8</i>	18	31	7	<i>f8</i>	21	24	6
<i>m9</i>	18	23	6	<i>f9</i>	18	30	7

Based on the table above, a female respondent has scored the highest band score 8 whereas for male respondent it is 7. It is clearly stated as 11% of the total respondents are modest users, 56% are competent users, 28% are good users and only 5% are expert users. One male and one female respondent have scored band 5.5 which is below an average (modest user). It shows that the overall respondents have some difficulty in reading comprehension.

The bar chart below shows the percentage of band scores obtained by overall male and female respondents involved in this research.

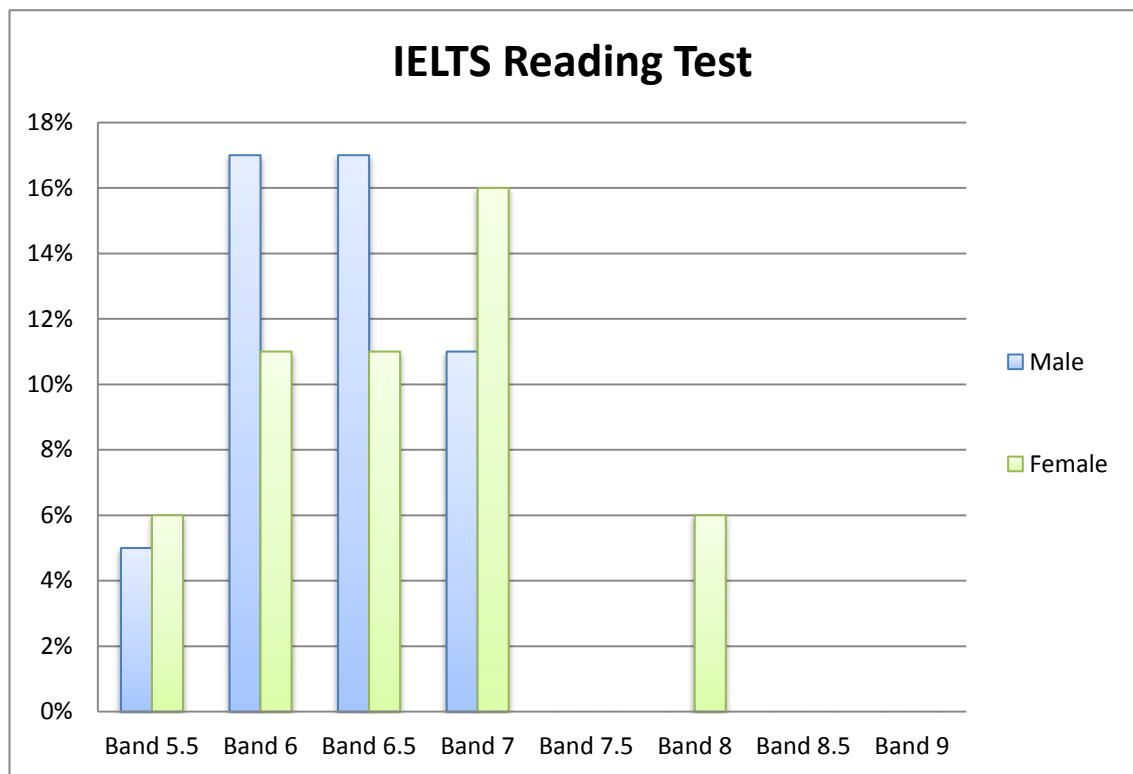


Figure 4.17: The IELTS Reading Band scores of respondents

The figure above shows that majority of the overall 18 respondents did not perform well as most of their band score is average and below average in the reading test. It is very obvious that all the respondents have a poor ability in comprehending text in the English language.

As a result, the researcher found that (67%) female respondents are classified as good and expert users in the both listening and reading tests compared with males (44%) throughout this study. The differences of the band scores in both the tests conducted are shown in the figure (4.18) below.

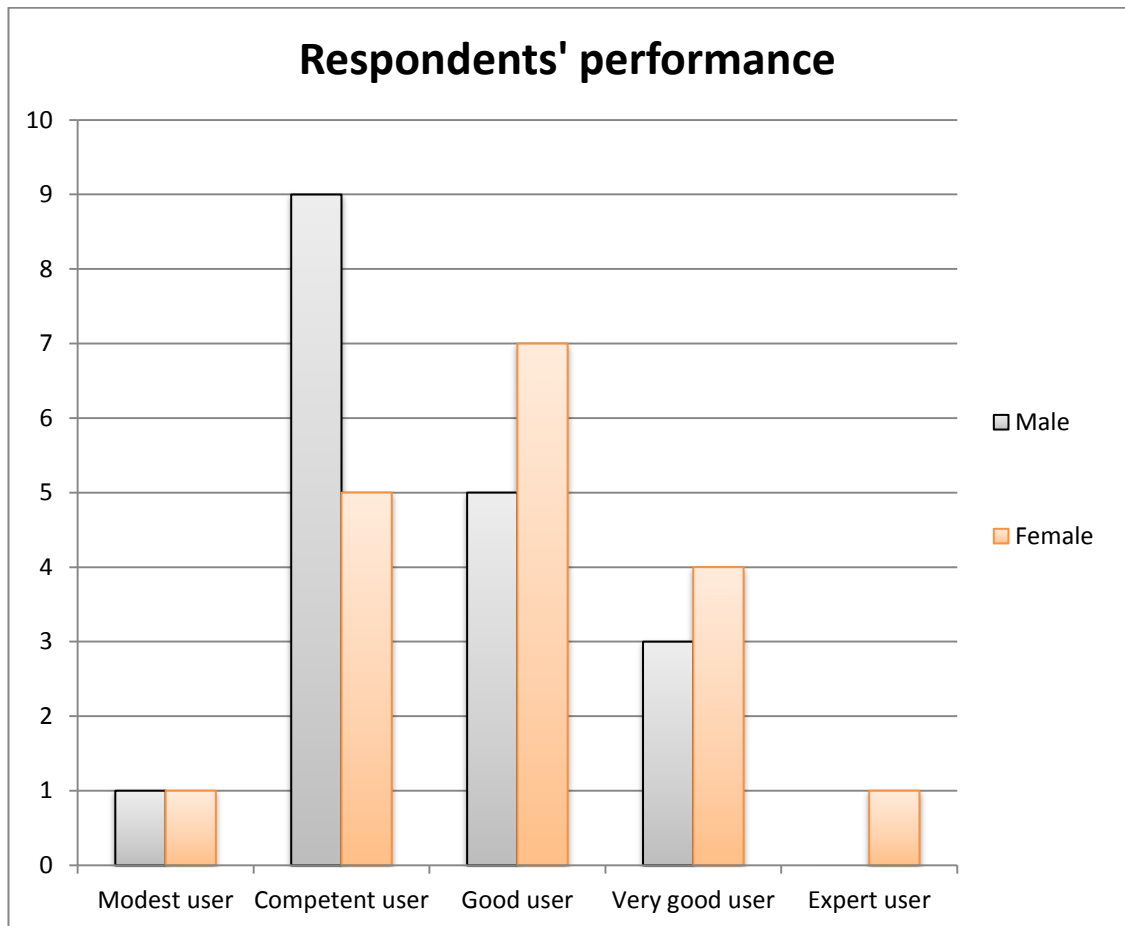


Figure 4.18: A comparison of respondents' performance in IELTS listening and IELTS reading tests.

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher has gained relevant results from the data analysis. It was found that all the three research questions have been answered. The outcomes drawn based on the findings from each instrument used are discussed as presented below;

4.7.1 Language Learning Styles Inventory (LLSI)

The research on the most preferred language learning styles showed that majority of the respondents have chosen the auditory style followed by the visual and tactile styles. However, one female respondent has chosen both auditory and visual styles. Hence, only a lesser number of male and female respondents prefer visual and tactile styles.

4.7.2 Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

The research on the most preferred language learning strategies shows that all the 18 respondents have chosen the cognitive strategy followed by metacognitive and memory strategies. Therefore, a smaller number of choices were obtained for compensation, affective and social strategies. In addition, it shows the strength of the male and female respondents in a particular skill.

4.7.3 Listening Test

The research on the impact of the respondents' learning styles and strategies towards their English as second or foreign language proficiency achievement has been proven through the results obtained from the listening and reading tests. The analysis with reference to their attitude towards language learning shows that majority of the respondents obtained good grades or band scores in listening test compared with reading test scores. As per the earlier findings on the preferred learning styles and strategies, auditory style has indicated that the respondents' most efficient method of information intake is listening. It is very obvious that the respondents enjoy listening activities and enjoy music.

4.7.4 Reading Test

Furthermore, the outcome is supported by the cognitive strategy which is preferred by most of them. It helps the learners to understand their learning process which is related to their intellectual in auditory performances. On the other hand, the respondents have scored a lower or an average band score in the reading test as they are giving a second preference to visual style and metacognitive strategy and third preference for the memory strategy. It explains that the respondents don't really enjoy reading and the storage of information in their mind is very low. That is, they were unable to comprehend the meaning of words encountered in the reading passages.

4.7.5 Factors affecting English language proficiency achievement

Therefore, the research on other variables such as age, gender and interest which contributes towards the English language proficiency achievement is proven through the analysis made. Age factor does involve in the proficiency achievement especially among the respondents. The majority of the overall respondents are in the first category of age group (18 -20). It is proven among female respondents from the second age group (21-24) as one female respondent who is 24 years old has obtained the highest band score for both the tests, band 9 for listening and band 8 for reading.

However, it contrast with the male respondent who is 24 years old obtained the lowest band 6 for listening and band 5.5 for reading. The other respondents from the age of 18 to 20 have similar band scores with each other. So, gender plays an important role in language proficiency achievement as female respondents perform better than the male respondents in both the tests. In addition, the curiosity of each respondent to be proficient in the second or foreign language contributes towards the accomplishment of their performance in their studies.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter offers a conclusion of the study in relation to the role of learning styles and strategies in English language proficiency achievement by the EFL learners at the Intermediate level. Thus, this chapter will determine and provide some of the implications of the study. Therefore, the recommendations for future research are discussed. This research was conducted in a private institute of higher learning in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

5.1 Summary of the study

This research has shed light onto the role of learning styles and learning strategies in English language proficiency achievement by the EFL learners. English is playing a vital role in connecting people from all over the world. It is known as “language of wider communication” which makes people from different ethnic groups to interact with one another.

Three research questions were asked in this study. Thus, an analysis of the data revealed the following results.

5.1.1 Research Question 1

What are the most preferred language learning styles and learning strategies?

In order to answer this research question, the most preferred language learning styles and learning strategies were surveyed. The quantitative data were collected using

two questionnaires on language learning style consisting of 24 items in three sections and language learning strategies consisting of 50 items in six sections.

Data collection was done with the assistance of 18 respondents drawn from different cultural backgrounds. The questionnaires used in this research required the respondents to complete the task by reading the statements and selecting the preferred answers.

The findings revealed that the most preferred language learning style is the auditory followed by visual and tactile styles. It is proven by other studies conducted by Selime Tabanlıoğlu (2003, p.65) that “auditory learners also know how to control their emotions and attitudes about learning.” Furthermore, an Exploratory Study of the Language-learning Style Preferences was conducted by Manfred Man-fat Wu (2010, p.230), has found that “among the six types of style preferences, Auditory preference was the most popular, followed by Kinaesthetic and Group preferences. The least popular preference was Visual preference, followed by Individual preference.”

The respondents prefer instrumental activities the most where they are engaged orally or with music. They learn best through verbal lectures, reading aloud, discussion, presentations and recordings. Thus, they are the best listeners and actively participate in debates. However, some of the respondents do prefer to charts, diagrams and pictures to remember lessons. Hence, they always use mind maps to organise information for revisions during an examination. Therefore, the respondents enjoy hands on activities the least.

In terms of the most preferred language learning strategies are found to be cognitive, metacognitive and memory. Studies conducted by Hashim and Sahil (1994) and Gu (2002) *as cited in* Cabaysa and Baetiong (2010) showed females to be better strategy users than males. Majority of the respondents participated in this study always

repeat and translate words into their first language, take notes during lectures, visualize as well as prefer auditory representations. Besides that, the respondents adore interpretation based activities in cognitive learning strategy.

5.1.2 Research Question 2

Is there any impact of learning styles and learning strategies on students' proficiency achievement?

The research framework of Reid 1998 regarding learning styles and Oxford (1990) and O'Malley (1985) about similarity, differences and representation of Language Learning Strategy by the speakers of other languages (SOL) to achieve proficiency level were used in the discussion.

In analysing the data with regard to the framework of similarities, differences and representation of the language learning styles and strategies, the current study finds its significance towards students' proficiency achievement. The data was collected through IELTS listening and IELTS reading tests.

The instruments used in this research assisted the researcher to determine learners' strength in listening skills compared with those of reading skills. It was found that female respondents obtained the highest score (band 9; expert user) when compared to male respondents (band 8.5; very good user). Therefore, all the respondents have reached above the average score which is band 6. However, the reading test scores show that most of the respondents have scored an average and below average grades. It was found that the highest grade was obtained by a female (band 8; very good user) compared with male (band 7; good user) and the lowest grade achieved by both the genders is band 5.5 (moderate user). The comparable result shows that the learners need to improve their reading skill.

The researcher classified the number of options chosen by the overall respondents for the statements provided in the language learning style inventory and language learning strategy inventory. The classified numbers were shown in the tables and figures.

The outcome of the research has been described in the form of tables, figures and text. A comprehensive explanation was provided by the researcher regarding the students' preferred leaning styles and strategies which were then related to their listening and reading test scores obtained using the IELTS assessment criteria.

Hence, the result was found to be true while comparing with their test scores where majority of them have obtained good band scores for listening.

5.1.3 Research Question 3

What are the other factors that influence students' proficiency achievement?

The study used the background information provided by the respondents to explore other factors that influence students' proficiency achievement.

The respondents were required to provide their background information such as age, nationality and reasons for learning English. It was found that majority of them belong to the same age group of (18- 20) and they have a great interest in learning English. Female respondents perform better than male respondents.

5.2 Discussion of the research findings

The theory of Reid (1998) has indicated that each individual have his or her own way of understanding information which is not same with others. It is proven that not all the learners enjoy doing activities. In other words, they have a unique ability or talent in their own way which will be discovered through assessments or research. The

classification of learning styles used was very helpful in contributing some insights into understanding the respondents' personality. Hence, it shows that male and female informants have different attitudes or perceptions towards language learning. All the respondents were able to identify their strength and weakness through the survey conducted. Thus, all the respondents have answered the entire listening test and reading test. The transformation of the raw scores obtained by each respondent for both the tests were done through IELTS band score online calculator. It was then converted into band scores using International English Language Testing System (IELTS) grading system.

The research concluded that the female respondents perform better than the male respondents as they have achieved the highest band scores in listening and reading. However, majority of the respondents are classified as competent and good users. The similarities found among both the genders in learning styles and strategies show that they have a different mind-set. It shows that the respondents are aware of their learning process.

5.3 Conclusion of the research findings

Based on the findings achieved, it is possible to perceive the fact that learning styles and strategies have a greater impact on the proficiency achievement. All the respondents are best at the auditory and visual styles with the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The male and female respondents are motivated to learn the language as it is illustrated by the International English Language Testing System. Other factors such as age and gender did not really affect the learners to achieve their competency level.

5.4 Implications

English language is considered as a second language in Malaysia. It is widely spoken and used almost in all the private and government sectors. Moreover, English language programmes are being offered in many of the higher learning institutions in Malaysia as it has been one of the requirements for entering undergraduate programme in local and foreign colleges or universities. Thus, many of the local and foreign students join the special English courses and programmes in Malaysia.

The analysis of the data reveals that language learning styles and strategies plays an important role in English language proficiency achievement by the EFL learners. This implies that such learning styles and strategies are essential to be identified among the learners.

According to Karthigeyan, K. and Nirmala, K. (2013, p.139): “Teachers and educators should recognize students’ different learning style preferences which can assist the teachers in organizing the classroom setting, developing suitable educational program and adopting the suitable teaching strategies. Matching the teachers learning styles and strategies with students’ varied learning style will surely increase the students’ academic performance.”

This research is expected to help the English language learners and teachers to evaluate the strength of learning styles and strategies towards proficiency achievement. It can also assist the teachers and curriculum designers to choose effective approaches according to the learners’ preferred styles and strategies. Therefore, this study would offer a better understanding among the learners to cultivate their interest, while knowing their strength and weakness which can improve the academic performance to succeed.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

The current study has certain limitations in terms of domain, data selection and scope.

Therefore a comprehensive study is recommended for future research to obtain a valid and reliable data as well as to fill in some of the grounds that the current study does not cover.

Some recommendations for future research include:

- i) Examining the role of language learning styles and strategies among other categories of students especially in the government schools with different age groups.
- ii) Extending the scope of the study to other courses such as science and mathematics.
- iii) Using other research methodologies and instruments such as interviews, observations and recordings to measure the language learning styles and strategy use.
- iv) Examining the impact of learning styles and strategies based on the four integrated skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) at the basic, elementary and advance levels.