GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE USE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG ESL STUDENTS

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DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the types of strategies used by ESL learners and to determine the differences in strategy use between genders. A total of 172 (86 males, 86 females) students from the Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST) participated in the study. The data were gathered through Oxford's (1990) strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) and twenty-four students who chose the higher scales in the questionnaire were selected for a semi-structured interview. The instrument, based on Oxford's (1990) classification of language learning strategies are composed of 50 items in six subscales and 12 questions were extracted from SILL for the semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire data were analyzed through SPSS (19.0) to identify the types of language learning strategies used by the students while the interview data were analyzed qualitatively. The findings of the study revealed that the participants used metacognitive and social strategies more frequently compared to other learning strategies. The analysis of interview data showed that there were some similarities in terms of the six categories of language learning strategies used by the male and female students.

Keywords: language, language learning, gender, language learning strategies and learning strategies.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menyelidik enam kategori strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang digunakan oleh pelajar ESL. Ia bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti jenis strategi yang digunakan oleh pelajar ESL dan untuk menentukan perbezaan strategi penggunaan antara jantina. 172 (86 lelaki dan 86 perempuan) dari Universiti Sains dan Teknologi Malaysia (MUST) mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Data telah dikumpul melalui inventori strategi (SILL), Oxford (1990) dan 24 pelajar yang memilih skala yang lebih tinggi dalam soal selidik dipilih untuk temu bual separuh berstruktur. Alat, berdasarkan Oxford (1990) klasifikasi strategi pembelajaran bahasa, terdiri daripada 50 item dalam enam kategori dan 12 soalan telah diekstrak dari SILL untuk temu bual. Data soal selidik dianalisis melalui SPSS (19.0) untuk mengenal pasti jenis strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang digunakan oleh pelajar manakala data wawancara dianalisis secara kualitatif. Penemuan kajian menunjukkan bahawa peserta-peserta menggunakan strategi metakognitif dan sosial lebih kerap dibandingkan dengan strategi pembelajaran yang lain. Analisis data wawancara menunjukkan bahawa terdapat beberapa persamaan dari segi enam kategori strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang digunakan oleh pelajar lelaki dan perempuan.

Kata Kunci: bahasa, strategi pembelajaran bahasa, jantina.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English is an essential subject in school and it has the status as the second most important language in Malaysia. English is taught in all schools to encourage students to utilize the language in order to pursue their studies at the university level, to cope with the modern world and to compete in the job sector. Therefore, learning English is given a lot of emphasis in Malaysia (Ho & Ng, 2016). Students have to be capable in the four skills which are reading, writing, listening and speaking. In brief, students need to be taught to be proficient in these language skills. However, concern with the English Language proficiency of ESL students is not something new.

The standards of English proficiency in Malaysia are concerned by parents and academicians (Dean, 1991). For example, many graduate especially doctors with poor English are unable to find a job due to poor speaking skills (The Star, November 25, 2015). Lack of English proficiency among school learners and fresh graduates has been highlighted by employers. According to Kho, Aqiera and Leong (2015), the issue of unemployed graduates with good academic performance has attracted the attention of Malaysian higher institutions (as cited in Ho & Ng, 2016).

Due to the fact that English has the status as the second most important language in Malaysia and is extensively used in daily communication in certain sectors, there is a need for the education system in Malaysia to enhance the English language

proficiency of students in primary and secondary schools as well as colleges or universities in order for the students to use English every day in order to meet their future needs in the workplace.

In September, the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (Pemandu) designed a survey for high school students to know their opinions on the proficiency level ("*Malaysian survey goes viral, 90% want standard of English raised*", November 9, 2015). In just one week, 90 % of the 190,000 respondents said they were in favor of increasing the standard of English in schools. In July, the Education Performance and Delivery Unit (PADU) and the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (Pemandu) implemented two programmes which were, "Upholding Bahasa Malaysia and Strengthening the English Language (MBMMBI) policy" (The Star, November 9, 2015). The two programs are the Highly Immersive Program (HIP) and the Dual Language Program (DLP) to improve students' proficiency in English. The Malaysian Prime Minister has allocated RM38.5 million for these two programs to be implemented in all schools. HIP is an implementation approach to bring about increase in activities conducted during English language lessons in urban and rural schools while DLP is a program where schools will be given the option to teach Science, Mathematics, Design Technology and ICT in English or Bahasa Malaysia to Year One and Year Four pupils (The Star, October 24, 2015). In order to make this work, school principals and teachers agree to implement these two programs whereas parents support this program for their children.

According to the Today Online (2015), teachers with low proficiency in English are teaching students on how to be proficient in all skills resulting in poor levels of

proficiency among the school leavers. P.Kamalanathan, Deputy Minister of Education and Higher Learning, explained that the Education Ministry is taking steps to improve mastery of English among teachers as well ("When Malaysian English Language Teachers don't know English", November 26, 2015). There are 70,000 national schools teachers in Malaysia. Due to poor proficiency in English, the education ministry has identified more than 20,000 teachers in Malaysia to undergo an English language course. This course which focused on phase B1 and B2 of the Cambridge Proficiency Test was completed by the end of 2016 (Bernama, November 19, 2015).

1.2   Statement of the Problem

What went wrong in the process of teaching and learning English? One possible answer to this question is that students do not use appropriate strategies. Past studies on second language learning reported that students' performance can be improved by using various strategies in order to learn effectively and efficiently (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, Boonkongsaen, 2014, Oxford, 2013). One of the factors is adopting appropriate learning strategies. The most comprehensive definitions of learning strategies proposed by Oxford (1990), defined as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations" (p. 34). Language learning strategies are important factor in the area of second language acquisition (Ellis, 2004). As stated by Chang, Liu and Lee (2007), language learning strategies can provide students to enhance the acquisition, increase their self- esteem and storing and retrieving information.

Many researchers have set out to identify possible factors which affect the use of the language learning strategies (e.g, El-Dib, 2004; Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006; Kavasoglu, 2009; Radwan, 2011, Viriya & Sapsirin, 2014). The individual factors include motivation, aptitude, age, gender, learners' demographic background and others (Ellis, 2008).

According to several studies, gender does make a significant difference in learning a second language (Ehrman and Oxford, 1989, Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). Gender is an important element that may create differences in terms of using suitable learning strategies and differences in strategy use may influence the learning achievement among students (Oxford 2006). Male and female students learn differently because their brains are said to be wired differently (Magogwe and Oliver, 2007). According to Ho & Ng (2016), another scenario found across Malaysian public universities was that the number of female learners surpassed the number of male learners. Kamarul (2009) stated that there were huge differences between the male and female students in terms of using affective and metacognitive strategies (as cited in Viriya & Sapsirin, 2014).

This study will focus on male and female students at Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST). The researcher who has been an English lecturer at MUST for the past three years, has also observed that different genders perform differently based on a task given. The researcher who has taught Intermediate English in the previous semesters at MUST University and graded the students at the end of the semester has noted that based on their performance in the final exam there are obvious differences in terms of the grades obtained by male

and female students. The female students obtained higher grade than the male students. Many of the male students may continue to fail without knowing that their choice of learning strategies or lack of language learning strategy use may be preventing them from learning English effectively. This may be the consequences of male students not selecting suitable strategies in learning English. The selection of the right strategy is important if students want to accomplish success in the learning process (Oxford 2003).

The studies which relied on the use of language learning strategies and the role of gender, used questionnaire to gather the data and analysis has looked at the frequency of use while the present study utilizes semi-structured interviews in addition to the questionnaire to determine if there are differences in terms of strategy use between male and female students at Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST).

1.3   Aim of the study

The aim of this present study is to examine the language learning strategies used by Diploma in Logistics and Freight Forwarding (DLFF) students enrolled at the Department of Transport and Logistics at Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST) in Kelana Jaya. This study also aims to determine the differences in terms of strategy use between male and female students. This research aims to establish the importance of strategy use among the Diploma in Logistic and Freight Forwarding (DLFF) students.

1.4   Research Questions

In order to achieve the stated objectives, the research will address the following research questions: -

1. What types of language learning strategies do ESL students at Malaysia University of Science and Technology use?

2. How do male and female students differ in their use of language learning strategies?

1.5   Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study is to contribute to the knowledge base on the role of gender and the use of language learning strategies by ESL students. Material developers and teachers may design educational modules and methodologies for the learners to use the appropriate learning strategies which can make them to be independent of their own learning. Also, teachers may give some insights on how their students approach a task. Teachers can then plan their teaching in that they can select the best methods to encourage students' use of relevant strategies in their language learning process. Language learning strategies can promote students' success in their language learning. Students must be given opportunities to learn efficiently through the use of relevant learning strategies. This study used Oxford's (1990) framework which establishes a precise framework to categorize the language learning strategies.

1.6   Scope and Limitation of the Study

This research study aims to examine the use of language learning strategies by ESL learners at Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST), a university located in Selangor. A questionnaire will be used to elicit information based on the six categories of language learning strategies and the differences between genders in terms of strategy use. This study aims to investigate the role of gender in the use of language learning strategies at Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST) by using established data derived from questionnaires and interviews. There are a few limitations associated with this study. The limitation of this study is the participants themselves. The participants in this study are students from Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST). They are not representative of all university students in Selangor, Malaysia. The researcher has also selected students from only one program at MUST which is the Diploma in Logistic and Freight Forwarding (DLFF). The participants for the interview are limited to a small number, i.e. 24, due to time constraints.

1.7   Definition of Terms

There are various important terms used in this study which is defined below:

- Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies defined as, "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective

and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990, p. 34). Direct and indirect strategies are two main categories of language learning strategies.

- Direct Strategies

Direct strategies produce messages which directly involve the target language although the learners have limitations of knowledge. There are three categories of direct strategies, namely, memory, cognitive and compensation strategies.

- Memory Strategies - Oxford (1990) defined memory strategies as methods used to store, retrieve and transfer information from fact to skill level when needed for communication.

- Cognitive Strategies - Oxford (1990) described cognitive strategies as methods or techniques used to support the use of the target language in a direct way. These methods range from reasoning to analysing and summarizing.

- Compensation Strategies – These strategies are used by learners to 'overcome knowledge boundaries in all four skills', (Oxford, 1990, p. 90) in learning and producing a new language.

- Indirect Strategies

Oxford (1990) defined indirect strategies as learning strategies that do not directly involve the target language but rather manage and support the language learning process. Indirect strategies are categorized into three major groups, namely, metacognitive, affective and social strategies.

- Metacognitive Strategies - These strategies refer to plan, control and evaluate students learning process (Oxford, 1990).

- Affective Strategies - Oxford (1990) defined "affective" as relating to motivation, attitudes and values. These strategies allow students to be in control of their feelings, to feel motivated and have a positive attitude towards learning a language.

- Social Strategies - Oxford (1990) defined social strategies as actions taken by students in order to communicate with others in different situations. Oxford (1990) stated that "language is a form of social behaviour", (p.144)

1.8   Concluding Remarks

Language learning strategies are regarded as being important in aiding students to master English as English is important in their future workplace. This chapter has provided the background to the study as well as outlined the research aims of the study and the questions the researcher intends to address. In the second chapter, the researcher will review the literature directly related to this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 reviews the literature that is significant to this study. The literature review discusses the background of language learning strategies (LLS) and gender, the definitions and theories of LLS and gender. This chapter also focuses on some related studies on language learning strategies that have been conducted.

2.2 Definitions of Language Learning Strategies (LLS)

Language learning strategies is "an extremely powerful learning tool" (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper and Russo, 1985, p.43, as cited in Aslan, 2009), "which results in better proficiency and better self-confidence" (Oxford, 1990, p.9, as cited in Aslan, 2009). The learning can only be done by the students (Griffiths, 2004). When students are learning a new language, some students may do better but some of them may struggle to acquire the new language. Some learners are better at foreign and second language learning than others even though they receive the same input in the same setting (Lee, 2010). Successful language learners have at their disposal a variety of strategies ready to be employed in different occasions (Anderson, 2005).

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Oxford stated that "language learning strategies were important for language learning because they were tools for active, self- directed involvement, which was essential for developing communicative competence" (Oxford, 1990, p.1). Oxford's definition (1990) comprised physical activities as well, for example acting out new vocabulary or

writing words in a notebook. Language learning strategies is "special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning or retention of the information'' (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990, p. 1). According to their views of language learning strategies, when students learn a new language, it is not different from the content (Skehan, 2002).

Phakiti, (2003, as cited in Macaro, 2006) stated strategies as "not in the strictest sense of the term and argued they should be seen as learners' stable long-term knowledge of their strategy use" (p.8). Language learning strategies refer to "behaviours of a learner that are intended to influence how the learner processes information" (Macaro, 2006, p. 11). Language learning strategies also refer to "the operations or processes which are consciously selected and employed by the learner to learn the TL (Target Language) or facilitate a language task" (White, 2008, p. 8). As stated by Oxford (2003), when the students choose the appropriate strategies to their learning style, these strategies become a beneficial toolkit for the students' learning.

Language learning strategies defined by (Cohen, 2012), "thoughts and actions, consciously chosen and operationalized by language learners, to assist them in carrying out a multiplicity of tasks from the very onset of learning to the most advanced levels of target language performance" (p.7). Language learning strategies help learners develop information so as to increase capability in language learning. In addition, strategic activity is aimed to be the rule for language development and is also linked to a goal (Bialystok, 1978, as cited in Griffiths, 2013).

Many researchers have defined language learning strategies over the years in terms of linguistic or sociolinguistic competence (Kinoshita, 2003). Kinoshita also

explained that "language learning strategy instruction is a teaching approach that expects to raise students' consciousness of learning strategies and equip students with effective practice, support and self-monitoring of their strategy use while attending to language learning activities" (pg. 209). Yet, there are problems in the research of language learning strategies, whether the learners are effective or they involve action, intention or knowledge, how general they are or how can they be classified in a hierarchy (Macaro, 2006).

2.3   Main Features of Language Learning Strategies

Griffiths (2013) recognized six important features of language learning strategies; they were purposeful, conscious, regulatory, learning focused, active, and chosen. There are six main features of language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990):

- Language learning strategies help achieving the interaction capability as it helps students to participate actively.
- Language learning strategies allocate roles for the teachers in order to identify students' learning strategies and help students to become more independent.
- Language learning strategies help students to solve or overcome a task or problem so as to attain a goal.
- Language learning strategies have particular actions to develop students learning process.
- Language learning strategies have cooperating strategy is which the students can work with someone else to complete a task.
- Language learning strategies can be improved by strategy training which is important in education and also students can become experts in terms of choosing the appropriate strategies.

2.4   Classification of Language Learning Strategies

One of the most significant classifications of language learning strategies according to different categories has been put forward by Oxford (1990). Ellis (2008) stated that these are multi-level and detailed taxonomies (as cited in Wenden, 1999). While there are a number of taxonomies only some provide a comprehensive categorization of the strategies.

Rubin (1987), who has done much work in this field, identified three kinds of learning strategies, which directly and indirectly contribute to the language learning. Rubin categorized the direct learning strategies into six major categories, "memorizing", "clarification/verification", "practice", "guessing/inductive inferencing", "monitoring", "deductive reasoning" and also divided the indirect learning strategies into two types "production tricks" and "creating opportunities for practice", (as cited in Aslan, 2009).

- Clarification is used by students in order to check whether they understand the rules of a language.
- Guessing relates to how a language works.
- Deductive reasoning is a strategy where knowledge of general rules is used by students to understand a language.
- Practice refers to storing and retrieving information of a language. It includes rehearsal and repetition.
- Memorisation relates to storing and retrieving information and also organising the information for storing.
- Monitoring means students checking their own performance.

Rubin comprised communication strategies under the production tricks. The learning strategies and communication strategies are separate manifestations of language learner behaviour. Oxford (1990, p.243) stated that researchers including Rubin, "use communication strategy only in a very limited sense, referring to strategies used only during conversational speech production". The third group of Rubin's classification is social strategies. In social strategies, students may have the chances to practice their knowledge by asking questions to their peers or instructors and starting conversation with the second language speakers. In 1990, Oxford took a step further and grouped two main strategies; direct strategies and indirect strategies. These two categories were sub-divided into six other groups. Cognitive, memory and compensation strategies are direct strategies, while affective, metacognitive and social strategies are indirect strategies.

Direct Strategies
- Memory Strategies
- Cognitive Strategies
- Compensation strategies

Indirect Strategies
- Metacognitive Strategies
- Affective Strategies
- Social Strategies

Figure 2. 1 Direct and Indirect strategies (Oxford, 1990, as cited in Aslan 2009)

This study adopts Oxford's framework to examine the role of gender and the use of language learning strategies among ESL students. The researcher has chosen Oxford's framework because it is designed to suit not only students learning English as a second language (ESL) in America but also students of any country, (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995).

2.4.1   Direct Strategies

Language learning strategies involve directly to the target language (Oxford, 1990). These strategies involve the function of mental and are categorized into three groups: "memory strategies", "cognitive strategies" and "compensation strategies".

2.4.1.1 Memory Strategies

Memory strategies refer to entering information to the memory and retrieving it. These strategies may assist students to connect a second language with another without deep understanding. Students learn and retrieve information using sounds, images, body movement or location and they used at the beginning stage of the learning process (Oxford, 2003). Oxford (1990) divided memory strategies into four sub-groups which are, "creating mental linkages", "applying images and sounds", "reviewing" and "employing actions" (Oxford, 1990, pg. 17). The figure below displays the types of memory strategies.

- ❖ Creating Mental Linkages
  - ▪ Grouping
  - ▪ Associating / Elaborating
  - ▪ Placing New Words into a Context

- ❖ Applying Images and Sounds
  - ▪ Using Imagery
  - ▪ Semantic Mapping
  - ▪ Using Keywords
  - ▪ Representing Sounds in Memory

- ❖ Reviewing
  - ▪ Structured Reviewing

- ❖ Employing Action
  - ▪ Using Physical Response or Sensation
  - ▪ Using Mechanical Techniques

Figure 2. 2 Memory Strategies (Extracted from Oxford, 1990, pg. 17)

The first subgroup of memory strategies is creating mental linkages which include three sub-strategies: grouping, associating-elaborating and using context. These sub strategies linked with writing; connecting information to the related ones to make connection in memory as word-based; furthermore, such strategies include setting an expression in a sentence or conversation in order to remember to connect with the related situation.

Applying images and sounds, includes four sub-strategies: "using imagery",

"using key words", "semantic mapping" and "representing sounds in memory".

These sub strategies refer to linking information to existing data in the memory by utilizing visual imagery; arranging words into visual; remember a piece of information using visual and auditory.

Reviewing comprises of structured reviewing. It refers to reviewing the language material in deliberately separated gaps. Reviewing is first done together, and after that broadly space out.

Employing action comprises two sub strategies: "using physical response" or "sensation and using mechanical techniques". Using physical response refers to physically showcasing an expression or linking an expression to a physical sensation. The second is associated by using imaginative actions, particularly by moving in order to recall the new information.

2.4.1.2 Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies are important in language learning as they allow students to employ and transform the target language, (Oxford, 1989, 1990). Cognitive strategies has four sub-groups: "practicing", "receiving" and "sending messages", "analysing and reasoning" and "creating structure for input and output". The figure shows the different types of cognitive strategies.

- ❖ Practicing
  - Repeating
  - Formally practicing with sounds and writing system
  - Recognizing and using formulas and patterns
  - Recombining
  - Practicing naturalistically

- ❖ Receiving and sending messages
  - Getting the idea quickly
  - Using resources for receiving and sending messages

- ❖ Analysing and Reasoning
  - Reasoning deductively
  - Analysing expressions
  - Analysing contrastively (across languages)
  - Translating
  - Transferring

- ❖ Creating Structure for Input and Output
  - Taking notes
  - Summarizing
  - Highlighting

Figure 2. 3 Cognitive Strategies (Extracted from Oxford, 1990, pg. 17)

Practicing is generally acknowledged to be the popular cognitive strategies (Chamot, 2004). Practice is generally expected to increase capability in the target language. The sub-strategies for practicing include "repeating", "formally practicing with sounds" and "writing systems", "recognizing and using formulas and patterns", "recombining" and "practicing naturalistically" (Oxford, 1990, pg. 17). It refers to doing something over and over; repeating; go through the sounds and composed variants of the language in assortment methods; monitoring and using structures, similar to "Good morning, see you later, and so forth"; joining known components by using different methods to deliver sentences.

Receiving and sending messages are important components for learning a language. They comprise two sub-strategies: "getting the idea quickly" and "using resources for receiving and sending messages". The strategy refers to scanning and skimming the material to identify the main points and discover information. The students will get help on what they have identified. The second strategy uses print or non-print materials to obtain the end goal which is to comprehend received messages.
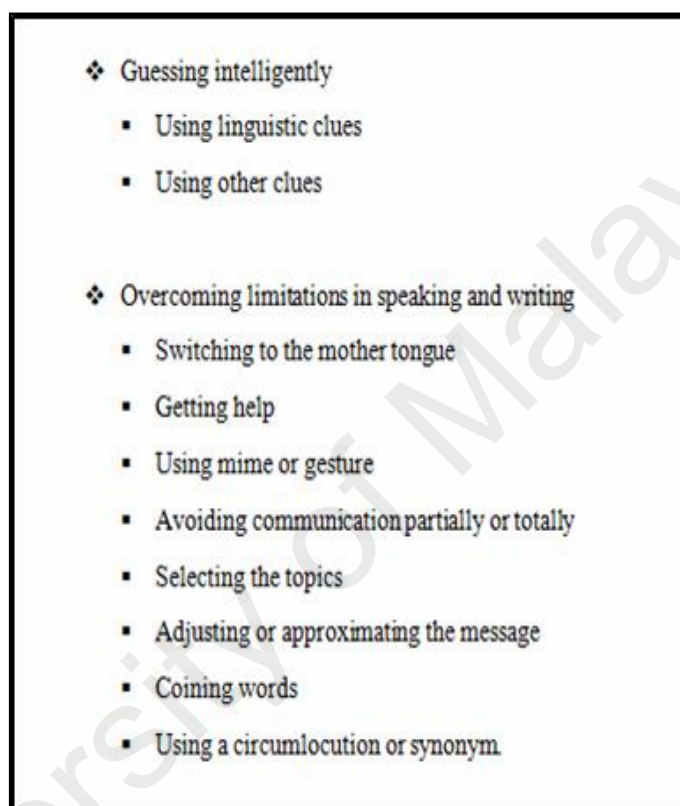
Analysing and reasoning strategies are generally reported to be the most frequently used. Learners progress a model in their memory based on the analysis and draw overall perception. Analysing and reasoning strategies comprise "reasoning deductively", "analysing expression", "analysing contrastively" and "translating and transferring" (Oxford, 1990, pg. 17). These strategies are used by students to utilize the principles and relate them into a new language; contrasting components of the target language and native language; translating; and straightforwardly using information related to words, ideas with one another (Oxford, 1990).

Creating structure for input and output strategies included sub-strategies such as "taking notes", "summarizing" and "highlighting". These strategies comprise writing the main ideas in a more systematic way; writing a synopsis and using an assortment of important methods (Oxford, 1990).

2.4.1.3 Compensation strategies

Compensation strategies help students to use the language in order to understand the information. Oxford (1990) specifies that these strategies function to construct insufficient collection of lexis, so these strategies help as

auto fillers to help students to learn a language where information gap occurs. In addition, these strategies help students to be more fluent with the knowledge they have. There are ten sub-strategies listed: "guessing intelligently" and "overcoming limitations in speaking and writing". The figure displays the types of compensation strategies.

```
❖ Guessing intelligently
    ▪ Using linguistic clues
    ▪ Using other clues

❖ Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing
    ▪ Switching to the mother tongue
    ▪ Getting help
    ▪ Using mime or gesture
    ▪ Avoiding communication partially or totally
    ▪ Selecting the topics
    ▪ Adjusting or approximating the message
    ▪ Coining words
    ▪ Using a circumlocution or synonym
```

Figure 2. 4 Compensation Strategies (Extracted from Oxford, 1990, pg. 17)

Guessing intelligently refers to the use of clues to create to identify the hidden information. Students may use clues of information in order to figure out about the language, without comprehensive knowledge of the words and linguistic structure (Oxford, 1990). The use of vocabulary words, parts of speech, and types of words or past learning of a particular word can be used as any clues which related to linguistic, content or visual clues.

Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing comprise sub-strategies to address troubles in speaking and writing: "switching to the mother tongue", "getting help", "using mime or gesture", "avoiding communication partially or totally", "selecting the topics", "adjusting or approximating the message", "coining words", and "using circumlocution or synonym" (Oxford, 1990, pg. 17). These sub-strategies involve using the first language to express oneself; asking somebody to make available the missing expression; utilizing physical movement, for example, gesture and mime; ignoring discussion when the challenges are foreseen; making up words to convey the required idea; selecting theme for the discussion of direct communication; receiving and describing the idea which implies a similar thing (Oxford, 1990).

2.4.2   Indirect Strategies

These strategies support the language learning process and it involves indirect use of the language material. It also helps learners to comprehend messages in the target language regardless of the knowledge limitations (Oxford 1990). Indirect strategies are divided into three sub-groups: "metacognitive strategies", "affective strategies" and "social strategies".

2.4.2.1 Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies support students to control their learning process. This includes paying attention and connecting new information with their background knowledge and existing knowledge. These strategies are used to help students understand the way they learn and to 'think' about their 'thinking'.

Daghistani's (2015) concept of metacognitive as "mental actions" employed by an individual to "organize, monitor, guide and control" his or her thinking (p.103) was similar to Oxford's (1990) definition. Daghistani (2015) also revealed that "strong indicator of processing abilities, skills that develop with age" (p.108). Learners who feel overwhelmed when learning the target language and faced with new vocabulary, overlapping rules and so forth may use these strategies. Through intentionally employing metacognitive strategies, learners may improve their attention.

However, Green and Oxford, (1995) and Oxford (1990), stated that regardless of the significance of metacognitive strategies, students appear to use these strategies less frequently than cognitive strategies. The language learners, who were at elementary level needed more clarification, verification and correction.

There are eleven sub-strategies listed under three main strategies, which are "centering your learning", "arranging and planning your learning" and "evaluating your learning". The figure displays the types of metacognitive strategies.

Figure 2. 5 Metacognitive Strategies (Extracted from Oxford, 1990, pg. 17)

The first sub-strategies help students to focus their awareness on certain language materials or activities. Employing these strategies gives students an attention for language learning. Outlining and connecting with familiar language material, focusing and postponing speech production are the strategies to centre one are learning.

Arranging and planning one's learning helps students to develop the capacity of their language learning. Metacognitive strategies involve seeking answers concerning language learning, organizing, setting objectives and targets, recognizing the motivation behind a language task, making preparations to tackle a language task and looking for practice openings.

Strategies to evaluate one's learning include, "self-monitoring" and "self-evaluating". These strategies help learners to monitor their progress of learning. "Self-monitoring" refers to recognize one's mistakes in producing the language while "self-evaluating" refers to evaluating one's own improvement in the target language.

2.4.2.2 Affective Strategies

The word "affective" refers to students' emotions, attitude and values. Students positive feelings will increase the performance in learning process (Oxford, 2003). Affective strategies have been found to be significant to language learning among native English speakers learning a foreign language (Oxford and Ehrman, 1995). The sub-strategies of affective strategies, such as; "lowering your anxiety", "encouraging yourself" and "taking your emotional temperature" (Oxford, 1990, pg. 17). The figure displays the types of affective strategies.

- ❖ Lowering Your Anxiety
    - ▪ Using Relaxation, Deep Breathing and Meditation
    - ▪ Using Music
    - ▪ Using Laughter

- ❖ Encouraging Yourself
    - ▪ Making Positive Statements
    - ▪ Taking Risks Wisely
    - ▪ Rewarding Yourself

- ❖ Taking Your Emotional Temperature
    - ▪ Listening to Your Body
    - ▪ Using a Checklist
    - ▪ Writing a Language Learning Diary
    - ▪ Discussing Your Feelings with Someone Else

Figure 2. 6 Affective Strategies (Extracted from Oxford, 1990, pg. 17)

The strategies in this grouping comprise both physical and mental segments which include relaxation, meditation, using music and laughter. These strategies encourage learners to relax the muscles in their body; to listen to relaxing music and to laugh by watching entertaining movies or reading funny books (Oxford, 1990).

Strategies to "encouraging yourself" are valuable and necessary for language learners. Oxford (1990) stresses that self-encouragement is essential to expect appreciation from others. If the learners make or create a positive atmosphere, they may feel more independent and confident in learning a language. Further,

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students may take risks in interaction in spite of the prospect of making mistakes and reward themselves.

"Taking your emotional temperature" help learners to evaluate the learners' motivation, attitudes and emotional. As indicated by Oxford (1990), learners can easily manage their emotions and feelings if they know how they feel and why they feel that way. "Listening to your body", "using a checklist", "writing a diary" and "discussing your emotions with another person" refers to affective strategies. These strategies focus on signs given by the body, for example, stress, fear or tension; "using a checklist" to determine emotions connected with language learning; "writing a diary" to monitor feelings during the learning process; and "interacting and expressing" with one another feelings about language learning (Oxford, 1990).

2.4.2.3   Social Strategies

These strategies support learners in communicating or interacting with others in order to know the culture as well as the language. Social strategies, divided into six sub-strategies which are "asking questions", "cooperating with others" and "empathizing with others". The figure displays the types of social strategies.

Figure 2. 7 Social Strategies (Extracted from Oxford, 1990, pg. 17)

The first sub-strategies of social strategies is asking question. It is an essential strategy which involves asking instructors, native speakers or friends for clarification, verification and correction (Oxford, 1990). While learning a new language, learners need assistance from native speakers of the language. Such assistance may include furnishing the learner with feedback and repetition, summarizing and clarifying. Approaching somebody for correction is vital for prompt feedback. Student may then use the feedback received to correct their language production.

Social strategies emphasize on the significance of cooperating with others during the learning process. These strategies raise learners' language performance as well as self- confidence. Cooperating with others include two sub-strategies, such as,

"cooperating with peers" and "cooperating with proficient users of the new language" (Oxford, 1990, as cited in Aslan, 2009).

Empathizing with others involves the capacity of understanding other individuals' feelings and emotions. It is frequently portrayed as the capacity to allow oneself to see from someone else's point of view in order to understand the individual better (Oxford, 1990). When learners use related strategies such as enhancing the social understanding and getting to be mindful of others' feelings, students empathy can be created during the language learning process (Oxford, 1990).

2.5   Factors Influencing Strategy Choice

Language learners can shift in both choice of specific learning strategies and frequency with which they use them. This individual decision is impacted by an extensive variety of factors, as observed in various studies (e.g. Oxford & Nyikos 1989; Choo, 2010; Kambakis & Mamoukari, 2016).

Oxford (1989), for instance, recognized no fewer than 16 distinct factors, for example, personality, age and gender that have an influence on the learner's choice of language learning strategy. According to Aslan (2009, p.29), some of the features which impact the choice of strategies include "degree of awareness, personality traits, cultural background, beliefs, teachers' influences, age, learning style, motivation and gender". In this study, the researcher will examine one of the factors which is gender. There are many factors which may impact the language learning, such as attitude, motivation, learning style and age are widely concentrated in SLA research, while gender is disregarded (Jimenez-Catalan, 2000). According to Sunderland (2000) and Ehrlich (1997), gender was

considered in the research and it was perceived in an oversimplified way. Based on the recent studies, there were some features which influence the choice of strategy, for example, consciousness, purpose of learning a language and gender (Oktay, 2009). Similarly, according to Chamot and Keatley (2004), among a few factors, for instance, age, proficiency level, motivation and so on, gender difference is one of the factors that impacts language learning and acquisition.

2.6   Past studies on Language Learning Strategies and Gender

Several studies have been conducted to research the role of gender and the utilization of language learning strategies among ESL students. Griffiths (2003) inspected the connection between frequency of language learning strategies and course level utilized by 114 male students and 234 female students. The Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL), a vital connection between course level and strategy use was found, however the findings related with gender and strategy use was not significant. But the only difference is found in strategy choice of various areas.

Numerous studies stated that female students use more learning strategies than their male counterparts (Peacock and Ho, 2003; Gu 2002; Green and Oxford, 1995;). A study conducted by Green and Oxford (1995) on the use of language learning strategies and gender by using Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The questionnaire was administered to 374 participants to examine the strategies used by students from different levels at the University of Puerto Rico. The study linked with strategy use between gender and L2 proficiency level. This study also incorporates the differences in the utilization of learning strategies. The

researchers discovered that female students used many strategies compared to their male counterparts to enhance their critical thinking skills and cultivate valuable strategies to adapt to any issues in their fields of study and future professions. The findings of the study discovered that females used more "compensation strategies" and "affective strategies" than the males.

Bedir (2002) conducted a study to measure the frequency of language learning strategy use among students attending elementary classes of high schools located in Adana, Turkey. The instrument used in the study was SILL developed by Oxford (1990) has been administered to the participants. The participants in this study were 884 students (391 males, 493 females). The results showed that Turkish students do not appear to be in favor of using memory strategies. The findings discovered that half of the students appear to be using cognitive strategies such as "repeating, practicing with sounds, recognizing and using patterns, getting the idea quickly, and translating". Nevertheless, the students indicated a negative approach for the item, "creating structure for input and output such as taking notes and summarizing". Furthermore, strategies related to analysing and reasoning as "I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts" seem not to be frequently used by the students.

Peacock and Ho (2003) conducted a study on the utilization of 50 learning strategies by 1,006 participants of English for Academic Purposes through eight majors –business, designing, maths and science, building, computing, essential instruction, English– at a university in Hong Kong. The information was gathered through a questionnaire which is Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. Interviews were conducted with 48 participants to investigate why the students did and did not utilize certain strategies. The study looked into strategy use through

the majors and furthermore inspected the connections between strategy use, L2 proficiency, age and gender. The findings discovered that male students used more affective and social strategies, and females used more memory and metacognitive strategies. They noticed that males and females are organically extraordinary as well as raised in various methods. Thus, males and females react differently with the intention of these behavioural differences.

Likewise, in an investigation concentrating on the Turkish setting, Tercanlioglu (2004) discovered the differences between male and female foreign learners using Oxford's (1990) SILL. The study was conducted at the School of Education, Ataturk University, Turkey. A total of 184 teachers, 44 males (23.9%) and 140 females (76.1%), participated in the study. The results showed that males used more scales than females. In Turkey, it's male-dominated Turkish society while females may lower their confidence in reporting the learning strategies they used.

Cheng, Xu and Ma (2007) who investigated engineering students' use of LLS while learning English. Questionnaires were used to investigate their strategy use, frequency of strategy use and utilization of learning strategies in practice. The findings indicated that students frequently used more cognitive strategies than social/affective strategies, and metacognitive strategies were employed less often. Further, the result suggested that participants believed in the positive effect of strategy use on language learning.

Fan Xiying (2010) conducted a study on gender differences in the use of learning strategies among middle school students. This study used questionnaire survey and interview in order to gather the data. The participants of the study were 105 male and 112 female students in Pan Zhihua City, China. The findings showed

that the female students reportedly used all strategies more frequently compared to male students except social strategies.

A study conducted by Abu Radwan (2011) to analyse the utilization of language learning strategies, English proficiency, the duration of learning English and gender. A total of 128 students at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman took part in the study. The outcomes discovered that metacognitive strategies is reported to be fundamentally higher than some other categories of language learning strategies and the least strategy used reported is memory strategies. The least used strategy is memory strategies and the education system in Arab nations emphasizes on rote memorization.

Following Green & Oxford and Patil and Karekatti (2012) examined LLS employed by engineering students and their insights on the use of strategies in learning English. The SILL (Oxford, 1990) was used to collect data from 60 engineering students from four engineering colleges. The findings indicate that students prefer metacognitive, cognitive, compensatory and social strategies, but they rarely use memory and affective strategies. Further, students are not aware of the benefits of using LLS to learn English.

Tanie Sallies (2014) conducted a study to investigate how gender relates to language learning strategies and to contextual variables. 128 males and 186 females from three different institutes in Brazil participated in the study. Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was used to collect the data. The findings showed that male students used 21 of the SILL strategies compared to female students.

Viriya & Sapsirin (2014) conducted a study in Thailand on gender differences in language learning style and language learning strategies. The study used the perceptual learning style preference questionnaire (PLSPQ) to investigate the learning style preferences and Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The participants were from Information Technology Faculty in Thailand. The survey was distributed to 150 participants. The findings reported that there were no gender differences in terms of using the learning strategies but there was a gender difference in language learning style.

A study conducted in Malaysia by Embi (2000) is to identify the use of language learning strategies among gifted students enrolled in a special program. The data gathered using the Strategy Inventory Language Learning (SILL) with 104 gifted students. Information was examined utilizing descriptive analysis. The discoveries reported that the students utilize more indirect strategies compared to direct strategies. The result likewise demonstrated that female students utilized affective and metacognitive strategies more than male students.

Punithavalli (2003) likewise conducted a study on gender and the utilization of language learning strategies. The participants who took part in the study were 170 students in Selangor, Malaysia and found that female students utilized more strategies than male students. The findings demonstrated that female students are inclined to utilize social or affective strategies more frequently than male students. The differences of gender may have been related with females being more prominent with social because of their verbal skills. This study expects to investigate further the role of gender and the utilization of language learning

strategies in the context of ESL students at a Malaysian university.

A study was conducted by Subramaniam & Palanisamy (2014) on the use of language learning strategies in a Malaysian private secondary school. The aim of the study was to investigate the practices of private school students and the relationship between gender and language learning strategies. Males and females were chosen randomly to take part in the study. The findings reported that private school students did not use the strategies often due to lack of practice in using learning strategies.

Ho & Ng (2016) conducted a study on the language learning strategies used by the first year undergraduates in a Malaysian public university. The study examined the relationship between language learning strategy use and gender. SILL was used on 535 male and 1173 female students. Data obtained were analsyed using descriptive statistics, t-test, Oneway ANOVA and chi-square test. The results showed that female students employed more strategies compared to male students. The findings also revealed that metacognitive strategies were highly used by the undergraduate students while affective strategies were the least used strategy.

2.7   Conclusion

In summary, gender in the field of second language acquisition has been a plan of numerous researchers for now; however, the outcomes are still a long way from being decisive. The reason may be because of gender, it is not a steady factor; it relies upon numerous factors, for example, cultural, biological factors, social elements and so on. This study aims to explore further the role of gender and the

use of language learning strategies in second language learning.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

This chapter explained the research design, research sample, research instruments, the data collection method, the procedure and data analysis.

3.2   Research Design

This study aims to examine the learning strategies used by Diploma students at MUST university and to determine the differences in terms of strategy used between male and female students. This study adopts both the quantitative and qualitative methods. Thus, a mixed method sequential exploratory study was undertaken (Creswell, 2017).

For the quantitative method, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) instrument designed by Oxford (1990) was used to collect data from the participants (See Appendix 1). The data obtained were analysed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) and interpreted the mean. The instrument used for the qualitative method is interview questions (See Appendix 2). The questions were extracted from the SILL instrument in order to get more in-depth explanations from the students on their use of language learning strategies.

3.3   Research Setting

For this study, the Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST) was chosen as the research site as it provides a site that is accessible to the researcher to examine the language learning strategies used by male and female

students from the Logistics and Freight Forwarding Program at the Department of Transport and Logistics. Like many other professions, professionals working in logistics, supply chain, and purchasing and procurement give importance to English. Functioning in English at work in these professions requires a comprehensive knowledge of English vocabulary used in supply chain, procurement and logistics and purchasing. Approximately 231 students follow this 2.5-year undergraduate course for each intake. These students are required to have a minimum of band 3 in their MUET Examination before they graduate from this university. The English language proficiency level of the Logistics and Freight Forwarding students can therefore be said to be of mixed proficiency.

The English course is only taught to the Logistics and Freight Forwarding students in the first or second year as a core course in the program. The courses offered in the first or second year are: Pre-Intermediate English, Intermediate English and Communication Skills. The students have to complete all English courses as a requirement of the Diploma program. The language lecturers focus on exposing students to the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening in order to prepare them to understand their lectures on the logistics and freight forwarding courses.

Most of the logistics books are written in English. As there is a need to read material in English and to follow lectures in English, students need to be proficient in the language skills. Although the Logistics and Freight Forwarding students in Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST) have a fair command of English, they still need to improve their ability to write effectively. The English language instructors help to prepare the students with the necessary

English skills which will help them to carry out various tasks successfully in their future workplaces.

3.4   Research Sample

The participants in this study are enrolled in the Department of Transport and Logistics at Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST) in Kelana Jaya. The total number of students in the department is 231 students but the students chosen to participate in the survey are 172, while 24 students who chose the higher scales in the questionnaire survey were selected for the semi-structured interview.

A total of 145 male students and 86 female students are enrolled in the final year of the diploma programme. Given the unequal number of students according to gender, the researcher selected the first 86 males in the register and all of the 86 females in order to investigate how male and female students differ in their use of language learning strategies. The students were mostly young adults and their ages ranged from 18 and 21.

3.5   Data Collection Instruments

3.5.1   Questionnaire

The questionnaire instrument adopted from Oxford (1990) which is the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was used to gather data (See Appendix 1) to answer research question 1. The SILL instrument was designed in 1985 and reviewed in 1990 by Oxford. The purpose of SILL was to categorize the strategies that support students in order for them to become more effective

language learners. The instrument used in this study provides information on six strategies that students employ to learn a language (Tercanlioglu, 2004). Strategy Inventory of Language Learning is a "self- scoring paper-and-pencil survey that is the key instrument in more than 40 studies, including 12 dissertations and theses. These studies have involved approximately 8,000 students around the world" (Green & Oxford, 1995, p. 264). Since 1995 many more studies have been conducted by researchers using SILL as the main instrument for their study. Some of the more recent studies using SILL include Oxford, Cho, Leung and Kim (2004), Tragant & Victori (2012), Rahi (2013), Mahnani & Rostampour (2014), Qasimnejad & Hemmati (2014), Meyer (2015), Noor Saazai Mat Saad (2016) and Alnujaidi (2017).

3.5.2 Format and Question Design

The SILL instrument comprises of 50 statements and students were asked to give responses on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 to 5 (Green and Oxford, 1995), as follows:

A "Never or almost never true of me"

B "Usually not true of me"

C "Somewhat true of me"

D "Usually true of me"

E "Always or almost always true of me"

The use of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) is for categorising learning strategies into six groups and the statements in the inventory pertain to the following six strategies.

1. Memory strategies (e.g., imagery, moving physically, grouping, reviewing).

2. Cognitive strategies (e.g., summarizing, reasoning, practicing, analysing).

3. Compensation strategies (e.g., using synonyms, guessing, using gestures to understand the meaning).

4. Metacognitive strategies (e.g., planning a task, concentrating and observing errors, gauging one's progress, awareness of opportunities).

5. Affective strategies (e.g., reduction of anxiety, self-praise or reward and self-encouragement).

6. Social strategies (e.g., "cooperating with one another especially with native speakers, asking questions and becoming culturally aware" (Oxford, 1995, p. 264-265).

Table 3. 1 Table 1: SILL Categories (Oxford, 1990)

CONTENT	NO OF STATEMENTS
Memory Strategies	9
Cognitive Strategies	14
Compensation Strategies	6
Metacognitive Strategies	9
Affective Strategies	6
Social Strategies	6

Table 3.2 below shows two sample statements from the inventory (The questionnaire is provided in Appendix A).

Part A: Memory Strategies

Table 3. 2 Sample statements from the inventory

"I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English".	1	2	3	4	5
"I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them".	1	2	3	4	5

Green and Oxford (1995) stated that the SILL instrument was used in most of past studies and the purpose is to measure the strategy use of the students. The instrument is an organized questionnaire and it aims to evaluate how frequently students utilize particular language learning strategies. The SILL produces standardized information which are exceptionally valuable for statistical treatment, however, it does not give any space to the person's innovative reactions (Oxford 1993). It provides teachers with the strategy profile of their students and reveals to students the sorts of strategies they resort to when learning English as a second or foreign language (Oxford 1990).

3.5.3   Reliability of the SILL

Cronbach's alpha is the most widely recognized measure of internal consistency. It is most generally utilized with multiple Likert questions in a questionnaire that form a scale with the aim to determine if the scale is reliable. So as to know whether the questions in the questionnaire all reliably measure the variable, a

Cronbach's alpha was run on a sample size of 172 students. The alpha value of each scale and strategy items are shown in Table 3.3. The Cronbach's alpha is .944 which specifies a high level of internal consistency for the sample.

Table 3. 3 Reliability Test of SILL

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Basedon Standardized Items	Number of Items
.944	.946	50

3.5.4   Pilot Study of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire, adapted from Oxford (1990) was tested on several students at Malaysia University of Science and Technology who were enrolled in a different program. A total of 10 students (5 males and 5 females) took part in the study. The purpose of the pilot study was to help to determine if the survey is effective in fulfilling the purpose of the study. So as to know whether the questions in the questionnaire all reliably measure the variable, a Cronbach's alpha was run on a sample size of 10 students (5 males and 5 females). Based on the reliability analysis in Table 3.4, the value of Cronbach's alpha is (.709) which specifies a high level of internal consistency for the sample.

Table 3. 4 Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	Num. of Items
.709	50

The SILL instrument was chosen because it is "maybe the most widespread classification of learning strategies has been extensively employed and its

Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients are within the limits" (Ellis, 1994, p.539). In addition, "its validity lays on its correlative connection with language performance and also its confirmed relationship to sensory preferences" (Tercanlioglu, 2004, p. 4).

3.6   Data Collection Procedure using the Questionnaire

The researcher informed the top management of Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST) about the study and obtained the required consent to conduct the study. First, the researcher explained to the lecturers of the Diploma in Logistics and Freight Forwarding programme the aim and the nature of the study and emphasized the importance of stressing to the students the need to answer the questionnaire honestly. Before the researcher distribute the questionnaire to the students, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and they were told to response so as to identify the language learning strategies used by students as a whole. Before lecturers started their lecture, they set aside 15 minutes for the students to complete the inventory. Once the students completed the questionnaire, they were collected and the researcher numbered them from 1-86 for both male and female students, respectively. The questionnaires thus were separated according to gender. This way the researcher would be able to identify which questionnaire belonged to which student and students who were invited to an interview.

3.7   Limitation of the Questionnaire Survey

One of the limitations of the survey is the researcher expected the students to take 10-15 minutes to respond to the statements in the questionnaire but the students took twice as much time, which caused some frustration to the researcher. During the process of analysis, the researcher questioned herself whether the students were able to maintain focus and answered honestly or checked-off randomly due to tiredness or boredom. There was also the matter of students' motivation in completing the questionnaire. The researcher asked herself whether the students completed the survey to be polite or because they feared their lecturers and the consequences if they did not participate in the survey. Before the researcher distributed the questionnaire to the students, the students were urged to answer honestly.

3.8   Semi-structured Interview

According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), interviews are the most common method to collect data in qualitative research. For this research study, the researcher used interviews in order to examine in greater depth male and female students' use of the six categories of language learning strategies. The interview data will be analysed to answer research question 2. The researcher carried out semi structured interviews with the selected students and asked supplementary questions in order to get more insights on the matter (See Appendix 2). As the outcome, the researcher obtained more informative data than what was collected from the survey. The researcher was specifically interested in how male and female students used the different learning strategies. These matters are best

discovered when interview is used as the main method for qualitative study. A total of 24 students who had chosen the higher scales in the survey questionnaire were interviewed. Each interview lasted no more than five minutes. The reason for interviewing the students was to gain further information on the subject of gender and strategy use. During the interview, the questions were used to trigger elaboration on all areas of the topic. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed.

3.8.1   Participant Selection for Interview

The selection of participants for the interview was guided by several criteria. Students who answered the survey and ticked the highest scale (4/5) were selected. The researcher selected only 24 students for the interview session due to time constraints. The researcher selected only high strategy users so that these students could provide more in depth explanation on their use of the six categories of language learning strategies. Two males and two females were selected to answer questions on each category of language learning strategies. In total there were 12 males and 12 females and their proficiency level was mixed.

3.8.2   Designing the Interview

The interview questions were extracted from the questionnaire. From the 50 statements (Part A-Part F) of the questionnaire, the researcher selected two questions to represent each category. The questions for each category which were extracted from the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) were considered to be reflective of the strategy in question. As it is a semi structured interview design, the researcher asked more supplementary questions (See

Appendix 2). Table 3.5 shows the strategies and description identified by Oxford (1990).

Table 3. 5 Strategies and description

Strategies	Description
Memory	These strategies involve the storing and retrieving new information whenever they needed (Oxford, 1990).
Cognitive	Cognitive strategies involve learning in a conscious way and it covers a few sub-strategies such as summarizing, reasoning, practicing and analysing (Oxford, 1990).
Compensation	It enables the students to use speaking or writing skills even though there is a knowledge gap (Oxford, 1990).
Metacognitive	These strategies allow students to control their awareness (Oxford, 1990).
Affective	Affective strategies are for reduction of anxiety involving self-praise or reward and self-encouragement (Oxford, 1990).
Social	Social strategies include "cooperating with one another especially with native speakers, asking questions and becoming culturally aware" (Oxford, 1995, p. 264-265).

3.8.3 Carrying out the Interview

All 24 interviews took place in the morning in a conducive classroom at Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST) which provided a comfortable atmosphere without any distraction. The language used for the interview was English. Before starting the interview, the researcher informed the

students about the purpose of the interview. Maxwell (2012) talks about the "interview guide, and in that respect such introductory briefing questions" (p. 75) are significant so as to form an atmosphere of trust. All the 24 participants of the interview agreed to be interviewed when the researcher explained the purpose of the study. Then the researcher asked questions related to the theme in question. There were two trigger questions for each theme. In this study, the researcher selected 4 students (2 males and 2 females) to respond to questions pertaining to each category. The interview was audio recorded. Kremer (2005) highlights the "importance of the interviewer to listening carefully, even though the conversation is being recorded". (p.144). The researcher concentrated on what the interviewees said in order to formulate relevant follow up questions.

3.8.4 Transcription of Data

The researcher transcribed the interview data in order to analyse it. The interview data were transcribed precisely based on what the interviewees said without including pauses or prosodic features as these were considered unnecessary in view of the study. The researcher chose to provide a word for word transcription of the interviews.

3.8.5 Limitations of the Interview

One of the limitations of the interview concerns the participants selected for the interview. The participants for the interview are limited to a small number due to time constraint. The researcher selected only 24 participants for the interview based on their responses in the survey, that is, those who has chosen the higher scales (4/5) in the survey questionnaire. For each category of strategies, only four students (2 males and 2 females) were interviewed.

3.9   Data Analysis

3.9.1   Quantitative Analysis

The questionnaire responses from the 172 participants were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) to determine the mean of SILL items so as to identify the language learning strategies used by the ESL learners at MUST university. The data of the questionnaire were tabulated in an Excel spreadsheet. This study seeks to determine the LLS preferred by the participants.

3.9.2   Qualitative Analysis

A qualitative analysis of the interview data was conducted to answer research question 2. The interview was conducted with selected students who had chosen the higher scales in the survey. With a specific end goal to anonymize the interviewees, each student was given a number and a letter so as to indicate their gender. The number represented the student and the letter represented the gender. M is used to refer to the male students, and F is used to refer to the female students. A summary of the interviewee background details is provided in Appendix 3. Twenty-four selected students expressed their opinions in a semi structured interview based on the questions asked by the researcher. In order to code the interview data, it was necessary for the researcher to go through the transcription several times. According to Postholm (2008), it is an important process of re-reading materials in order to analyse the data. The researcher will therefore focus on relevant extracts that address the second research question. All the responses were coded according to the six categories of language learning strategies.

3.10   Ethical Considerations

Before starting the present study, an application was made for an ethical review to the Malaysia University of Science and Technology. Permission was granted in early January 2016 by the Human Resource Manager and the Provost of the University for the study to take place. Prior to data collection, the researcher contacted the Provost and Head of Department at the Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST) to explain the purpose of the research study. A week later, permission was granted for the university's name to be used in the study. The participants in this study participated voluntarily and none of them asked to be exempted from the study.

Prior to the data collection process, the university, lecturers and students were informed that only the researcher would have access to the recordings made during the interview. When discussing the results and findings of the study, all students' names will be replaced with numbers and letters to protect their privacy. After the completion of the research, all documents that may reveal the identity of the students and the recordings will be kept for a period of up to six months before being erased.

3.11   Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed explanation of the methodology employed in this study and discussed the research design, participants, instruments used, data collection procedures and data analysis. The results of the analysis and findings are reported in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the data analysis obtained from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to answer the following research questions raised in Chapter

1. What types of language learning strategies do ESL learners at Malaysia University of Science and Technology use?

2. How do male and female students differ in their use of language learning strategies?

The first section of this chapter addresses Research Question 1 and reports the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire data. The results are explained and presented in tables. The second section of this chapter answers Research Question 2 and reports the findings obtained from the semi structured interviews.

4.2 Types of Language Learning Strategies Used

To answer the research question 1, descriptive statistics was applied to the data set covering the mean scores of the SILL items. The respondents of this study were the final year students of the Logistics and Freight Forwarding programme. 86 males and 86 female students responded to the statements in the questionnaire based on the six categories of language learning strategies identified by Oxford (1990).

The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale, and the responses were assigned a value of 1 to 5 (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). There were 50 questions that were classified into six categories to do with the types of language learning strategies (e.g. memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social). The descriptive analyses (i.e. the mean) were performed on the quantitative data. The purpose of conducting the analyses was to determine which language learning strategies were most frequently used by the students. Table 4.1 shows the mean calculated for each questionnaire item on memory strategies.

Table 4. 1 Mean Score for Part A: Memory Strategies

Item	Mean
1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.	3.33
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	3.42
3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.	3.43
4. I review English lessons often.	3.21
5. I remember new English words by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	3.41
6. I use rhymes to remember new English words.	2.98
7. I use flashcards to remember new English words.	2.74
8. I physically act out new English words.	2.98
9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	3.18

Table 4.1 provides the mean scores of the responses given for the use of memory strategies. Both the mean and standard deviations are very similar across each strategy item except for three strategies that had the lowest mean scores compared to the other strategies. The highest mean score for memory strategy is ($M = 3.43$) for item 3: "I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word". Most of the students seem to create mental links and apply images and sounds in order to remember unfamiliar words.

Meanwhile, the lowest mean score for this category is ($M=$ 2.74) for item 7: "I use flashcards to remember new English words". Further, items 6 and 8 also received the lowest mean scores, showing that the students mostly do not use rhymes, flashcards or act out to remember new English words. It is likely that most of the students do not opt to use flashcards or rhymes to remember a word because they are young adults and not children.

Memory strategies were found to be the least frequently used strategy among the students according to the overall rank of the six strategies (See Table 4.7). Oxford (1990) however, viewed memory strategies as effective mental instruments. In any case, in this study, memory strategies reported as the lowest strategies compared to other strategies. The finding of this study is consistent with Al-Otaibi (2004), revealed that Saudi students rarely employed memory strategies. The least used of memory strategies in Al-Otaibi (2004) study was astonishing thusly strategies are generally with regards to teaching systems regularly utilized by Arab countries, which frequently highlighted rote memorisation. In this study, the subjects were unfamiliar to the use of mnemonics (particular systems to develop memory) thus, they employed less memory strategies. The outcome is likewise in accordance with findings by Al-Buainain (2010). Al-Buainain (2010) study's analysed the type and frequency of language learning strategies utilized by Qatar University English majors. A total of 120 Arabs enrolled in the Department of Foreign Languages participated in the study. The outcomes uncovered that memory strategy were the least used strategy among the students. It was discovered that student's do not employed flash cards to learn new words and that they likewise did not have any significant context to learn new words.

Table 4. 2 Mean Score for Part B: Cognitive Strategies

Item	Mean
10. I say or write new English words several times.	3.35
11. I try to talk like native English speakers.	3.55
12. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.	3.73
13. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.	3.63
14. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	3.43
15. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.	3.22
16. I practice the sounds of English words.	3.60
17. I use the English words I know in different ways.	3.53
18. I start conversations in English.	3.56
19. I read for pleasure in English.	3.47
20. I first skim an English passage then go back and read it carefully.	3.49
21. I try to find patterns in English.	3.40
22. I try not to translate word for word.	3.27
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.	3.34

Table 4.2 provides the mean scores of the responses given for the use of cognitive strategies by the respondents. The highest mean score as shown in table 4.2 is for item 12 which is (M= 3.73): "I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English". As watching movies or shows spoken in English, is a common activity among Malaysians. This comprises a cognitive strategy that is widely used. Meanwhile the lowest mean score is for item 15: "I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand" (M= 3.22). It implies that if the students do not understand an English word, they will look up the word in a dictionary rather than divide the word into parts.

Cognitive strategies are important during the learning process as it directly involves in approaching information (Oxford, 1990). In this study, cognitive

strategies were found to be the third most used strategy among the students according to the overall rank of the six strategies (See Table 4.7). The participants preferred some cognitive strategies, for example, "watching English language TV shows spoken in English or going to movies spoken in English" (M= 3.73), "writing notes, messages, letters, or reports in English" (M= 3.63) and "practicing the sounds of English words" (M= 3.60). Cognitive strategies to be the preferred among the language learners because it allows them to work with the language material in different ways, such as; summarizing, analysis, note-taking and practicing structures and sounds formally.

Table 4. 3 Mean Score for Part C: Compensation Strategies

Item	Mean
24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.	3.48
25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.	3.40
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.	3.21
27. I read in English without looking up every new word.	3.21
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.	3.40
29. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	3.53

Table 4.3 provides the mean scores of the responses given for Part C, which is the use of compensation strategies. The highest mean score is for item 29: "If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing" (M= 3.53). Most of the students prefer to use synonyms or approximations of English words that they have difficulty recalling. The second highest mean score is item 24: "To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses" (M= 3.48) and item 28: "I try to guess what the other person will say next in English" (M= 3.40). These latter two items were frequently mentioned in the interviews as the students used guessing to understand unfamiliar English words.

Meanwhile, the lowest mean scores are for item 26: "I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English" (M= 3.21). It seems that the students are inclined to look up every new word in a dictionary. They also appear to lack the creativity to coin new terms when unable to come up with the required terms. Students look for a similar word if they do not understand something they learn in class.

Compensation strategies were found to be the fourth most frequently used strategy according to the overall rank of the six strategies (See Table 4.7). They allow students to compensate for knowledge gaps when understand a language (Al-Otaibi, 2004). Students utilize compensation strategies, for example, using mimes and guessing to keep the interaction with one another when the students do not have complete linguistic background.

Table 4. 4 Mean Score for Part D: Metacognitive Strategies

Item	Mean
30. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	3.64
31. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	3.66
32. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	3.78
33. I look for people I can talk to in English.	3.60
34. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	3.50
35. I think about my progress in learning English.	3.62
36. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	3.19
37. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	3.47
38. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	3.48

Table 4.4 provides the mean scores of the responses given for the use of metacognitive strategies. The most frequently used strategy is metacognitive strategies based on the overall rank of the six learning strategies (See Table 4.7). Metacognitive strategies refer to actions that permit students to organize their own learning. This study reported that "they seek ways to be a better learner of

English" (M= 3.78) and "pay attention when someone is speaking English" (M= 3.66). Further, "they notice their English mistakes and use that information to help them do better" (M= 3.64).

The results showed that nearly 70% of the students used metacognitive strategies such as finding ways to use their English, noticing their English mistakes and using that information to improve, paying attention when someone speaks English and so on. Instead, the findings revealed that students do not seem to have the practice of planning their schedule which students can use their time effectively since a substantial number of students rejected the statement "I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English."

Table 4. 5 Mean Score for Part E: Affective Strategies

Item	Mean
39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.	3.45
40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	3.64
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.	3.17
42. I write down my feelings in a language learning dairy.	3.18
43. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	3.23
44. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.	3.19

Table 4.5 provides the mean scores of the responses given for the use of affective strategies. The highest mean score as shown in the table above is (M= 3.64) for item 40: "I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake".

Meanwhile, the lowest mean score for the category above is for item 41: "I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English" (M= 3.17). Affective strategies help students to manage their attitudes, feelings and motivations and it

was reported to be the fifth most commonly used strategy by the students according to the overall rank (See Table 4.7). In this study, many students motivated themselves to speak English although they were afraid of making mistakes (M= 3.64), "tried to relax whenever they felt afraid of using English" (M= 3.45) and talked to someone else about how they felt when learning English (M= 3.23). The results also indicated that the students were less inclined to use affective strategies such as "I write down my feelings in language learning diary", "I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English", and "I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English". Instead, they were in favor of trying to overcome their anxiety when using English as in "I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English."

Table 4. 6 Mean Score for Part F: Social Strategies

Item	Mean
45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	3.63
46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.	3.44
47. I practice English with other students.	3.50
48. I ask for help from English speakers.	3.40
49. I ask questions in English.	3.55
50. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.	3.42

Table 4.6 provides the mean scores of the responses given for the use of social strategies. Social strategies were found to be the second most used strategy among the students according to the overall rank of the six strategies (See Table 4.7). Most of the students tend to ask their interlocutors to slow down or repeat as stated in item 45: "If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again" (M= 3.63). Meanwhile, the lowest mean score for the category above is for item 48: "I ask for help from English speakers" (M= 3.40). These students do not have the opportunity to ask help

from English speakers due to lack of accessibility. Most of themare comfortable asking their peers instead as in item 47: "I practice English with others" (M= 3.50).

Social strategies incorporate communication with different people, for instance, "asking for assist or clarification or practicing with different students". In this study, social strategies reported as the second most commonly utilized strategy. This study surveyed the use of social and emotional support with regards to language learning. The greater part of the subjects in the present investigation prefer to ask the interlocutor to say it once more (M= 3.63), to make inquiries in English (M= 3.55) and to practice English with different students (M= 3.50). Phillips (1999) who conducted a study of Asian students enrolled in Intensive English Program (IEP) showed expanded utilization of social strategies in regard to alternate strategies. The analysis of social strategies demonstrated that most of the students prefer to ask questions and cooperate with their peers.

Based on the analysis of the SILL items, table 4.7 shows the overall ranking of the six categories of language learning strategies. The most commonly used strategy is the categories of language learning strategies. The most commonly used strategy is the metacognitive strategy and the second most widely used strategy by the students is the social strategy. The third commonly used strategy is cognitive strategies. The least used strategies among the students are memory, compensation and affective strategies. The analysis of the learning strategies supports results from previous research (Hong-Nam and Leavell, 2006). "The high-frequency of the use of metacognitive, social and cognitive strategies seemed to suggest that they are important for language learning" (Oxford 1990, pg.136). Metacognitive and social strategies were the preferred strategies of these ESL students.

Table 4. 7 Mean Score of Learning Strategies Used

Language Learning Strategies	N	Mean	Rank
Metacognitive Strategies	172	3.55	1
Social Strategies	172	3.49	2
Cognitive Strategies	172	3.47	3
Compensation Strategies	172	3.37	4
Affective Strategies	172	3.31	5
Memory Strategies	172	3.19	6

As previously discussed, the choice of a specific learning strategy and also the frequency is impacted by various factors. These factors may be linked to the language learner or to the social and situational setting. Besides, a student's choice of a specific learning strategy does not rely upon just one factor, but instead is the result of the influence of several factors.

4.3 Gender and the use of Language Learning Strategies

The second research question of the present study explores the relationship between gender and the use of six categories of language learning strategies by ESL learners at Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST). To answer this question, semi- structured interviews were conducted with 12 males and 12 females' students who had chosen the higher scales from the SILL statements. The interview questions were extracted from the SILL instrument. There were 2 questions for each category of language learning strategies (e.g. "memory", "cognitive", "compensation", "metacognitive", "affective", and

"social"). The purpose of conducting the semi-structured interview was to get more in-depth explanations from the students on their use of language learning strategies and to determine if gender influenced the learners' use of language learning strategies.

4.3.1   Gender and the use of Memory Strategies

In response to the question: How do you remember new words or phrases that you learn in English?, student M1 reported that he writes difficult words in a notebook. Likewise, student M2 who sees memory strategies as an important method to learn new words, writes down words and phrases in order to remember them.

M2- "I write and try to understand the word. If I couldn't understand, I go to online oxford dictionary; "I try to use in English-English, if I couldn't understand then I try to use the English-Malay.

Student M2 relies heavily on the dictionary to understand new words and he writes them down so that he can remember them easily. The two male students appear to depend on rote memorization to acquire vocabulary and they seem unaware that reviewing English lessons often and connecting the sound of a word with a picture can also help them remember the word. Whereas, F1 stated that,

F1- "I remember new words/phrases when I practice writing, also when I read more such as reading newspapers and a lot of books".

Student F2 mentioned that, "I write in my notebook in the class and I go through the words at home in order to remember the words".

Like M1 and M2, F2 is also inclined to write down words that are new in order to remember them.

When asked to elaborate further and explain what precise steps they took to remember words when writing difficult words in a notebook, student M1 mentioned that he makes guesses on the meaning of the words listed and he goes through the words everyday whereas student M2 indicated that, he uses an offline dictionary and translates these words into his mother tongue to get the meaning. Meanwhile students F1 stated;

"I will try to pronounce and write a small paragraph. I can also memorise the words. I use a dictionary when I do not understand the words".

Student F2 said that she spends an hour or two to go through the pronunciation of each word. Based on the interviewees' responses, the female students display some differences from the male students in applying memory strategies. While both the male and female students prefer to use the dictionary and list the new words in their notebook, the female students also apply a combination of sound so they not only learn new words but also learn how to pronounce them. Neither of the two male students mentioned employing such a strategy to remember difficult English words.

Memory systems incorporate creating a mental picture of a circumstance in using rhymes to remember new words; pronouncing the sound of an English word; visuals to help remember the word; As the survey revealed, the participants in the present study did not appear to be acquainted with these mnemonics or particular strategies to improve their memory. However, the female students' responses in the interview suggest that they are more inclined to link the sound of a word to the

word itself in attempts to remember the word as compared to the male students.

4.3.2   Gender and the use of Cognitive Strategies

In response to the question, what do you do to practice the English you learn in class?, student M3 revealed the following;

"We can practice by writing and speaking in the classroom such as speaking topics or presentations. We help each other to improve our English so we ask our teacher about how we can improve our writing and also speaking".

Student M4 mentioned that he wants his lecturer to give lots of vocabulary exercises to practice and he needs to practice with his classmates.

Meanwhile student F3 said,

"I usually ask my teacher if I don't understand something and sometimes I ask help from my friends to explain to me. If I still don't understand, I try to find any videos about the lessons".

However, student F4 said that she will try to practice English by listening to English music or watching movies and also she reads books.

According to the interviewees' responses, male students tend to focus on speaking and writing while the female students also give attention to the receptive skills which are listening and reading. The male students prefer to seek opportunities to speak and they also prefer to write as much as they can to improve their English. When speaking to others, they pay attention to how others use English. However, student F3 also asks her friends if she does not understand something she learns in class and watches videos. Meanwhile student F4 mentioned that she watches TV

shows or movies in English.

In response to the next question: How do you process the English language material that are given in class?, student M3 reported that, "I read the instruction to understand and also I can share each other, that time I can summarise the information or giving my opinion".

Meanwhile student M4 mentioned that,

"If my lecturer gives me grammar worksheet, some questions, she wants the students to answer. After I write two or three times, I can answer the questions".

Student F3 said she will go through the questions, skim the reading part and also she tries to find the difficult words and ask the teacher the meaning if she does not understand a word whereas student F4 stated the following:

"I usually summarise what I hear in class or I learnt; "I try to get the main ideas and also to learn about the title in order to get more information"; I skim because to know about the details and I will scan the material.

Based on the respondents' comments, it appears to correlate with the SILL items on cognitive strategies which include skimming and summarizing reading material. In understanding and producing the English language, the male and female students used some similar methods such as summarizing the information that they hear or read in class. Meanwhile the male and female students also used skimming to determine the main idea of the text to get the idea quickly in analysing the materials. Cognitive strategies can be

helpful to acquire a language easily and more permanently.

4.3.3   Gender and the use of Compensation Strategies

In response to the question, what do you do to understand unfamiliar English words?, student M5 said,

"Most of the time I will make guesses so it depends on the situation, I will try to make sense of the speaker's sound and even their gestures. That is one way but I have tried different ways or methods, you see sometimes I cannot bring along the dictionary forever, so maybe we can come up with alternative words or new words, or will come up with a sentence that describing the action".

Meanwhile, student M6 reported that,

"For unfamiliar words, can make a small guess according to the situations are given. For example, in reading process, I think we can use thinking box, when you try to find words repeatedly it might clear your speculations and make a clearer thought on what guess that you can actually make. I believe you can also try to go across the words few more times and try to understand more in different situations. You can try to have more transparent view of the words. You can make up new words and synonyms out of it".

From the female students' perspectives, student F5 mentioned that,

"To understand unfamiliar English words, I will come up with a new word. I relate it with the similar word which I learn in the class. For example, using gestures and

guesses which I will try to guess what is the person is trying to express to me to understand better.

Meanwhile, student F6 reported that,

"If I couldn't understand uncommon English words, I will try to make guesses. For example, my lecturer is teaching using tough words, I will try to figure out what my lecturer trying to express. After that, I will try to catch the meaning of the whole sentence. Besides that, I will make up my own new words if I don't understand. I will try my best to put my new words. The new words would be simple and common that fit into the sentence based on my understanding".

Based on the male and female students' responses, they used similar methods in terms of using the compensation strategy. If they do not know or understand words they had learned in class, they used guessing, approximation, contextual clues, word coinage, and paraphrasing. They preferred to use guessing and word coinage when they did not understand English words they had learned in class. In all 4 interviews, no one mentioned using a dictionary.

In response to the following question, how do you make guesses when you do not understand information that you learn in class?, student M5 reported that,

"A very big element would be gestures, so normally if there are any gestures from the speakers, and then probably is a one way to make a guess. If you are really desperate without any gestures, then probably the sound of the words because sometimes you can hear the level of the strength of the voice. Otherwise, you try to relate something with the knowledge you already known. I will speak more with

native speakers because they have a different expression, which is one way to make guesses when they use their expressions".

Besides that, student M6 said,

"You can take account the gestures that are being made when your lecturer is talking in front, maybe you can have a clearer thought about what is being talked, or what information is being misused by us. We can also try to relate with what other people have to say on the information that is being assimilated by us".

However, student F5 mentioned that,

"Through guessing, I see ideas as logical extension of my own thinking. When I make guesses I may feel that I could have reached the result without anyone's help. Although I wasn't familiar with the topic, I will try to relate it with similar knowledge or situation I have or which I have experienced".

Whereas student F6 reported that,

I would use the context from the materials to help me so that I would probably work out the meaning by myself. This would be my guessing method. I will try by myself first to fill up without asking directing to the lecturer. I would guess first. Looking at dictionary would be my last source".

Based on the male and female students' responses, they again used similar methods. They preferred to rely on the interlocutor's gestures to make guesses on meaning when confronted with information they did not understand. They also linked new information with the knowledge they already had in order to understand better or make more accurate guesses.

As indicated by the analysis of the questionnaire data more than half of the students use the compensation strategy by guessing logically, employing the context and using the synonym of a word.

The students appear to also make up new words to compensate for words they do not know. The use of compensation strategies shows that both male and female students are not afraid of taking risks when trying to make intelligent guesses. This clearly showed that learners' choice of language learning strategies could also be affected by their command of the English language (Subramaniam & Palanisamy, 2014).

4.3.4   Gender and the use of Metacognitive Strategies

In response to the question: What do you do in order to improve your English?, student M7 reported the following steps he takes to improve his English:
"I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English. I read books that interest me. For instance, my hobbies collecting stylish clothes, therefore I purchase fashion magazines which is in English. I pay attention to others like when they are speaking, I will listen to them carefully. I tried to find as many ways as I can to use my English. I tried to read books. I listen to songs that are in English. For example, singers like Rihanna, Eminem".

According to student M7, he mentioned that he preferred paying attention to others and focuses on listening and reading.

Whereas student M8 said that,
"The best way is to pay attention to others when they are speaking. Hence, you can learn their speech patterns the way they use their grammar and the use of

vocabulary. I tend to look for people who can be able to converse in English with. Wherever I can find an opportunity, I will use it to the maximum".

Based on student M8, he preferred to seek opportunities to converse in English as a way to improve his English. However, female students have their own view on the ways to improve their English. Student F7 reported that,

"First, I will start with my reading material then I will start speaking to others when I am confident that I am right. I start conversation in English. If they are good, I will listen how good they are and I will start learning the new words and all. If they are bad, then I will start correcting them. I have one more thing to say, I would like to appreciate people who put their self in difficult situations like you speak to people they are more fluent in English like lecturer, our friends".

Student F8 said,

"I read lots of books like newspapers and novels. Those kinds of things can help me to improve my English. I notice my English mistakes and use the information to help me to do better. I pay attention to someone who speaks English and I will find out how to be a better learner in English".

According to the male and female students' responses, they used similar methods such as seeking opportunities to speak and they also prefer to read as much as they can to improve their English. When speaking to others, they pay attention to how others use English. They also prefer to read as much as possible in English and they also pay attention to how others use English.

In response to the second question: How do you plan your schedule to study English?, student M7 stated that,

"I will make a timetable to improve my English through self-educating. I think my progress in learning English. I take English tuition classes so I will confide with teachers when I have problems. I also have clearer goals for improving my English".

Meanwhile, student M8 emphasized that,

"I will set goals in order to improve and caught my progress to improve me. I could plan a study schedule for others and fit in as much English as possible. I possibly read two to three hours' novels or story books in English or any reading material I could find. Minimum will be two hours and maximum could be the whole day".

With reference to the female interviewees, student F7 said,

"I will buy a study planner. I will make it as a hobby so I can have time for English, I will have free time to study English. I will read novels; I will have activities with my friends outside the classroom. I have a special time with my family to speak English with them. I do take part time English courses to make my English better".

Besides student F7 opinion on how she plans her schedule to study English, student F8 also said,

"I try to manage my timetable. I buy a study planner and I create a group and study together with my friends. We can share a lot of knowledge and ideas with our friends. I participate activity in English club and every time I google new words and I have a special time to speak with my family around one hour".

For metacognitive strategies, both the male and female students listed some similar strategies to improve their English. According to the responses of the male and female students, they used the same methods to organize their learning through the use of timetables, schedules and study planners. Based on student M7 and M8, they both set aside time for activities to learn English and set goals in order to achieve their objectives towards learning English and organizing their own learning. Both female students however, also set aside time for English-language related activities with friends and family.

Based on the SILL survey, students used metacognitive strategies such as finding ways to use their English, noticing their English mistakes and using that information to improve, paying attention when someone speaks English and so on. These students relied on and favoured looking for opportunities to speak and to listen to others speak.

The strategies allowed students to monitor their own learning processes and set learning goals as well as look for opportunities as often as possible to listen to and use the language. There were no major differences in terms of using this strategy between the male and female students.

4.3.5 Gender and the use of Affective Strategies

In response to the question: What do you do when you feel nervous when you study English in class?, student M9 and M10, stated that they would go to the library to look for reference books or ask the teacher so that they will not feel nervous.

M9 – "I go to the library and make some research about English subjects. Sometimes I just use google translate or I just ask the teacher". Maybe I will just

take note and make research".

M10 - "When I feel nervous in class, I go to the library and look for reference book or I will ask my lecturer to help me out or to give me some hint, some definition of the word and stuff like that. This is how I manage to overcome the stress in class".

Student F9 emphasized that when she feels nervous, she takes a deep breath to calm herself down and at the same time she will try to smile among her friends to calm her mind in the process of learning. She also said that,

"If I feel nervous, I will keep quiet and at the same time, I take note about what I do not understand. After the class, I will ask my friends to explain to me what the lecturer taught in the class".

Meanwhile, student F10 reported that she tries to be relaxed whenever she feels nervous and she also mentioned that if she does not understand something that she learns in class, she uses some apps to search the words or ask her lecturer for better understanding.

Based on male students' responses, to overcome their nervousness in class as a result of not understanding their English lessons, they are inclined to go to the library afterwards and do some research. Meanwhile the female students strive to remain calm and relaxed whenever they feel nervous in their English class. Both the male and female students, however, are similar in that they turn to their lecturers or instructors to seek clarification of what they do not understand, i.e., the source of their nervousness.

In response to the following question: How do you encourage yourself when you feel tense or nervous?, student M9 said that he takes take a deep breath and focuses in class so that he will have a clear mind. As he said,

"Sometimes I will just say to myself, all is well. Take a deep breath; I will just focus in the class or I will clear my mind for a while and focus".

Student M10 revealed the following:

"When I'm presenting something, they do listen to me and they show some respect. They tell me my area of improvements and stuff like that. Lecturers of course, he or she does all the time, my friends yes they do. Basically what I do is that I motivate myself because of my parents spending on me".

On the other hand, student F9 believes that self-confidence is very important in studies so she pushes herself to have positive thoughts to learn and to ask her lecturers questions without being afraid. She also mentioned that,

"I try to be brave inside the classroom and also I will try to be active inside the classroom when my lecturer is teaching".

Student F10 also said that she motivates herself by telling herself that she should not be worried or scared to face the nervousness. As she said,

"I will always tell to myself that I shouldn't be scared or worried or I can face it. After that I won't feel scared or worried about anything".

Regarding affective strategies, the male and female students expressed some differences in the ways they regulate their emotions to lower their anxiety. Student M9 tries to lower his nervousness by using relaxation and deep breathing whereas student M10 encourages

himself to converse in English when he makes mistakes. However, female students turned to their teachers or peers to control their feelings to monitor their learning and to enhance language learning. The females were in different in that they worked at being self-confident and discussed their feelings with others. It also correlates with the SILL survey as many students motivated themselves to speak English although they were afraid of making mistakes and talked to someone else about how they felt when learning English.

4.3.6   Gender and the use of Social Strategies

In response to the question: What do you do when you do not understand something in English?, student M11 reported the following;

"Well, if I don't understand something in English, I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk. I don't feel shy or embarrassed when they correct me because I am learning something new and it's for myself and not for them".

Student M11 also reported that if he does not understand something in class, he prefers to ask his friends, "I feel more comfortable talking to my friends than the lecturers".

Meanwhile, student M12 stated that,

"I will ask my friends to slow down or repeat the words again so that I can catch up and understand the meaning of the words. I would turn to my friends and try to get help from them. I would guess the meaning of the word first and let them reveal the meaning of the word. I will also ask help from some English speakers so that I can learn the meaning of the word".

Female students similarly made use of social strategies. Student F11 reported that, "If I do not understand something in English, I will ask my friends that who understands well to make sure that I understand and I will ask them to slow down or say it again. They understand well and they will answer me back".

Whereas student F12 said that,

"If I do not understand something in English, I will ask the other person to slow down or say it again so that I can understand well and it makes me feel confident. I will ask English speakers to correct me when I talk by that I will improve my English".

When the interviewer asked whether she would feel shy or get embarrassed when somebody corrected her, student F12 said, "I don't feel that because for me I want to learn".

According to the responses of the male student, M12, and the female students, they both ask help from English speakers and their friends; they also ask their interlocutors to slow down or repeat. Meanwhile, student M11 asks English speakers to correct him when he speaks as he does not feel embarrassed if someone corrects him.

In response to the following question: How do you practice English with others?, student M11 said,

"I practice English with others by practicing English with my friends. In this way, I will not be afraid to talk in English. Even though I mess up, my friends wouldn't judge me because they know that I am trying to learn something. They also can take something from this and they also can learn to talk in English".

Whereas M12 emphasized that,

"I prefer to speak English with fluent English speakers and ask them to correct me if I make mistake so that I can learn from my mistakes and improve my language. I will also try my best to speak in English whenever given the chance to. I will form a study group so that I can learn English language more. I will try to learn about the culture of English speakers and start from there. Try to pick up some words to learn".

Meanwhile, student F11 revealed that,

"I will practice like I will communicate with my family members and my friends every time in English. I will ask English speakers to correct me when I talk before I start my conversation; I will try to plan what I am going to say to correct my grammar".

Similarly, student F12 reported that,

"I speak English with my parents every day at home and they always correct me when I talk. They encourage me to use new words. But after my parents always correct me and I always feel like it's getting better. Other than that, I speak English with my friends so my friends will always help me and encourage me to do the same things as what my parents did. In addition, I will also ask English speakers because they have more experience and they can share lots of information in English, they can make me feel confident to talk or present in front".

With regard to the social strategies, both the male and female students mostly used similar methods as there were no major differences in their responses. Male and female students tend to practice English with their friends or other speakers. They also ask for correction from English speakers and cooperate with proficient users of English.

Based on the SILL survey, most of the students are comfortable asking their peers to practice with them. When using social strategies to improve their English, the students are able to practice communication and build relationships. Social strategies allow possibilities in second language learning and promote greater activity among students. Overall, most of the students like to be active. When they feel relaxed, they learn a language easily according to Oxford, (1990). Wong (2011), similarly found her students to be greater users of social strategies and relatively lower users of memory and affective strategies.

4.4   Conclusion

Based on the finding obtained from the questionnaire, metacognitive strategies were highly used among the six categories of language learning strategies while memory, affective and compensation strategies were less frequently used.

Metacognitive strategies are crucial for effective language learning since they facilitate and expand their own learning process through planning, organizing, focusing, seeking opportunities to use the language and monitoring and evaluating language use. As discussed above, the finding of this study is compatible with results of several studies which have investigated the types and frequency of use of strategies by learners of English. Based on the analysis of the semi structured interview data, twelve males and twelve females appeared to use many language learning strategies, some of which were similar methods in the process of learning English.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter of this research study provides a brief review of quantitative and qualitative results, a discussion of the pedagogical implications for theory and practice and recommendations for future research.

5.2 Overview of the Study

The aim of the present study is to investigate the types of language learning strategies employed by ESL students and examine the differences in strategy use according to gender. 172 students from Malaysia University of Science and Technology took part in the study. The participants were in the final year of the Diploma in Logistics and Freight Forwarding programme and were of mixed proficiency level.

The instrument used for the quantitative method is the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) by Oxford (1990). The instrument consists of 50 statements covering six language learning strategies. The data obtained were analyzed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) and interpreted using mean scores.

The instrument used for the qualitative method is interview questions (See Appendix 2). The questions were extracted from the SILL in order to get more in-depth explanations from the students on their use of language learning strategies in order to determine if differences existed in the use of language learning strategies

between genders.

5.3   Summary of the Findings

This section provides a summary of the findings of this study. The findings are discussed according to the research questions of the study.

RQ 1: What types of language learning strategies do ESL students at Malaysia University of Science and Technology use?

To answer the first research question, the SILL was administered to the students to identify the types of language learning strategies used. The six categories of language learning strategies as proposed by Oxford (1990) namely "memory", "cognitive", "compensation", "metacognitive", "affective" and "social" strategies have been used as a framework to analyze the questionnaire data. The analysis of questionnaire data revealed that the most commonly used strategy was metacognitive strategies. These students reported putting in effort to take responsibility of their learning. Specifically, the sub- strategy of metacognitive strategies that had the highest mean score was; item 32- "I try to find out how to be a better learner of English" (M= 3.78). Another frequently used metacognitive strategy was item 31 (M= 3.66): "I pay attention when someone is speaking English". This strategy highlights the students' consciousness of their own responsibility in learning the language. Students stated that they see their mistakes in English and use that information to enable them to improve (item 30). Also, they reported that they reflect on their progress in learning, (item 35: M = 3.62). Another metacognitive strategy that is frequently used by the students was (item 33: M = 3.60): "I look for people I can talk to in English". As Khansir & Pakdel (2016) observed, out of the six subgroups of strategies only "metacognitive strategies only

"metacognitive" strategies are used frequently by all the students, implying that managing and organizing their language learning is more important for them than any other thing. According to Ho & Ng's (2016) study, metacognitive strategies were highly used by the undergraduate students in a Malaysian public university which was similar to the present study.

Meanwhile social strategies were ranked as the second most-used strategy in this study. As far as the strategy of asking for clarification or verification is concerned, it is used when learners are not sure about anything connected with language learning and need to ask somebody for help, for example, item 45: "If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again". Therefore, this strategy is regarded as "asking the speaker to repeat, paraphrase, explain, slow down, or give examples; asking if a specific utterance is correct or if a rule fits a particular case; paraphrasing or repeating to get feedback on whether something is correct" (Oxford 1990: pg. 146). Another frequently used social strategy was item 48: "I ask for help from English speakers". The strategy of "cooperating with proficient users of the new language" refers to working with other people mostly outside the classroom, which means cooperating with native speakers or other proficient users. In a study conducted by Alhaysony (2012) to investigate the use of vocabulary learning strategies among Saudi students, social strategies were found to be popular. Female students tend to build relationships and utilize social networks with more consistency than male students.

Cognitive strategies were ranked the third most-used strategy by the students. The sub-strategy of cognitive strategies that had the highest mean score was as follows, item 12: (M= 3.73): "I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English". By watching movies or shows spoken in English, the students get to

listen to more English outside the classroom. The second highest mean score was for item 13: (M = 3.63): "I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English". The preferred one nowadays, is writing e-mails, which may be utilized for language learning. This strategy develops creativity, cooperation and communication among learners. Oxford (1990) highlights that such activities, which learners are participating in, can cause an increase in learners´ confidence in using the new language, better attitude and motivation.

Compensation strategies were ranked the fourth most used strategy among the students. The sub-strategies of compensation strategies that had the highest mean score were as follows: (item 29: M = 3.53): "If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing"; item 24: (M= 3.48): "To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses". The strategy of using linguistic clues is based on linguistic knowledge which learners are already familiar with and are able to use in order to guess meanings of unknown vocabulary or grammar. The strategy of using gestures is considered to be natural for learners because it is normally used in the mother tongue as well. Learners try to demonstrate the meanings of words they cannot retrieve or do not know with the help of gestures or facial expressions. Comparable result was found by (Alhaysony, 2017) who conducted a study on the language learning strategies (LLS) used by Saudi EFL students at Aljouf University. Compensation strategies were favoured over memory and affective strategies by the participants in his study.

The findings also demonstrated that affective strategies were not commonly used by the students as it was ranked the fifth most-used strategy. The results of the analysis reveal that affective strategies were used with a lower frequency level. This may be because the students believe that they do not need to find ways to lower their anxiety since they could acquire a language using more mechanical activities such as writing several

times, memorizing with the help of a dictionary or doing practice test activities that do not arouse anxiety or nervousness. The infrequent use of affective strategies may account for the fact that students tend to worry about passing exams (Van Den Hurk, 2006).

Memory strategies, which are probably more known under the name of "mnemonics", relate to new information including remembering words. Nevertheless, for most learners learning vocabulary means a complicated process and a difficult task to cope with. In this study, the least used strategy was memory strategies. This study's findings are in line with those of Bedir (2002) also whose participants showed favoured for the use of memory strategies but instead favoured metacognitive strategies.

RQ 2: How do male and female students differ in their use of language learning strategies?

To answer the second research question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 students who had opted for the higher scales in the questionnaire survey to identify the similarities and differences between male and female students in their use of language learning strategies.

The analysis demonstrated that there were not many differences in the use of language learning strategies between male and female students. Both genders mostly used similar methods for cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social categories of language learning strategies. With regard to cognitive strategies, the results revealed that both genders used similar strategies such as summarizing the information they heard or read in class. Meanwhile the female students also used skimming to determine the main idea of the text and to get the idea quickly. In addition to the strategy of taking notes, summarizing is helpful for learners because it makes them understand new information

better.

In terms of compensation strategies both male and female students also used similar strategies such as they preferred to rely on the interlocutor's gestures to make guesses on meaning and also linked new information with the knowledge they already had in order to make more accurate guesses. The use of compensation strategies shows that male and female students are not afraid of taking risks when trying to make guesses. All in all, there are many activities based on guessing unknown words which teachers could introduce into their lessons to prevent learners relying on dictionaries only.

Both genders also used similar metacognitive strategies such as looking for opportunities to speak and to listen to others speak. They also paid attention to their interlocutors and set aside time for group activities with friends and family. One of the most important strategies for learners is seeking practice opportunities, which is connected to the cognitive strategy of practicing naturalistically. These learners, both male and female, seemed aware of the need to search for ways to improve their language skills outside the classroom.

The results revealed that both genders used similar affective strategies such as both genders turned to their lecturers to seek clarification of what they did not understand. This may suggest that male and female learners are inclined to share their emotions with one another. These learners seemed aware of the need to pay attention to their feelings which can influence their learning. One of the reasons why there is no difference in learning strategies in both males and females in this study may be because of the culture and the educational system (Viriya & Sapsirin, 2014).

Both genders also used similar social strategies such as practicing English with their friends or other speakers. They also ask for correction from English speakers and cooperate with proficient users of English. This strategy refers to working with other people mostly outside the classroom, which means cooperating with native speakers or other proficient users. When learners need help in language learning, it is natural that they turn to more proficient language users. This strategy is connected with the strategy of asking questions as well.

Unlike many studies that have found a link between gender and the use of LLS (Chou, 2002; Al-Otaibi, 2004), the findings of this study provide evidence of the absence of gender difference in the use of language learning strategies.

Similarly, a study conducted by Al-Otaibi (2004) revealed that there were no differences in the use of the six language learning strategies between genders. When comparison of the six categories of language learning strategies was made, the results showed that male and female students did not reveal any differences in strategy use except in the case of memory strategies. As Ellis (2008) commented, there is not one set of language learning strategies that is used by the "good language learner". Rather, learning strategies that can be viewed as "good language learning strategies" vary based on the learner, context, particular language task, and so forth.

5.4   Pedagogical Implications

There are several pedagogical implications arising from this study. Given the infrequent use of compensation, memory and affective strategies in comparison to the other three strategies (metacognitive, social and cognitive), there is a need to expose students to these three categories of language learning strategies. Specifically, learners should be introduced to the different sub-categories of three language learning strategies and encouraged to use those strategies.

As language teachers, we should give guidelines to our students on how they can learn language more easily using compensation, affective and memory strategies. Lessons should be dedicated to practising not only new vocabulary and grammar but to repeat all vocabulary and grammar explained in order to make it automatic for the learners. If teachers are creative, they can teach repeating in an enjoyable way.

When learners come across unfamiliar words they should be encouraged to ask their teacher or to guess the meaning of the words. There are many activities based on guessing unfamiliar words and teachers should integrate them into their lessons to prevent learners from relying on dictionaries only. Thus, learners should be encouraged to develop a range of compensation strategies.

Oxford (1990) emphasized that instructors may create positive atmosphere of the classroom for the students in order to control their language learning. Affective strategies can help learners take control of their anxiety during the learning process and reduce it. Learners should therefore be offered tasks which are enjoyable for them and which support creating a pleasant atmosphere in classroom without any stress and anxiety. Oxford (1990) suggests various kinds of activities

which reduce learners´ nervousness, e.g., role playing and games which teachers can adapt for use in their language classrooms.

5.5   Suggestions for Further Research

Several considerations for future studies can be recommended from the discoveries on the role of gender and language learning strategies in learning English. Since this study was directed with a limited number of university students, different studies need to be replicated with bigger samples with various proficiency levels to decide the validity of the discoveries of this study.

This study seems to be the first that has investigated language learning strategies by using SILL and semi-structured interviews in ESL tertiary setting in Malaysia. It would be worthwhile to conduct further studies using different methodologies to explore the influence of gender on the use of language learning strategies.

The participants in this study were young adults but the age factor was excluded from the study. Additionally, future studies should compare other age groups. Also, different variables, for example, attitude, motivation, social background and learning styles ought to be investigated in further research.

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