IDENTIFICATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY BS ENGLISH MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SWAT

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ABSTRACT

This research work tried to find out the English language learning strategies used by the students of BS English at the University of Swat. The approach adopted was quantitive and an adopted questionnaire from the Oxford Study Inventory for Language Learner (1990) was administered to 100 participants for collecting the data. The data collected was analysed through SPSS. The findings of the study show that all the participants employed various types of strategies for learning English. The strategies identified were cognitive, affective, social and metacognitive in nature. However, the most frequently utilized strategy came out to be the memory strategy, whereas the least used strategy was identified to be the metacognitive strategy. However, with respect to gender, no significant differences were found between the male and female students in their use of different strategies. Apart from showing the types of strategies used by the BS English students of the University of Swat and the frequency of each method, the study suggests it to the academicians that males and females learn language in the same way and therefore both can be taught in the same way.

Keywords: *English language learning strategies; strategy inventory for language learner (SILL); gender differences; memory strategy; metacognitive strategy.*

Introduction

English is measured as the additional language of Pakistan. It is very central because it is spoken globally and is used for gaining information in different fields. It is used in Pakistan and is also a major motivational factor in learning (Yunus et al., 2013). Language Learning can take more time and it is a very complex process (Hashim et al., 2018). Language learning is a practice in which the mental capability of the learners is developed (Hashim et al., 2018). Learning a language necessitates the use of techniques, processes, and routines. According to (Namaziandost et al., (2020), strategies of learning are the stages, plans, behaviours, or activities that beginners use to get the information they acquire. According to (Aliakbari & Hayatzadeh, (2008), strategies of learning can be well-defined as steps, actions, plans or activities performed by the students in delivering the data they acquired. Learners used different strategies to expand and increase language learning process for that we need to know about the style of a language learner and the preferred strategies, because learners have different style of learning and for that they use different strategies, which work for one learner and may not help the other learner. Learners enhance their acquisition for that they use different kinds of procedures, actions, storage processes or retrieval of information, all these kinds of learner activities come into the categories of language learning schemes according to (Green & Oxford, (1995). To achieve autonomy, self-reliance, and self-direction in learning, learners can take responsibility by employing

learning strategies (Wharton, 2000). In the field of cognitive psychology, learners can augment their prior knowledge by using specific language strategies that aid in developing their existing schemata (Utara, n.d.). Once the teacher-centered approach becomes less prominent, learners may become autonomous and encouraged to pursue independent learning through a learner-centered approach, which is essential in acquiring a second language. Acquiring information and enhancing skills and attitudes signify learning, it often leads to changes in behavior (Rubaai et al., 2019). While linguistic ability and intelligence are factors contributing to effective learning, success in language acquisition is also influenced by educational background, language learning strategies, and inspiration. Employing effective language learning strategies facilitates a more conducive, organized, and effective learning process. In this regard, in a target language, language learners are required to think and take specific actions referred to as Language Learning Strategies (Chamot, 2004). Hence, learning strategy is defined as "a process by which the learner acquires knowledge more easily, rapidly, in a self-directed manner, authentically, and always applicable to new settings" (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2007). Language learning strategies, their identification, description, and their connection with additional elements for instance age, gender, competence level, and inspiration constitute the basics in the arena of study in second language acquirement (Chamot, 2004).

Applied research aims to assist second language learners by teaching them to become proficient users of language learning strategies identified by descriptive studies as characteristics of a "good language learner" (Chamot, 2004). Language learning strategies for second language novices offer opportunities to identify and employ strategies suitable for their learning style. Language learning strategies encompass actions, methods for storing and retrieving knowledge, and the use of L2 that language learners work to accelerate their acquisition of L2 (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2007). Language learning strategies also assess the manner of second language learning and students' competency in that language (Yunus et al., 2013). Therefore, language learning strategies are instrumental for learners to turn into a successful language learners of the target language (Rubaai et al., 2019). Language learning strategies encompass the various methods, activities, and techniques students utilize to improve their expertise in a second language (Yunus et al., 2013). These strategies encourage students to monitor their language learning progress independently. The critical factor distinguishing successful language learners from less effective ones is the frequency and preferences for using language learning strategies (Rubaai et al., (2019). It is fundamental to recognize the learning techniques utilized by successful learners to assist less successful learners in becoming proficient language learners. Therefore, second language

learners can be trained to use various strategies to become proficient in the target language (Namaziandost et al., (2020). Learners can adjust and adapt language learning strategies to their style after mastering and practicing how to use and apply them. Language learning strategies play a key role in two ways: firstly, they help learners to be responsive of the learning process, including effective, social, and cognitive aspects, and secondly, they assist students who struggle with second language learning by communicating the strategies of an effective language learners (Namaziandost et al., 2020). Language learning strategies are not only beneficial for learners but also for teachers, making their teaching more effective and easier (Rubaai et al., 2019). Over the past decade, research has investigated how factors like gender, along with language learning methods, influence success in acquiring a second language.

The study on the identification of English language learning strategies among BS English male and female students at the University of Swat incorporates insights from various critical works. The role of humor in English language teaching has been explored to improve student engagement (Ali et al., 2015). Similarly, the study by Rahman et al. (2015) investigates the gap between teachers' beliefs and practices in English language teaching and provides a lens to assess instructional challenges. In the same vein, Ali et al. explore gender differences in learning strategies and job titles, and the critical analysis by the authors offer perspectives relevant to this research (2020). Furthermore, another study concerning Attitudes of Pashto speakers towards English highlights sociolinguistic factors affecting language learning (Ali & Rahman, 2020). Studies on punctuation errors and reading skills among Pakistani students help frame the broader context of linguistic challenges (Ali et al., 2020; Khan, Ali, Khan et al., 2019). Finally, the study by Ali et al. (2020) in respect of the role of code-switching as a teaching strategy provides insights into classroom dynamics.

The analysis of English language learning strategies among BS English students benefits from research addressing language characterization (Ali et al., 2018), conversational analysis in linguistic contexts (Ali et al., 2019a; 2019b; 2019c), and effective communication practices such as nonverbal cues and paralinguistics. Issues like punctuation errors and learners' attitudes towards linguistic standards (Ali et al. 2020a; 2020b) highlight the challenges in academic and cultural integration. Additionally, studies on gender representation in literature (Ishtiaq et al., 2021), transliteration effects on pronunciation (Ishtiaq et al., 2022), and systemic linguistic patterns (Ishtia et al., 2022) further contextualize the intricacies of language acquisition and instructional strategies. These references collectively underscore the multi-faceted nature of English language education in diverse contexts.

Literature Review
Language Learning Strategies
Research on language learning strategies has been conducted for an extended period, but formal recognition in this regard has been a recent development. Since the 1970s, research on language learning strategies has expanded. The primary focus of Language Learning Strategies (henceforth LLS) research is understanding how learners acquire knowledge, identifying factors contributing to successful learning, and exploring variations in learning speeds among learners. Investigating learning methods, as a component of LLS (Alhaysony, 2017), offers potential solutions to these challenges. LLS are crucial as they empower learners who receive training to become the most effective and successful language learners. LLS enhance learners' L2 skills, foster greater autonomy, and contribute to the acquisition of L2 knowledge (Alhaysony, 2017). Simply put, language learning strategies enable learners to accomplish language tasks with ease (Hashim et al., 2018), fostering independence, continual learning, and self-sufficiency (Pickering et al., 1991). LLS bring language learners' autonomy, linguistic competence, and actively engage students in the learning process. Importantly, they are not only valuable for successful language learners but also for those facing challenges, helping them understand their learning deficiencies and steering their learning in the right direction (Alhaysony, 2017). Additionally, LLS are crucial for educators to adapt lessons in a second language for learners facing difficulties (Alhaysony, 2017). According to Hong-Nam and Leavell (2007: p. 224), LLS encompass the following constituents: i. Contribute to communicative competency ii. Enable learners to turn into more self-directed iii. Prolong the part of instructor's iv. Are problem-directed v. Involve unique strategies used by the student vi. Include various elements of the learner, not just the perceptive vii. Aid understanding together explicitly and implicitly viii. Are not continuously noticeable ix. Are often mindful x. Can be taught xi. Are adaptable xii. Are affect by a multiplicity of elements.

Definition of Language Learning Strategies
According to Alhaysony (2017) LLS can be defined as the process undertaken by learners to improve the gaining process, remembering, retrieval, and performance in the target language. Marina (2017) viewed that it is a process of thoughts and a specific attitude which the learners bring in mind during learning a second language. They focused on the attitude and thoughts of the learners that directly influence the learner's internal coding process. After that, Aliakbari & Hayatzadeh (2008) extensively defined LLS as the attitude and behaviors of the learners that directly influence how the learners go through the specific information. According to Alhaysony (2017), language learning strategies can also be defined as finding out the meanings of a target and foreign language with respect to behavior (pp. 18-28). In cognitive theory, it can be defined as knowledge about strategy

used in learning a language, while it can be defined as motivation and learners' attitude with respect to their affective aspect. Alhaysony (2017) also highlighted that language learning strategies are phases taken by the learners in acquisition, daily routines, processes, storing information, recalling prior information, and using that information in the attainment of a second language. According to Alhaysony (2017), LLS is a behavior that learners are taking consciously that aids them to understand, learn, and get new knowledge about learning in the target language. Oxford (1990) widens this notion by arguing that the goal of adopting LLS is to make learning easier, faster, more pleasant, self-directed, effective, and transferable to other settings. LLS are intentionally chosen by the language learner, according to Yunus et al. (2013). In recent discussions, language learning strategies (LLS) have been characterized as the deliberate instruments learners employ to actively and autonomously enhance their language acquisition process (Griffiths, 2008b; Oxford, 2011b). In this current study, LLS is conceptualized as the measures learners undertake to bolster their language proficiency. Learning strategies encompass unique methods employed by learners to simplify learning, accelerate it, broaden its scope, increase enjoyment, foster self-direction, enhance efficiency, and facilitate transferability to diverse contexts.

Classification of Language Learning Strategies

Primary Strategies: Memory techniques, cognitive strategies, and compensatory methods are the main kinds of direct learning strategies. Memory methods assist learners in associating one L2 concept or idea with another without requiring deep understanding (Oxford, 2003, p.13). Different methods associated with memory facilitate learners in organizing and recalling information systematically. For instance, mnemonic devices such as acronyms aid in creating a coherent sequence for retrieval. Similarly, auditory techniques like rhyming assist in memorization through sound associations, while visual strategies involve forming mental images of words or their meanings. The keyword method combines auditory and visual elements for enhanced retention. Furthermore, kinesthetic approaches like total physical response engage body movement in the learning process. Mechanical tools like flashcards and spatial cues such as location on a page or blackboard also play crucial roles in aiding memory recall (Oxford, 2003). Cognitive strategies allow students to interact directly with language materials by using techniques such as note-taking, thinking, charting, synthesising, reorganising data to improve comprehension, summarising, formal practice of constructions and sounds, and immersion in realistic settings (Oxford, 2003). Compensation mechanisms, on the other hand, allow learners to effectively use the language in both speaking and writing, even when information breaks exist. These tactics fall into twofold categories: clever guessing and overcoming restrictions in verbal and written expression (Zare, 2012). According to Cohen (1998), as

stated in Oxford (2003), compensation methods, sometimes known as communication strategies when used for speaking and writing, are primarily intended to facilitate language usage rather than language acquisition. It is critical to distinguish these from language learning strategies.

Secondary Strategies: Indirect language learning techniques encompass three distinct categories: social, affective, and metacognitive (Oxford's (1990a). These strategies are worked to indirectly backing language comprehension devoid of directly addressing the target language. Social strategies, occurring within interpersonal interactions, facilitate communication and empathetic understanding (Canale, 1983) cited in (Paredes, 2010). (Alhaysony, 2017). Examples of social strategies include requesting clarification, paraphrasing, or asking for a slower pace of speech to enhance comprehension. Affective techniques cater to learners' emotional needs, fostering confidence and perseverance necessary for active language acquisition, including anxiety reduction and embracing errors with humor. Metacognitive methods include aspects for organising, supervising, and measuring the language acquisition process (Fewell, 2010). Oxford (1990) divided the structure of SILL into six main categories: Affective strategies are employed to reduce anxiety, enhance self-confidence, and foster self-appreciation for motivation. Social strategies involve posing various language-related questions, establishing effective relationships with English native speakers, gaining a better understanding of the language, and learning about the values of English native narrators. Metacognitive strategies are utilized to monitor progress in language learning, plan language acquisition effectively, identify opportunities for using the English language, and concentrate on fundamental language usage and errors. 4. Memory-related strategies include forming study groups, employing visualization, recognizing patterns, using gestures, and engaging in systematic review. Cognitive processes, such as reasoning, analysis, summarization, and practice, are integral to language learning. Compensatory techniques involve addressing gaps in knowledge, such as extracting connotation from perspective or utilizing signals and other synonymous expressions to enhance speech delivery.

Factors in Language Learning Use

Several studies suggest that numerous variables directly influence the optimal of language learning strategies (see Oxford, 1989b). Factors such as age, gender, attitude toward a second language, motivation intensity, learning objectives, motivational alignment, personality, language learning strategy preference, learning style, aptitude, career orientation, birthplace, preferred teaching approaches in a classroom setting, specific tasks, language being learned, time spent on learning, and knowledge about the second language are among these factors. Out of these characteristics, language teaching methods, language proficiency level, area of

gaining expertise, and national derivation are said to be closely related to learners' language learning strategies. However, to draw conclusions, researchers need to elaborate on other factors contributing to second language learning. To date, research has revealed developing evidence of gender and racial differences. Research findings suggest differences in approaches to second language learning between males and females. For example, Pulitzer (1983) discovered that females exhibited a notably higher tendency to engage in social interactions related to second language acquisition outside of classroom settings compared to males. Additionally, females were found to employ language learning techniques more recurrently across various strategy categories, including prescribed rule-based practice strategies, general study strategies, and conversational/input elicitation strategies (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006). Furthermore, in a study concerning personality traits in language learners conducted by Utara (n.d.), it was noted that females demonstrated considerably larger usage of four specific types of language learning techniques compared to males. These techniques encompassed extensive study strategies, purposeful exercise strategies, strategies for seeking out and conveying sense, and self-management strategies. Nationality and ethnicity are among the elements that can mark language learning processes, according to various previous studies. Oriental learners, for example, are more likely to employ rote memorization and linguistic procedures than communicative tactics, as demonstrated by research (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006). In a study on learning style inclinations, it was observed that ESL students' preferences for learning modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile) were intensely inclined by their linguistic upbringing. Additionally, some countries, according to Reid, were resistant to supportive learning and chosen to work independently. Numerous research investigations have indicated that career orientation, often associated with one's university major or current job title, plays a role in the selection of language learning strategies (Oxford, 1989b). Similarly, Politzer and McGroarty (1985) conducted a study supporting the view that profession orientation, whether in engineering/science or social science/humanities, impacts language acquisition processes.

Gender and Language Learning Strategy

In the realm of L2 learning, gender poses a significant challenge with notable theoretical and pedagogical implications. This aspect has garnered considerable attention within the perspective of Language Learning Strategies (LLS). Various studies have highlighted the significant influence of gender on adolescents' language acquisition processes. Many studies examining gender as a factor in LLS usage consistently found large gender differences, with females employing LLS more frequently than males (Green & Oxford, 1995). According to Schillerstrom et al. (2007), males generally use social LS less than females. Aliakbari and Hayatzadeh

(2008) noted that in four specific extents—regular study strategies, practical rehearsal strategies, strategies for conveying meaning, and self-management strategies—females displayed significantly greater utilization of LLS compared to males. Green and Oxford (1995) reported alike results in a sample of University of Puerto Rico students, concluding that females utilized techniques much extra frequently than males. Aliakbari and Hayatzadeh (2008) conducted an investigation into variations in second language vocabulary acquisition strategies among genders. Their findings suggest that there are disparities in the quantity and kinds of vocabulary learning strategies employed by males and females. Specifically, in their examination of 1006 Chinese English students, it was observed that females exhibited expressively higher utilization across all six strategy sets compared to males. Moreover, females demonstrated increased proficiency in nine additional strategies. Chang (2004) argued that adult males and females differ in various ways, including approach utilization, due to distinct upbringing and societal expectations. Contrary to the above perspectives, some research findings suggest that gender does not influence LLS use. Kim (1995) conducted a study indicating that there were no substantial dissimilarities in method use among male and female Korean adult English learners. Similarly, Oh (1996) arrived at a similar conclusion regarding the bearing of gender on the usage of techniques among Korean English learners in their study. Hong Nam and Leavell (2006) found that Vietnamese females use fewer LLS than males, and Aliakbari and Hayatzadeh (2008) obtained similar results with Turkish university student applicants. In general, the existing body of research exploring gender differences in language learning strategies (LLS) underscores the need for additional inquiry into this matter. This includes examining the issue within everyday contexts as well as conducting specific case studies on Pakistani L2 learners.

There are gender disparities in the utilization of LLS, in accordance with limitless previous research. Female university students utilized greater social approaches than male pupils, according to Politzer (1983). In their search on the use of LLS by potential undergraduate language learners in distant locations, (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006) found 'that females favored the use of cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies more often than males.' (Nyikos, 1990; Tran, 1988) observed 'that males adopted unique structures more than females in their study.' Tran (1988) investigated the acculturation of immigrant Vietnamese in the United States, ranging from 40 to 92, and determined that males reported using more techniques to analyze and enhance their English language skills. Furthermore, in a study examining potential test type bias in memory assessments among college diploma novice males and females of German, Nyikos (1990) found that adult males used larger precise techniques. Female beginners utilized elevated seeking, good practice, self-management, and

speaking ability strategies more than male learners, according to Ehrman and Oxford (1989). (Green & Oxford, 1995) also observed that females employed larger strategies than males. Wharton (2000) determined that male university students in Singapore used larger techniques than females. There were no significant gender differences, according to Lou (1998) and Peng (2001). The category of method adopted by males and females differs according to gender. Female university students used larger conversational and enter techniques (Marina, 2017), social reading techniques (Wharton, 2000), and memory and metacognitive methods than male students (Khalil, 2005). In contrast to these findings, Shmais (2003) located no variations in technique utilization between adult males and females among university students. This could be attributed to the participants' background as university English majors, who typically possess a bottomless considerate of the foreign language learning process and the strategies needed for proficiency compared to other groups. A study conducted in Singapore found no gender differences in the variety or types of methods employed by bilingual foreign language learners (Wharton, 2000). This lack of gender disparity may be due to the language acquisition skills of multilingual learners, which might have mitigated any potential gender biases. The utilization of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) by Arabic students was discovered with the beneficial resource (Alhaysony, 2017). Compensation and emotive strategies were found to be the most commonly employed, whereas social and cognitive strategies were viewed to be the least often used. The research also revealed significant gender disparities in familiar LLS use, with female university students using them additional often than male students. Abu Radwan (2011) investigated the potential links between the utilization of language learning methodologies and gender, English competency, and time spent studying English. The study enlisted the participation of 128 English majors at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman. The findings confirmed that university students employed metacognitive strategies much extra than any other category of strategies, with memory methods being the least used by the participants. Gender, major, affection for the English language, and earlier practice in an English-speaking country were utilized to examine the links between LLS use and the participants' gender. Compensation was the most famous category overall. Social strategies came in second, while memory strategies received the least attention. Most of the strategy items had significant gender differences, with males utilizing them more often than females. In conclusion, research on Language Learning Strategies (LLS) has evolved since the 1970s, highlighting their pivotal role in knowledge acquisition, successful learning, and diverse learning speeds.

Research Methodology

Introduction

The primary objectives of this learning were to recognize the language learning strategies utilized by BS English students at the University of Swat, which could significantly impact their proficiency in a second language. Additionally, the study aimed to investigate potential variations in the practice of language learning strategies based on gender (males and females) at the University of Swat. The research methodology adopted a quantitative approach, and data collection relied on the Strategy Inventory for Language Learners. The study involved a total of one hundred participants, with data analysis primarily conducted using SPSS.

Research Design

A quantitative research design was pragmatic to examine the language learning strategies among undergraduate ESL learners of English at the University of Swat and to explore gender variations in the practice of language learning techniques. The quantitative approach was chosen for more objective and accurate outcomes.

Population

The population for this study entailed of ESL leaners, all of whom were pursuing a Bachelor of Studies (BS) in English. Additionally, these students were actively engaged in language classrooms aimed at enhancing their English language skills.

Sampling

A random sampling of (100) students of both sexes was taken from the University of Swat for the survey questionnaire of LLS version 17 developed by Oxford (1990). All (100) participants (61 men and 39 females) were aged 18-20 years = 41, 20-22 years = 28 people, and 22-24 years = 31.

Table 1:   Demographic Description of Participants

Gender	Frequency/Number	Percent %
Male	61	61 %
Female	39	39 %
Total	100	100 %

Age wise			
Years	18 – 20	41	41%
	20 – 22	28	28%
	22 – 24	31	31%
Total		100	100%

Instruments Used for Collection of Data

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learner (SILL) was the main tool for data collection in this study. The SILL consists of 50 items used in this study to determine the frequency of language learning strategies (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2007). Reliability coefficients for the SILL-based questionnaire range from .85 to .98, making it a more reliable instrument for learners' language learning strategy

use (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006). Many researchers claim that a reliability value of (.7) is acceptable for language learning strategy use. This study employed a three-point Likert scale for investigating LLS, with values ranging from 1 to 3 (always, sometimes, never). Learners were asked to indicate which strategy items they were using while learning a second language. When finalized, the SILL data offers a composite score for each set of strategy. After inputting the data from the Strategy Inventory for Language Learner (SILL) into SPSS, it described which strategy category the learners used most and least while learning English as a second language: (1) "High Usage" (2.3-3), (2) "Medium Usage" (1.67– 2.3), and (3) "Low Usage" (1 – 1.66), such scale ranges were established by Oxford (1990). The researchers employed the Strategy Inventory for Language Learners (SILL) to inspect the correlation between language learning strategies and learners' achievement in English, alongside other relevant factors (reprinted in Oxford, 1990).

Table 2: Strategies, Number of Items within Each Section, and One Sample Item for Each Section.

No.	Strategies	Number of Items each	Sample Items from each strategy category
A	Memory (Mem)	9	I try to bring in mind the relationship of my previous knowledge about the word or try to learn new words in English.
B	Cognitive (Cog)	14	I try to repeat new English words in speaking and writing for several time to remember that.
C	Compensation (Comp)	6	I use alternative words if I don't recognize the exact words in English.
D	Metacognitive (Meta)	9	I try to find out people for conversation in English.
E	Affective (Affe)	6	When I am learning English, I try to share my feelings of learning to someone else.
F	Social (Soc)	6	For better understanding I try to learn native speakers' culture.

Reliability of Items

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.814	50

To assess the internal consistency of SILL, Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha was calculated. The Cronbach's Alpha for all strategy categories in this study was (.814). The value of Cronbach's Alpha is higher than (.7), each item in SILL is considered consistent and exhibits high reliability. Conversely, if the value of

Cronbach's Alpha is lower than (.7), the items lack reliability.

Procedure for Quantitative Data Analysis

The analysis procedure employed descriptive statistics, containing means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, to compile information from the respondents regarding the strategies they utilized. To assess the questionnaire's internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was utilized. Gender, divided into two groups, underwent Independent Samples T-test to probe potential gender variances in the occurrence of language learning strategy usage. The data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, specifically version 17.

Analysis of The Quantitative Data

For evaluating the overall strategy use, descriptive statistics were utilized for data analysis. These statistics encompassed mean scores for individual strategies and overall strategy use, standard deviation, and frequency. Frequency was employed to determine the total number of strategy usages and the percentage of contributors along with their individual strategy usage. Additionally, Cronbach's α was employed to assess the validity and overall reliability of the Language Learning Strategies (LLS) questionnaire.

To investigate the strategies employed based on gender, an independent-samples t-test was piloted. As highlighted by Pallant (2007, p. 232), "an independent samples t-test is utilized to compare mean scores on constant variables between two distinct groups of subjects." The six types of language learning approaches in the questionnaire were treated as dependent variables, with gender as the independent variable. Statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS version 17.

Preference of Language Learning Strategies by Students

The study aimed to reply the first question.: What are the language learning strategies used by BS university students of English at the University of Swat? Data study revealed that Swat University students preferred English language learning methodologies based on Oxford's six categories (1990). Students prefer to use various practices, such as creating flashcards to recall new English words, using rhymes for rhythmic recall, associating words with page numbers or environmental cues for future recall, as revealed by the results for memory strategies.

Regarding cognitive strategies, the findings indicated that students think of similar words in their native language when using English, avoid translating text word by word during reading, and initiate conversations in English. Compensatory approaches demonstrated that students refrain from checking up the definition of each new word in the dictionary. use alternative words when unfamiliar with an exact English term, and employ body language or gestures during conversations if they encounter unfamiliar words.

In terms of metacognitive tactics, students prefer to adjust their

timetables to allocate more time for studying English, actively seek opportunities for reading in English, and employ various methods to enhance their overall English learning experience. Affective strategies revealed that students keep a diary of language learning to document their feelings, track their progress, and provide self-motivation, even rewarding themselves for achievements in English. Lastly, for social strategies, students strive to understand native speakers' culture, actively seek correction from conversation partners, and engage in language practice with friends.

Table 4.52 indicates the various kinds of strategies used by both males and females. Memory techniques (M = 2.1400) were the most repeatedly used strategy among the six strategy types, tailed by affective strategies (M = 2.000), compensating strategies (M = 1.9500), and cognitive strategies (M = 1.9400). Social strategies (M = 1.8300) were used less frequently, while metacognitive strategies (M = 1.5700) were the least utilized among the six strategy categories.

Table 3 presented the mean scores for all items in the six SILL categories. On a scale of 1 to 3, the mean values ranged between 2.1400 and 1.5700. According to Table 3, the memory method item "I use rhyming to help me recall new English words in a rhythmical manner." (M = 2.1400) was the most frequently used technique, while the metacognitive strategy item The least often used phrase was "I try to use English in as many different ways as possible" (M = 1.5700).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the Variables in the Six Strategy Categories

Type of Strategy	Mean (n=100)	SD	Frequency Category
Memory Strategy	2.1400	.72502	Medium Used
Cognitive Strategy	1.9400	.74968	Medium Used
Comprehension Strategy	1.9500	.71598	Medium Used
Affective Strategy	2 000	.72474	Medium Used
Social Strategy	1.8300	.73930	Medium Used
Metacognitive Strategy	1.5700	.63968	Low Used

Strategies Differences Because of Gender

The second inquiry of this study aimed to evaluate the variance in language learning processes between genders, particularly focusing on disparities at the University of Swat. The analysis employed an independent-sample t-test to discern gender-based discrepancies in language learning approach frequency. As outlined by Marina, M. (2017), the independent-samples t-test compares average values between two distinct and unrelated cohorts. This study sought to ascertain whether there existed a noteworthy distinction in language learning strategy utilization between genders. Typically employed for assessing distinctions between two variables, the independent sample t-test treated all strategy categories as

dependent variables, while gender functioned as the independent variable. Its purpose was to uncover disparities between the mean scores of one group and those of another.

T-Test Result and Finding

Table 4: Results of an Independent-Samples T-Test to Determine Differences in Language Learning Strategies Due to Gender.

Categories	Strategies	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		dif	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mem1	I try to bring in mind the relationship of my previous knowledge about the word or try to learn new words in English.	Male	61	1.6393	.48418	-.265	98	.791
		Female	39	1.6667	.52981			
Mem2	When I see different English words in books or somewhere I try to use that in a relevant way so that I can remember that new words in a relevant context.	Male	61	1.6721	.56925	-.642	98	.522
		Female	39	1.7436	.49831			
Mem3	When I hear	Male	61	1.8525	.79238	.534	98	.594

			N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	df	Sig.
	the pronunciation of a new word or see some image or picture somewhere I try to connect that sound of a word or image to the words that help me to remember that new words.	Female	39	1.7692	.70567			
Mem4	When I want to remember a new English words, I make a picture of that new word in mind so that I can use it for new situation.	Male Female	61 39	1.7705 1.7436	.66817 .59462	.205	98	.838
Mem5	When I want to remember new English words, I use rhyme that help me out to remember these words rhythmically.	Male Female	61 39	2.1639 2.1026	.73440 .71800	.411	98	.682
Mem6	In order to recall new English words, I make flashcard and use that flashcard to recall that specific words in future.	Male Female	61 39	1.7213 1.7949	.75567 .57029	-.520	98	.604
Mem7	In order to	Male	61	1.5082	.56636	.650	98	.517

	remember new words, I use my body to act it physically so that I can remember that in future.	Female	39	1.4359	.50236			
Mem8	I study and see the review of English lessons.	Male Female	61 39	1.8525 1.8462	.60100 .58663	52	98	.959
Mem9	When I want to remember new English words for the next location, I remember the page number in books or I bring in mind the sign board or street board that help me out to recall the studied words.	Male Female	61 39	2.1148 1.8205	.73254 .75644	1.934	98	56
Cog1	I try to repeat new English words in speaking and writing for several time to remember that.	Male Female	61 39	1.8197 1.7436	.69542 .59462	.564	98	.574
Cog2	I try that I speak like native speakers of English.	Male Female	61 39	1.5902 1.6923	.64231 .65510	-.770	98	.443
Cog3	When I learn	Male	61	1.7049	.66694	.999	98	.320

			N	Mean				
	new English words, I try to practice the pronunciation and sound of that words.	Female	39	1.5641	.71800			
Cog4	Words that I know I try that I use that in different ways in different context.	Male	61	1.7705	.71632	.191	98	.849
		Female	39	1.7436	.63734			
Cog5	When I need to speak in English first, I start speaking with others.	Male	61	1.9016	.62463	33	98	.974
		Female	39	1.8974	.64051			
Cog6	For learning English, I start watching English TV shows or watch some authentic movies.	Male	61	1.7869	.77706	-.378	98	.706
		Female	39	1.8462	.74475			
Cog7	I read English books for amusement	Male	61	1.3607	.48418	1.86	98	.280
		Female	39	1.2564	.44236			
Cog8	When I write anything like notes, letters, applications or reports, I use English only.	Male	61	1.9016	.67589	1.33	98	.304
		Female	39	1.7692	.53614			
Cog9	Whenever I read new English books first, I follow strategy of skimming and after that I read it out thoroughly.	Male	61	1.7541	.67468	-.110	98	.913
		Female	39	1.7692	.66734			
Cog10	I find out	Male	61	2 328	.75205	1.559	98	.122

	words in local language having the same meaning in English	Female	39	1.7949	.73196			
Cog11	I try to look up the structures in English.	Male	61	1.8361	.68752	.113	98	.910
		Female	39	1.8205	.64367			
Cog12	When I read English books etc. if I did not understand I try to divide the specific passage into chunks and then I find out the meaning of that passage.	Male	61	1.9836	.67062	1.701	98	92
		Female	39	1.7436	.71517			
Cog13	While in reading and its translation I don't go to translate text word by word.	Male	61	2 164	.74144	1.761	98	81
		Female	39	1.7692	.58316			
Cog14	When I hear or read something I try to write summaries of that	Male	61	1.7705	.64274	.991	98	.324
		Female	39	1.6410	.62774			
Comp1	When I see words that I did not see before I try guesses to find out the meaning of words.	Male	61	1.3279	.47333	.479	98	.633
		Female	39	1.2821	.45588			
Comp2	While in	Male	61	1.8033	.67872	-.691	98	.491

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	speaking with others I use body language or gestures if I did not think about that word.	Female	39	1.8974	.64051			
Comp3	When I don't know the specific terms in English, I utilise synonyms.	Male	61	1.9344	.74986	-.271	98	.787
		Female	39	1.9744	.66835			
Comp4	While in reading I don't see the sense of every new word in dictionary.	Male	61	2 328	.70633	.564	98	.574
		Female	39	1.9487	.75911			
Comp5	When I speak to someone, I think what he will say next.	Male	61	1.7213	.71019	22	98	.982
		Female	39	1.7179	.75911			
Comp6	I use the same words or phrases that have the same meaning if I did not find particular word in English	Male	61	1.7705	.66817	-.565	98	.574
		Female	39	1.8462	.62989			
Meta1	I try to use as different ways as I can in order to use English.	Male	61	1.5574	.67143	-.246	98	.806
		Female	39	1.5897	.59462			
Meta2	When I speak, I note down all my mistakes and try to avoid such kind of mistakes in next conversation.	Male	61	1.3443	.57403	-.537	98	.592
		Female	39	1.4103	.63734			
Meta3	When	Male	61	1.3443	.54422	.571	98	.569

			N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
	someone speaks English, I attempt to focus my attention on him.	Female	39	1.2821	.51035			
Meta4	I use all the ways to become a good English leaner.	Male	61	1.5246	.69777	.258	98	.797
		Female	39	1.4872	.72081			
Meta5	I make timetable so that I can have much more time for studying English.	Male	61	1.3607	.48418	.265	98	.791
		Female	39	1.3333	.52981			
Meta6	I try to find out people for conversation in English.	Male	61	1.5246	.64824	-.673	98	.503
		Female	39	1.6154	.67338			
Meta7	I find out opportunities of reading in English as possible as I can.	Male	61	1.4918	.67387	35	98	.972
		Female	39	1.4872	.60139			
Meta8	I learn English skill for achieving specific goal.	Male	61	1.3279	.59781	-1.599	98	.113
		Female	39	1.5128	.50637			
Meta9	I am thinking about the progress I show while learning English.	Male	61	1.5410	.67265	.600	98	.550
		Female	39	1.4615	.60027			
Affe1	When I am using English and feel afraid of it so I try to make myself comfortable.	Male	61	1.5902	.58813	.221	98	.825
		Female	39	1.5641	.55226			
Affe2	While using	Male	61	1.6230	.75639	1.125	98	.263

			N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
	English I make mistakes even I am afraid of it but I motivate myself to speak English.	Female	39	1.4615	.60027			
Affe3	I motivate myself even I give reward myself when I perform well in English.	Male	61	1.7705	.71632	-.340	98	.735
		Female	39	1.8205	.72081			
Affe4	While studying English or using I notice how I feel such as tense or nervous.	Male	61	1.8852	.68553	.874	98	.384
		Female	39	1.7692	.58316			
Affe5	I use dairy of language learning in order to put down my feelings.	Male	61	1.7705	.82449	1.491	98	.139
		Female	39	1.5385	.64262			
Affe6	When I am learning English, I try to share my feelings of learning to someone else.	Male	61	1.7541	.72240	76	98	.940
		Female	39	1.7436	.59462			
Soc1	When someone speaks, if I don't understand, I ask him to slow down or repeat it for me.	Male	61	1.6721	.62507	41	98	.968
		Female	39	1.6667	.70088			
Soc2	Whenever I am talking in English, I ask the partner to correct all my mistake.	Male	61	1.6721	.74658	-1.901	98	60
		Female	39	1.9487	.64680			

			N	Mean	Std	t	df	Sig
Soc3	In learning English, I practice with my friends.	Male	61	1.8033	.77071	.930	98	.355
		Female	39	1.6667	.62126			
Soc4	In English speaking I ask other to help me out.	Male	61	1.3443	.51268	-1.270	98	.207
		Female	39	1.4872	.60139			
Soc5	When I am unclear about something I use English to ask questions.	Male	61	1.7869	.68592	.886	98	.378
		Female	39	1.6667	.62126			
Soc6	For better understanding I try to learn native speakers' culture.	Male	61	1.8361	.75675	.102	98	.919
		Female	39	1.8205	.72081			

The t-test findings are presented in Table 4 to determine if there are any significant differences in the utilization of language learning techniques based on gender. Because the values of Sig. (2-tailed) were above .05, there were insignificant differences in rankings for males and females in the Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social categories of language acquisition strategies.

Discussion, Limitations, Recommendations and Conclusion
Discussion

The study sought to explore the language learning strategies used by undergraduate ESL students enrolled in the Bachelor of English Studies degree course at the University of Swat. Utilizing Oxford's six categories (1990), the research identified preferences in memory. As per the findings only 47% of the participants sometimes used the flashcards while 14% never used the flashcards let alone creating and using the flashcards. Cognitive strategies included thinking in the native language, avoiding word-for-word translation, and initiating conversations in English. Compensatory methods involved avoiding excessive dictionary use, substituting words, and using body language during conversations. Metacognitive tactics encompassed time management, seeking English reading opportunities, and employing diverse methods for an enhanced learning experience. Affective strategies involved maintaining a language learning diary for motivation and self-reward. Social strategies included understanding native speakers' culture, seeking correction, and engaging in language practice with friends.

The next query was whether there was a difference in the usage of language learning strategies by gender. The accompanying tables

clearly show that there were no variances in the use of six language learning strategies between males and females. The data indicates that all students prefer the equivalent strategies when learning English. The table 4 presented values for each strategy item, its t-value, difference (dif), and Independent-sample t-test value. It was also clarified that the significant 2-tail value for each strategy was above .05. As discussed by Oxford (1990), if the significant 2-tail value is above .05, there would be no significant difference between independent variables. The significance (sig 2-tail) for each strategy was greater than the critical value (Memory (.791), Cognitive (.574), Compensation (.633), Metacognitive (.806), Affective (.825), and Social (.968), all above .05). Male and female university students used these techniques at identical rates, with no significant gender differences in the use of memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

Limitations

There are certain limitations to this research. The first limitation pertains to the participants; the sample size for this research was small, comprising approximately n=100 participants. As a result, the findings of this study may not be generalizable. Further study with a larger and more diverse sample is required to provide a thorough picture of students' language learning processes. The second limitation pertains to the context; this study was conducted exclusively on students from the University of Swat. To improve the external validity of the outcomes, similar research should be conducted in contexts other than the University of Swat. The third limitation is associated with the discipline of the students. This study focused solely on students pursuing a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Literature and Linguistics. Additional research is required to investigate the application of language learning methodologies in areas other than English Literature and Linguistics. The fourth limitation is an uneven distribution of male and female participants is acknowledged as one of the limitations of this study. It is recommended that future studies strive to include an equal number of male and female participants for a more balanced representation. Finally, since this research primarily employed quantitative methods, it is recommended to supplement it with a qualitative study to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and views associated with the use of language learning tools.

Recommendations

Promotion of Metacognitive Strategies: Given that the metacognitive strategy was the least used among the identified language learning strategies, there is a need to increase awareness and encourage the use of metacognitive methods in language learning. This could be achieved through targeted interventions, workshops, or courses that specifically address metacognitive skills.

Balanced Strategy Utilization: The study recommends a balanced

approach to language learning strategy utilization. While the memory strategy was identified as the most frequently employed, it is critical to encourage pupils to broaden their strategy selection. Educators can provide guidance on how to integrate various strategies into their language learning routines, promoting a holistic and effective language learning experience.

Enhanced Language Proficiency: Emphasizing the memory strategy, which was found to be predominant, can contribute to enhanced language proficiency. English language teachers can incorporate memory-enhancing techniques into their teaching methodologies, and students can be encouraged to adopt memory strategies in their study habits.

Gender-Neutral Language Learning Support: Since no significant gender-based variations were found in strategy usage, language learning support programs and resources should be designed to cater to the needs of both male and female students equally. Gender-neutral approaches should be adopted in teaching practices and support services.

Addressing Research Limitations: Future research in this area should address the identified limitations, including a small sample size, exclusivity to the University of Swat context, focus on a specific academic discipline, and uneven gender distribution. Researchers could expand their scope to include a more diverse participant pool, different academic disciplines, and multiple institutions to enhance the generalizability of findings.

Exploration of Epistemological and Methodological Dimensions: The study suggests that future research should delve into the epistemological and methodological dimensions of language learning strategies. This would offer a more thorough knowledge of how students conceptualize and approach language learning. as well as the methodologies employed in language learning environments.

Qualitative Research Integration: To gain a deeper insight into language learning experiences, future investigation should consider using qualitative research approaches. Qualitative data, such as interviews or focus group discussions, can provide a richer understanding of students' perspectives, attitudes, and challenges in language learning.

Collaboration with Administrators: The study suggests that administrators at the University of Swat can benefit from the insights provided. Collaboration among researchers and administrators can result in the expansion of specific interventions and policies to assist language learning programmes at the institutional level.

By implementing these recommendations, educators, administrators, and researchers can contribute to the improvement of language learning strategies and outcomes among BS students at the University of Swat and potentially in similar educational contexts.

Conclusion

In the investigation of English students at the University of Swat, it was observed that students were moderate language strategy users among the six strategies. The memory method was the most commonly used, followed by the emotive, compensating, cognitive, and social strategies. The metacognitive method received the least amount of utilization. The results discovered a predominant use of the memory strategy among students at the University of Swat, emphasizing an ontological perspective on language learning. The metacognitive strategy, while identified, was less frequently employed. Notably, the results indicated no significant variations in the use of language learning strategies between male and female participants within the context of the ontological focus. Both male and female students at Swat University used all the strategies with equal frequency, as indicated by the values assigned to each strategy, all of which were above .05. The t-test findings confirmed this finding, showing no significant variances in strategy use between male and female.

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