

The Relationship between Out-of-Class Language Learning Strategy Use and Reading Comprehension Ability

FAHIMEH MAREFAT

FATEMEH BARBARI

Allameh Tabatabaai University, Iran

Received: 26 December 2007 / Accepted: 17 November 2008

ISSN: 1697-7467

ABSTRACT: This study examines the potential inter-relationship between three language learning strategies (Formal, Functional and Monitoring), proficiency level and reading comprehension ability in a foreign language. The data, obtained from 60 male and female Iranian EFL students, was collected through the questionnaire on learner strategies, derived from Rubin-Stern inventories, and a reading comprehension test, derived from Carrel (1991) and Nelson Test. Results indicate that students mostly used monitoring strategy. It means that learners pay more attention to the use of linguistic forms and modify language responses the most. Also this study finds that Iranian EFL learners do not employ the Formal, Functional or Monitoring learning strategies differently as far as their proficiency levels or reading comprehension ability are concerned. Based on this statement, the researchers can claim that although almost all the learners unconsciously use a lot of strategies in their learning experience, the idea of learning through strategies, especially what they can expand out of the classroom, was quite new for the subjects in this study. The analysis of learners' language learning strategies shows that the students of the high level of proficiency mostly used reading activities and students of the middle and lower levels of proficiency used listening activities more often. The results indicate that they use more receptive skills than productive ones.

Key words: Out-of-class language learning strategies; Formal practice; Functional practice; Monitoring.

La relación entre el uso de estrategias de aprendizajes de lenguas fuera de clase y la habilidad de comprensión lectora

RESUMEN: Este estudio examina la potencial inter-relación entre tres estrategias de aprendizaje (Formal, Funcional y de Seguimiento), niveles de capacidad y de comprensión lectora en una lengua extranjera. Los datos, obtenidos de 60 estudiantes de masculinos y femeninos de EFL se recogió a través de cuestionarios sobre estrategias del aprendiz, derivadas de las taxonomías de Rubin-Stern y un test de comprensión lectora, derivadas del test de Nelson y Carrel (1991). Los resultados indican que los estudiantes usaron en su mayoría estrategias de seguimiento (*monitoring*). Significa que los aprendices prestan más atención al uso de formas lingüísticas y modifican respuestas lingüísticas. También este estudio demuestra que los estudiantes iraníes de EFL no emplean las estrategias formal, funcionales y de seguimiento de manera diferente en cuanto a sus niveles y habilidades. Según esto, los investigadores pueden afirmar que aunque la ma-

yoría de los aprendices usan de manera inconsciente muchas estrategias en su experiencia de aprendizaje, la idea de aprender a través de estrategias, especialmente lo que pueden aprovechar del aula, fue bastante nuevo para los sujetos de este estudio. El análisis de las estrategias de aprendizaje de lenguas muestra que los alumnos de mayor nivel usaron las actividades de lectura y que los de nivel medio y bajo usaron actividades auditivas con mayor frecuencia. Los resultados indican que usan más las destrezas receptivas que las productivas.

Palabras clave: estrategias de aprendizaje extra-escolares; práctica formal; práctica funcional, seguimiento.

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning strategies are important in the process of second language acquisition. It has also been demonstrated that learning strategies can be taught effectively to second language learners (Baker & Boonkit, 2004).

Interest in learning strategies is due, in large part, to increased attention to the learner and to learner-centered instructional models of teaching. These trends can be traced to the recognition that learning begins with the learner (Oxford & Nyikos, 1993).

Some research has been carried out with learners who have experienced informal exposure to English as well as formal instruction (Griffiths & Parry, 2001). This view of language learning allowed for the possibility of learners making deliberate attempts to control their own learning. The main incentive for the researcher in the present work has been on the great differences among different learners in applying out-of-class language learning strategies. The research questions of this study were as follows:

1. Is there any difference between Iranian EFL learners' use of formal, functional or monitoring learning strategies?
2. Is there any difference between Iranian EFL learners' use of formal, functional or monitoring learning strategies as far as their proficiency levels are concerned?
3. Is there any difference between Iranian EFL learners' use of formal, functional or monitoring learning strategies as far as their reading comprehension ability is concerned?

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. Out-of-class language learning strategies

Much interest has been expressed in recent years in language learning strategies. Pickard (1996) reported that some studies formulate useful typologies of strategy use (Naiman, 1978; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1975); all highlight the importance of the *out-of-class strategies* employed voluntarily by learners outside the language classroom. Pickard (1996, p. 150) also reported that:

These language learning strategies encompass student-initiated activities, such as listening to the radio and reading newspapers. In spite of the interest in this area, there is small amount of data on the precise nature of the language learning activities undertaken by learners outside the classroom.

Benson (2001) referred to the dearth of research on *out-of-class language learning* (OCLL), and its importance to the theory and practice of autonomy. The framework for research concerning OCLL is rather broad and at times somewhat vague. There are a number of research areas that have been investigated in the past but they were mainly concerned with learning inside the classroom. Examples of these include learner concentration span and learning styles. There are a range of research areas that have immediate relevance to OCLL that are not yet completely understood and explained.

Rubin (1975) identified seven general characteristics of the good language learner, which include such *out-of-class strategies* as seeking out opportunities to use the language by looking for native speakers, and going to the cinema or to other cultural events.

Macaro (2001) proposed some activities which students would use into the habits of looking for the foreign language outside the classroom:

Speaking outside the classroom: Not only can learners maximize exposure to the foreign language outside the classroom by reading or listening to language, they can also try to speak the foreign language outside the classroom.

Social strategies: There is a list of activities that students can do with their friends in order to develop this idea that language learning can take place outside the classroom and can involve social activities: writing a letter to their friends with 10 deliberate mistakes, asking them to underline the mistakes, recording a dialogue together, practicing a scene together, trying to work out a foreign language text together.

Taking notes: Teachers should allow students to take notes whenever they want. It helps to remember and notice something interesting and different about their current knowledge and the input they are receiving.

Materials: We have also considered a dossier of materials which we can use in order to train learners to use strategies. These materials are designed to «scaffold» the strategy in question.

2.2. Strategies of good language learners

Stern (1983, p. 41) hypothesizes that good language learners are likely to exhibit four basic sets of strategies:

- *An active planning strategy:* Good language learners have the ability to select goals and sub-goals and recognize stages and developmental sequences.
- *An academic (explicit) learning strategy:* Good language learners are able to view a language as a formal system with rules and regular relationships between language forms and meanings.
- *A social learning strategy:* They seek communicative contact with target language users and the target language community; they develop techniques of coping with difficulties in the language.
- *An effective strategy:* Good language learners cope effectively with emotional and motivational problems of language learning.

According to Stern (1983), a student learning a new language faces three major problems or dilemmas:

- 1) The problem of dominance of the first language as a reference system as opposed to the new underdeveloped reference system;
- 2) The problem of having to pay attention simultaneously to linguistic forms and communication-a psychological impossibility;
- 3) The problem of having to choose between rational and intuitive learning.

The student's ability to handle each of these problems will determine success or failure and the way he copes with these dilemmas distinguishes the good from the poor learner.

Rubin (1975) suggests that good learners create opportunities for practicing the language by, for example, initiating conversations with target language speakers, including fellow students and the teacher. They consciously use communication strategies while speaking. Thus they get their message across by using circumlocution and paraphrase.

Rubin (1975) made a list of strategies presumed to be essential for all «good language learners». She has found the following seven learning strategies and techniques:

- 1) Good language learners are *willing and accurate guessers*. They use all the clues which the setting offers and thus able to narrow down what the meaning and intent of the communication might be.
- 2) Successful language learners have *strong motivation to communicate*. They will do many things to communicate-including using circumlocution, paraphrasing, gestures, etc.
- 3) Successful language learners are often *not inhibited*. They are willing to make mistakes in order to learn to communicate.
- 4) Good language learners are prepared to *attend to form*. They are constantly looking for patterns in the language. He also maintains that these students constantly analyze, categorize, and synthesize materials that confront them.
- 5) Good language learners *practise*. They seek opportunities to use the language. In addition to establishing the kind of classroom climate in which students are eager to speak and are motivated by personalized and creative teaching, teachers can also facilitate communication between students in the classroom.
- 6) Good language learners *monitor* their own speech and that of others. Part of this monitoring is a function of active participation in the learning process. The word active is the key word in this statement because successful language learners constantly process information and, thus, can learn not only from their own mistakes but also from those of others.
- 7) Good language learners *attend to meaning*. They know that in order to understand the message, it is not sufficient to pay attention to the grammar of the language. They attend to the context and mood of speech act, to the relationship of the participants, and to the rules of speaking.

2.3. Language Learning Strategies and Language Proficiency

Krashen (1982) states that there are several ways in which the outside world clearly excels, especially for the intermediate level second language students. First, it is very clear that the outside world can supply more input. The informal environment will, therefore, be of more and more use as they progress and can understand more and more.

Second, as many scholars have pointed out, the range of discourse that the students can be exposed to in a second language classroom is quite limited; no matter how “natural” we make it. The classroom will probably never be able to completely overcome its limitation, nor does it have to. Its goal is not to substitute for outside world, but to bring students to the point where they begin to use the outside world for further acquisition, to where they can begin to understand the language used in the outside world.

Research indicates that appropriate use of language learning strategies, which include dozens or even hundreds of possible behaviors (such as seeking out conversation partners, grouping words to be memorized, or giving oneself encouragement), results in improved L2 proficiency, or in specific language skill areas (Oxford, 2002).

Bialystok (1981) and Huang and Van Naerssen (1987), however, found that strategies related to functional practice were associated with proficiency, while Oxford and Ehrman (1995) discovered that cognitive strategies such as looking for patterns and reading for pleasure in the target language were the strategies used by successful students in their study, and Green and Oxford (1995) discovered that higher level students reported using language learning strategies of all kinds more frequently than lower level students. These mixed findings suggest that factors such as situation, context, sample and individual styles may be important moderating variables which will be undertaken in this study.

3. THIS STUDY

3.1. Participants

The total population participating in this study included 95 subjects. This study was carried out in two educational settings, Allameh Tabatabai University and Saba Language Institute, both located in Tehran, the capital of Iran. The university students participating in this study were 40 sophomores majoring in English Literature during the second semester of the academic year 2006-7. Only 26 students returned the questionnaire. They comprised of 7 males and 19 females and the age range of 18-23. The English Foreign Language students studying at Language Institute participating in this study were 55 females and the age range of 15-29. Only 34 students returned the questionnaire. So the data collected from 60 students were used for analyzing.

3.2. Instruments

Three instruments were used to accomplish the purpose of this study. A questionnaire on learner strategies derived from Rubin-Stern inventories (1975, adopted from Huang and Van Naerssen, 1987), reading comprehension tests adopted from Carrel (1991), and a standardized test, Nelson Test, for measuring language proficiency adopted from Fowler and Norman Coe (1978) were utilized.

3.2.1. Questionnaire on Learner Strategies

To gather information on learner strategies, the researcher used a three-part questionnaire including open-ended question in part 1 and closed questions in parts 2 and 3 (with Likert Scale for frequency in part 2 and multiple alternatives in part 3).

In part 1, the participants were requested to list the strategies which helped students most in improving their reading comprehension. Parts 2 and 3 included three types of learning strategies derived by Huang and Van Naerssen (1987) from the Rubin-Stern inventories. These learning strategies were formal practice, functional practice, and monitoring:

Formal practice included such activities as listening to and doing pattern drills, listening in order to improve pronunciation, memorizing and reciting texts, and imitating, re-telling stories, reading aloud, and reading in order to learn vocabulary items or grammatical structures.

Functional practice included activities which mainly focused on using language for communication, such as speaking with other students and native speakers, listening and reading for comprehension, attending lectures, watching films and TV programs, and thinking or talking to oneself in English.

Monitoring as a strategy refers to the efforts made by the learner to pay attention to the use of linguistic forms and modify language responses.

Furthermore, in these two parts students were only asked to consider techniques involving use of or exposure to the target language that the learner arranged beyond the formal classroom requirements. This was done to ensure that the techniques were, in fact, ones that the learner chose to use and not ones that the teacher imposed.

3.2.2. *Reading Comprehension Test*

To measure reading comprehension ability of students, two reading passages on the general topic of “language” (adopted from Carrel, 1991) were used. The texts originated from authentic texts in publications such as the U.S News and the World Report and both were approximately equal in length, varying between 315 and 344 words. Carrel (1991) reported that according to Fry’s (1977) readability graph, the grade level of first text (Is English degenerating?) was 10th grade and the grade level of second text (Why Johnny can’t write) was 15th grade.

Each text contains ten multiple-choice comprehension questions. The questions were intended to tap deep levels of text passage, based on careful reading and a more profound comprehension of the text.

3.2.3. *Nelson Test*

The 1978 version of Nelson English Language Test was administered to determine the subjects’ language proficiency level. This test included 100 multiple-choice items testing grammatical points and knowledge of vocabulary. Students had to choose the correct answer which best completed the sentence.

Answering all 100 items would have been tiring for participants and time-consuming. For this reason, items were divided in two parts (Form A and Form B) alternately and every subject answered one of these parallel tests.

3.3. **Data Collection and Analysis**

As for administering the questionnaire and tests, first, the students were instructed to answer the proficiency and reading comprehension tests and later the questionnaire was given to them and they were asked to fill them carefully. They were allowed to take the questionnaire home.

The procedure proposed by Huang and Van Naerssen (1987) was used for correcting the questionnaire. The answers to open-ended questions in part 1 were categorized and the categories with the highest frequency were analyzed. Then, in part 2 a score was assigned to each answer which range from one to five: very often=5, often=4, sometimes=3, rarely=2, never=1. At the end, in part 3, each item was given equal weight in scoring.

For scoring the Reading Comprehension and Nelson English Language Test, one score was assigned to each correct answer. The scores for all items were added and an ultimate score was calculated for every participants.

To analyze the data of this study, first, a factor analysis was used to discover the factors that underlay the tests and the questionnaire employed in this study. Then to investigate the first research question the descriptive statistics were used to discuss the possible differences among the Formal, Functional and Monitoring sections of the language learning strategies. The repeated measures ANOVA were carried out to compare their means at different proficiency levels. To answer the second and third research questions the repeated measures ANOVA were used to compare the means of the three sections of the language learning strategies as far as their proficiency levels or reading comprehension ability were concerned.

In the next step the correlation coefficients between all variables of this study (proficiency, reading comprehension ability and three sections of the language learning strategies) were calculated. Ultimately for analyzing the learners' strategies use reported in this study, percentage reports were employed.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Results of factor analysis

A factor analysis was carried out to probe the underlying constructs of the tests and the questionnaire employed in this study. The SPSS extracted two factors. As displayed in Table 1, the general proficiency and the reading comprehension tests load on the second factor which can be labeled as general proficiency factor due to the nature of these two tests. The three sections of the LLS load on the first factor which can be labeled as Language Learning Strategies.

Table 1. *Factor Extraction of proficiency test, reading comprehension test and three sections of language learning strategies.*

	Component	
	1	2
MONITORING	.84	
FUNCTIONAL	.84	
FORMAL	.70	
READING		.92
PROFICIENCY		.92

4.2. Language learners' use of three language learning strategies

First the mean and standard deviation of each three sections of language learning strategies used by language learners at different proficiency levels were calculated. The results of them are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics of three language learning strategies used by language learners.*

Language Learning Strategies	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
FORMAL	20.09	4.42	60
FUNCTIONAL	23.94	6.17	60
MONITORING	47.71	9.31	60

As indicated in Table 2, the students mostly used monitoring strategy (Mean=47.71) and the least strategy use was formal strategy (Mean=20.09).

An Analysis of Variance through the repeated measures was carried out to investigate the possible difference among the means of the Iranian EFL learners on the Formal, Functional and Monitoring sections of the Language Learning Strategies (LLS) at different proficiency levels. As displayed in Table 3, the F observed value for comparing the three sections of the LLS is 505.68. This amount of F at 2 and 118 degrees of freedom is higher than the critical value of F, i.e. 3.07.

Table 3. *Repeated Measures ANOVA for comparisons of the means of three language learning strategies used by language learners at different proficiency levels.*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
LLS	26861.536	2	13430.768	505.68	.000
Error(LLS)	3134.022	118	26.560		

The first null-hypothesis is thus rejected. Iranian EFL learners do not employ Formal, Functional or Monitoring Learning Strategies equally.

4.3. Strategy use and English proficiency

The participants' proficiency level in English was measured by means of a Nelson Test. Based on the 33.33 and 66.66 percentile ranks of the students on the proficiency test, the students are divided into three proficiency levels.

Then an Analysis of Variance through the repeated measures was carried out to investigate the possible difference among the means of the Iranian EFL learners on the Formal, Functional and Monitoring Language Learning Strategies (LLS) as far as their proficiency levels were concerned. The F-observed value for the effect of the proficiency level is 1.65 (Table 4). This amount of F at 2 and 57 degrees of freedom is lower than the critical value of F, i.e. 3.15.

Table 4. *Repeated Measures ANOVA for comparisons of the means of three language learning strategies and their proficiency levels.*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Intercept	56113.54	1	56113.54	1883.49	.000
PROFLEV	98.80	2	49.40	1.65	.200
Error	1698.15	57	29.79		

It can be concluded that the proficiency levels of the subjects do not have any significant effect on their performance on the three sections of the LLS. Thus the second null-hypothesis fails to be rejected. It can not be claimed that Iranian EFL learners use the Formal, Functional or Monitoring Learning Strategies differently as far as their proficiency levels are concerned.

4.4. Strategy use and reading comprehension ability

Based on the 33.33 and 66.66 percentile ranks of the students on the reading comprehension test, the students are divided into three reading ability groups.

Then an Analysis of Variance through the repeated measures was carried out to investigate the possible difference among the means of the Iranian EFL learners on the Formal, Functional and Monitoring sections of the Language Learning Strategies (LLS) in the three reading comprehension ability groups (low, mid, high). The F-observed value for the effect of the proficiency level is .84 (Table 5). This amount of F at 2 and 57 degrees of freedom is lower than the critical value of F, i.e. 3.15.

Table 5. *Repeated Measures ANOVA for comparisons of the means of three sections of language learning strategies and their reading comprehension ability.*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Intercept	55503.56	1	55503.56	1812.52	.000
Reading ability	51.49	2	25.74	.84	.437
Error	1745.47	57	30.62		

It can be concluded that the reading ability of the subjects does not have any significant effect on their performance on the three sections of the LLS. Thus the third null-hypothesis fails to be rejected. It can not be claimed that Iranian EFL learners use the Formal, Functional or Monitoring Learning Strategies differently as far as their reading ability is concerned.

4.5. Correlation Coefficients among Variables

The Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficients were calculated to measure the degree of relationships among the variables. As displayed in Table 6, the general proficiency and the reading comprehension tests correlate with each other high (.77), while they show high correlation only with the monitoring section of the LLS (.31, .28). On the other hand, the three sections of the LLS have statistically high correlation with each other.

Table 6. *Correlation Coefficients of proficiency test, reading comprehension test and three sections of language learning strategies.*

	Reading	Formal	Functional	Monitoring
PROFICIENCY	.777(**)	-.048	.191	.319(*)
	.000	.718	.144	.013
	60	60	60	60
READING		-.057	.122	.285(*)
		.665	.351	.027
		60	60	60
FORMAL1			.312(*)	.374(**)
			.015	.003
			60	60
FUNCTIONAL1				.710(**)
				.000
				60

4.6. Analyzing Learners’ Language Learning Strategies

In analysis of learners’ language learning strategies helped them most improve their reading comprehension ability, their mentioned activities were classified into different categories according to their proficiency levels (high, mid, low). From the data on subjects’ use of strategies, we can infer their approaches to learning English, that is, their conscious or subconscious plans for this endeavor. They seemed to feel it was important to create opportunities to use English. Their reported activities also seemed to be motivated by their perceived need to use English in order to learn it.

Table 7. *The number of instances of using different techniques by students of the High, Mid and Low levels of proficiency.*

Activities	Number of respondents		
	HIGH	MID	LOW
Reading English books, ...	16 (94.11%)	4 (80%)	10 (71.42%)
Listening to English news, ...	5 (29.41%)	3 (60%)	4 (28.57%)
Reading grammar books	2 (11.76%)	2 (40%)	
Memorizing vocabulary	2 (11.76%)		2 (14.28%)
Having self-confidence	1 (5.88%)		
Writing vocabularies	1 (5.88%)		
Making sentence	1 (5.88%)		
Improving general knowledge	1 (5.88%)		
Watching TV, Movies	1 (5.88%)	2 (40%)	3 (21.42%)
Checking spelling in dictionary	1 (5.88%)		2 (14.28%)
Retelling the text	1 (5.88%)		
Practicing expressions, proverbs		1(20%)	
Speaking with family		1(20%)	1 (7.14%)
Studying		1(20%)	
Going to institute		1(20%)	
Repeating words			4 (28.57%)
Practicing new words			4 (28.57%)
Translating sentences to English			1 (7.14%)
Explaining vocabulary			1 (7.14%)

Therefore, after analyzing their responding the following results were gained (Table 7):

- 1) Students of the high level of proficiency mostly used reading English books, newspapers, and novels (94.11%).
- 2) Students of the middle level of proficiency mostly used listening to radio, news, cassettes, and the speaking of other persons (80%).
- 3) Students of the lower level of proficiency also mostly used listening to English cassettes, music, and news (71.42%).

These data indicated that learners use different out-of-class language learning strategies. However most of them did not consider the importance of functional practice and they were

not able to readily deal with authentic input. Little students' opportunities to use foreign language may lead to this result.

5. DISCUSSION

- 1) The first major conclusion of the present research is that Iranian EFL learners employ different quantities of the three sections of language learning strategies. The students employed the monitoring section most (Mean = 47.71). It means that learners pay more attention to the use of linguistic forms and modify language responses the most. McGroarty (1988,1999, cited in Oxford & Crookal, 1989), Oxford (1985, cited in Oxford & Nyikos, 1988), Rubin (1975), Wenden and Rubin (1987), Naiman et al. (1978, cited in Woods, 1997) showed that monitoring strategy is one of strategies used by good language learners.

Rubin (1981) maintained that good language learners monitor their own speech and that of others. These students are concerned that their speech is well received and meets performance standards. Part of this monitoring is a function of active participation in the learning process. It means that successful language learners constantly process information and, thus, can learn not only from their own mistakes but also from those of others.

Regarding the differences between formal and functional strategies, the participants in this study performed more on the functional strategy (Mean=23.93). Formal strategy was found to be the least frequently used strategy (Mean=20.09).

This finding, based on functional strategies, adds statistical support to information-processing systems. Shoerey (1999), Bialystoke (1981) and Huang and Van Naerssen (1987) pointed out that functional strategy has the critical role in language learning. Naiman et al. (1978, cited in Pickard, 1996, p. 150) also identified the "active task approach" whereby learners involve themselves actively in the language learning task in a number of different ways.

- 2) The second major conclusion of the present research is that the proficiency level of the learners does not have any significant effect on their performance on the three sections of the LLS. Iranian EFL learners do not employ the Formal, Functional or Monitoring Learning Strategies differently as far as their proficiency levels are concerned. Similarly, some research such as Vann and Abraham (1990), Borzabadi (2000), and Lotfiyan-Moghaddam (2003) indicated that there is no relationship between language strategies and language proficiency. All language learners appear to be active strategy-users, but they often failed to apply strategies appropriately.

However, this finding is different from that of others who have investigated the same relationship type in an EFL context. Because in these studies, such as Griffiths (2003), Griffiths and Parry (2001), Sheory (1999), Bremner (1999), Bialystok (1985) and Huang and Van Naerssen (1987), showed that students with higher proficiency in English are more frequent users of learning strategies and language proficiency strongly affected strategy choice. Although, Tajedin (2001) found that Iranian EFL learners make medium use of learners' attempts to regulate their language learning process.

McDonough (2006) mentioned that there's an alternative way of looking at language learning strategies of successful and poor language learners. What seemed to be distinctive between the good and poor language learners was not so much that they were using a whole different class of strategies. They were using, in many cases, the same strategies, but the good language learners of course were using them successfully and the poor language learners were failing to use them well.

- 3) Another conclusion reached at based on the results of this study is that reading ability of the subjects does not have any significant effect on their performance on the three sections of the LLS. Iranian EFL learners do not employ the Formal, Functional or Monitoring Learning Strategies differently as far as their reading ability is concerned.
- 4) In analysis of learners' language learning strategy use reported in this study, it was shown that the students of the high level of proficiency mostly used reading and students of the middle and lower levels of proficiency mostly used listening. It is supported by Pickard (1996) that passive activities used by language learners are more often due to the accessibility of materials.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The fact that students identified as good language learners by teachers use conscious learning strategies not only in classrooms but also out of classroom acquisition environments is an indication that teachers could profitably direct students to utilize learning strategies for a variety of language learning activities. Therefore, some implications were suggested:

- 1) As Oxford (2002) believes perhaps central implication of this study concerns the way in which teachers view and employ language learning strategies. They should look more closely at each student regarding the features of "good language learners". They can identify which of these characteristics each student has and which he or she lacks.
- 2) Teachers could increase self-confidence of slow students by providing opportunities for them to explore language successfully. This may be particularly important at early stages in learning a language.
- 4) There was evidence from the closed-question in part 1 that more learners were not aware of their strategies used. Some students wrote two or three of their language learning strategies use. EFL teachers can help their students recognize the power of consciously using language learning strategies to make learning quicker, easier, more effective, and more fun.
- 5) Furthermore, there was evidence that the most subjects in this study use monitoring strategy, while functional strategy is showed effective in language learning, too. It suggests providing situations in which students can learn and use the target language purposefully and meaningfully, and encourage students to explore potential communicative situations outside the classroom, in which they can implement a functional strategy.
- 7) The teachers need to incorporate the strategy training in their teaching program. As Oxford (1990) put it, strategy training can be used to enhance learner autonomy. This

autonomy may in turn cause a reduction in language anxiety, which may contribute to more effective use of language learning strategies.

- 8) Strategy training can be included in the teaching materials. This is an explicit approach towards strategy training, which is supported by Brown (1999, cited in Brown 2001). Students are encouraged to continue their learning outside the classroom, sometimes individually, sometimes with a partner.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- a) In order to extend the domain of this research, other techniques of gathering information such as interviews and observations can be used. The reason is that observations and interviews provide rich, unquestionable detail that can help explain the process.
- b) New computer-assisted language learning technologies should also be examined to determine their effects on the strategies students use to learn a new language.
- c) A range of issues and themes relevant to out-of-class language learning strategies could be explored via research, including language learning inside and outside self-access-centers, individual differences in motivation and out-of-class language learning behavior in different contexts and at different times, the exact contribution of out-of-class language learning to overall language gains, and details of both positive and negative factors which influence out-of-class language learning.

Finally, it is hoped that the findings of this study help improve the educational processes in and out of classrooms and educational institutions and help teachers and learners to promote their knowledge and find easier and more efficient ways of teaching and learning English.

8. REFERENCES

- Baker, W. and Boonkit, K. (2004). Learning strategies in reading and writing: EAP contexts. *Regional Language Center Journal*; 35/3, 299-328.
- Benson, P. (2001). *Autonomy in language learning*. London: Longman.
- Bialystok, E. (1985). The compatibility of teaching and learning strategies. *Applied Linguistics*; 6/3, 255-262.
- Bialystok, E. (1981). The role of conscious strategies in second language proficiency. *Modern Language Journal*, 65, 24-35.
- Borzabadi Farahani, D. (2000). «The relationship between language learning strategies and major fields of study, sex, language proficiency, and learning styles». Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran.
- Bremner, S. (1999). Language learning strategies and language proficiency: Investigating the relationship in Hong Kong. *Canadian Modern Language Review*; 55/4.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Second Edition. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
- Carrell, P. (1991). Second language reading: Reading ability or language proficiency? *Applied Linguistics*; 12/2, 159-179.

- Dickinson, L. (1994). *Self-instruction in language learning*. Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.
- Green, J. & Oxford, R.L., 1995: A closer look at learning strategies, L2 proficiency, and gender. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29, 261- 297.
- Griffiths, C. (2003). Patterns of language learning strategy use. *System*; 31,367-383.
- Griffiths, C. and Parry, J. M. (2001). Language -learning strategies: Theory and perception. *ELT Journal*; 55/3, 247-254.
- Huang, Xiso-Hua and M. Van Naerssen (1987). Learning strategies for oral communication. *Applied Linguistic*; 8/3,287-307.
- Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Lotfiyan Moghaddam, Mehdi (2003).»The relationship between reflection through keeping language learning diaries by Iranian EFL learners, Their language learning strategies and language proficiency level». Unpublished M.A Thesis, Tarbiat Modarres University, Tehran.
- Macaro, E. (2001). *Learning strategies in foreign and second language classroom*. Continuum: London and New York.
- McDonough, S. (2006). Learner strategies. *ELT Journal*; 60/1, 63-70.
- McGroarty, M. (1988). Second Language Acquisition Theory Relevant to Language Minorities: Cummins, Krashen and Schumann. In McKay, S.L. & Wong, S.C. (eds.), *Language Diversity: Problem or Resource*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle: 295-330.
- Naiman, N., Fröhlich, M., Stern, H.H. and Todesco, A (1978). *The good language learner*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Oxford, R.L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. New York, New bury House.
- Oxford, R. L. (2002). Language learning strategies in a Nutshell : Update and ESL suggestions. In J.C.Richards and W.A.Renandya(Eds), *Methodology in language teaching* (PP.124-132). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oxford, R. (1996) *Language Learning Strategies around the World: Cross-cultural Perspectives*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Oxford, R. L. and Crookall, D. (1989). Research on language learning strategies: Methods, findings, and instructional issues. *The Modern Language Journal*; 73/4, 404-419.
- Oxford, R. L. & Ehrman, M. (1995). Adults' language learning strategies in an intensive foreign language program in the United States. *System*, 23(3), 359-386.
- Oxford, R. L. and Nyikos, M. (1989).Variables affecting choice of language learning strategies by university students. *The Modern Language Journal*; 73(3), 291-300.
- Oxford, R. L. and Nyikos, M .(1993). A factor analytic study of language-learning strategy use: Interpretations from information-processing theory and social psychology. *The Modern Language Journal*; 77/1, 11-22.
- Pearson, N. (2004). *The idiosyncrasies of out-of-class language learning: A study of mainland Chinese students studying English at tertiary level in New Zealand*. Retrieved April 23, 2006, from <http://www.Independentlearning.Org/ila03/ila03- Pearson.pdf>
- Pickard, N. (1996). Out-of -class language learning strategies. *ELT Journal*; 50/2, 150-159.
- Rubin, J. (1975). What the «good language learner» can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly*, 9, 41-51.
- Rubin, J. (1981). Study of cognitive process in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 11:2, 117-131.
- Sheorey, R. (1999). An examination of language learning strategy use in the setting of an indigenized variety of English. *System*; 27,173-190.
- Stern, H. H. (1983). *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching* . Oxford: Oxford University Press: 380-383.

- Tajedin, Z. (2001). «Language learning strategies: A strategy-based approach to L2 learning, strategic competence and test validation». Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Allameh Tabatabai University.
- Vann, R. J. and Abraham, R. G. (1990). Strategies of unsuccessful language learners. *TESOL Quarterly*; 24/2, 177-198.
- Wenden, A. and Rubin, J. (1987). *Learner Strategies in Language Learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Woods, D. (1997). *Decision –making in language learning: a lens for examining learner strategies*. (1997, October 19). Retrieved July 28, 2005, from <http://www.jalt-publications.org/tlt/files/97/oc/woods.html>.