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# Language Learning Strategies (LLS) Implementation of Students and Teachers at a Malaysian Pre-Tertiary Educational Institution

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## ABSTRACT

The study which took place at a Malaysian pre-tertiary educational institution aimed at investigating the implementation of language learning strategies (LLS) of its two major stakeholders, namely the students and the teachers. As the study employed mixed-method design, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected as to report the findings. *The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning Strategies* (SILL) and classroom observation protocol were the two important instruments for this study. A total of 300 students were involved in the study in which the number was determined using Krejcie and Morgan table. The students were divided into two groups consisting of 150 students who passed the institution's English Proficiency Test, being referred to as 'EPT-pass' and 150 students who failed the test, hence known as 'EPT-fail' in the study. Four teachers voluntarily involved in the study after invitation to be part of the study was extended to all teachers at the educational institution. Analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation scores) and thematic analysis. The findings showed that students employed indirect language learning strategies more than direct strategies with EPT-pass group recording (M=4.084, *SD=0.625*) and EPT-fail group with (M=2.722, *SD=0.466*). It was apparent that metacognitive strategies (M=4.361, *SD=0.954*) were EPT-pass group's most employed strategies while EPT-fail students implemented affective strategies (M=3.077, *SD=0.399*) the most. Additionally, LLS were undoubtedly embedded into the lesson implementations of the four teachers whose lesson implementations were observed. The study implies that LLS play fundamental part in the teaching and learning of English and should be directly nurtured and embedded into English language classrooms to ensure more effective implementations.

*Keywords:* Language learning strategies (LLS), descriptive statistics, thematic analysis

## INTRODUCTION

Malaysian students in general were found to have displayed substandard performance in assessment or examination related to English language (Azman, 2016). That is a recurring statement uttered and

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expressed by pedagogues across the globe, not just in Malaysia. Education stakeholders in the country have raised their concerns about the circumstance for decades, trying to find functioning remedy to not just tackle, but also solve the issue. This is because English has prominent impact not only while students are still part of the education system, but also later in their future undertaking. Students who fail to acquire adequate level of English proficiency while still being in school will not only fail to attain good grades, they will also face greater hardship when they pursue tertiary education as English is the medium of instruction in most Malaysian higher education institutions (Mehar Singh, 2019). If they enter higher learning institution with inadequate language proficiency, there is a chance that the students might drop out from the educational system.

Apparently, being out of the educational system does not free school leavers or higher learning institution dropouts from language (English) related issues as mastery of the language is seen as a pivotal factor especially in career progress by employers in general. The Ministry of Education Malaysia reported "3,500,000 students Malaysia do not meet the minimum English proficiency required from secondary school graduates. That's 72% of Malaysian students who will enter the workforce at a disadvantage" (Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, p.33 & p.114). Entering the workforce at a disadvantage will then bring serious economic implications to individuals as there will be 70% income gap between those without and with English proficiency in their career right off the bat.

Students are still reported to show dissatisfying performance in spite of numerous plan of actions taken to revamp the education system, particularly language learning (Lim, Md.Yunus & Embi, 2017). That could possibly be perhaps for ages, researchers, teachers and policy makers have been focusing on methods to facilitate learners to attain learning goals. However, Cohen (2011) believes that learners should be the ones shouldering more responsibilities in going through the process of trial and errors in learning. There is a substantial truth to that claim. Afterall, there has been paradigm shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered in the past two decades. In this case, it is only fitting to study language learning strategies (LLS) as they are nevertheless one of the key concepts related to learning progression, aside from truly embracing the shift to learner-centered. The study focused on language learning strategies employed by individual students at a Malaysian pre-tertiary educational institution as LLS "could lead to greater performance and aplomb on the part of the language learner" (Kussin, Omar & Kepol, 2018, p.110). Alhaisoni (2012) suggested that language learning strategies are to be taught to students especially the less successful learners so they get to improve their language proficiency and hence, achieve the very objective of learning a language. In view of that, the researchers invited teachers from the same learning institution to become part of the study. All in all, language learning strategies are made the focal point of the study because "successful language learning is determined by the utilization of suitable learning styles and strategies, as well as the extent to which learners respond to and benefit from educator in a successful manner" (Abdolmehdi Riazi, 2007; Al-Hebaishi, 2012; Felder, 1995; Oxford & Ehrman, 1993; Reid, 1987 as cited in Muniandy & Munir, 2016, p.2).

Many researchers have grown interest in looking at the concept of good language learning which directly led them to studying language learning strategies. That has led to no general consensus in the field of second language acquisition with respect to the appropriate way of defining language

learning strategies but according to Ellis (1994), Oxford's taxonomy is "perhaps the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies" (p.539).
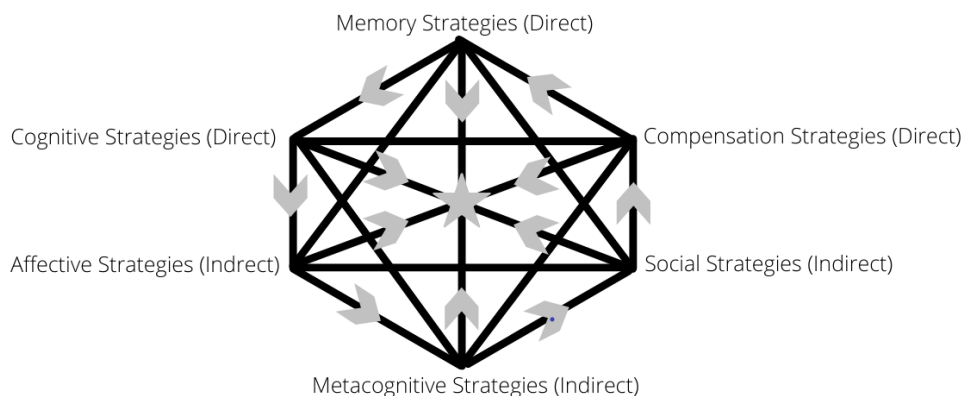
Memory Strategies (Direct)

Cognitive Strategies (Direct)                          Compensation Strategies (Direct)

Affective Strategies (Indrect)                          Social Strategies (Indirect)

Metacognitive Strategies (Indirect)

**Figure 1** Oxford's Framework of Language Learning Strategies

In Oxford's (1990) framework of language learning strategies, it is believed that all the direct strategies (memory, cognitive and compensation strategies) and indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective and social strategies) are both inter and intra related. Learners would first have to operate storage system to not only collect information for future use (memory strategies) for them to be able to deploy those stored input in time to come (cognitive strategies) and while still in progression to fully utilize those deposited information, language learners would have to improvise for their language deficiencies (compensation strategies). The situation leads learners to keep track of their own learning in order to progress further in the language (metacognitive strategies) and along with that, they also have to be resilient in order for them to go through the trials and errors in learning (affective strategies). The whole learning process will become a laid-back experience if learners get scaffolding from others as that will not only aid the learning process but also present learners with more occasions to practice the language which in turn lead to language mastery (social strategies).

The comprehensive nature of Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning study is the reason why the current study adopted the taxonomy and with it, the adoption of *'The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)'* (Oxford, 1990) - the standard measure for learners of variety of languages. Studies have reported reliability coefficients for the SILL ranging from .85 to .95, making it a trusted measure for gauging students' report on language strategy use (Eid Alhaisoni, 2012) and hence, being used as one of the instruments for the study.

Oxford (1990) first defined learning strategies as "operations employed by the learners to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information" before she further expanded the definition to "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p.8). Within those two conflated definitions, Oxford (1990) has indirectly given new hint that for a successful learning to take place, learning strategies need to be evident.

There are 62 strategies altogether mentioned by Oxford (1990) and they are divided into direct and indirect strategies. The strategies used directly in dealing with a new language are called direct strategies. The three sub-strategies that belong to direct strategies are memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. The indirect strategies on the other hand are used for general management of learning. The three sub-categories grouped under indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective and social strategies.

Knowledge and practice of language learning strategies are crucial should students want to develop their language competency (Masoud Gholamali & Fereshteh Faryardres, 2011) and evidently, good language learners appeared to use larger number and range of strategies than poor language learners (Abdalmaujod, 2013) but for learners to become well versed in utilizing language learning strategies, they need (according to Vygotsky's concept of 'Zone of Proximal Development' as cited in Shabani, Khatib & Ebadi, 2010) to have collaborative endeavours with skilled individuals. In educational setting, 'skilled individuals' (other than peers or classmates with better language performance), teachers would be the closest individuals which could be referred to as 'skilled individuals'. That is why besides studying the language learning strategy practice among students (where similarities and differences were drawn out), the study also went into studying the practice of language learning strategies by individual teachers who voluntarily become part of the study.

## METHODOLOGY

### Site and Sample

The data were collected at a Malaysian pre-tertiary educational institution. There were approximately 3,000 students pursuing their pre-tertiary education at the institution. The sample size was determined using table of sample size prepared by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) in which the table suggested for 300 students to be selected from the total population as that is the required size to be within a sampling error of .05 with a 95% level of confidence. The number was then divided equally to form a group of students known as EPT-pass group and another group which is referred to as EPT-fail students in this study. The name reflected the performance of both groups in the institution's English proficiency test. Upon enrolment, it is made compulsory for every student to sit for English proficiency test (EPT). Students who pass the test would be exempted from following English classes throughout their study period at the educational institution while those who fail the test would have to follow English classes for 14 weeks (one semester) before they could have another attempt at sitting for another English test. The terms 'EPT-pass' and 'EPT-fail' basically derived from those passing and failing English proficiency test at the educational institution. Convenient sampling was used in the selection of student participants but the sample was stratified based on their performance in the institution's English Proficiency Test. A total of 300 students (from both EPT-pass and EPT-fail groups) were asked to answer *The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL) as it is a trusted measure for gauging student's report language strategy use (Alhaisoni, 2012).

All English teachers at the learning institution were invited to become part of the study but only four teachers agreed to participate in the study. They were interviewed using semi-structured interview pro forma to get more insights on the implementation of LLS at the learning institution. Semi-structured interview sessions have the advantage of providing reasonably standard data across respondents, but of greater depth. (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007).

**Methodology Summary**

The table below provides summary of the research methodology for the study.

**Table 1** Summary of Methodology

| No. | Research Questions | Framework/ Taxonomy | Data Collection Method | Data Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | What are the similarities or differences in practice of language learning strategies between students from both EPT-pass and EPT-fail groups? | Oxford (1990) Language Learning Strategy Taxonomy | Questionnaire (SILL) | • Descriptive Analysis  • Qualitative Analysis of Data Collected through Interviews and Lesson Observations |
| 2. | What is the most utilised strategy by EPT-pass and EPT-fail students? | | Questionnaire (SILL) | |
| 3. | Do academic staff at the educational institution make language learning strategies part of their lesson implementations and how do they go about doing it? | | Lesson Observations | |

**FINDINGS**

**Findings from *The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL):**

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990) was adopted and distributed to 150 EPT-pass and 150 EPT-fail students for the purpose of collecting data for research questions one and two which are:

RQ1: What are the similarities or differences in the practice of language learning strategies between student from both EPT-pass and EPT-fail groups?

RQ2: What is the most utilised strategy by EPT-pass and EPT-fail students?

**Table 2** Students' Overall Practice of LLS

| | | Main Strategies | EPT-pass Students | | EPT-fail Students | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *M* scores | *SD* scores | *M* scores | *SD* scores |
| Language Learning Strategies | Direct | Memory | 3.098 | *0.495* | 2.033 | *0.433* |
| | | Cognitive | 3.859 | *0.470* | 2.699 | *0.465* |
| | | Compensation | 3.262 | *0.509* | 2.927 | *0.449* |
| | | **Average** | 3.406 | *0.491* | 2.553 | *0.449* |
| | Indirect | Metacognitive | 4.361 | *0.954* | 2.689 | *0.469* |
| | | Affective | 3.811 | *0.449* | 3.077 | *0.399* |
| | | Social | 4.079 | *0.473* | 2.400 | *0.531* |
| | | **Average** | 4.084 | *0.625* | 2.722 | *0.466* |

Generally, EPT-pass students appear to have utilised more LLS than EPT-fail students. The former group recorded mean scores of between 3.098 and 3.859 for practice of direct strategies which cover memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. The latter group registered lower mean scores of between 2.033 and 2.927 for practice of the same direct strategies. Similarly, EPT-pass students also recorded higher mean scores of between 3.811 and 4.361 for practice of indirect strategies which consist of metacognitive, affective and social strategies whereas EPT-pass students registered mean scores of between 2.689 and 3.077 for practice of the same indirect strategies.

Both EPT-pass and EPT-fail groups however are found to be similar when practice of direct and indirect strategies were being compared. Both groups evidently employed more indirect strategies than direct strategies and of the three strategies grouped under indirect strategies, both EPT-pass and EPT-fail students clearly resorted to employing metacognitive strategies the most through mean scores of 4.361 and 2.689 respectively. With *0.469*, the latter group recorded lower standard deviation score in comparison to *0.954* recorded by the former group which indicates that the responses of students from EPT-fail group are more clustered around the mean score. In other words, overall responses collected from students who belong to EPT-fail group are more congruent in comparison to responses collected from students who belong to EPT-pass group when it comes to practice of metacognitive strategies.

**Findings from Lesson Observations**

Four classroom observations (involving the four teachers who responded to the invitation to become part of the study) were done in order to further substantiate the findings of the study, looking at the implementations of LLS from the perspective of the teachers. Verbal agreements were made with all the four teachers that their names and background would not be mentioned anywhere in the report. The study had to resort to structured observation using self-developed 'classroom observation

protocol' forms as the four teachers did not want their lesson implementations to be videotaped. The findings from classroom observations help to provide answer to research question three which is:

**RQ3**: Do academic staff at educational institution make language learning strategies part of their lesson implementations and how do they go about doing it?

**Table 3** LLS Embedded into Lesson Implementations

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3"></td><td>**Main Strategies**</td><td>**Sub-strategies embedded into four (4) observed lesson implementations**</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">Language Learning Strategies</td><td rowspan="3">Direct</td><td></td><td>Memory</td><td>'word grouping', 'acronym', 'placing new words into context'</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Cognitive</td><td>'taking notes', 'get the idea quickly', 'translating',</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Compensation</td><td>'guessing intelligently'</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Indirect</td><td></td><td>Metacognitive</td><td>'paying attention', 'setting goals and objectives', 'self-evaluating', 'seeking practice opportunities'</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Affective</td><td>'making positive statement', 'rewarding yourself',</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Social</td><td>'cooperating with peers'</td></tr>
</table>

In total, the four teacher who voluntarily become part of the study demonstrated usage of 14 language learning strategies via their lesson implementations observed and those strategies include 'word grouping', 'acronym', 'placing new words into contexts', 'taking notes', 'get the idea quickly', 'translating', 'guessing intelligently', 'paying attention', 'setting goals and objectives', 'self-evaluating', 'seeking practice opportunities', 'making positive statements', 'rewarding yourself' and 'cooperating with peers'. From the total number of language learning strategies being embedded into lesson implementations, 7 strategies are grouped under direct. strategies and the remaining 7 strategies are grouped under indirect strategies. Those equal numbers suggest that there is a balanced practice between direct and indirect strategies when it comes to lesson implementations at the educational institution. For instance, the first teacher whose lesson was observed clearly made learning strategies part of lesson implementation. The first strategy being made part of lesson implementation (which is grouped under 'memory strategies') was 'word grouping'. During the lesson, students were asked to group 'trend words' (words which are used to describe data movement in any graph) into noun group and verb group using words like *increase, is increasing, has increased, increased, an increase, a decrease, a rise, a fall*, to mention a few.

'Taking notes' (sounding facile as it it), was another strategy being made part of the first lesson implementation observed. Students were made to copy all the notes or 'trend words' given during the lesson although they are easily memorised. The teacher made is clear to the students (although cliché) that the only reason they were mace to copy those 'trend words' was to provide them with something to refer to whenever they are not in class or without the presence of the teacher when doing revision.

Unfortunately, throughout the one-hour observation, there was no evidence of cognitive strategies being made part of the lesson implementation for that particular day. Considering the light content of the lesson, it was not a surprise that cognitive strategies were not made part of the lesson.

There were however three sub-strategies grouped under 'metacognitive strategies' being made part of the lesson implementation in lesson observation #1. The first sub-strategy was 'paying attention' and the teacher made it part of the lesson implementation by just acting out the role of typical teacher ('When I do the talking, you shall listen') and while stressing out the importance of doing well in report writing (or better known as Task 1 Writing among the students), the teacher was in a way made another strategy which is 'setting goals and objectives' as part of the lesson implementation – although it may have sounded like a teacher nagging to her students, but a language learning strategy is still a strategy no matter how it is put forth or translated. The last strategy grouped under 'metacognitive strategies' that was made part of the lesson is a strategy called 'self-evaluating'. It was made part of the lesson when the teacher reminded all the students to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and work towards further enhancing their strengths and overcome their weaknesses. That 'advice' is actually another useful strategy to learn any new target language.

Other than that, the teacher also made one of the affective strategies as part of the lesson implementation by simply giving out words of encouragement to the students – when students were called out to the front and when they managed to write out a clear analysis on the board, the teacher uttered out all sorts of words of encouragement like *good, great, you have that right, excellent*. 'Making positive statement' is actually one of the strategies grouped under affective strategies.

When the teacher asked her students to work in groups and helped each other out with familiarizing themselves with all the 'trend words', it was actually another striking evidence of one more strategy (social strategy) being made part of lesson implementation and that strategy is called 'cooperating with peers'. It may appear as a simple strategy to be incorporated into lesson but it does help learners to have enhanced learning process.

Similar to lesson observation #1, the teacher observed in lesson observation #2 did make a strategy called 'word-grouping' as part of lesson implementation. It started with the teacher highlighting some words which could be found in the passage given out to students (namely *judge, captured, imprison, legislate, implement* and *penalize*). Students were then asked about the possible similarity that those words have. When the correct answer was finally heard from the students, they were then asked to change the word form of those words so they could have nouns instead of verbs.

What appears to be the basic reading skills (skimming and scanning) were actually some of the language learning strategies being made part of lesson implementation in lesson observation #2 and those two are done in order to 'get the idea quickly' – in the case of the lesson, that would be to get rough idea of what the passage is all about. When the teacher translated words from the target language to L1 (the learners first language, the Malay language that is), the teacher actually made another strategy as part of the lesson which is 'translating'. Another strategy grouped under cognitive strategies which was also being made part of the lesson was 'taking notes' and that took place when the teacher reminded the students to keep words like *judge, captured, imprison, legislate, implement* and *penalize* into their notebook.

'Guessing intelligently' was another strategy (grouped under compensation strategies) being made part of lesson implementation. Students were first asked to 'intelligently guessed' the meaning of words like legislate, imprison (just naming two) before they could resort for help from their classmates and eventually, the teacher. They were reminded by the teacher of the need to make

'intelligent guess' sometimes as there will be circumstances in which they would not be able to look for help from anyone or anything.

When students were asked to be attentive, that was actually the time when another strategy was being made part of lesson implementation and that strategy is called by a simple name, 'paying attention'. It was made clear to the students that they needed to pay attention so they would not get words from the two word-groups (e.g., legislate – verb, legislature – noun) confused, in which failing to differentiate the two would cause the students to inaccurately use those two word-groups in sentences (especially in extended writing or better known as Task 2 Writing among the students at the institution).

Portraying a motherly figure as she was, the teacher in lesson observation #2 made 'making positive statement' strategy as part of the lesson. When students managed to write a complete sentence using the word assigned to them on the board (even with errors, but rather minimal), they were given credits like, 'There you go, it is not so difficult, is it?' and 'Complex Structure! Bravo!'

Similar to lesson observation #1, the teacher in lesson observation #2 did not incorporate much of social strategies into lesson implementation except for 'cooperating with peers' in which she instructed her students to work in groups so they could work together on the tasks that came with the lesson.

As for lesson observation #3, using 'acronym' was the first strategy being made part of lesson implementation. This particular strategy is placed under 'creating mental linkages' which is still within memory strategies. The teacher demonstrated the usage of this strategy in order to help his students to not only remember coordinators well, but also for them to use coordinators correctly in sentences. Coordinators like for, and, nor, but, or, yet and so were acronymized as F. A. N. B. O. Y. S. – perhaps a known 'strategy' to all teachers teaching the target language but a strategy still needs to be acknowledged no matter how simple it is.

Other than that, a cliché 'note taking' strategy was demonstrated by the teacher in lesson observation #3 and being made part of the lesson. The teacher explained the rationale of making his students to copy those notes on conjunctions was to help aid their memory on what constitutes coordinators.

Throughout the one-hour observation, there was no evidence of compensation strategies being made part of lesson implementation. Perhaps, if the content of the lesson and implementation were to be made different, compensation strategies would surely be made of the lesson implementation (not that there was anything wrong with the content or implementation of the lesson – just a thought).

Perhaps another cliché instruction given by any teacher irrespective of gender and locality – students were asked to pay attention on how to use coordinators carefully and accurately in sentences and what appeared to be a 'cliché instruction' was actually another strategy grouped under metacognitive strategies being made part of the lesson implementation in lesson observation #3 which was 'paying attention' in which this strategy helps anyone learning the target language to stay focused on the learning process.

The teacher in classroom observation #3 went very generous into rewarding his students who managed to use coordinators correctly in sentences with chocolate-flavoured candy. It was not only an act of generosity but also a clear demonstration of one language learning strategy placed under

affective strategies which is 'rewarding oneself' and it is strongly believed that one will be driven to move even more forward upon being rewarded for even a small accomplishment.

Very much similar to lesson observations #1 and #2, the teacher in lesson observation #3 also made 'cooperating with peers' strategy part of lesson implementation before he eventually offered his assistance to those who still had problem with using coordinators correctly.

In lesson observation #4, 'placing new words into context' was a strategy under memory strategies being made part of lesson implementation. The lesson began with students reading a passage on 'Domestic Violence' and words like *assaults, degrade, retaliation, flee, vicious* as well as *perpetuating* were extracted out from the passage. After ample explanation was given on the meaning of those words, students were asked to construct sentences using each of those words. The teacher mentioned it out loud that the students needed to embrace that strategy as it will help them retain information better or in the context of the lesson, that helped students to remember the meaning of those individual words and thus, they can use them properly and repeatedly in sentences, when the context is right.

Apart from making 'taking notes' strategy part of the lesson, the teacher also incorporated 'translating' strategy (from the target language to L1) as quite a number of the students had difficulty to understand the actual meaning of some words.

'Guessing intelligently' (using other clues besides linguistic clues) strategy was also evidently being made part of the lesson implementation. It involved finding the definition of some difficult words and before students were allowed to use dictionary or resort to any other kind of help, they were first told to guess the meaning of those difficult words using their knowledge of context and text structure. The teacher mentioned it out loud that flipping through of language dictionary will only slow down the students' language progress and therefore they were advised to embrace that strategy.

Similar to the other three teachers in the first three lesson observations, the teacher in lesson observation #4 also demanded his students to give undivided attention while he was teaching in front of the class – and obviously 'paying attention' is one of the important strategies grouped under metacognitive strategies that language learners need to embrace in the process of learning and acquiring target language. Apart from that, the teacher also made 'setting goals and objectives' strategy as part of his lesson when he constantly reminded the students of the importance to produce good quality writing, and hence, pass the next language test. Another strategy which is also grouped under metacognitive strategies that was made part of the lesson observation #4 was 'seeking practice opportunities' – in which the students were urged to use those words introduced for the day as often as possible to help them remember how to use those words correctly in sentences.

When the teacher in lesson observation #4 uttered, "You can, just have faith in yourself" (when one of the students second-guessed his ability to write a proper sentence on the whiteboard), he was actually embedding another strategy into the implementation of his lesson – and that strategy is known as 'making positive statement'. A simple act of trying to encourage his student is actually one important enough strategy as students will have to go through trial and error in the process of learning and acquiring the target language – whether they like it or not.

Very much similar to the first three lesson observations, the teacher in lesson observation #4 also made 'cooperating with peers' part of his lesson implementation. Perhaps what made it a popular choice of strategy among language practitioners is the fact that the strategy helps learners to lend each other the needed scaffolding while undergoing trial and error in the learning process.

Generally, language learning strategies were embedded into lesson implementation either through classroom activities (depending on the context and content of the lesson for the day) or through verbal instructions of individual teachers.


## CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS


The findings of this study provide a better understanding of the ways the two education stakeholders namely students and teachers approach to language learning – both stakeholders do practice LLS but the latter group was not really aware of LLS being embedded into their lesson implementations. "Learning and acquiring a language is not an easy task, especially when it comes to learning a second language. It takes courage, effort and a lot of hard work" (Hashim, Md.Yunus & Hashim, 2018, p.46). The trio researchers are right about learning a language, particularly learning a second language being a complex process. However, to believe a thing impossible is to make it so. More often that not, it is all in someone's mind. Nonetheless, it has to be tackled systematically. Learning a second language can only be done systematically and hence lead to successful mastery of any target language (English, in the case of this study) through impeccable knowledge of language learning strategies as numerous studies which focused on English as a second language (ESL) and English as foreign language (EFL) stated that language learning strategies can "greatly support students in becoming more effective learners inside and outside school (Khaldieh, 2000; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Morony et al., 2013; Platsidou & Kantaridou, 2014; Shang, 2010; Wong & Nunan, 2011; Wu, 2008, Yang, 2007; Yin, 2008; Yu, 2007 as cited in Habok & Magyar, 2020, p.3). In this study, both EPT-pass and EPT-fail groups (through *The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* or SILL) did claim to have utilized language learning strategies in acquiring the target language (English) but the overall findings indicate that both groups employed indirect strategies more than direct strategies. It is undeniably true that indirect language learning strategies work together with the direct strategies. They help learners regulate the learning process but they do not involve the target language directly. Direct strategies on the other hand help learners with the mental processing of the language. Direct strategies, by and large, assist language learners with storing and recovering language input, which is the essence of language learning. Perhaps language learners in general should take heed of the importance of having both direct and indirect strategies balanced in order for successful language learning to take place.

Additionally, the study also reported EPT-pass students having utilized language learning strategies (overall) more than EPT-fail students. That is as anticipated by the researchers and goes parallel with the Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary and Robbins study findings (as cited in Omar & Kussin, 2017) when they mentioned, "Differences between more effective learners and less effective learners were found in the number and range of strategies used, in how strategies were applied to task, and in whether they were appropriate for the task," (p.9). Language learners who are still in the dark

when it comes to acquiring and mastering target language could perhaps be enlightened on the substance language learning strategies have on the whole learning process. Having at least two diverse groups of students (competent and incompetent language learners) could be said as an ordinary scenario in most, if not all language learning settings. Instead of feeling perplexed, pedagogues could maybe turn the event to their advantage by bringing and adapting peer learning concept into classroom settings. The name 'peer learning' is self-explanatory in which students can form partnerships to assist each other in learning. A more precise definition of 'peer learning' as suggested by Boud, Cohen and Sampson (2009) would be "the use of teaching and learning strategies in which students learn with and from each other without the immediate intervention of a teacher" (p.2). In the context of this study, students from both EPT-pass and EPT-fail groups should be encouraged to practice reciprocal peer teaching. With 'encourage' being the key operational word, language educators need to constantly remind themselves to not directly be involved while peer learning is taking place. It is hoped that students from more competent group could exchange not only conversation, but also strategies that could help one with ameliorating his or her language mastery.

The four teachers who volunteered to become part of the study clearly demonstrated good practice where language learning strategies is concern. Incorporation of language learning strategies into lesson implementation is popularly known as 'Strategy Based Instruction (SBI)'. Shown next is SBI framework.



Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, & Robbins (1999, p.46)
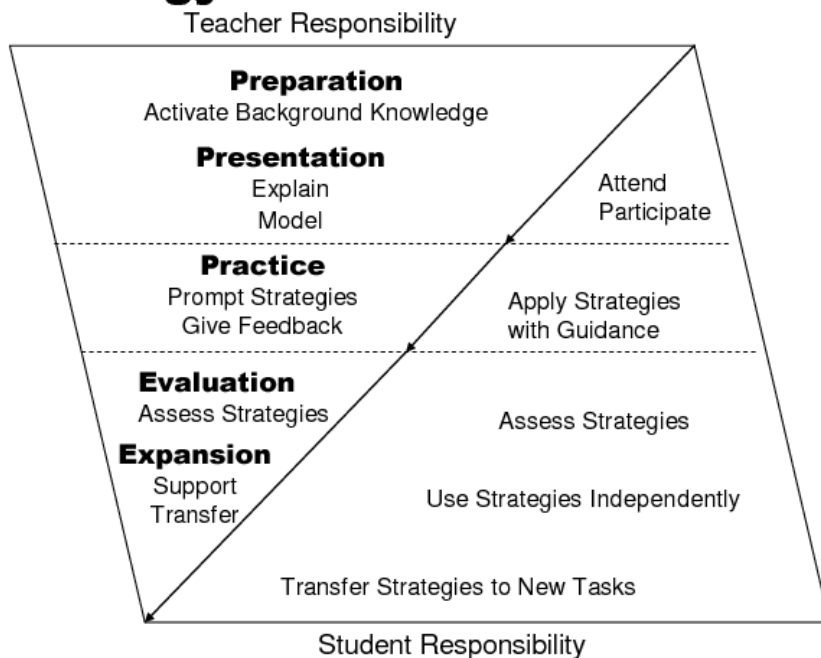
Cohen (as cited in Li & Liu, 2008) defined SBI as "learner-centred approach to teaching that extends classroom strategy training to indicate both explicit and implicit integration of strategies into course content" (p.129). The proverb 'provide a person with a fish will feed him for a day, but teaching him how to fish would provide food to last him a life time' very much reflects the concept of SBI. Indeed, pedagogues across the globe wish language learners to achieve learners' autonomy but that can only be achieved if language instructors first model out and demonstrate language learning strategies to students and as students take control of the language learning strategies, they get to independently decide which strategy works best when it comes to tackling any specific language task or activity. In other words, language learners have to undergo explicit strategy training – that, coupled with thinking about how one goes about learning, and experimenting with different strategies, before they can successfully acquire and master a language. Language teachers at the educational institution did just that. They incorporated language learning strategies into their lesson implementations. The only concerning point with the practice at the educational institution would be the fact that LLS were implicitly embedded into lesson implementations. It is crucial for L2 teachers to not only become aware of LLS but also understand them as they help enhance language learning (Abed, 2011).

If language instructors themselves are not fully aware of what constitute LLS and how they work, knowledge transfer involving LLS would not happen. The supposed strategies like 'skimming & scanning' will be acknowledged as just another common activity in language classrooms instead of cognitive strategy and 'working with peers' would be viewed as an opportunity to rely on more proficient classmates in lieu of social strategy. What is worse is that, affective strategies like 'giving out praises' or 'rewards' would only be viewed as teachers being in jolly mood (Kussin, Omar & Kepol, 2018). L2 learners, through specific and clear instructions shared by language instructors should be made fully aware that those they assumed to be merely 'activities' or 'language instructors having smooth day' are actually helpful strategies that could potentially help boost their language learning and hence, mastery of the target language. Prior to that, language instructors need to first become LLS literates. All in all, language learning strategies which have been found to correlate with language proficiency by many researchers in the past, need to be taught explicitly and overtly to students for them to enjoy maximum benefits from knowing, understanding and practicing language learning strategies.

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