Investigation of the Factors Affecting the Use of Language Learning Strategies by Saudi EFL Learners

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine factors affecting language learning strategies used by Saudi EFL learners. The study is based on a review of previous literature related to language learning strategies (LLS) and factors affecting the use the of LLSs. To examine the research problem, the study employed a quantitative approach in Jazan University in Saudi Arabia, used different statistical techniques including descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis, and one-way ANOVA. The results showed that language study years, gender, learning styles, motivation and proficiency can predict the strategy use by Saudi EFL learners. That is, the relationship between the model i.e. the set of independent variables and language learning strategies (LLS) is significant. However, it was found that only three independent variables are significant in predicting the use of language learning strategies (language study years, motivation, and proficiency level). Surprisingly, the study revealed a negative significant relation between the language study years and the use of LLS. It shows that, with an increase in the language study years, there would be a decrease in the use of learning strategies

Introduction

Within the realm of EFL learning and second language acquisition, literature is evident and researchers agreed upon the use of language learning strategies as a most pertinent factor. Many studies such as Purdie & Oliver (1999), Riazi (2007), Riazi & Rahimi (2005) and Shmais (2003) have documented the use and choice of learning strategies because of their extensive use and learners' tendency to rely upon a wider variety of learning strategies to have successful second language acquisition. Meanwhile, immense research has been done to find, analyze and gauge the impact of various learning strategies to enhance the learner's performance and language proficiency after acquisition. It is clear that the use and choice of language learning strategies play a vital role in second language learning. Likewise, research has been done on finding the variable favorable or unfavorable for the second language acquisition. Oxford (1996) has reported various factors which may affect the use of LLSs and final outcome which include sex, age, gender, learning goals, motivation, orientation, learning style, attitude, career orientation, teaching methods, duration, aptitude, task requirement and degree of awareness. Despite the immense research conducted to find the statistical significance of above mentioned factors and use of LLSs, a certain criticism has been raised with the passage of time. Moreover, nationality, culture, ethnicity, religion and tendency towards other languages have also been found significantly affecting the use of LLSs in various situation. Hence, it can be said that variables affecting the choice and use of learning strategies vary from country to country. This study has been conducted to find and analyze various factors which impact the use of learning strategies by Arabic EFL learners. Through literature, it has been found that in the context of Saudi Arabia, use of LLSs by Arabic EFL is greatly impacted by four factors i.e. gender, motivation, communication with native speakers and experience in learning a second language. The aim of the research study is to determine the factors affecting LLS used by Saudi EFL learners. The study is based on review of previous literature related to language learning strategies (LLS) and factors affecting the use the of LLSs.

The following section encompasses the literature review and previous research conducted on these factors and their relationship with use of LLSs.

Further research would be done in later sections of this study.

Related Literature

Language Learning Strategies

Researchers have discovered many language learning strategies, naming them only recently while it is evident that these strategies have been used for thousand years ago. For instance, historical data is evident about using many memory devices and mnemonic to help remembering story lines by storytellers in ancient times (Oxford, 1996). These are important because of their extensive use and benefits to help leaners to learn language successfully. Learning strategies help students to improve their developing skills of L2 and to gain larger responsibility to learn language on their own with more exposure and experience (Peacock and Ho, 2003). These are pertinently necessary because language learners need to keep on learning language even after leaving the classroom setting which bring more prompt and successful results in language learning. Also, these strategies help learners to assimilate new forms of information with which they are exposed in their daily routines and storing them into mental schemata. There are numerous definitions of language learning strategies which have been developed since late 1970s. According to very initial definitions developed by researchers, "a language learning strategy can be defined as a strategy which is best reserved for overall characteristics, approaches and tendencies employed by the learners to learn and get more exposure of a new or foreign language". It differs from learning technique in a way that a learning technique is a term referring to a form of learning behavior which is observable and more or less employed by the language learner (Chamot, 2004).

According to Chamot (2005), "language learning strategies are deliberate actions and approaches that learners employ in order to recall of both content area information and linguistics and to facilitate the learning of foreign language". Another definition states that a learning strategy can be called a strategy if it contributes in the development of language system which the student affects and constructs during learning process directly (Oxford, 1996). These strategies can be thoughts, actions, careful measures, processes and deliberate behaviors towards learning a new language and retaining new information making the process faster, easier, more self-directed, more enjoyable and more transferable towards existing as well as new situations. These are very essential because of their help in improving and applying language on new situation and building vocabulary comprising of various developmental steps and actions (Peacock and Ho, 2003). The very recent definition of learning strategy states as "language learning demands a strategy which are comprised of the processes consciously selected by the learners to enhance the use of a second language or learning, through storing, retaining, recalling and applying newly acquired information on new situations and improvising the use of learned words. It can be concluded that a learning strategy can be a process, thought, behavior, action, step or strategic vision to enhance learning experience as well as application of obtained information with more exposure in the native surroundings (Chamot, 2005).

Taxonomies of Language Learning Strategies

A contrasting criteria has been existing upon which a classification of learning strategies have done by researchers. It includes an implicit theory about the L2 learning strategies or about the L2 learning in general, to some extent. Oxford's taxonomy is one of different conceptualizations and taxonomies which has been selected to be used in this study and its three categories are more important consisting of memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. Following these are metacognitive and social affective strategies which have developed as the more detailed and comprehensive strategies by Oxford (1996). These are described as the tools for active involvement and self-directed actions essentially required for the better learning of a foreign language and development of a communication competence. These strategies, mentioned above, fall under two main categories i.e. direct and indirect. Following are the direct strategies:

Memory Strategy

It is comprised of the processes and tools which are designed specifically to help learners in acquiring and storing new information in their memory and retrieving that information later to be used in new situations and improvised surroundings. For instance, using key words, placing new words in unaware contexts and representing sounds in memory (Magogwe and Oliver, 2007).

Cognitive Strategy

It constitutes the processes and skills which help the learners in producing and comprehending a language in different ways. For instance, repetition, note-taking, pronunciation and summarizing text etc.

Compensation Strategy

It covers the behaviors which are used to help and compensate learners to employ newly learned language, for instance, using synonyms, making guesses while reading or listening or paraphrasing while writing or speaking.

Direct strategies are known to be employed directly in the classroom environment for teaching

language, on the other hand, indirect strategies help students in with indirect support through planning, seeking opportunities, focusing, evaluating, increasing cooperation, controlling anxiety, empathy and other means. Indirect strategies are following which are being used by Arab learners extensively (Bernat and Llyod, 2007).

Metacognitive Strategy

It can be described as behavior which reinforce learned language and its use through arranging, evaluation and planning one's learning linking with the previously known material (Peacock and Ho, 2003).

Affective Strategy

It can be known as the technique which regulates motivation and emotional behavior towards learning environment comprising of relaxation techniques e.g. singing songs to mitigate learning anxiety (Magogwe and Oliver, 2007).

Social Strategy

It can be an action employed by the learner for better interaction with another people comprising of cooperating peers, asking questions, probing situation, describing routines and development of empathy towards learning language's speaking people.

Factors affecting the use of Language Learning Strategies

These strategies have been widely employed by the Arabic EFL learners in Saudi Arabia with an increased demand of learning English language caused by the globalization and increased communication across border in every aspect of life taking from business environment to personal levels. In various scenarios and countries, many factors are affecting use of learning strategies for EFL learners and these factors are similarly affecting Arabic EFL learners (Peacock and Ho, 2003). Most pronounced factors among these are, motivation, and tendency towards learning a new language, personal beliefs, and level of language proficiency, learning style, education level, age and gender falling under demographic characteristics of learners. It has been found in literature that gender, motivation and experience of learning EFL are being considered as the most hindering and affecting factors in context of Saudi Arabia for Arabic EFL leaners (Oxford, 1996).

Gender

The literature is evident about the existence of gender differences arguing in support of opinion that female EFL learners use language learning strategies more frequently than male EFL learners. Gender differences are also pronounced in using type of strategy used by female or male learners. Evident is there for the use of social learning strategy more by female learners along with focus on input or conversational strategies and frequent use of rule-based practicing strategies. Also, use of metacognitive and memory strategies is more among female students (El-Dib, 2004). On contrary, male counterparts are less tended towards using these taxonomies. Hence, gender difference is seemed to be worthy investigating to analyze and find the factors influencing language acquisition and learning. Several studies have postulated that use of affective and compensation strategies is more by female learners of EFL in social surroundings which results in better language learning by females in Saudi Arabia instead of male counterparts (Peacock and Ho, 2003). A study conducted by Kyungsim and Leavell (2007) took into participation of many learners from various nations including Brazil, Korea, Thailand, India, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Malaysia and Togo. This study revealed that male students preferred use of metacognitive strategy while least tendency towards the use of memory and affective strategies. Through extensive research, it has been concluded by various researchers that gender plays a very dominant role in choosing language learning strategies in Saudi Arabia as females carefully choose and use these strategies for better and pronounced leaning while males are found to be less self-directed and self-motivated towards use of these prescribed processes, behaviors, thoughts, steps, actions and tools. Nevertheless, many other studies have resulted and pointed out gender as might not be affecting learning strategies neglecting as a key variable. For instance, a study conducted by Griffiths (2003) showed that relationship between frequency of learning strategies' usage and course level has been found significantly pronounced while the relationship between strategy use and gender or age has been found not statistically significant. It has then concluded that gender does not play any significant role in the choice or use of EFL learning strategies. On contrary, a more significant relationship was found between strategy choices and students' different majors. It can be said then, relationship is explicitly weak between strategy use and gender difference due to the conflicting results found in the literature and previous researches. In the context of Saudi Arabia, there is more need of studies and researches with extensive application of various theories and research instruments to find statistical relationship between language learning strategies and role of gender in determining these strategies.

Motivation

Researchers have been increasingly studied relationship between motivation and strategy use for EFL learning despite various others variable having been recognized and statistically significant (Bernat

and Llyod, 2007). According to literature and supportive researchers, it has been found that attitude and motivation are the primary sources contributing in the individual's learning experience and outcomes. According to Gardner et al. (1985), motivation and attitude are composed of four pronounced factors including a goal, effort, attitudes towards learning process and activity and desire to accomplish necessary milestones with greater efficiency for better outcomes in from of proficiently learned foreign language. In addition to this segmentation and contents, motivation can be further divided into two main orientations of reasons, integrative and instrumental. Instrumental orientation refers to an individual's interest and willingness in bearing social interact with members of the L2 or second language students (Shmais, 2003). This necessary orientation happens only when learner wishes to be a part of social network and a true part of culture of the second language he or she is learning. An instrumental orientation can said to be occurred when a student or learner exhibits a utilitarian reason and self-orientation in passing the exam for a practical work, job or other logical reason. Hence, Gardner et al. (1985) as well as McIntyre and Noels (1996) have been concluded that both integrative and instrumental orientations are necessary to be employed and exhibited by learner to more proficiency and vocabulary of second language because of the increased motivation. Another research has been stated that motivation generally speaks as the matter of explanation why people tend to do something new, how hard they can try for it and how long they are willing to pursue the activity for better results comparatively. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) have studied the level of motivation and its impact on EFL learners concluding that the learners with a high level of motivation and favorable attitude are more likely to select and adapt various learning strategies along with creating relaxing environment in classroom leading to more social interaction with native speaker. Hence, in terms of EFL learning, achievement can be taken as an index of motivation since it can lead to better outcomes and support to more proficient learning of English language (Dörnyei, 1998).

Researchers have placed a greater focus on classroom participation in various activities and learning lesson in order to gauge the motivation level and its final impact on increased learning, mitigation of tension and enhanced interaction. It has been resulted in more evidence for significant relationship between motivation level and use of language learning strategies by Oxford (1996). For instance, Pintrich and Schunk (2002) conducted a comprehensive study and pointed out the involvement of motivation in all activities of a learning environment impacting the performance of learned behaviors as well as learning of new behavior. Motivation also impacts the choice of learning strategies and many other factors such as self-evaluation of language proficiency, major courses and enjoyment in the class. Another interesting factors that have been found is the longer retentions of learned vocabulary and new words by those who are increasingly motivated in comparison of others, less motivated students. Longer retention of new words in memory leads to better use of words in new situation and comprehensive use in making long, more accurate sentences.

Literature is supportive about the impact of motivation, instrumental as well as integrative motivation on the choice of strategy, use as well as results during the learning process of EFL. It could be acknowledged that motivation in various contexts is not primarily concerned with the grades or job orientation rather it has been found concerned with the better learning of second language, retention, recalling and better use in everyday situation (Khalil, 2005).

Communication with Native Speakers

Another factor which has been found in literature, affecting the use of language learning strategies in Arabic EFL is the less communication with native speakers of English language. Studies reveal that learners in Saudi Arabia are less likely to communicate with native speakers on direct terms which delays their capability of increased learning or retention of words in their memory for longer time period (Dörnyei, 1998). Moreover, non-supportive social interaction also delays the early adaptation of learned language and reduced results and outcomes consequently in Saudi Arabian context. However, living abroad and effect of experiences in studying English language by Arab nationals are found positively affecting learning EFL (Chamot, 2005).

Experience in Learning a Language

Studying a language and interacting situation during this process are other factors which have been claimed to be affecting the choices as well as use of Arabic language learning strategies. A small number of researchers have been taken out on this topic, however, which have been resulted in less statistically significant relationship found between the language strategy use and the experience of English language study. Purdie and Oliver (1999) has reported the use of language strategies by bilingual school going children from three major group with respect to culture i.e. Asian, European and speakers of Arabic. The results of this study showed that the children who

have spent a longer time in English speaking countries or among native English speakers have gotten higher mean scores for memory as well as cognitive strategies. These findings have served as an insight into the deeper research about learning strategies stating that experience in studying a language affects the outcomes in form of proficient use of language along with the choice of learning strategies (Khamkhien, 2010).

Purdie and Oliver (1999) has highlighted the pertinence of experience in learning a language as a major factor affecting the use, choice, applicability and final results of a language learning strategy. His study also supported the findings of Khamkhien, (2010) in which studying English language abroad in the US and Europe was investigated. The results showed that learning a language abroad deemed to influence on learning style and student's thoughts specifically in terms of their actual ability of learning a language (Riazi and Rahimi, 2005). Several areas have been spotted in this study which have found impacting the use of LLSs such as academic effects, change in attitudes, cultural impacts foreign language proficiency effect and views about second language. Study had agreed with the research by Oxford (1996) concluding that there are numerous factors including nationality and culture which influence the learning strategies directly as well as indirectly by impacting the motivation level which has significant statistical relationship with the use and choice of LLSs.

Research Method

A quantitative research approach was applied in this study to determine the factors affecting LLS use by Saudi EFL learners. Burns and Burns (2008) defined quantitative approach as a study where researchers categorize and calculate characteristics, and build statistical models to describe what they have observed. The research study employs a correlational research design to evaluate the factors affecting LLS use by Saudi EFL learners. Bordens (2006) defines correlational research as a research design that involves observing the data of two or more variables and defining the type of association that exist between them. In this kind of research design, variables cannot be manipulated and can only be observed.

Participants

The participants of this study consists of 115 male students and 81 female students from Jazan University. The sample selected, i.e. the Saudi EFL learners, for the study can be considered as a representative sample because the university students belong to different parts of the country. the participants were selected randomly form different colleges among Jazan University. The table below shows some demographic data about the participants.

Table 1: Participants Characteristics

Age		how long do you study English	
Group	Percentage	Group	Percentage
18-20	56.5%	Less than 1 Year	16%
21-25	40%	1-3 years	20%
26 and above	3.5%	3-5 years	30%
		More than 5 years	34%

Data Collection

Primary data was directly collected from the participants in this research study. `A primary data research consists of original data accumulated by the researcher. Researchers collect primary data because it provides them better control, efficiency in data collection and proprietary information. In contrast, Secondary data is not collected directly from the respondents (Nahum et. al, 2012). Data for the study was collected using different instruments and questionnaires. These instruments consisted of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a reduced version of TOEFL, motivation questionnaire, and learning style

questionnaire. The information related to gender, majors and language study years was also collected.

Statistical Technique

In this study, a number of statistical tools are used to evaluate the factors affecting LLS use by Saudi EFL learners. Techniques used included descriptive statistics, One-way Tests of ANOVA and regression analysis. These techniques were analyzed in the IBM, SPSS Statistical package, version, 20.

Variable Description

The independent variables of the study affecting the language learning strategies consisted of language study years, Gender, Motivation level, Proficiency level, and a group of learning styles (Global vs. Sequential learning style, Verbal vs. Visual style, Intuitive vs. Sensing Style and Reflective vs. Active style). The dependent variable is the Saudi EFL's language learning strategy (LLS).

Data Analysis

As discussed in the methodology, a number of tests were applied in this study to evaluate the factors/variables influencing the use of language learning strategies (LLS). These tests included descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis, and one-way tests of ANOVA. Descriptive statistics were used to evaluate whether the participants of the study were high, medium or low strategy users, based on the mean values. To determine the factors influencing the LLS use, regression analysis was used. Finally, to test a significant difference between the six categories of strategy and learners' use of LLS, a number of one way ANOVA test were performed on the data.

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was used to determine the effect of a set of independent variables or predictors over a dependent variable (Cohen et al., 2013). The regression analysis, in this study, was performed to determine the extent of independent variables' (language study years, gender, learning style, motivation and proficiency) impact on the perceived use of strategy of the learners.

Table 2: Regression Analysis

Sig. Value (P-Value < 0.05)	1. 0.00
R – Squared	2. 0.43

Table 2, revealed results of using the multiple regression analysis, the Sig, value or the p-value is 0.00 i.e. less than 0.05 threshold. Therefore, the overall multiple regression model was significant in determining the impact of independent variables on the perceived strategy of learners. In other words, the relationship between the model i.e. the set of independent variables and language learning strategies (LLS) was significant. The R-squared value showed the goodness of fit. It indicated the percentage of variance explained by the model (Cameron and Windmeijer, 1997). In this case, the value of R-Squared is equal to 0.43, which shows the model explains 43% of variance in the dependent variable.

To examine the extent of prediction of each independent variable, partial regression coefficients are used. Table 3: illustrates partial regression analysis results:

Table 3: Partial Regression Coefficients

(Independent variables and LLSs)

Predictors	B	t-statistic	P-value (sig.)
Language study years	-0.17	-2.50	0.01*
Gender	-0.04	-0.89	0.36
Motivation level	0.29	6.2	0.00*
Global vs. Sequential	-0.06	-1.20	0.22
Verbal vs. Visual	-0.02	-0.39	0.72
Intuitive vs. Sensing	0.00	-0.02	0.98
Reflecting learning vs. Active learning	0.07	1.12	0.29
Proficiency level	0.49	10.05	0.00*

*p < 0.05

Table 3, only three independent variables were significant in predicting the use of language learning strategies. These variables were language study years, motivation, and proficiency level. It can be observed that the proficiency level, among all other variables, was the strongest predictor with a t-value of 10.05. The beta values explained the change in dependent due to the variation in the independent variable on average. The beta value of proficiency level was 0.49, which explained that with an increase in one unit/level in proficiency, the LLS use would increase by 0.49 units. Level of motivation, having the beta value of 0.29, was also positively contributing in the total strategy use. However, a negative significant relation is found between the language study years and the use of LLS. According to the results, the beta value for language study years was -0.17, which shows that a month increase in the language study years, the LLS use decreases by 0.17 units. A possible explanation for the result may be the lack of formal English instructions and learning at the school and university level, which do not add up over the period and may influence negatively.

Multiple regression analysis was again applied to assess the impact of different interactions between the independent variables, on the use of language learning strategies (LSS).

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Sig. Value (P-Value < 0.05)	0.00
R – Squared	0.59

The above table showed the overall significance of the model and the goodness of fit. The p-value equals 0.00, which is less the 0.05 threshold indicating that the model is significant in predicting the LLS use. In other words, the relationship between the model i.e. the interaction between independent variables and language learning strategies (LLS) is significant. The R- Squared, showing the percentage of variance explained by the model, is equal to 0.59, which indicated the model explains 59% of variance in the use of LLS.

The detailed results of the regression analysis in presented in the table 5, which showed the individual impact of the interacted variables on the LLS use.

Table 5: Partial Regression Coefficients (Independent variables' interaction and LLSs)

Predictors	B	t-statistic	P-value (sig.)
Gender by global vs. sequential	-0.13	-1.20	0.23
verbal vs. visual (Gender)	-0.20	-0.39	0.72
intuitive vs. sensing (Gender)	-0.10	-0.78	0.42
active vs. reflective (Gender)	0.05	0.60	0.55
Motivation (Gender)	0.13	1.20	0.23
Gender Proficiency level	0.14	1.13	0.25
Proficiency level by motivation	0.49	7.02	0.00*

*$p < 0.05$

The data showed the individual impact of the independent variables over the dependent variable i.e. language-learning strategies' (LLSs) use. The independent variables, in this analysis, were interacted with each other for evaluating their impact of LLS use. The results reveal that only one interaction, i.e. Proficiency level by motivation was significant in predicting the use of LLS. The sig. values of all other predictors were higher than 0.05 threshold, except for Proficiency level by motivation. The coefficient of the significant variable was equal to 0.49, which means that an increase in a level of interaction between motivation and proficiency level, there would be an improvement of 0.49 units in the use of LLSs. The association between the interaction and the use of LLS was quite predictable as a strong link between motivation and proficiency level exist according to a large number of studies (Rahimi et al., 2008), and the individual link of the variables with the LLSs use.

The multiple regression analysis determined three predictors and one interaction between predictors that affect the Saudi EFL learner's LLSs use. These variables included Motivation level, Proficiency level, Language study years and the interaction between motivation and proficiency (Proficiency level by motivation). The estimated model can be illustrated in the following figure:

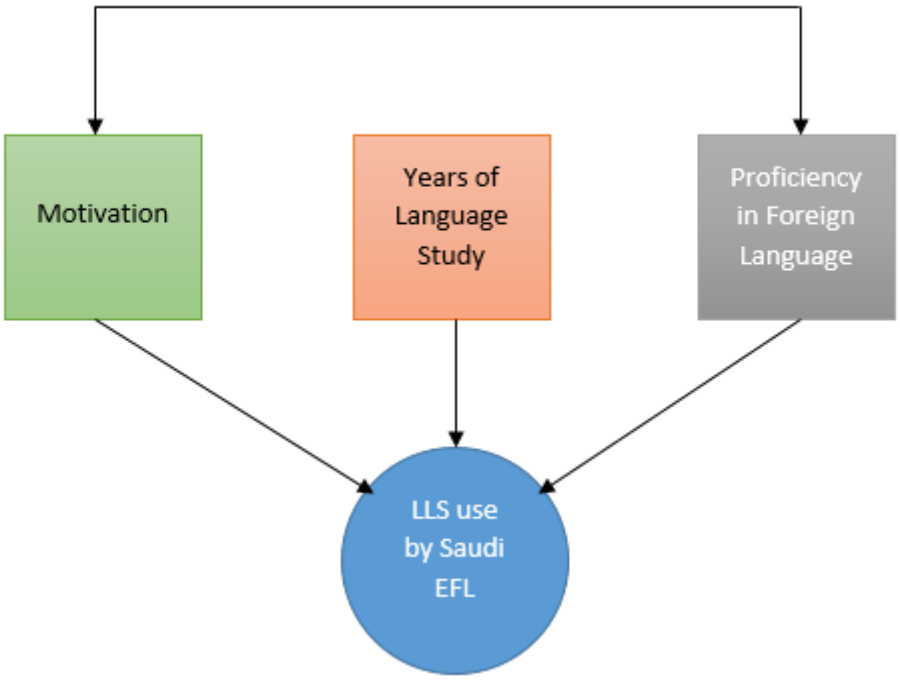

Figure 1: Factors affecting the LLSs use by Saudi EFL Learners

The figure illustrates that years of language study and the proficiency level were part of a learner's background, whereas the motivation level is psychological and cognitive aspect. According to the figure, the model was designed, with the help of the three variables and the interaction between motivation and proficiency. It explained the factors affecting the use of LLSs by Saudi EFL learners.

Proficiency

As discussed in the previous section, proficiency level of the participants were determined using the grade of English language intensive course on the basis of the test results. They were divided into three groups; high proficiency (A and B), mid proficiency (C) and low proficiency (D and F) in which 29.5% each belonged to the high and low proficiency group. The rest of 41% represented the mid proficiency level. In the following table, the summary of use of LLS by the three levels of proficiency is presented with respect to their mean and standard deviation scores.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of use of strategy by proficiency levels

Strategy	High (n = 58)		Mid (n = 80)		Low (n = 58)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
LLSs	3.69	0.39	3.38	0.51	2.98	0.48

The data showed the mean and standard deviation value of strategy use at different levels of proficiencies. The mean language learning strategies at high level of proficiency of participants 3.69, which was higher than the other two proficiency groups (mid and low). The mean LLSs score for mid-level group was 3.38, whereas the value for low proficiency group was the lowest i.e. 2.98. The values of standard deviation for the three proficiency groups using LLS were 0.39,

0.51 and 0.48 for high, mid and low levels respectively.

Table 7: One-Way ANOVA

Sig. Value	P < 0.05
F Statistic	29.78

To examine, whether the mean difference between mean scores of LSSs use among the three categories of proficiency was significant, a one way ANOVA test was employed. According to table 7, the sig or p-value was less 0.05 and the F statistic equaled 29.78, showing a significant difference among the mean scores.

Table 8: Post hoc Scheffé test

Level of Proficiency	High	Mid	Low
High	-	0.31*	0.71*
Mid		-	0.40*
Low			-

*mean difference is significant at p < 0.05

A Scheffé test (post hoc) was applied to confirm the significant difference between all pairs of mean scores at the three levels of proficiency, as without applying a post hoc test, it cannot be evaluated that means of which level(s) were different. The results in the above table showed that the mean scores difference, between three proficiency levels' pairs were significantly different. The mean difference between high level and Mid-level is 0.31, between high level and low-level proficiency is 0.71, and between mid and low level is 0.40. The results related to proficiency level and strategy use were consistent with previous studies, which also deduced strong significant relation between the two variables (Park 1997) and (Rahimi et al., 2008).

The association between the overall strategy use and the level of proficiency is studied. A linear relationship was found between different strategy categories adopted by Saudi EFL learners and the three levels of proficiency.

Table 9: Mean scores and standard deviation of strategy categories by proficiency level

Strategy Category	High (n = 58)		Mid (n = 80)		Low (n = 58)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Social	3.46	0.69	3.20	0.76	2.90	0.81
Affective	3.52	0.73	3.48	0.59	3.18	0.68
Metacognitive	4.12	0.60	3.81	0.56	3.19	0.76
Compensation	3.96	0.89	3.33	0.97	2.99	0.56
Cognitive	3.77	0.54	3.39	0.51	2.97	0.54
Memory	3.46	0.66	3.19	0.48	2.77	0.62

According to table 9, the use of different strategies in high proficiency learners was more frequent than in mid-level proficiency learners. Similarly, the use of different strategies in mid-level proficiency learners was more frequent than the low-level group. For instance, the mean score of social learning strategy at high-level proficiency was 3.46, which was higher than the mid-level (mean = 3.20) and the low level (mean = 2.90).

To investigate, the mean difference for different strategy categories at the three proficiency levels, one way ANOVA and post hoc test were applied. It is found that the high and mid-level proficiency at all categories of strategy are

significantly different from the low-level proficiency except for compensation and affective categories. No significant difference was found., for memory and social strategies, between high and mid-level. The mean differences, in the categories of metacognitive and cognitive strategies, for the three proficiency levels was significantly different and a linear relationship was found between the strategy category and the proficiency level. It showed that the relationship between the two variables is comparatively strong, with respect to metacognitive and cognitive strategies, as compared to the other learning strategies.

Years of Language study.

As discussed in the section of regression analysis, a negative significant relation was found between the language study years and the use of LLS. It showed that, with an increase in the language study years, there would be a decrease in the use of learning strategies. A possible explanation for the result may be the lack of formal English instructions and learning at the school and university level, which do not add up over the period and may influence negatively.

It can be argued that, with the perspective of EFL learning in Saudi Arabian schools and colleges, it is not necessary that increasing language study years add up in the proficiency level. In KSA, a typical students' language learning pattern during the education period cannot guarantee increase in the language proficiency. The general learning pattern include minimal writing and reading practice, limited vocabulary use, and almost non-existent speaking, comprehension and listening in English Language. Therefore, the above reason may serve as the possible explanation for the negative relationship observed between the use of language learning strategies and years of the language study by Saudi EFL learners.

Motivation

The results from the regression analysis section explained that there was a positive linear relationship between motivation and the LLS use. It means the greater level of motivation a learner possesses, the more would be the use of the learning strategies by Saudi EFL learners. Similar to Proficiency, motivation levels are divided into three groups; high, mid and low motivation in which 29.5% each belong to the high and low motivation groups. The rest of 41% represents the mid motivation level. In the following table, the summary of use of LLS by the three levels of motivation, in Saudi EFL learners, with respect to their mean and standard deviation scores was presented in table 10.

Table 10: Descriptive statistics of use of strategy by motivation levels

Strategy	High (n = 58)		Mid (n = 80)		Low (n = 58)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
LLSs	3.72	0.44	3.50	0.39	2.99	0.48

The above table shows the mean and standard deviation value of strategy use at different levels of motivation. The mean language learning strategies at high level of motivation of respondents is 3.72, which was higher than the other two motivation groups (mid and low). The mean LLSs score for mid-level group was 3.50, whereas the value for low motivation group was the lowest i.e. 2.99. The values of standard deviation for the three groups using LLS were 0.44, 0.39 and 0.48 for high, mid and low levels respectively. The results showed a strong linear relationship between motivation and overall strategy use.

Table – 11: One-Way ANOVA

Sig. Value	$P < 0.05$
F Statistic	37.22

The above table presents the results of using one way ANOVA test, which verified a significant difference among the table means scores of LLSs use at the three motivational levels. The pairwise significance is validated with the help of a post hoc analysis.

Table 12: Mean scores and standard deviation of strategy categories by motivation.

Strategy Category	High (n = 58)		Mid (n = 80)		Low (n = 58)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Social	3.57	0.79	3.19	0.66	2.81	0.67
Affective	3.75	0.58	3.45	0.56	3.06	0.81
Metacognitive	4.15	0.61	3.79	0.59	3.18	0.64
Compensation	3.80	1.17	3.44	0.81	2.98	0.72
Cognitive	3.71	0.50	3.38	0.44	3.15	0.51
Memory	3.34	0.61	3.20	0.62	2.82	0.58

There was also an impact of motivation level on the six strategy categories as shown in the table 12. The data explained that the use of different strategies in high motivation learners was more frequent than the mid and low level motivation learners. However, it was found that in only two strategies the mean difference is significant at all 3 categories of motivation, which are social and cognitive strategies. The other four categories did not show any significant difference according to ANOVA and Scheffé tests. According to the study, as compared to proficiency, the impact of motivation on the perceived use of LLSs was not very strong.

Gender

To study the effect of gender on the use of learning strategy, descriptive statistics were used initially. Following table illustrates the mean and standard deviation of LLSs use by gender.

Table –13: Descriptive statistics of use of strategy by gender

Strategy	Male (n = 81)		Female (n = 115)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
LLSs	3.51	0.45	3.32	0.47

The mean score of strategy use by Saudi male learners was high (3.51) as compared to the female learners (3.32). However, the difference between the mean scores was not significant as the p value was equal to 0.28.

Learning Style

The effect of learning style, according to the multiple regression analysis, was insignificant over the use of LLSs. A detailed analysis of different learning styles over the use of strategy further confirmed the insignificant difference between the mean values.

Table 14: ANOVA for the effect of learning style on overall strategy use.

Learning Style	N	Mean	S.D.	Sig.
Global	79	3.51	0.59	0.77
Sequential	117	3.29	0.52	
Verbal	40	3.44	0.45	0.59
Visual	156	3.31	0.55	
Intuitive	25	3.59	0.63	0.09
Sensing	171	3.28	0.49	
Reflective	50	3.40	0.58	0.81
Active	146	3.09	0.52	

The above table showed the insignificant mean differences of strategy use by the different learning styles. The intuitive vs. sensing learning styles was affecting the metacognitive and cognitive categories of learning strategy as shown in the table 15:

Table – 15: ANOVA Test, impact of intuitive vs. sensing styles.

Strategy	F	Sig. ($p < 0.05$)
Metacognitive	4.15	0.03
Cognitive	8.22	0.00

*$p < 0.05$

It was also found that the global vs. sequential learning styles influenced the use of affective and compensation strategies as shown in table 16. The use of this strategy is more frequent among global style learners as compared to the sequential style learners.

Table – 16: ANOVA Test, effect of global vs. sequential styles.

Strategy	F	Sig. ($p < 0.05$)
Affective	4.39	0.03
Compensation	5.09	0.02

*$p < 0.05$

Conclusion and Implications

The aim of this study was to determine the factors affecting LLS used by Saudi EFL learners. The study is based on a review of previous literature related to language learning strategies (LLS) and factors affecting the use the of LLSs. To examine the research problem, the study employed a quantitative approach and used different statistical techniques including descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis, and one-way ANOVA.

According to the results of the study, the overall multiple regression model, consisting years of language study, gender, learning styles, motivation and proficiency, is significant in predicting the strategy use by Saudi EFL learners. That is, the relationship between the model i.e. the set of independent variables and language learning strategies (LLS) is significant. However, with the help of partial regression coefficients, it is found that only three independent variables are significant in predicting the use of language learning strategies. These variables are years of language study, motivation, and proficiency level. Proficiency and motivation levels have positive relationship with the use of LSS, whereas the language study years have a negative impact over the perceived use of strategies. In another regression analysis, which tested the impact of different interactions between the independent variables, on the use of language learning strategies (LSS), it is found that only proficiency level by motivation interaction is significant in predicting the use of LLS. The association between the interaction and the use of LLS is quite predictable as a strong link between motivation and proficiency level exists according to a large number of studies.

A greater understanding, related to the strategy use by Saudi EFL learners, is provided by the findings of the study. The results elaborate that the use of language learning strategy interacts with a number of variables, as it is a complex phenomenon. The impact of the independent variables on the overall strategy use is relatively different over the individual strategies/strategy categories discussed in the study. Therefore, it is important to consider relevant aspects, before understanding the pattern of the use of strategy by EFL learners. The study also shows the importance of context of language learning. It also expresses that the awareness to learning processes and the learning experience influence a Language strategy choice. In the learning context and in teaching methods, it is therefore important to consider the influence of such factors.

The study finds a negative significant relation between the language study years and the use of LLS. The data shows that, there is an opposite relationship between the language study years and the use of learning strategies. It can be argued that, with the perspective of EFL learning in Saudi Arabian schools and colleges, it is not necessary that increasing language study years add up in the proficiency level. The strong link between motivational levels and use of LLS refers to the importance of higher motivation in Saudi EFL learners. It indicates the significance of exposure to the English language and integrative motivation.

The study recommends necessary amendments in the design and development of curriculum related to language learning, which provide opportunity to the learners to link their language course objectives with real life application.

There is a substantial need of inclusion of activities, in the language curriculum, to enhance involvement of the students in the target language's actual use.

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