



GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

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Annotation. For many years, learning strategies and styles have been the topic for the Linguists. Many scientists and scholars are doing effort to find clues that have an impact on learning strategy. Interestingly, one of the factors that held the attention of the scientists is gender dissimilarities in language learning strategies and styles.

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Ebel (1999) and Cavanagauh (2002) state that 'males and females learn differently from each other'. Marcus and Pizzo point out that females learn much better when atmosphere is quiet and they tend to be more auditory learner while males inclined to be more visual and find peers feedback more motivational. More recently, statistics has shown that simultaneously, both genders have improved their language skills, girls achieved higher marks than boys in EFL learning. So Gender has been referred as one of the irresistible factor that influences second language acquisition and has an important role in language learning. No matter what gender differences are primarily culturally or biologically determined, educational research in the last several decades has proven that the gender differences manifestly influence students' academic interests, needs and achievements (Halpern, 1986; Collins, Kenway and McLeod, 2000; Swiatek & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2000). Moreover, while taking into consideration the gender we also should mention that males and females' choices in the term of learning styles and strategies are different. Nyikos mention that 'As for learning strategies, various learners' factors have been identified as factors related to language learning strategies, including language being learned, level of language learning, proficiency, degree of metacognitive awareness, gender, affective variables such as attitudes, motivation, and language learning goals, specific personality traits, overall personality type, learning style, career orientation or field of specialization, national origin, aptitude, language teaching methods, task requirements, and type of strategy training'(Oxford & Nyikos, 1989).

This work aims to show the objectives of the different studies on gender differences in language learning strategies used by ESL students.

The learning strategies are the strategies a learner selects for language acquisition (Shahilla Zafar. 2013.p.642). Brown argues that 'the choice of learning strategies is strongly influenced by the nature of their motivation, cognitive style, and personality as well as by specific contexts of use and opportunities for learning'. After reading a number of articles, I realized that there are many definitions and explanations for the concept of learning strategies. Rubin (1981, as cited in Purpura,1999), identified six strategy types: clarification or verification, monitoring, memorization, guessing or inductive inferencing, deductive

reasoning and independent practice. Moreover, in the term of strategies Oxford (1990) also proposed major classes of learning strategies, which are direct and indirect. These two classes are subdivided into a total of six groups, which are memory, cognitive, compensation strategies. These are all under the direct class. The metacognitive, affective, and social are the indirect class (Oxford, 1990, p.37).

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990) strategies are the tools for active, self-directed involvement needed for developing L2 communicative ability. O'Malley and Chamot, (1990) have identified the following strategies (3): Cognitive strategies; Metacognitive strategies; Social and affective strategies.

1. Cognitive strategies.

According to Nyikos (1989) and Taguchi (1989) cognitive strategies, such as summarizing or reasoning deductively, enabling learners to understand and produce new language by many different means (Oxford, 1990, p. 37.). Cognitive strategies are essential in learning a new language. It consists of four sets, practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning and creating structure for input and output (Oxford, 1990).

2. Metacognitive strategies.

'Metacognitive strategies are skills used for planning, monitoring, and evaluating the learning activity'; "they are strategies about learning rather than learning strategies themselves" (Sh. Zafar, K. Manekshi. 2013). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) point out that 'the metacognitive strategies include advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, advance preparation, self-monitoring, delayed production and self-evaluation'. Other researchers Viriya and Sapsarin (2014, 77-88 pages) argue that 'Indirect strategies are 'the strategies that underpin the business of language learning' (Oxford, 1990, p. 135.). It is called indirect because these strategies support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language. They are divided into metacognitive, affective and social strategies (Oxford, 1990). The first type of indirect strategies is metacognitive strategies, which means beyond, beside, or with the cognitive. Therefore, metacognitive strategies are actions which go beyond purely cognitive devices, and which provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process (Oxford, 1990, p. 136). It consists of three strategies in this set, which is centering your learning, arranging and planning your learning and evaluating your learning (Oxford, 1990)'.

3. Social and affective strategies.

Shahilla Zafar and K. Meenakshi (2013) mention that 'Social and effective strategies involve interacting with another person to assist learning or using control to assist a learning task. These strategies are:

Questioning for Clarification: Asking for explanation, verification, rephrasing, or examples about the material; asking for clarification or verification about the task; posing questions to the self.

- Cooperation: Working together with peers to solve a problem, pool information, check a learning task, model a language activity, or get feedback on oral or written performance.
- Self-talk: Reducing anxiety by using mental techniques that make one feel competent to do the learning task (p. 642). Some of the researchers link third strategy with emotions and motivations of the learners. This type of indirect strategy which refers to emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values (Oxford, 1990 p.140). This strategy should not be overlooked because

positive emotions and attitudes can make language learning far more effective and enjoyable (Viriya & Sapsarin, 2013, p.80).

According to scientists, scholars and results of surveys gender does have effects on learning style but no important effect on language learning strategies. In that part of the literature review will see implication of the results. Several studies and surveys have been conducted on language learning strategies. For example, in 2003 Wafa conducted a survey who were studying An-Najah National University in Palestine. And their major courses were conducted in English but their native language was Arabic. He mentioned that 'the subjects of the study are male and female students still studying for their B.A. degree. The results of this study show that An-Najah English majors use learning strategies with high to medium frequency, and the highest rank (79.6%) is for metacognitive strategies while the lowest (63%) is for compensation strategies. In general, the results show that gender and proficiency have no significant differences on the use of strategies'. (Chayata Viriya, Sutthirak Sapsirin, 2014,p.81).

Furthermore, other researchers also conducted gender study on language learning strategies. Another gender study on language learning strategies belongs to Kamarul et al. (2009), the findings of the study show that 'there are important gender differences in the use of language learning strategies. Female students also tend to use overall language learning strategies more often than males, especially with affective and metaphysic strategies (Oxford 1990)'.

For this part, as a researcher I can say that for learning strategies, the results of the studies and surveys show no differences. The aim of this study is to understand why the choices of the males and females in the term of learning strategies are different but literally, there is no dynamic difference between final outcomes. Both males and females sometimes use learning strategies while learning a language. The researchers point out that 'this may be because of the age factor. The population in this study is 20 or 21 years of age. Therefore, according to Harley (1986), Singleton (1989) and Moyer (2004), age is considered to be one of the factors that affect language learning strategies. As a result, this study cannot be generalized to different age group population.' (Chayata Viriya, Sutthirak Sapsirin, 2014, p.85). Organizers of this researches point out that 'much more time, energy, and study are needed in order to prepare a more valid and reliable test. For, further research, this study is needed to be done in different types of context students. The effects of gender could be investigated more with treatment and controlling groups' (Masoud Zoghi, The effect of gender on language learning,2013). Regarding these factors, this topic still needs further investigation.

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